

## AGAINST CAPITALISM: AN UNFINISHED ARCHAEOLOGICAL MANIFESTO<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** archaeology; materiality; critique; capitalism; Romania.

**Abstract:** This text is a manifesto for a critical study of the material dimension of capitalism (i.e. neo-liberalism) in Romania, in all its aspects: pro-capitalist types of discourse; restructuring of the discipline in accordance with the values of contemporary capitalist ideology; the material culture of everyday life, public space and economic projects in the capitalist society; the material dimension of legitimation and promotion of capitalist ideology; the material apparatus of the military system mobilized to defend and export capitalism in Eastern Europe; etc. We argue that, conceived this way, archaeology needs to become a form of resistance to and action against capitalist ideology.

**Rezumat:** Textul de față este un manifest pentru studierea critică a dimensiunii materiale a capitalismului (*i.e.* neoliberalismului) din România, sub toate aspectele sale: forme de discurs procapitaliste; restructurarea disciplinei în conformitate cu valorile ideologiei capitaliste de astăzi; cultura materială asociată vieții cotidiene, spațiului public și proiectelor economice în societatea capitalistă; materialitatea acțiunilor de legitimare și promovare a ideologiei capitaliste; resursele materiale ale sistemului militar mobilizat pentru apărarea capitalismului și exportarea sa în Europa de Est; etc. Susținem că o astfel de arheologie trebuie să se constituie într-o formă de rezistență și de acțiune împotriva ideologiei capitaliste.

*"You feel that it would require a great deal of eternal spiritual resistance and denial not to succumb, not to surrender to the impression, not to bow down to fact, and not to idolize Baal, that is, not to accept what is as your ideal."<sup>2</sup>*

The archaeology of the recent and contemporary past is a very well individualized research field of the discipline, proof being the many and very diverse papers published, and the 2014 first issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology*. In Romania, the archaeology of the recent and contemporary past has covered almost

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<sup>1</sup> This manifesto is an extended version of a text published in Romanian: Dragoman, Oanță-Marghitu 2014b.

<sup>2</sup> Dostoevsky 1997, p. 37.

exclusively the theme of repression and resistance during the Communist Era.<sup>3</sup> Even a research institute was founded with the goal of producing the necessary documentation needed for an official trial for the prosecution of the political offences committed during the communist regime and, as a result, of communism itself – The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania, renamed in 2009 The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER), under the authority of the Romanian Government. The IICCMER has mostly undertaken forensic archaeology cases, with some exceptions, such as the archaeological excavations made by the authors in the former communist forced labour camp at Galeșu (in 2014 and 2015).<sup>4</sup> In IICCMER's projects, the archaeology was attached to a judicial and political action of prosecuting communism and used as a simple and useful means for gathering "evidence". In other words, rather than following the role of material culture in the existence of repression and resistance and in that of what we call "communism" in general, rather than casting light on the aspects omitted or silenced by the historical or political discourse, the research philosophy of the IICCMER has transformed archaeology into a simple extension of the official policy of the state institutions.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, in contrast with the condemnation of communist crimes by a presidential commission in 2007,<sup>6</sup> the genocidal character of capitalism has been officially ignored so far. Following herein an (Orthodox) Christian perspective, we consider that capitalism has built its palaces on seas of blood and mountains of corpses, while reserving some liberties to the privileged social classes – to paraphrase the words of Archimandrite Sophrony.<sup>7</sup> However, no institution was founded in order to research capitalism, including in an archaeological manner. For example, in the Romanian Academy there is a National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, but there is none that studies capitalism. Speaking of archaeology in particular, even if there are calls for bringing Romanian archaeological research at the same standards as the international ones, there are no Romanian publications dedicated to capitalism like those existing in the western world (e.g. see the series Contributions to Global Historical Archaeology). In order to study the capitalist system in Romania from an archaeological perspective, one does not have to wait for it to become definitively, irrevocably *past*. In this regard, we mention the attitude of some South-American archaeologists that decided in

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Dragoman 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Dragoman *et alii* 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Dragoman, Oanță-Marghitu 2014a.

<sup>6</sup> Tismăneanu *et alii* 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Sofronie 2015, p. 103.