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The Ethnograph Ion Ștefureac

We are nearing a new celebration of our beautiful Bucovina. For the people of Bucovina, the day of November 28th signifies the historic event when they reunited with the Mother Country, and represents the opportunity to celebrate the ancestors who shed their blood to fulfill this national dream.

The political act of 1918 that expressed the willpower of the People of Bucovina to reunite Bucovina with Romania, represents the culmination of bravery, sacrifice and determination of the great people of Bucovina, who fought with every fiber to keep alive the national awareness and to preserve the Romanian historic values during the ruthless times of foreign occupation. Now, more than ever, the names of the fighters for the Great Unification should not be forgotten, but celebrated as true models of patriotism and as representatives of the local community values.

Ion Ștefureac, professor and ethnograph, represents a model of such prodigious patriotism. He has a well-deserved place in the pages of the local history of Campulung, Bucovina. Contemporary with the Bucovinian folklorist Simion Florea Marian, Ion Ștefureac was a progressist intellectual, considered among the first Romanian ethnographs, dedicated to the study of folk art.

Ion Ștefureac was born on January 17th 1871, in Rădăuți, where he attended the primary school and high school. He then was granted a stipend to study to become a primary school teacher at the Normal School of Radauti between 1890 – 1893. After graduation, he functioned as a teacher and then director of the Bilca primary school. Later on, he specialized in History of Art and Drawing, attending the Austrian Museum of Art and Industrie, and the Technology Museum of Crafts courses, in Vienna and Salzburg, between 1897 – 1900 and 1903 – 1904. During this time, he had also traveled for documentary purpose to the Italian South Tirol and to Germany.

He joined the School of Art and Crafts, former School of Wooden Craft of Campulung, by 1901. There he taught Technical and Constructive Drawing, Architectonic Drawing, and the History of Arts and Technology. In 1919 he became the school principal. He is also known as one of the first teachers of the Dragoș Vodă Highschool in Campulung. While being a teacher,

parent and mentor for his pupils for more than 19 years, he had also been a known publicist of his times.

Ion Ștefureac was a great patriot. In the milieu of a strong anti-nationalist current imposed by the Austrian domination, he defended with all his might the use of the Romanian language as the official language utilized in the schools he activated as a teacher. .

The folk art was his great passion that carried him on foot through all the villages around Câmpulung city. Charmed by the beauty of the objects crafted by the hands of the farmers from Bucovina, he aimed to immortalize them in pictures, to research and collect them, and he encouraged other local intellectuals to follow his example. „We are not allowed to let all these cherished treasures of our national culture to get lost and forgotten. We need to fight for their preservation as the sacred reliques that they are” used to say Mr. Ștefureac.

He gathered a valuable collection of more than 400 pieces: dowry boxes, tables, chairs, corner pieces, hangers, torso forks, Shepard’s twigs, containers for gun powder, napkins, scarfs, shirts and other folk garments and household objects.

Inspired by the ornamentations noticed on the traditional pieces, he created an Album of the Romanian National Art, composed of 100 ink drawings, designed with an exceptional talent. The album was presented and awarded at the 1906 Anniversary Exhibition in Bucharest and was especially remarked by the great historian Nicolae Iorga.

His passion, dedication, deep national feelings, the admiration for the traditional Romanian folk art and the deep respect towards his ancestors, inspired Ion Ștefureac to aim to create a local museum in Câmpulung. His goal was „to create a spiritual link between generations” that would act like „an open book for all times and future generations.” His dream was brutally shattered by the Austrian epoqe authorities who opposed such an initiative.

Ion Ștefureac died at Cernăuți in 1920. The ethnograph was just 49 years old. His treasured aspiration was fulfilled 16 years after his death, with the opening of a museum in Câmpulung on June 1st 1936. The Câmpulung Wooden Art Museum is based on the Ion Ștefureac ethnographic collection, the most beautiful pieces that bestow value on the Câmpulung Museum patrimony.

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