

THE ROMANIAN-FINNISH CULTURAL RELATIONS: HISTORY, TRENDS, BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Abstract:

The scientific interest for the study of the Romanian-Finnish relations considerably increased during the last years. Within this trend, this article focuses on the Romanian-Finnish cultural relations and briefly presents the most important events and moments in the history of these relations, from the 19th century to the present. It also includes a selective bibliography on the Romanian-Finnish cultural relations, with works published both in Finland and Romania. The article stresses the need for further research in the field of Romanian-Finnish cultural relations, noticing that when the quality of the political relations was negatively affected by different historical circumstances, the cultural contacts have been maintained and even developed.

Rezumat:

Interesul științific pentru studierea relațiilor româno-finlandeze, și mai ales a relațiilor culturale româno-finlandeze, a crescut în ultimii ani. Acest studiu, în prima sa parte, trece pe scurt în revistă principalele momente și evenimente din istoria acestor relații culturale, începând din secolul al XIX-lea și până în prezent. În cea de-a doua parte prezintă o bibliografie selectivă a lucrărilor dedicate acestor realități și apărute atât în România, cât și în Finlanda. Dacă în domeniul relațiilor politice contactele dintre cele două țări și națiuni nu au fost întotdeauna ușor de menținut la nivele înalte, în domeniul cultural, interesul reciproc a existat în permanență.

Keywords: Finland, Romania, cultural relations, bibliography

A focused analyse proves that the Romanian-Finnish relations, including those in cultural area, are framed by a context in which the major

historical objectives such as the gaining of the independence and the creation of a modern state were similar. Spiritually, the process of setting up the national cultures followed the same course especially in the second half of the 19th century. The two cultures distinguished themselves at the European level in the first decades of the following century. Certainly, the relations between Romania and Finland became stable and significant after the gaining of their independence and after the establishment of their diplomatic relations. But I must also point out that even before this moment the Romanian-Finnish cultural relations were constant and have made a real contribution to the European cultural identity.

Beginnings (The 19th century)

Contrary to the first contacts of Romania and Finland that followed the sinuous military conflicts, the cultural relations were continuous and ascendant. Soon after the publication of the *Kalevala* some of the most representative intellectuals such as Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu and Alexandru Odobescu, made meaningful comments on the importance of this masterpiece of the Finnish national culture. In 1846, eleven years after publication of *Kalevala*, Mihail Kogălniceanu remarked some similarities to the Romanian folk epos. Zacharias Topelius, writer and journalist, a great pioneer of the Finnish spirituality, wrote, in his turn, about 1848 Revolution in Wallachia and Transylvania.

In 1854, Timotei Cipariu published the first translation of a Finnish folkloric poem into Romanian. In 1894, a part of *Kalevala* and a poem by Johan Ludwig Runeberg were published in Iași in the translation of G. Lazu (with a foreword by A.D. Xenopol). This was followed by a number of translations from the works of the most important Finnish authors. In 1914 a volume of Finnish short stories was published. Another premiere came up in 1906, when the volume entitled *Countries and peoples* was published in Helsinki, a chapter about the Romanian Kingdom having been integrated there.

Certainly, a relevant event of the Romanian-Finnish cultural relations was the creation within the Royal Hungary University of the comparative Finno-Ugrian cathedra.

Another meaningful events:

- **1828-1830:** During the Russian-Turkish war, which will end with the Peace of Adrianopole, thirty six Finnish officers were in the Russian army, crossing the Romanian Countries. Some of them left journals and letters, for example, Colonel Gustav-Adolf Ramsay, Berndt Johan Rosenström.

Frederik Nyberg remarked that in Bucharest in bookstores are "to find books, translations from different languages, which is quite extraordinary"

- **1915:** In the magazine „Românul” (Arad) is published the translation of a sketch of the Finnish writer Zachrias Topelius (translation is signed "RC" probably Ana Alex. Codreanu)

Books and exhibition (The interwar period)

Regardless the political contacts, the cultural relations are more intense in the context of a real interest in both countries for the reciprocal knowledge of history traditions and arts. The organization in 1935 of a Romanian exhibition of folk art enjoyed such a great success that Finnish Society for Geography held a festive session dedicated to Romania. Consequently, the next year, a Finnish folk art exhibition was opened in Bucharest.

A special importance had also the publication of some works such as a monographic volume about Finland written by Ion Simionescu and the work *Romania. People and country* signed by Professor V. J. Manisikka. This trend continued with the publication of the book entitled *Finnish testimonies regarding Romania* by Raoul Bossy, in 1937.

The Romanian Academy is represented in a certain number of homage events dedicated to some prominent personalities of the Finnish culture and the national epic *Kalevala*. The translation of Romanian literature continued, Panait Istrati's novels having enjoyed a great success.

In the context of numerous cultural events in Finland regarding the Romanian culture, such as book exhibitions, concerts, or mutual visits of journalist, a special moment turned out to be the inauguration of the Romanian language courses at the University of Helsinki.

Another events:

- **1929:** Constantin Brâncuși and Alvar Aalto met in New York.

- **1934:** Raoul Bossy begins his diplomatic mission as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Minister of Romania in Finland (until 1936). The Romanian diplomat distinguished himself by the energetic actions to represent country interests, and to develop bilateral relations in the cultural field. He is the author of the works on the historical relations between the two countries.

- **1932** Number 1-2 of the magazine „Boabe de grâu” is dedicated to Finland. Here is the translation of the study *Educația poporului în Finlanda (Education of the people in Finland)* by J. Castrense.

The continuity of the traditions (The World War II)

Despite the war conditions, the cultural relations followed a natural trend. In this regard, a significant event was the creation the associations „Romania-Finland” and „Finland-Romania” envisaged to the development of the cultural, artistic and touristic relations between them. Among the founding members of these two associations were significant personalities of the public and cultural life of the two countries.

Professor Väinö Tanner, the Finnish minister accredited to Bucharest is the author of the work *Romania. The Land and the people. Professor V.J. Mansikka* from Helsinki University has researched the Romanian folklore.

The publication of some important works continued, regarding not only the history but also issues of current interest. In this sense, it should be mentioned the publication in Romania of the volumes *Finland. The Country of Cooperatives* written by Ioan Manof, *The Green Gold of Finland* edited by Romania-Finland Association, *Romania in Confusing Times* by Britta Wrede and *Romanian Issues. The Question of Transylvania* by Gustav Bolinder who considered the Vienna Dictate unjust. In 1944, the volume *Romania. The Latin island from South-Eastern Europe* was published in the Finnish language, edited by the Finland-Romania Association, a book comprising general information, as well as references to the Romanian art, science and history.

A significant event is represented by the publication, in 1942, of the first complete Romanian translation of the national epic *Kalevala* achieved by Barbu Brezianu. This evoked a letter of gratitude by Marshal Mennerheim who pointed out that the translation of *Kalevala* had positive repercussions for the Romanian-Finnish relations. In this regard, Barbu Brezianu has been awarded medals and decorations.

Another premiere developing an older tradition is the setting up, in 1942, in Bucharest, of the Chair of Finnish, and of a Romanian lectureship in Helsinki.

Visits of some Romanian writers to Finland are organized, as well as a book exhibition, concerts in Bucharest and Helsinki (among which Dinu Lipatti's concert should be remembered), the distribution of Romanian movies, translations into Romanian of significant Finnish writers such as Eemil Sillanpää, laureate of the Noble Prize, and the translation into the Finnish language of some volumes by Mihail Sadoveanu and Lucian Blaga.

Another events:

- **1940-1944:** Gedeon Meszöli teaches comparative courses of Ugro-Finnish philology at the University of Cluj;

- **1942 April 18:** Representation of Romanian movies in Helsinki: „Monasteries in Bucovina”, „The Moților Country”.

***A concert in Bucharest, in Athenaeum Hall with Finnish music, conducted by Georg Schneevoigt takes place.

***The translation into Romanian by George Sbârcea and Al.I. Popp of Mika Waltari's novel *The Alien and the woman*.

- **1944:** The Finnish translation of the novel *Baltagul* by Mihail Sadoveanu.

- **1945:** With the occasion of the 50 anniversary of Lucian Blaga an Anthology of his poetry, *Aura ja Huilu (Plug and Fluier)*, is published. The translation is signed by the famous Finnish writer Martti Larné, the selection and presentation by Gr. Dobrinescu.

A normal course (1945-1989)

Even during the Cold War, culture and art were areas where further developments in the Romanian-Finnish relations took place.

The cultural and scientific relations developed on the basis of the implementation programs of the "Agreement of cooperation in the fields of culture, science and other related fields" (April 29, 1974). Programs concluded for a three-year period and renewed thereafter.

In 1950, the Romanian-Finland Friendship Association is set up, which will organize in the course of time a lot of events regarding the cultural cooperation. In 1975, the Romanian lectureship within the Turku University and the Finnish chair in the University of Cluj Napoca were inaugurated. Professor Lauri Lindgren, who was also the author of some translations and works of reference regarding the Romanian-Finnish cultural relations, played a significant role for the better knowledge for the Romanian language in Finland.

The translations and printing activities were also very fruitful in that period. In 1985, the book *Kantelar. Culegere de Rune finlandeze alcătuite de Elias Lönröt* was published at Turku. Next year, the bilingual edition of the volume *Antologie de poezie romaneasca* was published at Turku, consisting in translations of poetry of thirty Romanian poets.

Ever since the 1960s many translation of significant Finnish writers have been published in Romanian: Kivi Alexis, Mika Waltari, Silvy Kekkonen, Martti Larni and so forth. In 1959, the epic *Kalevala* is for the first time translated in verse into Romanian by Iulian Vesper, which has also been re-edited ever since. The forth complete translation of the *Kalevala* epic into Hungarian, by Kalman Nagy, is published in Bucharest.

George Sbârcea published, in his turn, a volume devoted to the most important Finnish composer *Ian Sibelius. His life and work*.

In 1982, appears the *Columna Magazine*, publication of the Romanian lectureship at the University of Turku. The magazine has published valuable studies and translation in the course of time. Alongside, a certain number of volumes concerning Finland were published. In 1982 a special issue of *The 20th Century* magazine dedicated to Finland was also published.

In 1968, the Romanian section of the Toijala library was set up.

Another events:

- **1947:** Romanian language lecturer at the University of Helsinki, Grigore Dobrinescu, publishes the first Romanian language manual in Finnish.

- **1959:** Academician Perspessicius published an article about the first evidence of knowledge of epos *Kalevala* in Romanian culture.

- **1960s:** In Romania appear volumes of translations of Finnish authors: Alexis Kivi, Mika Waltari, Sylvia Kekkonen, Martti Larne, Johannes Linnankoski, Ilmari Kianto, Sally Salminen, Pietari Paivarinta, Edith Södgeran, Veijo Meri; anthologies "Finnish short stories" of northern poets (translated by Veronica Porumbacu and Tașcu Gheorghiu).

- **1963:** Starting with this year, writers from Romania participate at international annual meetings of the writers in Lahti (for instance, Marin Sorescu, Nicolae Manolescu, Ana Blandiana Mircea Iorgulescu and others).

- **1965:** From this year appears the magazine of the Association of Friendship Finland - Romania.

- **1968:** Piroska Gergel, teaches courses in Finnish language at the University of Cluj.

- **1969:** During the commemoration of 50 years after the proclamation of the Republic of Finland, writers Iulian Vesper, Brezianu Barbu, Ion Pas are assigned a commemorative medal.

- **1970:** Starting this year, Prof. Lauri Lindrgren teaches Romanian language courses at the University of Turku.

- **1976:** The volume of George Radu *Finland*, is published.

- **1977:** The beginning of the collection of music from Romania in Valkekoski.

- **1978-1979:** Professor Nicolae Constantinescu teaches Romanian language courses at the University of Turku.

- **1980:** It is established at the University of Turku, the association "Ciocârlia".

- **1982:** Concerts of the folklore ensemble "Rhapsody at Somes" from Cluj are staged in Helsinki, Turku and other cities in Finland.

- **1982-1986:** Ioan Stăvăruș works as lecturer for the Romanian language at the University of Turku.

- **1984:** The representation of the play *O scrisoare pierdută* at the Municipal Theater Kupio directed by Dan Micu.

- **1989:** Barbu Brezianu is elected honorary member of the association "Kalevi".

Open perspectives (Cultural relations after 1989)

On May 21, 1997, the "Program of cooperation in the fields of culture, education, science and technology" between Romania and Finland was signed in Bucharest, for the period 1997-2000. On the basis of this program, annually a number of students and specialists are being granted scholarships for training and specialization in the fields of interest for Romania.

To begin with relations in the scientific field, it should be mentioned that a large number of young Romanian researchers work in research institutions in Finland, especially at the prestigious Nokia company, some of them earning international prizes. Exchanges between the research institutions in the two countries take place.

In January 2002, the third Program for the Application of the Cooperation Agreement in the Culture, Scientific and Other related fields between 2002-2006 was signed in Helsinki. This event provides new opportunities for contacts and exchanges in this field through the actions and initiatives of some institutions but also of some persons and authors in various domains of activity.

The translation activity also continues. First, it should be mentioned the publication in 1992, in Helsinki, of the first selection from Mihai Eminescu's poetry, *Runoja*, translated by Liisa Ryoma.

The translation of some books by contemporary Finnish writers such as Mika Waltari, Ann-Leena Härkönen, Arto Tapio Paasilinna was made due to the efforts of Teodor Palic. In this context, one must also recall the Romanian translation of the Marshal Gustav Mannerheim's *Memoirs*.

In 2001, the courses of Romanian language and literature at the University of Helsinki have been put on a permanent basis. Eventually, they have been transferred to the University of Turku. The *Columna* magazine, edited by the Romanian Chair from the Turku University, continued the publication of series of translation of Romanian folklore into

Finnish language as well as some literary works by the most important classical and contemporary authors.

The first Romanian-Finnish-Romanian dictionary was published in 2005. The Romanian Chair also drafted the Romanian-Finnish and Finnish-Romanian scientific dictionary with the support of some institutions from Romania and Finland.

Another special event was the exhibitions entitled *Eighty years of diplomatic Relations between Romania and Finland* consisting in the diplomatic documents and photos, opened on October 28th, 2000 at the National Archives in Helsinki. On this occasion a brochure was also published consisting of diplomatic documents concerning the Romanian-Finnish relations and a study by Lauri Lindgren entitled *Contacts between Finns and Romanian within the Past Centuries*. Professor Lindgren was awarded Romanian medals and decoration.

A similar exhibition was organized in 2006 in the same place where new documents about relations between the two countries were exposed, through the collaboration of foreign ministries of Romania and Finland.

In 2002, the seminar entitled *Nicolae Titulescu. A Romanian Diplomat as President of the League of Nations* took place in Helsinki.

From the artistic point of view, one can mention the exhibitions of fine arts, photo, and movies galas organized both in Finland and Romania.

A special interest was paid, in Finland to the tours of „Constantin Nottara” and „Ion Creangă” theaters and to the show of Dan Puric of the Bucharest National Theatre (2007), with his non-verbal theatre performance “Visul” (“The Dream”).

During this period, there were numerous tours of musical bands, orchestras such the concerts of cords quartet “Transilvania”, of the folk music formation “Ciocârlia” and the participation in 2003 of the Helsinki Symphonic Orchestra at the “George Enescu Festival” where compositions by the most important composers from two countries, Jan Sibelius and George Enescu, were performed. Another musical event dedicated to George Enescu took place in 2007, in Turku, at the Philharmonic Concert Hall, on the occasion of the anniversary of 125 years from the birth of the Romanian composer

After 1989 the presence of Romanian film in Finland was intense. In this respect it is to recall the Romanian Film Festival in Finland in August 2006, in Tampere, Oulu and Helsinki. Movies by well known Romanian directors (Cristian Mungiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Cristi Puiu) were presented at International Film Festival “Love & Anarchy”.

A certain number of significant exhibitions were organized in Finland, such as the varnishing of the Ștefan Petrescu's exhibition of photos entitled „Romania from an Inedited Perspective” and „Trip of Ancestors. Folk Art objects and Handcrafts from Maramureș”, the exhibition of the city Sibiu, the European Capital of Culture (2007).

A number of events were dedicated to Constantin Brâncuși such the first exhibition with his works in Finland and photo documentary exhibitions (2004, 2007)

A series of artistic and cultural events were organized with the support of „The Finnish-Romanian Friendship Association” (“Suomi-Romania-Seura”). The aim of the Association, according to its statutes, is "to spread information on Romania, its culture, literature, art and social life and to promote the relationships between Finland and Romania in the fields of culture, tourism and personal relationships."

In 2005, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania and the Romanian Embassy in Helsinki published in Bucharest the book *Romanian Finnish Confluence. Three Centuries of Connections. 85 Years of Diplomatic Relations*. This work has an informative and documentary purpose, envisaging to give the possibility to be realized a new theoretical synthesis, in the future, interesting not only because of the ties between the two countries in the frame of European Union, but also in universal perspective.

Another events:

- **August 13 - September 10, 2006** - Hauho, Hovinkartanon Taidekesku:
- Varnishing of Romanian-Finnish-German art exhibition, "With Pleasure", organized by Finnroart XXI.

- **December 12, 2006**-Helsinki: Concert of the „Ad Libitum String Quartet” of "Moldova" State Philharmonic of Iasi

- **February 20 - March 6, 2007**-Tampere: The exhibition "Ecumenism: an Architectural Point of View from Romania" is open in the Lobby Gallery RG2 of the Department of Architecture of the Tampere University of Technology.

- **June 12, 2007** - Helsinki: The opening of the exhibition "Archetypes : Homage to Brâncuși", dedicated to the artistic legacy of the greatest Romanian sculptor, at the French Cultural Center, Helsinki.

- **November 15, 2007** - Tampere: The Embassy of Romania and the Finnish-Romanian Cultural Association of Tampere organizes the photo exhibition "Sibiu - Cultural City".

- **January 12, 2008** - Helsinki: - A „Mihai Eminescu” cultural evening has been organized, in cooperation with the Finnish-Romanian Friendship Association, in order to honor the birth of the Romanian national poet.

- **February 7, 2008** - Pori: The Pori Symphonic Orchestra has performed a concert entitled “Romantic Romania”

-**March 5-9, 2008**-Tampere: The 38th edition of the Tampere Film Festival included the presentation of picture "Valerie/Waves" directed by Adrian Sitar

- **March 25-28, 2008** - Lahti: Helsinki (Temppeliaukio Church), Hämeenlinna: The concert tour of pianist Ilinca Dumitrescu. The concert program included piano works by composers Jean Sibelius, Selim Palmgren and Paul Constantinescu (1909-1963).

- **August 22, 2008**, - Helsinki: As part of the Helsinki 20th "Night of the Arts" festival, the Embassy of Romania and the Finnish-Romanian Friendship Association have organized, with the support of the Romanian Language Lectureship of the Turku University, a Romanian poetry evening with Finnish translations of well-known works by Romanian poets (such as Mihai Eminescu, Tudor Arghezi, Marin Sorescu, Nichita Stanescu etc.).

- **February 12, 2009** - The cultural program of the Embassy of Romania, "Golden Romanian Cinema" was inaugurated with a screening of films "Orient Express" directed by Sergiu Nicolaescu and "Nea Mărin Miliardar".

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This bibliography is not a general, but include only those with implications in the sphere of culture

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