

# *The Genesis of Romanian Football*

## *Social Factors and Processes behind the Game<sup>1</sup>*

**Abstract** The present article deals with those social and economic factors that contributed to the genesis of Romanian soccer at the turn of the previous century. The author argues that football was imported from abroad via peregrination and schools, but certain social processes, such as urbanization, capitalization and the appearance of massive working classes, are the reasons why this beautiful game became socially embedded in the local environments. The different circumstances in Banat and Transylvania and in the old Romanian Kingdom marked the social history and trajectory “travelled” by the ball. While in the western part of the country, football arrived in a fertile ground because of the already existing bourgeois sport associations and the rapidly emerging local working classes, the role of foreign companies and expats in implementing football was more significant in the southern regions. This difference in the genesis of the game produced two distinct styles of playing football. These two styles clearly reflect the historical and social background specific to the different regions.

**KEYWORDS** football, modernization, social history, Romania, education, capitalism, social development



## **Introduction**

This article tries to sketch the genesis of Romanian<sup>2</sup> football, but it is by no means exhaustive.<sup>3</sup> I believe that modernization has contributed to the emergence and institutionalization of

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on the results of an ongoing research called *Soccerology* supported by the Department of Art and Cultural Studies of Jyväskylä University, Finland, and it is a shortened version of a subchapter of the manuscript entitled *Social Problems and Conflicts Mediated by Public Sport Discourses in Romania* (monograph forthcoming in late 2014) on social history of football through the lenses of conflicts and problems.

<sup>2</sup> Publications in Romanian usually refer to their topic as Romanian football. We prefer to use the term football in Romania, since some spots where football started did not belong to the Romanian state as they do today. (If we use the term Romanian football, we mean football in Romania, when not expressly defined otherwise).

<sup>3</sup> Although there are several works concerning the history of Romanian football, there is no comprehensive monographic work. *Istoria Fotbalului Romanesc: 1909–2009. Ani pentru fotbal (History of Romanian Football: 1909–2009. Years for Football, 736 p.)* is a valuable and useful book edited by ANGELESCU–CRISTEA and published by the Romanian Football Federation on celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation. The book includes statistics, figures, journal articles, pictures and other data with short comments or explanations. Ioan CHIRILĂ wrote a series of reportage where he sporadically created fictional passages (1966, 1979, 1983, 1985). His writings are mostly about the history of Romanian football and persons connected to the world of football. Another valuable book is the IONESCU, MIHAI-TUDORAN, MIRCEA (1984) *Fotbal de la A la Z (Football from A to Z, Bucharest: Sport Tourism Publishing House)*. It is a synthesis considered as the most important work in the history of football, as it publishes the description of clubs, the most important features of Romanian football and the biographies of important players. We also have to mention Sergiu LAURIAN LUPU's book (2012) *Pentru cine s-a cântat imnul? O istorie a sportului Romanesc 1948–1989*

local football. I am going to present the most important moments (milestones) in the early history of football, moreover, I am going to discuss the social problems that accompanied football. I also intended to look beyond the quite limited context of this popular game's practice and to highlight the patterns of its social embeddedness.

## The Genesis: Historical Roots of Romanian Soccer

According to our fundamental perspective, there are several distinctive phases in the social history of Romanian football. Social, political and economic relations of each era have shaped these distinct phases of Romanian football. Working class and capital in the process of industrialization and centralized administration determined the social conditions that led to the spreading of football in Romania, just as it had happened in other parts of the world (see GOLDBLATT 2006). Romania witnessed two waves of expansion process: one emerged after the turn of the century when industry started to expand organically as a part of the modernization process, and the second took place in the early years of communism because of the forced industrialization. This paper focuses on the first stage.

Two initial statements formed the starting point of this analysis of the Romanian football. First of all, modernization shaped the emergence and development of football: industrialization, urbanization, embourgeoisement and the involvement of academic field (high schools, universities, innovative actions of open-minded individuals who returned from studies abroad). Meanwhile, peregrination is also a factor that we should take into account when discussing the spread of football. Secondly, the evolution of football arose from two distinct sources: one of them is related to Transylvania, Banat and the Partium in the Austro-Hungarian period. The other one is related to the Kingdom of Romania, more specifically to the oil companies which were financed with foreign capital (British, German, American, Dutch and French), as well as textile and other industries in Bucharest and Ploiesti. Early modern Romanian football emerged and developed from the merging of these two distinct traditions after 1919–1920.

The fusion of these two emerging fields of football was not at all smooth and easy, since social and historical antecedents led to many ethnic and regional conflicts (ANGELESCU–CRISTEA 2009) and to frictions in connection with technique and playing style (CHIRILĂ 1966). Moreover, different interpretations of the status of players became another source of contention. Romanian majority and minorities, amateurship or professional playing, centre and periphery articulated contradicting interests. Minorities imagined a regional championship, while the centre thought of a national championship as a part of the construction of Romanian nation.<sup>4</sup> Finally, a centrally

(*For whom the Anthem Sung*, Bucharest: FEST), a sport history that also comprises passages about football. Articles about football's history appear regularly in the popular journal *Historia*, a magazine that targets the general public. Our chapter uses the above-mentioned sources and some works in Hungarian (for example KILLYÉNI 2006; DÉNES–PETERDI–ROCHY–SELMECI 1999; CSILLAG 2011; SALLAI 2011). In addition, we considered literature on Romanian social history as well (especially EGYED, 1981; RONNAS 1984; LIVEZEANU 1995; GALLAGHER 2004; STAMATESCU et.al. 2008; GYÁNI 2012; BĂRBULESCU et.al., 2012). Statistics of RFF, UEFA served as data sources for our paper.

<sup>4</sup> For processes of unification and nation building based on cultural politics in Greater Romania after 1920, see LIVEZEANU (1995). Schools, universities and football, a mass sport that mobilized urban population, had an instrumental role in nation building. For example, Universitatea 1919 (University) in Cluj formulated its mission and aims in the national building paradigm from the start in 1919 (for more details see BODEA 2004). Romanization was a continuous project for the Romanian national team (POPA 2012) – more on this in the subchapter below.

organized “national championship” started in 1932-1933. Teams had the chance to compete for the Romanian Cup for the first time in 1933-1934. Let us have a closer look on the beginnings.

### ***The Beginnings: the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy Branch***

Football, a ball game originally from England, reached Hungary passing through Central Europe, primarily through Austrian and Swiss networks and influence (GOLDBLATT 2006. 141-144.). In the first phase of this process of diffusion, football got to Budapest from Vienna and presumably from Prague: people already played football (initially named „rugdaló” – *kicker* – in that time) in the Hungarian Athletic Club (HAC; MAC in Hungarian) (HADAS 2003. 292.). Football spread to Banat, more precisely to Arad in 1888 (GOLDBLATT 2006. 141-144.) where students embraced this game, because there was a sport association named Meteor functioning since 1879, which gave the basis for the adoption of football. According to contemporary Romanian sources, the official birth date<sup>5</sup> of football in this country is around 1890 (GOLDBLATT 2006. 143.; IONESCU-TUDORAN 1984. 9.). That year Gyula Wiener, a dentist, returned home to Arad from his studies in England, brought a real football, and introduced the precise, standardized rules in his town.

Other Romanian sources (IONESCU – TUDORAN 1984. 9.) prefer the idea that in its rudimentary form, football had already appeared right after 1875, in Timisoara, where youngsters regularly played in the Gymnastic Association of Timisoara. However, we cannot consider it as football, since they did not follow the rules of the game, so it cannot be seen as an important antecedent. Earlier in 1888, chronicles stated that youngster from Arad had already played football in the forest of Csala. What we know for sure is that in 1889 they played the ball regularly in the Physical Training Association in Arad (established in 1897). Newspapers published the rules of the game in the same year (IONESCU-TUDORAN 1984).

The next year proved to be decisive. Timisoara, situated close to Arad, also discovered the game, and its inhabitants organized semi-official matches, almost simultaneously with the matches organized in Arad. Sequence is a matter of dispute, because some sources (IONESCU – TUDORAN, 1984: 11) state that the first game was part of the closing ceremony organized by the Piarist High School in Timisoara in June 1899, while other sources claim that high school students organized the first match in August in Arad (CHIRILĂ 1973. 7.). Moreover, the “Brown-book” (DÉNES-PETERDI-ROCHY-SELMECI 1999) puts the organization of the first regular football match on an earlier date in 1888 (p. 89). According to the official historiography of the Romanian football, Arad hosted the “first match”<sup>6</sup>: the first team, the Football Association of Arad played against the team of the Technical University of Budapest at the end of October or at the beginning of November (p. 22). The Football Association of Arad was a department of Physical Training

<sup>5</sup> In this article, we do not consider such protocronist statements which claim for example that Romanian speaking revolutionaries in 1848, among them Avram Iancu, had already played football in their leisure time in Câmpeni (Topánfalva in Hungarian and Topedorf in German) (DUMITRESCU 2011. 7.).

<sup>6</sup> Defining the first occasions is problematic, because it is clear that some form of the game with loose rules had been already played before 1890. The official “Blue Book” of RFF is also uncertain about the date and records as probable date of the AFE matches in November instead of October (ANGHELESCU-CRISTEA 2009. 22.). In this case the criteria for establishing the date of the first match is official status of the game played within formal frames. Authors count also the matches played in June in Timisoara and in August in Arad, but given their informal status and the uncertainty surrounding them, they consider these games important antecedents. They were games played in summertime, which signals the pioneering role assumed by high school students in promoting football in both cities.

Association of Arad (PTA), which changed its name to Athletic Club of Arad (ACA) later in August (UJJ 2009) and played a decisive role in popularizing the game. It obtained a field next to the Wagon Factory the next year and the city “gave” them a regular stadium in 1903 (*idem*).

Physical Training Association of Workers from Arad came into being in 1911 (LÁSZLÓ 1937). The team, with the Romanian acronym AMEFA, played an important role in the city’s history of football.

The nearby rival, Timisoara, did not fall behind either. On the contrary, the Association for Physical Training of this town was among the first sport clubs that were established in Transylvania. It was founded at local initiative in 1875. A kind of standardized football very similar to the game we know in the present day appeared in 1897. Mostly local educational institutions gave room for playing the game, primarily the Piarist High School (very much like in Arad). We can find the reason for the emergence of football in high schools in a law adopted in 1886. The law was initiated by Baron József Eötvös and regulated obligatory classes of physical education (MÉSZÁROS–NÉMETH–PUKÁNSZKY 2005). It was relatively strictly enforced and followed in this period.<sup>7</sup> The immediate consequences were the organization of the match that the Piarists played in June 1899, and the appearance of Football Club in Timisoara, which in 1902 tried to organize football in a formal vein. Also in August the same year, FC Timisoara met Sport Association of Lugos which was immediately followed by the game organized with ACA (IONESCU–TUDORAN 1984. 13.; ANGHELESCU–CRISTEA 2009. 23.). The Kinizsi, the team of Hungarian Railways, was established in 1911 and it represented the leap in the case of the football in Timisoara. Worker’s Sport Association in Timisoara followed right after (1911). The city had had a stadium appropriate for football since 1902 (*idem*).

Oradea joined this trend somewhat later. We know that the Rhédey garden hosted a football match in the spring of 1902. Organizational and institutional frames of football became more formal in 1910, when the bourgeois Athletic Club in Oradea (ACO, originally called Nagyváradi Athletikai Club in Hungarian) was established, which later on had a successful career. NAC organized its first official game in August the same year. They played with the KVSC of Cluj in the Bunytay Park. The guests won 2-1 (THURY 2010). Other two associations were founded in 1911: the Harmony and the worker’s team named Pursuit Worker’s Sport Association of Oradea (MAROTI, 2013). Both the football department of the Physical Training Circle (1880) established in 1901 and the Sport Association of Oradea established in 1906 was important forerunner (LÁSZLÓ 1937). The emergent sport movement also had a beneficial effect on the reception of football in Oradea.

The case of Cluj is somewhat different. Similar to other important towns, Cluj had a rapidly expanding sport life<sup>8</sup> especially in fencing, gymnastics, athletics, skating, and cycling. The privileged aristocracy initially practiced these sports. However, the bourgeoisie gradually joined the sport associations and later they became involved in local leisure activities (see KILLYÉNI

<sup>7</sup> Instituting physical education classes was problematic throughout Transylvania because of the poor infrastructure (there were no gym halls or adequate flat ground). The opportunities for these classes arose from 1880 in big towns.

<sup>8</sup> KILLYÉNI András (2006) recorded the most important moments in the history of sports in Cluj that belonged to the monarchy in his volume *Kolozsvári sportélet életrajzi gyűjteménye (1818–1918)* (Episodes from Cluj’s Sporting Life) published by local Ábel Publishing House. The recorded data – a factual list – indicates which association were born and when: fencing school in 1818, Association of Fencing and Gymnastics in 1873, Athletic Club in Cluj, which had a prominent role was founded in 1885, Skaters Association in Cluj in 1872, a Cycling Association in Cluj in 1890, and Bowlers’ Society in year 1872. (29–31).

2006). In spite of all this trickling down, sports remained “gentlemen’s passions”. The university of Cluj transformed the emerging field of sport in a particular way and immediately influenced the spread football which was a novelty at that time. The Franz Josef University was opened in autumn 1872 and it immediately turned Cluj into a university town. It was a catalyst for em-bourgeoisement, and increased the central and administrative role of the city (GYÁNI 2012. 153.). More and more white-collar workers and members of the intelligentsia settled in the town (we refer to the students and graduates who opted for staying in the town), many other people visited the town, and the proportion of entrepreneurs, intellectuals and liberal professions increased (idem). Moreover, the University enabled the application of legal articles concerning physical training in the Eötvös’s educational law. It created a professional group of sport and gymnastics teachers, who had a crucial role in integrating and popularizing sports, especially football in the local society (SALLAI 2011. 41–43.). The ballplayers’ circle of Cluj began its activity in 1889, but football matches were occasional in this period.

Thus, university created opportunities for promoting professional knowledge and it soon produced a strata of young people who would become active participants in football: players, referees, sport managers, founders of associations, as well as sport writers, supporters and patrons. Professional teachers<sup>9</sup> were the first to spread the football and make it popular in schools. University brought the first regular football in the town: a clerk in the ministry who controlled sport education at the universities gave a ball brought from England as a present to the university in 1895 (SALLAI 2011). This act revolutionized the spread of the game. By the end of the decade, pupils of almost every educational institution knew the rules and practice of the game (exclusively under the supervision of teachers at the beginning, who had the monopoly over the administration of the ball and had some sort of control over the pupils, who started to play more frequently) (idem.).

Independent institutionalization and formalization outside schools occurred in 1902, when the English-sounding Youth Football Club was established (the previous year the University Football Club had already been established informally). The foundation of the Football department of the Athletic Club of Cluj in 1904 which can be considered as a breakthrough in this sense (KILLYÉNI 2006. 26.) (as part of the Athletic Club of Cluj, Kolozsvári Athlétikai Club or KAC, formed by aristocrats and bourgeoisie in 1885) was also an element and sign of independent institutionalization. Young graduates created the club, because they wanted to play after graduation and they needed a formal organizational framework. They also gained some independence from the “Vermes ball”<sup>10</sup> whose monopoly and control over the students ceased (in the beginning they kept the ball locked in one of the university’s halls). The commercial and academic sport circle established in 1905 parted from the school for the same reasons and in a similar logic. These endeavors can be interpreted as the pursuit of independence and the first steps towards the emergence of a field of football in Cluj which was also supported by the local media. However, workers of the Hungarian railway took the decisive step in 1907, when they

<sup>9</sup> Teachers of physical education like Lajos Vermes (at Franz Josef University and Roman Catholic College), Gyula Lassell (Unitarian College), and Ferenc Hoffman (Economic School) (SALLAI 2011. 42. KILLYÉNI 2006. 20–21.). They formed informal teams based on friendships and played against each other on the amateur championship in 1904.

<sup>10</sup> Vermes earned merits in naturalizing football as founder of University Athletic Association in Cluj (1902). A Croatian student brought a ball to Cluj in 1901 (Sallai 2009), which gave huge impetus to the spread of the game, since it freed the ball from the control of teachers.

established the Railway Sport Club of Cluj, the Railway Sport Association.<sup>11</sup> These three associations asked for membership in the Hungarian Football League in 1908. HFL admitted them, thus they participated in the Transylvanian championship a year later. The Worker's Sport Club of Cluj was established in 1911 which completed the map of local football.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the fact that these three teams joined the HFL, the inauguration of ACC's court in 1905 and of the Stadium in the Central Park in 1911 represented the symbolic acknowledgement of football in the town.

Other towns in Transylvania shared a similar pattern given the fact that many sport associations were born in urban settlements in this period. Football clubs grew from these associations and became very popular very rapidly: Workers' Physical Training Association in Salonta (WPTA, 1912), Sport Club in Turda (SCT, 1907), Sport Association in Târgu Mureş (SATG, 1898), Toma Association in Aiud (TAA, 1914). It has to be noted that the Kronstadter Turnverein, the Saxon sport association in Braşov established in 1861, and the Hermannstadter Turnverein established in 1862 were among the first sport associations in Transylvania (LÁSZLÓ 1937. 153.).

What can we say about the adoption of football in Transylvania? Firstly, the emergence and spread of football can be easily linked to modernization – especially to urbanization, embourgeoisement and industrialization. Apparently, football grew roots and spread in places where modernization was more significant in space and time, in the main urban settlements of Banat and the Partium, namely Arad, Timișoara, Oradea, and Cluj. Secondly, it seems that peregrination and schools had an important role in popularizing football: a dentist who had studied in England brought a ball to Arad and a clerk in the ministry took a ball to Cluj, the first students of enthusiastic sport teachers were the first people “enchanted” by football. Thirdly, due to its adoption by the rapidly expanding working class, football did not remain simply a “bourgeois leisure passion”, but it trickled down and became a mass phenomenon. Football became independent from the academic sphere and the bourgeois sport associations of Arad, Timișoara, Oradea, Cluj, because of the emergence of workers' associations, a phenomenon caused by the rapid growth of railway and industry. These workers' associations became the rivals of the bourgeois clubs, and later they took over the initiative. Young people were the most receptive to football. Let us examine some of the social and historical preconditions that turned football into a mass phenomenon that determined the specific character of the Danube-style<sup>13</sup> Transylvanian football until the fifties.

We have to take a closer look on modernization while searching the origins of football's expansion. The main carrier of industrialization was the railway that reached Banat and the Partium first. Timișoara and Arad also joined the railway in its eastward expansion. Timișoara was linked to Szeged in 1857, while Arad was linked to Szolnok with a rail line in 1858. Railway reached Oradea in the same year, when the Nagyvárad–Püspökladány line was built (EGYED

<sup>11</sup> The association was renamed as Railwaymen's Association was the product of a leisure circle; more precisely young men from the Harmony Singer's Society of MAV established (Sallai 2011) with the support of MAV (Hungarian Railways).

<sup>12</sup> There were many active teams in Cluj before 1918. The most important ones were University Athletic Club in Cluj, (KEAC, 1912) and Sport Association of Commercial Employees (KKASE, 1912) (KILLYÉNI 2006. 30.).

<sup>13</sup> “Danube football” was a style of playing and organizing football characteristic to Central European soccer in Austria, Bohemia and Hungary. Its main features were rational organization and a less regulated style of playing and more room for initiative in comparison to English football (see goldblatt 2006). The direct result of this style of football was the Austrian Wunderteam established in the early thirties.



1981. 150.). In this way, a series of possibilities opened up for these three cities: to join a larger economic and commercial network and to start modernization in the midst of an ongoing economic liberalism. Cluj also joined the expanding railway later, when the Oradea-Cluj connection was built in 1870 (EGYED 1981. 155.). We have to note, without going into the details of railway history, that all together 190 kilometres of railway was built in Banat from 1849 to 1867. These were railways that linked Timișoara to the miner and iron industrial region of Caraș-Severin which highly contributed to its development. After 1868, the first Transylvanian railway network linked Arad and Alba Iulia, Piski and Petroșani, where the main coalmines of the region were located.

Eastern railways provided North Transylvania with opportunities for industrialization, thus a total of 1106 kilometres of rail line was built from 1867 to 1873 (EGYED 1981. 155.); another 326 kilometres in 1874–1880 and 2174 kilometres in 1881–1900 (idem.). Arad, Timisoara, Oradea and Cluj were the main centres of the 4548-kilometers long railway. The railway had encouraged urban development since 1867, but it had a more intensive effect after the economic crisis in 1873.

It is not surprising that the population of the cities mentioned above learnt about football at the end of the 1880s. Railways extended labour market, boosted industry and built an economic environment that accelerated urbanization, industrialization and embourgeoisement (EGYED 1981. 161.): railways, traffic and transportation facilitated the development of industry especially in Banat where railways came first, and where the proportion of entrepreneurs and workers constantly increased along with the general population increase. Football spread where there was an *open bourgeoisie* stratum that “took over” the game from England, Wien, Prague or Budapest in our case (GOLDBLATT 2006. 143), and “transmitted” it to local society. In the next step, they “handed it over” to the emerging and expanding working class through the mediation of schools. Starting with Arad and Timisoara, the next steps in the spreading of football are Lugos (Sport Association of Lugos, 1903) and Resita (a city of steel industry, Athletic Club of Resita, 1911). Engineers and telegraphers diffused the popular game to these places.

Timisoara became the “Hungarian Manchester” at the beginning of the twenties century (Szász 1992), it was a real industrial town with several factories (GYÁNI 2012). It is obvious that football and economic development started simultaneously after 1890. When Kinizsi and Workers’ Physical Training Association in Timisoare (Temesvári Munkás Torna Egylet or TMTE in Hungarian) were formed in 1911, there were 32 financial institutions in the city (Szász 1992), the number of inhabitants was 72 555, and 7155 employees worked in various companies (EGYED 1982. 286–288.), there were 62 large companies (compared to just 32 in 1900) working in chemical and textile industries as well as mill and alcohol industries. The case of Arad was very similar. A great number of companies were founded from 29 to 54 in the first decade of the twentieth century. These companies employed 4645 people in a city inhabited by 63 155. There were 49 industrial companies in Oradea in this period (only 26, 10 years earlier) and employed 2727 people from a total population of 64 196. Cluj was the smallest town regarding the population; 3295 people from 60 080 inhabitants in 1910 worked in one of the 42 companies of the industrial sector (only 27 in 1900) (idem).<sup>14</sup> Football was institutionalized in every town in this period. Next to aristocratic-bourgeois clubs, several clubs emerged from the working class. State-owned railways and factories and companies financed with local capital facilitated

<sup>14</sup> The trends are similar in case of financial institutions: these cities concentrated most of the credit associations, banks, savings banks besides Brașov, Sibiu and Târgu Mureș (see EGYED 1981. 168–191.). All this is true also for embourgeoisement (see GYÁNI 2012. 138–158.).

this process. This situation became predominant in the second phase of the history of football's evolution from 1919 to 1940.

To sum up this subchapter, the following statements can be made.

Football reached Banat, the Partium and Transylvania through the direct connection between peregrination and education. Students studying in England (Arad), school inspectors from Budapest (Cluj) imported the game and other central European educational (Timisoara)<sup>15</sup> or commercial connections of the bourgeoisie (Oradea) enabled the adoption of football. This was the situation around 1895. Football was first connected to educational institutions where groups of students started to emerge in physical education classes and later they played football outside the school in formally organized frameworks. "Athletic Clubs" and sport association founded after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise provided such frameworks. They were the first to establish football departments throughout the country, but these were accessible only to the newly developed intellectual and bourgeois strata. This had happen until 1900. The evolution of football accelerated when capitalization reached a critical threshold, industry created a sufficiently large worker class and there was enough capitalist profit for financing organizational and institutional costs of football. This happened approximately at the beginning of 1910s, and State Railway Company had a pioneering role in this process. By 1914, bourgeois and worker football associations constituted a small-scale, but well-functioning system in the region (membership in Hungarian Football Association and championships in Banat and Transylvania, large recruitment basis, specialized knowledge and experience). However, the outbreak of the World War I put an end to the development.

Football was different in each of the above-mentioned cities. In Cluj, for example, football was a bourgeois sport. The majority of football fans came from the educated bourgeois stratum, from the university, high school or professional-intellectual milieu (GYÁNI 2012) (there were in this city more the bourgeois, university, high-school and commercial based clubs than worker clubs). The football in Cluj was the result of embourgeoisement and emerged from the university and aristocratic-bourgeois sports movement, a movement highly represented by the KAC in the past. It is also important to emphasize that Cluj was the centre of Hungarian nation building supported by the city's leadership in which sport life was a medium (the KAC field and Stadium in Central Park were constructed by the city). Emerging local sport media had a significant role in forming football's trajectory beyond the university, town leadership and implicitly the state.

Timisoara had the most favourable location for development of football. The city is considered as the stronghold of early football. Industry had an utmost role here; after the beginnings of football in schools, local entrepreneurs and later the rapidly expanding working class took over the promotion of the game. It is correct to say that capitalization produced football. Because of the multiethnic nature of the town, Timisoara was no ground for nation building; grand entrepreneurs undertook the organisation of football. As far as Oradea is concerned, we have to underline the joint and balanced role of bourgeois and worker groups. Initially, Arad reproduced the pattern of Cluj – peregrination, teachers – but because of the more rapid economic growth and continuous increase of the workers' and entrepreneurs' influence, the outcome resembled the Timisoara-model.

What was the newly emerged football like in the "monarchy"? Schematically: it had the

<sup>15</sup> We suppose that Károly Müller, P. E. teacher at the Piarist High School in Timisoara kept in touch with his colleagues in Cluj, Arad and Budapest.



Danube region character; it spread and developed relatively quickly, its centre was Timisoara and it was territorially concentrated. It was mainly an urban phenomenon and had a significant ethnic dimension (Hungarian, Swabian, Serbian and Jewish supporters and players), names of the clubs rang local (from Cluj, Oradea, Timisoara), had local meanings (for example Kinizsi) or they expressed social status or aspirations (Workers' associations like Railway, or Striving or Harmony). Football was a sport of passion played in spare time.

Now let us turn to the questions where and how football was born in the old Romanian Kingdom.

### ***Beginnings: the Old Romanian Branch***

Although the Old Romanian Branch evolved in a different way than Transylvanian and Banat football, it had nevertheless an important role in shaping Romanian football. Foreign capital had the decisive role in this part of the country (while it was a negligible factor in the territories of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy). Other two important characteristics were belatedness (a 10-15 years delay compared to Banat) and insignificance of educational institutions.

The Romanian Kingdom, comprising Moldova and Muntenia, was the most underdeveloped region in East-Central Europe with a delayed modernization process (HITCHINS 2012). After gaining total independence in 1877, Romania started to develop, became more connected to Western Europe economically, its population increased,<sup>16</sup> but the majority of population still lived in rural areas.<sup>17</sup> Bucharest, Ploiesti and the ports along the banks of the Danube: Galati and Braila showed the most significant economic growth. Bucharest is the capital of the country, while Ploiesti is the centre of oil fields. Social and economic structure is extremely uneven. The majority lived by small-scale agricultural activity in villages (GALLAGHER 2004), while the urban middle class that comprised workers, clerks, traders, and entrepreneurs was still developing. The proportion of workers was relatively low. Approximately two hundred thousand people made up 10% of the employed population (HITCHINS 2012. 326.). Despite all, the country stepped on the path of industrialization which was clearly reflected by the evolution of football.

As Romania and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy offered different circumstances for the development of football until 1918, we believe that the diffusion model presented by GOLDBLATT (2006) gives the most apt and comprehensive guide for the interpretation of its appearance and spread. According to this model, football spread all over the world from England, carried by English people and through informal networks of the British colonial empire (2006 112-169.). Clerks, investors, engineers and English workers played football for fun in their leisure time. "Local" people learnt the game from them, and integrated the game in their communities. In Romania, like in Argentina, Spain or India it happened in the same way, as foreigners brought the game in the country. However, the details of the process are more complicated, since other nationalities joined the English in spreading the game until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dutch and German also transmitted football, since their countries had already flourishing football culture. In Romania, booming industrialization created the opportunity for such evolution of football. Development of transportation infrastructure and the adoption of mine-law were two important preconditions of industrialization which was closely connected to football.

<sup>16</sup> The total population of this young country was 3 790 000 in 1861, and 5 957 000 in 1899 (HITCHINS 2012. 324).

<sup>17</sup> Only 12% of the total population lived in urban areas in 1912. However, urban population increased by approximately 90% from 1859 to 1899 (HITCHINS 2012. 324.).

The first railway was inaugurated in 1869: it was built between Bucharest and Giurgiu, a port city along the Danube. Cernavoda Bridge, a bridge considered very modern throughout Europe was completed in 1886. This bridge ensured the extension of rail line towards East. Until 1896, the length of the railway reached 921 kilometres (RONNAS 1984. 112.). The aim of these building projects was to connect the eastern Danube ports to rest of the country (HITCHINS 2012. 327.). By 1914 the total length of the railway lines reached 3500 kilometres (HITCHINS 2012. 328.); it connected the main industrial towns of Oltenia, Tara Romaneasca and Moldova.

Certainly, industrial development, which had started with the emergence of railways, transformed the economic structure. However, economy retained its pronounced agrarian dimension: before the First World War, there were no significant industries in Romanian Kingdom (e.g. steel or heavy machinery, while the processing industry was dominated by petrol and timber) (HITCHINS 2012. 327). Apart from industrial enterprises established by foreign investors, banks, commerce and insurance were the engines of economy as a whole (HITCHINS 2012. 327.). Only 169 000 people worked in industry in 1901-1902, which represented a tiny fraction of the entire population: 2,2% of the population and 13, 3% of heads of households (RONNAS 1984. 113.). A quarter of the labour force was not Romanian citizen; they worked in big companies founded on foreign capital (idem.). People from this group had brought football in Romania.

The Law of Mines, the formal legal frame of extraction industry, enacted in 1895 had a beneficial effect on Romanian industrialization (HITCHINS 2012). However, oil extraction gained more benefits with the adoption of the law, since the ruling act enabled investments and did not make any claims regarding property of minerals. Moreover, it instituted preferential treatment for large foreign companies. The law almost instantly created Romanian oil industry. Oil extraction sites were concentrated in the Pitești-Câmpina and Bacău areas. Oil industry became the leading sector in two steps: firstly, Steaua României, the company that started the exploration and exploitation of Campina fields had been established in 1895-1903<sup>18</sup> and secondly, big foreign corporations entered the field and these were the ones shaping the domain's profile from 1904 to 1916.<sup>19</sup> Nominal capital value of these corporation reached 519, 5 golden lei in 1915 (BUZATU 2009. 30.). More than one third (35%) of the invested capital was German, one quarter (25%) English, 13,1% Dutch, one tenth French and 5,5% American (idem.). Foreign capital was important in all economic domains and it had an almost monopolistic situation in oil industry, gas extraction and production of electricity (94 and 95, 5%). Moreover, it was also dominant in other industries such as sugar (94%) and steel industry (74%) which appeared a little later (HITCHINS 2012. 328.). All this is important for us to demonstrate the foreign origins of industrial sectors which represented the mediating environment for Romanian football; foreigners established the first football teams, and players were in fact recruited from the employees in the mentioned big corporations (CHIRILĂ 1973. 6-8.). They gave the initial impulse for the evolution of football in Old Romania.

Which were the first teams and who were the players? Let us turn to them now.

When it comes to the beginnings of Romanian football, official sport history in Romania generally mentions that "French sailors working in the Sulina porto franco, on the banks of the Danube brought several ball games from home, including football" (POPOVICI 2011. 6.). The other important milestone was 1895 when Dimitrie Ionescu, sport teacher at Gheorghe Lazăr High

<sup>18</sup> Its full name was *Societatea Română pentru industria și comercializarea petrolului*; initially started to work with Austrian capital then with English-Hungarian capital (Buzatu 2009. 29.).

School in Bucharest described the rules of football for the first time (IONESCU-TUDORAN 1984. 10). The third element of this origin myth was 1899 when Mario Gebauer (a person to become prominent personality and active organizer of football league later on) brought a standard ball to Romania while returning from his holiday in Lausanne, Switzerland (ANGHELESCU-CRISTEA, 2009. 11.; IONESCU-TUDORAN 1984. 11.). Supposedly, this is why young people played football in Bucharest at the very end of the nineteenth century.

Unlike in Banat-Transylvania, the first genuine sport club (and its football department) emerged as late as in 1904; German workers in the oil industry established the Olympia Sport Club. Mario Gebauer was a member of this team.<sup>20</sup> Two years later, clerks of the Standard Oil of Ploiesti, founded the Romano-Americana team, or Roma in short. The team moved to Bucharest in 1914. United Athletic Club was another team established by Brit and Dutch people (ANGHELESCU-CRISTEA 2009. 12-13.). The textile factory from the Colentina District in Bucharest founded with British investment the next, rival team named Colentina Athletic Club in 1904 according to some sources (POPOVICI 2011. 7.), or in 1907 according to others (CHIRILĂ 1973. 7.). IONESCU-TUDORAN's chronology of Romanian football prefers 1909 as the year when Colentina is established (1984. 15), while the statistics of Romanian Football Associations mentions 1904 as the probable year of foundation (2009. 11). FC Bukarester was born in 1912 aided by foreign investment (2009. 18.). One cannot consider these clubs to be Romanian, although there were Romanian players in the teams as well. Founders established them for their own entertainment and names were spelled in English. However, they had an important function, since they introduced football as a sport to the curious Romanian public. Moreover, they created a pattern that rapidly gained popularity.

The clubs were not embedded in Romanian society yet: founders and players were mostly of foreign origin and supporters were also foreigners. Consequently, foreign teams won the "championships" organized from 1909 to 1915. The first Romanian football game, organized in 1907 between SC Olympia of Bucharest and Roma of Ploiesti in front of a larger audience constituted an important moment in spreading and social embedding of football. Four foreign clubs created the ancestor of the present day football league in 1909, the Federation of Football Associations,<sup>21</sup> which organized the championships and the so-called Hertzog Cup. As a direct consequence, another association in Ploiesti was established in 1911, namely the FC Prahova. This was predominantly a Romanian initiative, but it was still connected to oil extraction, industry and refineries.

From that moment, football started to spread rapidly: young Romanian people were the most important supporters of the game. They regularly played in schools and organized the first mini-football championship between school teams in 1912.<sup>22</sup> Three years later a team appeared

<sup>19</sup> We refer to the following companies: German capital bought *Steaua Română* (Deutsche Bank took it over some time later), and to *Romano-Americana* (Standard Oil), which entered Romanian market in 1904, and to other companies such as *Aquila Franco-Romana* (French Colombia) active from 1904-1905, or the *German Concordia* (Disconto Gesselchaft-S. B. 1907) and *Astra Romana* (Royal Dutch-Shell, 1910) (BUZATU 2009. 29-30.).

<sup>20</sup> According to some sources, the association was born in 1905 (CHIRILĂ 1973. 7.) or in 1908 according to other sources (ANGHELESCU-CRISTEA 2012. 12.). Dates differ, because there were differences in the establishment dates of the sport club and the football team. In addition, activity and formal legal status of clubs did not always coincide; therefore, we encounter different dates regarding the establishment of clubs.

<sup>21</sup> See the next section.

<sup>22</sup> Mihai Viteazul, Gheorghe Lazăr, Sfântu Sava and Matei Basarab high schools participated (IONESCU-TUDORAN 1984. 16.).

whose formation can be directly linked to schools.<sup>23</sup> Both the players and the founders were Romanians and they chose a symbolic name for their team, FC Tricolor - its predecessor was the informal group called *Teiul* one year earlier (CHIRILĂ 1973. 9.). The name evoked the colours of the Romanian flag which highlighted the Romanian national character of the team in contrast with the English-sounding names of “foreign” teams (this process is similar to the emergence and evolution of Argentinean and Italian football, see GOLDBLATT 2006). Another Romanian club was Venus Athletic Club in Bucharest which was active in an informal manner already from 1914, but it was officially born in 1915, and made a great carrier later (ANGHELESCU-CRISTEA 2009. 19.). *Coltea* was a club established by students of Saint Sava High School a year earlier, in 1913. The founding document of the club stated that it was a Romanian club “a team not just passively watched by fellow citizens, but in which Romanians actively played” (POPA 2012. 1.). Sporting University Club (later *Sportul Studentesc*) was a university team established in Bucharest in 1916 as the official team of the University in Bucharest (IONESCU-TODORAN 1984. 16.).

Football in Old Romania started to gain a national dimension after 1914, after employees in foreign companies left the country because of the outbreak of the First World War. No important teams were born until the end of the war.

What conclusions can be drawn from the events described above? It can be stated that the adoption and spread of football in Old Romania conformed to a diffusion model, in which foreign oil companies, textile industry and the bank sector had a decisive role. The reason for this was the fact that foreign capital played such an important, pioneer role in Romanian industrialization. Furthermore, football emerged here with a fifteen-year delay compared to Central Europe. This delay was determined by the pace of industrial development that slowed down the spreading of Romanian football. Compared to the aristocratic-bourgeois clubs in Transylvania,<sup>24</sup> lagging modernization of Romanian society and the relatively low percentage of bourgeois stratum resulted in the lack of sports movements and feeble system of sport associations. In this situation, qualified employees of foreign companies were the ones who had done the most for the expansion and institutionalization of football in this region. This group of foreigners mediated the spreading of football, a process unknown in Banat and Transylvania. Capitalization generated the emergence of imported football; embourgeoisement had some role later in the social embedding the game. This was later accelerated when Carol I, the king of Romania became personal patron of development of Romanian sports and after the outbreak of the war in which Romania was neutral in 1914-1916. Later, football was concentrated territorially meaning that Ploiesti and Bucharest were the two primary poles on the football map of the period.

In sum, we can say that “foreign import” is what determined the adoption and evolution of football as far as the Old Romanian branch is concerned. Locals and schools entered the process only after initial steps had been already taken. War also had a decisive role in this. However, territorially concentrated football had gained relevance and importance relatively rapidly among the younger generation and later on, after 1919, among workers as well. Names of associations did not express Romanian social relations and local identity, they were rather English-sounding words, and evoked names of foreign companies. However, it is clearly the opposite that characterised the

<sup>23</sup> Alumni of Dimitrie Cantemir, Gheorghe Lazăr and Gheorghe Șincai high schools (CHIRILĂ 1973. 9.).

<sup>24</sup> The most important club was *Societatea Centrală Română de Arme, Gimnastică și Dare la Semn* (Central Romanian Gymnastics and Shooting Society), its more popular name was *Tirul* appeared in 1876. Its predecessor was *Societatea de Dare la Semn București* (Shooting Society Bucharest), established in 1863 which had a marginal role in football.

clubs established by Romanians (like Tricolorul, SC Universitea București, Universitatea Cluj). Football centred on real life: actors played for their own entertainment, state had little to say in the organization or exploitation of symbolic capital produced by the game. All these changed radically after the world war. But this is a whole different story...

### Conclusion

The genesis of football is strongly connected to and determined by objective social factors. The diffusion of soccer from England to Banat, Transylvania and old Romanian Kingdom followed different paths. Nevertheless, football was imported from abroad via peregrination and schools, but certain social processes as urbanization, capitalization and the massive appearances of working classes are the crucial factors of social embeddedness of this beautiful game in local environment. The different circumstances in Banat, Transylvania and in the old Romanian Kingdom determined the social history and trajectory “travelled” by the ball. While in the western part of the country the football arrived in a fertile ground because of the already existing bourgeois sport associations and rapidly emerging local working classes, the role of foreign companies and expats in implementing football was much higher in the southern regions. This difference in the genesis of the game produced later two distinct style of playing football: these styles practically reflected the historical and social background specific to these regions which could be a further topic to investigate.

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