

## Book Review:

### **Monografia Comunei Morunglav – Olt, by Cornel Manolescu. Craiova: Editura Hoffman, 2025. 383 pages.**

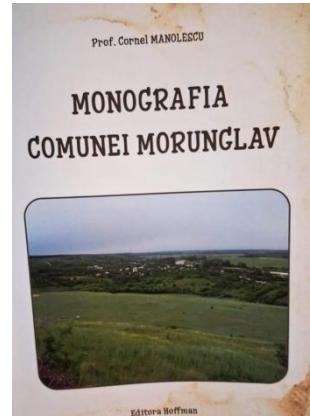
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Writing a monograph is not an easy task; it is not within everyone's reach. It requires civic responsibility, scholarly competence, courage, and tenacity. *The Monograph of Morunglav Commune – Olt*, authored by the distinguished professor **Cornel Manolescu**, proves to be a carefully conceived, deeply lived, and fully assumed project. It brings together multiple qualities that entitle us to state that it deserves appreciation and gratitude from readers, acquaintances, as well as from numerous personalities and institutions. We are dealing here with a territory marked by a strong identity of values, belonging to a community that has been well structured and harmoniously shaped over the centuries.



This substantial and valuable book (383 A4-format pages), published in 2025 by the prestigious Hoffman Publishing House, has a complex, coherent, and logical structure, demonstrating the author's systemic vision of the life and activity of a community that has been strongly consolidated over time. The eight chapters of the work, organized in an original architectural framework, present defining features of Morunglav Commune in Olt County, revealing a clearly articulated identity, specificity, and originality.

The table of contents is impressive. The author, Cornel Manolescu, offers a detailed, well-argued, and well-documented presentation of data and information concerning:

- the natural setting of Morunglav Commune (location, neighboring areas, relief, hydrographic network, climate, vegetation, fauna);
- the historical evolution of Morunglav Commune (archaeological evidence, documentary attestations, the evolution of property relations, and the participation of local inhabitants in major historical events);
- administrative development (the village council, administrative organization);
- economic life and the occupations of the inhabitants;
- the population of Morunglav Commune;
- local institutions (school and education; church and religious life; cultural center; medical dispensary; post and communications); sports activities;
- personalities native to Morunglav;
- local customs and traditions.

The 383 pages of *The Monograph of Morunglav Commune – Olt* present arguments and interpretations with strong persuasive effects. The book is the result of an impressive and sustained effort, carried out over a considerable number of years, culminating in this remarkable work that embodies the true vocation of its author, Cornel Manolescu—his scholarly rigor, dedication, responsibility, perseverance, sustained effort, and social commitment. In my view, these are the words that synthesize the truth. The author's prior editorial experience is clearly reflected in this work. His analytical capacity, as well as his ability to synthesize, has been elevated to a high level of systemic reflection.

Several conclusions clearly emerge from the reading of the book:

- The earliest documentary attestations of the settlements within the territory of Morunglav Commune – Olt are provided by the charter dated June 20, 1489; however, incidental archaeological discoveries indicate habitation in this area since prehistoric times (p. 43).
- The village of “Morânglavi” is first documented in the charter issued by Prince Vlad on June 20, 1489, “by which he grants ownership to Milco the *stolnic* and his wife Anca, and his brother Stanciu Canaenitul, and to Stanislav, over the estates of Curtișoara, Bălceanii Dobrotin, Fântâna Fagului, Iași, Morânglavi, and Spinișoru, to be their inheritance” (p. 48).
- The inhabitants of Morunglav Commune participated significantly in major historical events: the Revolution of 1848 (p. 75); the War of Independence (1877–1878) (p. 76); the Peasants’ Revolt of 1907 (p. 78); the First World War (p. 79); and the Second World War (p. 82).

### Personal testimonies

With regard to the Peasants’ Revolt of 1907, I would like to make a personal confession: my grandfather—thus the grandfather of the author of this review (Marin Manolescu)—took part in this event, which affected both Muntenia and Moldova. He recounted several interesting episodes, two of which are worth presenting.

- First, in the spring of 1907, the peasants rose up en masse in the Morunglav area. The authorities sent in the army; soldiers were transported in open, uncovered trucks. A peasant from Morunglav wanted to show off, to demonstrate that he was not afraid of the soldiers. He pulled down his trousers (*itari*) and exposed himself to them. One soldier fired his weapon. The rifles were loaded with cartridges filled with salt. No further comment is needed regarding what followed.
- The second episode is as follows. My grandfather, Ștefan Manolescu, was 11 years old in 1907, having been born in Morunglav in 1896. The rebellious population went to the manor houses, taking whatever they could. My grandfather, together with other children, entered the cellar of the manor house, where they found large winter supplies, including big ceramic pots from Oboga filled with honey, lard, and other goods. The children were dressed, as was customary at the time, in traditional folk costumes: *itari* and long shirts worn over the trousers, tied at the waist with woven belts. My grandfather lifted the hem of his shirt and put both lard and honey inside. Needless to say, by the time he reached home, the lard had melted completely.

The economic life of Morunglav Commune has been, and continues to be, highly dynamic. Fertile soil, varied relief, and a temperate climate have enabled remarkable

economic development. The Olteț River on one side (the Olteț floodplain), favorable to vegetable farming, and the Subcarpathian hills on the other, have supported animal husbandry and diverse, productive crops. “Gura Iașului,” a locality situated at the entrance to Morunglav from Bobicești, represents the “gateway” to the Dragășani hills, where the renowned fertile vineyards begin.

### **The institutions of Morunglav Commune, Olt County, receive careful, rigorous, and detailed treatment.**

The school is presented as an institution of prestige, commensurate with its importance. Education has kept pace with both time and historical change. We learn that the school in Morunglav Commune, Olt County, followed the common trajectory of similar institutions nationwide. It was shaped by events and developments of national significance. A princely charter dated March 17, 1775, signed by Prince Alexandru Ipsișlanti, stipulates that “in every market town teachers of the local language should be appointed to instruct pupils in matters of common knowledge, so that they may not be inexperienced when they come of age” (p. 203, cited from Petrescu, Ștefan, *Scolile din Zona Caracal*, Craiova, 1999).

### **The “Morunglav–Morunești” School in the National Context**

The “Morunglav–Morunești” School was established in 1859. The first teacher was Badea Ioan Diaconu, who had completed two primary school grades and was appointed on March 10, 1859.

In its development, the school of Morunglav Commune, Olt County, followed a trajectory similar to that of schools in the United Principalities and later in Greater Romania—marked by advances and setbacks, successes and failures. What remains certain is that it consistently functioned as an institution of prestige, fully assuming its historically established educational mission, in step with the times. The founding of the Morunglav school must be viewed within its broader historical context. The process of establishing rural schools was long and arduous and must be associated with major events that shaped the history of the Romanian lands and, implicitly, the evolution of education in the Romanian language.

Several historical milestones may be briefly outlined.

The remarkable founders of Romanian schooling in Wallachia and Moldavia during the early decades of the nineteenth century were leading figures of Romanian Enlightenment: Gheorghe Lazăr, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, Petrache Poenaru, among others in Wallachia, joined by the Văcărești family, Conachi, D. Golescu, and many others through their literary works and initiatives promoting education. In Moldavia, Gheorghe Asachi stood out as the emblematic figure of the era. Even prior to their efforts, however, Romanian was already in use in princely chanceries and in church and monastic institutions. *Neacșu's Letter* from Câmpulung-Muscel, addressed to the Mayor of Brașov in 1521, provides incontestable proof not only that writing in Romanian existed at the time, but also that schooling was conducted in this language. Instruction in Romanian writing must therefore have begun well before 1521, when Neacșu composed his letter.

The revolutionary movement led by Tudor Vladimirescu in 1821 represented a major impetus for the development of education. Tudor's Proclamation of Padeș (1821) addressed popular demands concerning education and culture—*The Demands of the Romanian People of Wallachia*. The proclamation stipulated, under point two, that “the metropolitan see, the three bishoprics, and all major monasteries shall be

obliged to maintain schools... and to gather children of Romanian origin, both noble and poor, as well as the uneducated, to be taught at the monastery's expense" (Anghel Manolache & Gheorghe Pârnuță, 1993, *Istoria învățământului din România*, Vol. II, EDP, p. 11).

Between 1831 (the Organic Regulation) and 1848 (the Revolution of 1848), primary education underwent significant changes. The Organic Regulation functioned simultaneously as a constitution and as a legal code of ordinary provisions. Article 364 of the Organic Regulation of Wallachia recorded the state's duty to care for public education, so that the upbringing of youth would be grounded in "the beginnings of the soundest morality" (*Regulamentele Organice ale Valahiei și Moldovei*, ed. P. Negulescu & G. Alexianu, Vol. I, Bucharest, 1944, pp. 129–130).

Alexandru Ghica is considered "the first founder of Romanian schools." In 1834, Russian troops withdrew from the Principalities, and Alexandru Ghica—described as "immortal"—was appointed ruler of Wallachia. He established public schools in all towns and market centers, which contributed "greatly to the moral and even material development of the Romanian nation" (Ioan Boldescu, *Memoriu sau Notițe istorice despre școalele din Orașul Giurgiu și Județul Vlașca*, Giurgiu, 1885, p. 4). In 1837, Ghica extended this initiative to "all villages, even the smallest hamlets." As Boldescu notes, "if Gheorghe Lazăr was the first Romanian teacher, Alexandru Ghica, Prince of Wallachia, was the first founder of Romanian schools after the disastrous Phanariot period" (ibid., p. 4).

The Revolution of 1848 also constitutes a crucial milestone. The *Proclamation of Islaz* (1848), which functioned as a constitution during the revolutionary government, called for a state-run education system with a democratic orientation. Among its 22 provisions, Article 16 stipulated "equal and comprehensive education for all Romanians of both sexes."

As is well known, the Revolution of 1848 was defeated, and its immediate consequences were unfavorable for Romanian education. "All schools in the country were closed; urban schools reopened in 1851, while rural schools reopened only in 1857, during the regency of Alexandru Ghica" (Ioan Boldescu, p. 4).

Following the defeat of the revolution, Barbu Știrbei and Dimitrie Ghica reopened the schools. These two prominent political and intellectual figures succeeded in restoring the temporarily interrupted thread of Romanian-language education. On September 27, 1850, a commission appointed by Prince Barbu Știrbei submitted a report proposing a division of education into primary, secondary (gymnasium), and higher (university) levels.

After the Union of January 24, 1859, the school network in the united Romanian Principalities expanded significantly. The number of elementary schools and pupils increased, new gymnasiums and high schools were founded, teacher-training schools were established, and universities were created in Iași (1860) and Bucharest (1864). By the end of 1858, there were 1,011 rural schools with 22,940 pupils; one year later, the number rose to 2,129 schools with 53,580 pupils. In the 1860/1861 academic year, there were 2,157 rural schools with 56,460 pupils, and by 1863/1864 the number of pupils in communal schools reached 67,759. Nationwide, during the 1863/1864 academic year, there were 2,008 primary schools (including 141 urban primary schools), three secondary schools (lyceums), eight gymnasiums, seven seminaries, one school of painting (Iași), schools of medicine, pharmacy, and

veterinary science (Bucharest), two music schools, and two universities with seven faculties attended by 203 students (Spiru Haret, *Raport general asupra învățământului*, Bucharest, 1886, p. 115, cited by Fl. Diac, p. 139).

It was within this dynamic historical context—marked by upheaval and hope—that the school of Morunglav was established in 1859.

### **“Personalities Born in Morunglav Commune”**

This is a dense chapter of the monograph, referring to an impressive number of individuals born in Morunglav Commune. Their fields of achievement are highly diverse: writers and publicists, poets, schoolteachers, primary and secondary educators, university professors, army generals, school inspectors, historians, diplomats, politicians, elite athletes, and others.

### **A Subjective Perspective on the Monograph of Morunglav Commune, Olt County**

This perspective is termed “subjective” because the undersigned, Marin Manolescu, traces his origins to Morunglav.

My paternal grandfather, Ștefan Manolescu, was born here in 1896 and later married my grandmother Bălașa in Bobicești (my native commune). Consequently, the Manolescu family lineage originates in Morunglav Commune. Through the effort, dedication, and collegial support of the author of the present monograph, Cornel Manolescu, I have been able to reconstruct my genealogical tree back to the early decades of the nineteenth century. For instance, Cornel Manolescu recently informed me—quite joyfully—that my great-great-grandfather, Alecu Manolescu, was born on March 25, 1830, and that on October 6, 1892, he served as a church cantor in Morunglav (p. 242 of the monograph). His son, Constantin Manolescu, was born in 1863 (source: Olt County National Archives, Fond Protoieria Romanați, file 58/1894).

A second reason for describing our perspective on the presentation of *The Monograph of Morunglav Commune – Olt* as “subjective” lies in the fact that the work contains numerous references to individuals and personalities belonging to the Manolescu family lineage. Two such references are particularly representative.

- **First**, on pages 315–318, Constantin Manolescu, my uncle (1893–1973), is presented. He served as a school inspector in Romanați County. He graduated from the Teachers’ Training School in Craiova—today the “Ștefan Velovan” Normal School—in 1915. Over the course of his career, he obtained all professional teaching ranks (permanent certification, second degree, first degree). He participated in the First World War, during which he was wounded twice. He later served as primary education school inspector for Romanați County. In 1958, he was arrested and sentenced to ten years of correctional imprisonment for “conspiracy” against the communist regime, thus becoming a political prisoner. He was granted amnesty on April 13, 1964 (see the criminal record file, p. 317).
- **Second**, on page 247, the book presents and illustrates “the cantor Marin Manolescu.” He was, in fact, the person who baptized me at the Morunglav Church in October 1951. Born in Morunglav in 1903, he graduated from the School of Church Cantors in Craiova and was appointed church cantor in Morunglav in 1924.

## **Who Is Cornel Manolescu?**

Cornel Manolescu—the author of this monograph—is deeply devoted to the study of the historical past, to the understanding of local traditions and customs, and to the identity of the commune in which he was born and has lived. He is, above all, an archive-based researcher. At the same time, he is a man of the present, firmly anchored in contemporary realities. He was born in Morunglav in 1943 and pursued his secondary education at the “Frații Buzești” National College in Craiova, followed by studies at the three-year Pedagogical Institute and the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Agricultural Knowledge in Craiova. He worked as a teacher and obtained all teaching degrees. Between 1982 and 1984, he served as a cooperating teacher in the Kingdom of Morocco. He has published books as sole author or co-author, as well as over 100 articles, primarily focused on the historical issues of various localities and regions in Oltenia (pp. 318–320).

His parents were teachers and graduates of the “Ștefan Velovan” Normal School in Craiova. His father was mobilized during the Second World War and disappeared on the Eastern Front in the Soviet Union.

### **Selected Evaluative Remarks on *The Monograph of Morunglav Commune – Olt***

*The Monograph of Morunglav Commune – Olt* is a complex and unique work, offering a comprehensive image of the life and activity of an important locality in Olt County and in Romania as a whole. What distinguishes it from other works of a similar type is the breadth of the issues addressed, the depth of analysis, the richness of data, facts, and events considered, as well as the value and flexibility of the conclusions drawn. The conceptual “map” of the book facilitates a sound understanding of the integration of Morunglav Commune within both regional and national contexts.

The author's professional background as a teacher is clearly reflected in the pages of the book. Both his academic specialization and the methodological rigor of that specialization are visible throughout the text. The rich content is carefully processed and distilled, resulting in persuasive ideas and conclusions. The written language employed by Cornel Manolescu—demanding in its standards—exhibits all the defining qualities of scholarly discourse: adherence to norms of systematization and clarity, respect for concision, and evident care in sentence construction and punctuation. The author achieves a high degree of communicative effectiveness.

The images included in the book—relating to events, personalities, flora, fauna, customs, and traditions—are selected with discernment and a profound respect for historical truth.

Cornel Manolescu demonstrates complete mastery of both the specialized scholarly language and the region-specific vernacular, as well as an experiential knowledge of the traditions, customs, and social norms characteristic of this Oltenian locality. The documentation is thorough, drawn from representative sources, and the information is filtered through the author's own critical reflection. There is a genuine respect for truth: nothing superfluous, nothing omitted. The result is a valuable spiritual gift.

Hats off, Maestro!

*Marin Manolescu, from Bobicești, via Morunglav*