

THE EASTERN MARGINS OF THE EMPIRE

Coloniality in the 19th century Romania

MANUELA BOATC

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EICHSTÄTT-INGOLSTADT

Throughout the history of the modern world-system, its economic and political peripheries have consistently faced the charge of either a lack of modernity or a 'lag' in achieving it. The need to rethink modernity and to question its uniqueness has therefore often been the result of being defined along the lines of this deficit as 'less than', 'not yet', or simply 'non-modern. As such, it has recurrently surfaced in peripheral locations, which thus became the privileged loci of enunciation (Mignolo 2000) of theories critical of modernity and the philosophy of history inherent to it. Latin American dependency theory, emerged in response to the developmentalist perspective advocated by U.S. theorists of modernization in the 1950s and 1960s, is in this respect the best-known, but by no means the only example. The metaphors of core and periphery, initially conceptualized in this context, have long informed social scientific thinking and have as such taken a variety of forms (center-periphery, metropolis-satellite, North-South). In most cases, they are however used without reference to a particular theoretical framework or are not even explicitly stated.

Yet it is precisely the existence of an economic, social, political, and not least intellectual core-periphery division that we have in mind when critiquing the uniqueness of modernity and examining its current 'global' character. Taking as a point of departure an heir of dependency theory, Immanuel Wallerstein's model of a world-system (Wallerstein 1974), I will therefore argue that what Anibal Quijano has termed the 'European patent on modernity' (Quijano 2001, p. 543) is the result of a series of subsequent ideological projects mandating the Westernization of peripheral regions as a means of attaining world modernity. An assessment of how this exportation of the modernity paradigm has operated in an historical Eastern European periphery, nineteenth century Romania, as well as of this operation's present-day relevance, will provide a case study for the larger context in which such processes have been occurring.