

**From “Evil's Herb” to a Dangerous Drug.
On Condemnation of Tobacco in the Romanian Society**
(Abstract)

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This paper analyses how tobacco was turned into the so called “iarba dracului” (devil’s herb) in the Romanian Principalities, towards the end of the 18th century. It inquires into the ways in which the Romanian Orthodox Church demonized tobacco and into the consequences the Church’s discourse had on the traditional beliefs. A certain evolution in the framing of the arguments regarding the condemnation of tobacco can be noted in the documents studied: From strictly religious arguments put foreword throughout the 18th c., through medically-informed religious condemnation (i.e. slow suicide, thus sin against God) encountered at the beginning of the 20th century, to the upsurge of the condemnation based exclusively on medical arguments (i.e. diseases, premature aging, impotence, death etc.) since the late decades of the 20th c. Under the impact influence of secularization/medicalization, fears evolved.

In the Romanian Principalities the religious condemnation of tobacco was, to a certain extent, triggered by similar reactions within Orthodox Russia (which were already attestable in the 17th century). Yet there are certain differences between Romania and Russia respectively, which pertain to the ways the Church tried to discourage Romanians from consuming tobacco, such as hagiographies which were modified to include tobacco among the sins, manuscripts written by Orthodox hierarchs, who associated tobacco with the devil and with certain ethnic groups (pagans, Turks, Gypsies etc.). These groups, already seen as deviant, were used as a counter-model for discouraging people from smoking: people should not smoke because that is what the pagans, Turks, Gypsies do.

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