

## MURGOCI – AN ERUDITE GEOLOGIST

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**Abstract.** A distinguished geologist, Gheoghe Munteanu Murgoci was also a prominent citizen of the country. Strongly involved in the social and political life of the country, he founded the Romanian Scouts Association with the declared aim of contributing to the achievement of the Union. Prince Charles himself, to whom he was even a teacher, particularly appreciated him.

**Keywords:** Gheoghe Munteanu Murgoci, pedology, agrogeology.

**Rezumat. Murgoci – un geolog erudit.** Geolog de marcă, Gheoghe Munteanu Murgoci avea să fie și un cetățean de vază al țării. Puternic implicat în viața socială și politică a țării întemeiază Asociația Cercetașii României cu scopul declarat de a contribui la realizarea Unirii. Însuși Prințul Carol, căruia i-a fost chiar profesor, l-a apreciat în mod deosebit.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Gheoghe Munteanu Murgoci, pedologie, agrogeologie.

### INTRODUCTION

“Let us be proud of our Dacian and Roman origins, let us boast of the Slavic blood that has been grafted in our veins and let us not be ashamed of the fact that we have coexisted with barbarian peoples...” This seems to be the life creed of the illustrious scientist Gheoghe Munteanu Murgoci. “The most heartfelt man of stones”, as he was to be called by Victor Stanciu, (STANCIU V. 1925) his successor at the head of the Institute of Mineralogy and Petrography in Cluj, was undeniably a personality of Romanian geology, but also a great patriot, an absolutely amazing and versatile personality. Well known as a geologist, he also deserves to be revealed as a good Romanian, a militant in the field of nationalism and the development of various areas such as research, paedology and geography.

Born under the open sky, he himself confessed “I was born on the road, in a wagon, with the sky with stars as canopy and the North Star as my guide”, referring to his pleasure in travelling. He was strongly connected to Romanian scientific life, but also to Romanian nationalism in the best and truest sense.

### MURGOCI'S CONCEPTS ILLUSTRATED AS A PUBLICIST

He was a great lover of Romanian folklore, but also of the Romanian peasantry, being a keen observer and a good connoisseur of the real problems it was facing at that time.

Murgoci dedicated himself with passion to the national problem, to promoting and supporting the upliftment of the people through culture and knowledge. He also published a series of articles on this subject in “Sămănătorul” and “Neamul Românesc”. His closeness to the great Iorga, to his ideals, can be found both in his published articles and in his declared convictions whenever he had the opportunity. Among these, the concept of the education of the many, communion with the people, the culturalization of the Romanian peasantry, a culture of all, or “from one border of Romanianism to another” as Iorga himself expressed it, stands out strongly. Interesting and well-documented articles on the problem of the peasantry written by Murgoci can be found in “Neamul Românesc” where, in each issue of the magazine, there was a special column dedicated to the analysis of the situation of the peasantry, in which he presented the dramatic reality of the most numerous social category in Romania. (BLEAHU & IANCOVICI, 1957).

If we carefully analyse the articles written in 1906 by the geologist Murgoci, we see that he was a keen observer of the gloomy picture, with all the details, with all the vulnerabilities of the Romanian peasantry, but for whose condition the government was guilty: “no matter how much the physiological ruin of the peasant is predicted by lack of food and overwork, and no matter how much is written and spoken about this disease of the nation, it still remains a matter that those called to care for the future of us all dare not touch” (MUNTEANU-MURGOCI, 1906).

In the same magazine we also found approaches to cultural, political and general interest issues. Here too, the militant spirit is noticeable, as the articles are usually nothing more than short statements signed with the initials G.M.M. Here is a copy of one such article (For example there is one which condemned the politicians from Mehedinți who opposed to the construction of Craiova-Gruia railway. Theoretically they thought that this would reduce the importance of Turnu-Severin as a city but in reality they were influenced by a Jewish mystic who believed that his grain warehouses in the area would lose influence.

Murgoci was also concerned about the situation of the people of Transylvania, as evidenced by an article in which he reported on the visit organized by the people of Brasov to the 1906 Exhibition (*Sosirea Brașovenilor pentru Expoziție*, 1906).

In an article from “Sămănătorul” of 1905 we find a critical and ironic Murgoci. He takes a stand on a subject that is still so present today, namely plagiarism. It is about the work of Al. Sturdza, *La terre et la race roumaine*, (Paris, 1904) in which the author appropriated to himself ideas and maps of Murgoci and E. de Martonne without mentioning the author and even assigning them unfairly to other authors.

## INVOLVEMENT IN NATIONAL ISSUES

Along with Gheorghe D. Mugur, Gabriel Giurgea and Colonel Grigore Berindei, he played an important role in the establishment and development of Scouting in Romania. This endeavour benefited from the strong support of Murgoci's wife Agnes. In fact, the first information on the Romanian Scouting was made by Gheorghe Munteanu-Murgoci, in the meeting of the Sports Association, in 1913, proposing the name "Pandurii României". It was later changed by Prince Carol to "Scouts of Romania", considering it is more appropriate to use the already established terms "scout" (English) and "éclaireur" (French). "The Great Legion of Scouts in Romania was founded with the well-determined purpose of facilitating the work of national unification" The organization also had its own monthly publication, called Cercetașul.

Since August 1916, when Romania decided to enter the war on the side of the Entente, the leadership of the scouts was entrusted by the Prince to Gh.D. Mugur and Gh. Murgoci

On the eve of the mobilization of the Romanian army, 4254 scouts from 34 cohorts were available to serve in various services of the Romanian army.

Among the prominent people of Romania with whom he lived and with whom he consulted on the issue of scouting were C.I. Istrati, Nicolae Iorga.

Extremely closed to the national movement regarding the Great Union, Murgoci was involved in achieving the union of Bessarabia with Romania. He appears on various occasions alongside personalities from all the Romanian provinces, as a signatory of the document "The first declaration of union of all Romanians"... Among the signatories of the document were Onisifor Ghibu, I. Mateiu, I. The Lame Man of Transylvania, V. Tofan, D. Lagigany from Bucovina, V. Horea, V. Cazacliu from Basarabia, D. Munteanu-Râmnic, P.V. Heneș from Muntenia, C. Nae, E. Balamace representing the Romanians from Macedonia and A. Popovici representing the Romanians from the Timoc Valley (PREDA, 1937).

Unfortunately, Murgoci's contribution to the fulfilment of national unity was overlooked in the post-war period, a matter that began to change with Andrei Pippidi's recent studies. (PIPPIDI, 1937).

## LAND REFORMS AND SPECIALIZED EDUCATION

Murgoci was heavily involved in the "Agricultural Organization Project" of Bessarabia. The Bessarabia peasantry has been instigated by the Bolsheviks against the Romanian army, this last one being accused of protecting the landlords and preventing agrarian reform.

Gheorghe Murgoci was assigned by the Romanian government to reassure the Bessarabia population that the agrarian reform will take into consideration the peasant matter.

A keen observer and a good diplomat, Murgoci was also concerned at the beginning of 1918 about the situation in Dobrogea, in the context of the peace negotiations between Romania and the Central Powers, all the more so as Bulgaria was laying claim to the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea.

Moreover, he became involved in university education, teaching general geography courses on Romania at the University of Chisinau, and working on maps of Bessarabia and Transnistria. His involvement became even stronger when he interceded with Minister Alexandru Averescu for the Autonomous Moldavian Republic, *trebuie să ramana* in order to make possible a nationalized education system in Basarabia. Another important moment of that time was the establishment of the Historical and Literary Society of Chisinau (in April 1918) and the donation of a large number of Romanian books to the library of the People's University.

His dedication to the problems of peasantry and agrarian field went so far that, with the help of general Broșteanu, he stopped the debate on the agrarian draft reform which was an urgent matter on the agenda of February 7, 1918 and he made the necessary steps for a new draft regarding the agricultural system organization only for the year 1918 ("put on the agenda with urgency on February 7, 1918, putting for debate another draft for the organization of agriculture only for 1918). This draft was prepared by the agronomist of the Council of the Country, but with the help of Gheorghe Munteanu-Murgoci.

A main contribution of Gheorghe Murgoci in Romania was the foundation of pedology as a science.

In connection with agrarian problems we cannot fail to mention Murgoci's significant contribution to the development of pedology and agrogeology in Romania, in addition to geology and geography. One of his fundamental works is "Sur l'existence d'une grande nappe de reouvrement dans les Carpathes Meridionales", dedicated to the careful and meticulous study of the agrogeology of the area in question. In 1907, he organised an expedition to southern Bessarabia and the regions between the Dnieper and the Bug in order to study the soils and to meet Professor Nabokich in Odessa, an eminent pedologist with whom he worked for a long time. In 1909 he would support the organisation of the first International Conference on Agrogeology in Budapest, where he advocated the need for international collaboration between scientists in the field. He stressed the importance of producing general maps of natural soil zones in all countries. One of his major contributions to this field was the production of the "agrogeological and climatological map of the country, which was nothing more than a reduction of the map of Romania's soils, as a result of the research of the Geological Institute, from 1906 to 1908" (Fig. 1).

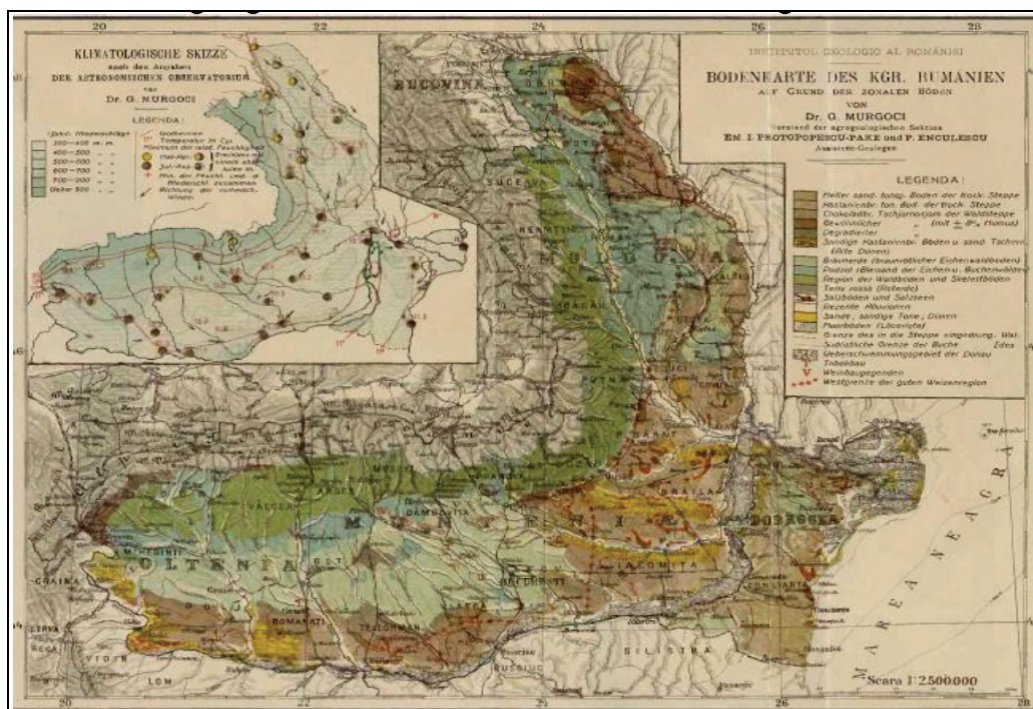


Figure 1. Map of Soils in Romania made by Murgoci (MURGOCI, 1910).

Gheorghe Munteanu Murgoci, a famous pedagogue, was the physics and chemistry teacher of Prince Carol himself and was even a member of the baccalaureate commission that examined him. Murgoci had nothing but praise for Carol, and Nicolae Iorga records: “About the heir's son I had heard only enthusiastic comments from the good Gheorghe Munteanu-Murgoci” (IORGA, 1976).

Moreover, Murgoci even had a certain influence on Prince Carol and was asked by Queen Mary herself in 1918 to intervene with him to renounce the relationship with Zizi Lambrino, which was to cause the first dynastic crisis in Romania. It is no less true that Carol also had a very high opinion of Murgoci and in a speech on 20 October 1930, given in the lecture hall of the University of Cluj, he called him “my beloved professor” and drew attention to his role in establishing the first Romanian university in Transylvania. (MURGOCI, 1957).

It is obviously difficult to cover Murgoci's diverse activity in a few pages, but perhaps his good friend N. Iorga described him best as “an open spirit <...> capable of understanding any new direction” (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Gheorghe Munteanu Murgoci with the royal family in 1912 (the archive of great-grandson Constantin Murgoci).

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