

INTRODUCTION

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The current issue of the *Revista Română de Sociologie* (Journal of Romanian Sociology) is dedicated to Paul H. Stahl (May 4, 1925 – September 16, 2008), Romanian sociologist of French and German descent, who fled to France in the late 1960s, to escape communist censorship and persecutions and became a significant reference in the field of European Ethnology.

This volume completes the series of memorial issues dedicated to the former members of the Romanian school of sociology. Two previous issues published by the same journal have been dedicated to Dimitrie Gusti, founder of what is known as the Sociological School of Bucharest (1–2/2005) and to Henri H. Stahl, one of the school's most prominent members (3–4/2001)¹. The latter, edited by Paul H. Stahl in memory of his father, contains an edifying introductory study, describing the fate of the Romanian sociology before and after World War II. Written from his own personal experience, and with a detachment that only the passing of time can bring, the text summarises the evolution of the discipline, with a special focus on the dramatic impact brought by the communist ban, in 1948.

Paul H. Stahl was part of the last generation of sociologists trained after World War II. Unable to continue his social studies, he took refuge in ethnology and art history studies, with a particular interest in comparative studies with the neighbouring Southeast European regions. In many ways, as Ilie Bădescu argues in his article, he was a continuator of the school's principles. However, bringing in a comparative – at first South-Eastern and later, European – perspective, he was also an innovator, taking these principles one step further, as Lucian Dumitrescu claims.

After experiencing the extreme ideological control of the 1950s and the 1960s, Stahl strongly opposed any kind of imposition on his scientific production. As I show in my study, his quest for academic freedom continued in France, where it materialized in the publication of his two collections: *Études et Documents*

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¹ The two memorial issues are available at: https://www.revistadesociologie.ro/sites/default/files/rrs_nr.1-2_2005.pdf; https://www.revistadesociologie.ro/sites/default/files/rrs_nr._3-4_2001.pdf (last accessed 24.11.2025)

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Balkaniques et Méditerranéennes et Sociétés Européennes. Both allowed him to publish what and who he wanted (from unknown or forgotten authors, to authors writing in less known or “exotic” languages), with the only criteria, the one of the scientific relevance, in mind.

One of the very few PhD supervisors in Paris specializing in traditional South-East European societies, Paul H. Stahl contributed to the formation of several generations of anthropologists who later actively contributed to the development of the discipline in their native countries. Stahl’s contribution to the creation of Greek anthropology is described by Evangelos Karamanes.

Cătălina Vătăşescu, in her investigation, reveals the extent of Stahl’s knowledge in Albanian studies, a research path that certainly justifies more extensive investigations.

The testimonial section includes two texts by Stahl’s former students in Paris: Galina Kabakova and Sokol Kondi. Their contributions bring to our attention the best of human qualities evident in Stahl, thus completing the image of the great scholar.

The volume ends with two book reviews authored by Helena Marinescu and Mircea Păduraru. The first book reviewed is a recent volume reuniting several of Stahl’s studies on social structures in South-East Europe, edited by myself, Stelu Şerban and Andrei Timotin, while the second is a book written by Anamaria Iuga, based on the rich fieldwork completed in Maramureş, just the type of text that Paul Stahl would have promoted in his collections.

Anchored in the Romanian sociological tradition, but well-tuned to the Western scientific knowledge (especially the French tradition) and informed of the South-East European scholarly production, Stahl created a unique oeuvre. Grounded in genuine fieldwork materials and completed by historical and linguistic sources, it is difficult to be placed in a particular scientific landscape or discipline. The major themes he investigates (social structures, blood as a social construct, the social and cultural dimensions of the skull etc.) and the methodology through which he approaches them are original and innovating. His inherent ability to avoid any contamination by political or other ideologies, a very timely topic today, provide an excellent lesson on how to cultivate a healthy sense of intuition through fieldwork experience. Stahl’s life in itself is an enduring example of how academic integrity can be preserved, the living proof that any obstacle can be overcome through academic honesty, moral strength and determination.

Paul H. Stahl’s contributions to the field of social sciences and humanities comprise many aspects yet to be investigated. His books are still to be reedited and translated, and many of his articles are yet to be regrouped in thematic collections. The main goal of this memorial issue is to bring Stahl’s substantial works to the attention of established and emerging scholars and to open new pathways for future studies.