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Romania: Borderland Of Europe (Topographics)



Synopsis

Romania occupies a unique position on the map of Eastern Europe. It is a country that presents many paradoxes. In this book the pre-eminent Romanian historian Lucian Boia examines his native land's development from the Middle Ages to modern times, delineating its culture, history, language, politics and ethnic identity. Boia introduces us to the heroes and myths of Romanian history, and provides an enlightening account of the history of Romanian Communism. He shows how modernization and the influence of the West have divided the nation - town versus country, nationalists versus pro-European factions, the elite versus the masses - and argues that Romania today is in chronic difficulty as it tries to fix its identity and envision a future for itself. The book concludes with a tour of Bucharest, whose houses, streets and public monuments embody Romania's traditional values and contemporary contradictions.

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Customer Reviews

After living for two months in the Romanian region of Oltenia, I came home obsessed with the place. I wanted to know everything I could about its history, culture, language, and people. This book was on my wish list for quite a while before I went ahead and bought it myself. Smartest thing I've done all year. It is a highly informative read about the history of the land, all the way from Rome's Trajan

to the present day, and the aftermath of Romania's extremely destructive bout of communism. Boia writes candidly about the spotty past of the country, even to the extent of sometimes portraying Romanians unfavorably. A lot of emphasis is put on the relatively recent history of post-WW2 events, and goes into depth about Ceausescu and his appalling legacy. The only thing about the book that I was slightly disappointed in was the focus of attention on Bucharest. It was not an area of the country I spent much time in, and I wish Boia would have spread out and explained more about Oltenia and the Banat; but it was still very intriguing. I would enthusiastically recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in the country.

For someone who plans on visiting Romania or is simply fascinated by this country's unique and complex position in Southeastern Europe, for those interested in its culture, history and people (and the events and phenomena that have helped to define this history) or for those, like myself, who are attempting to piece together the puzzle of their national identity by going back to their origins.... this is a wonderful point of departure. Boia's narrative is very powerful, as he takes the breathless reader on an unforgettable journey through the various (both necessary and unfortunate) stages in the protagonist's development, in order that the reader may try to understand the complex, and often conflicting, make-up of this fascinating land (and, in the process, as was the case with me, gain a better understanding of oneself). Unlike traditional historians, Boia doesn't just list facts; he analyzes Romania's condition throughout the ages and the events, ideologies and people that have made it what it is today, and at the same time, urges the reader to analyze them and to draw his or her own conclusions. (I simply could not put down this book until I finished it.)

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I learned of Lucian Boia watching a Youtube video, in which a Romanian history lecturer mentioned his name. He was right there at , and I got his book right away to my iPad. I did read it in a day! His book is a revelation for me, and an outstanding example of courage and moral integrity! I was born and grew up in Romania, and personally witnessed its history from the early 50's to January 1989. The book is the first of its kind, in combining ancient, medieval and more recent history with the description of the places and the people from the point of view of an objective observer and scientist, who remains a loving and proud representative of his nation. During my years spent in Romania I have witnessed the past changing way faster than the future many times! It is of outmost courage, even in today's Romania, to leave aside the myths and politically oriented lies, and I suspect the author is not popular with many contemporary Romanian groups. He certainly earned my respect and sympathy! The only way to overcome hardships of the past - and present - is telling the truth! And that is often unsafe, even for allegorical works, and so much so for a historical work! I highly recommend the book to anyone interested in the past, present and future of this amazing "Borderland of Europe"!

After so many years Lucian Boia's Romania (Reaktion Books - Topographics) is still a book I want to refer to when I need informed and relatively objective info on my own country's history. As a Romanian I find Boia's book a great read. His critical approach to history is much appreciated, even if it's sometimes difficult to agree with some of his interpretations. But that's the fun we love - to be challenged. I strongly recommend it to all those interested in Romania as well as to Romanians themselves.

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