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CULTURE”

SECONDARY EDUCATION IN TURNU-SEVERIN
DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD: INSTITUTIONS,
TEACHERS, AND STUDENTS

PHD THESIS

SUMMARY

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SUMMARY

The subject of the present dissertation concerns secondary education in Turnu-Severin during the interwar period. Naturally, interwar society in Turnu-Severin was heterogeneous from the perspective of the socio-professional structures that composed it, while the present research examines in greater depth those categories considered to be the most dynamic: teachers and students.

The evolution of Romanian society after the First World War took place within the broader context of the transformations brought about by the creation of Greater Romania, as well as by the efforts toward unification and integration, primarily legislative in nature, across various fields, including the educational system through the laws and regulations adopted in this domain. The modernizing educational reforms implemented, especially during the ministerial tenure of Dr. Constantin Angelescu exerted a clear, effective, and constructive influence upon education in Turnu-Severin as well.

An analysis of the historical writings concerning Turnu-Severin allows us to conclude that several historical works are particularly useful in outlining the context within which secondary education in the city evolved during the interwar period. Nevertheless, information regarding interwar secondary education in Turnu-Severin derives primarily from the monograph authored by Professors Giurescu and Pajură, published on the occasion of the city's centenary; from the study by Tudor Rățoi, which also addresses the issue of the secondary classes of the Catholic Institute "Santa Maria"; from the history of the "Traian" High School written by Professor Nicolae Prună; and from the Guide to the Mehedinți Branch of the State Archives. Building upon these writings and making extensive use of documents preserved in the archival collections of the Mehedinți Branch of the State Archives, including the collection of the schools of Turnu-Severin, the collection of the Municipality of Turnu-Severin, the collection of the School Inspectorate of Mehedinți County, the collection of the Cultural Society "Casa Luminii," the Collection of Photographic Documents, the Manuscript Collection, among others, as well as contemporary newspapers ("Cuvântul Nostru" – 1931, 1932, 1933, 1936; "Cafeneaua Politică și Literară" – 1930, 1931, 1932; "Tribuna" – 1931, 1933, etc.), scholarly articles published in interwar journals, and literary writings, the dissertation presents a perspective on two significant categories of interwar society in Turnu-Severin: teachers and students in secondary schools.

The dissertation is structured into six chapters. **Chapter I** is dedicated to the study of teachers in Turnu-Severin and addresses questions concerning their origins and professional training, their remuneration, and their involvement in local and national politics. Within the context of the historiography concerning the past of Turnu-Severin, these aspects constitute the original contribution of the present research.

The teachers examined in this study taught at the following secondary educational institutions in Turnu-Severin: the Boys' High School, the Girls' High School, the Girls' Teacher Training School, the Elementary School of Commerce, the Higher School of Commerce, the Girls' Vocational School, the Lower School of Arts and Crafts (for boys), and

the “St. Maria” Institute. Most teachers had graduated from faculties of the University of Bucharest, including the Faculties of Letters and Philosophy, Sciences, and Theology, but also from the Academy of Commerce in Bucharest and the Polytechnic Schools of Bucharest and Timișoara. Other teachers were graduates of the Universities of Cluj, Cernăuți, and Iași. Several teachers, particularly those from the Commercial High School, had studied abroad, some before the war, in Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Belgium. Drawing and calligraphy instructors graduated from Schools of Fine Arts in Bucharest and Iași, while only two masters pursued studies abroad, at the academies of Saint Petersburg and Munich. Music instructors graduated from the Conservatory in Bucharest. Physical education instructors were graduates of the School of Gymnastics in Iași and later, following its establishment, of the Institute of Physical Education in Bucharest, while one teacher had graduated from the Institute of Physical Education in Vienna. In vocational schools, teachers had graduated from second-degree vocational schools in Bucharest, Higher Schools of Crafts in Bucharest, Craiova, and Iași, and Lower Schools of Crafts in Bârlad and Râmnicu-Vâlcea. The Catholic nuns of the girls’ Institute “St. Maria,” a private educational institution with a branch in Turnu-Severin, had graduated from pedagogical seminaries in Germany, Bavaria (Würzburg, Kaufbeuren, Wettenhausen), Tyrol (Zams), and Bohemia (Königgrätz). Some had also graduated from teacher training schools, such as the Teacher Training School in Cernăuți, or from secondary schools in Göttingen (Saxony) and Nivelles (Belgium).

Born in various rural and urban localities throughout the territory of the Old Kingdom of Romania, including Turnu-Severin and Mehedinți County, as well as in localities from Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia, territories that before 1918 had belonged to the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires, the future teachers (most of whom became Severinians by adoption) took advantage of the opportunity to obtain positions within Romanian education following their ranking in the certification examination. From a statistical perspective, the proportion of teachers and masters who taught in the schools of Turnu-Severin and who had been born elsewhere in the country was greater than that of those born in Turnu-Severin or Mehedinți County. Likewise, the number of teachers originating from urban environments exceeded that of those from rural backgrounds. The fact that many had been born elsewhere or were attracted by larger urban centers generated considerable mobility among teaching staff, especially women, who formally held positions in schools in Turnu-Severin but obtained temporary transfers to other localities throughout the country.

The examination of teachers’ payroll records allows us to conclude that, in terms of salary income and standards of living, the teaching profession was extremely heterogeneous during the period under study. A hierarchy based on remuneration placed school principals at the top, since, in addition to the salary received for their teaching hours, they also benefited from compensation for their administrative duties. They were followed by tenured and provisional teachers, themselves ranked according to the number of salary grades they possessed, salary grades being determined at the time by years of service in education. Substitute teachers, who earned twenty percent less than certified tenured teachers, occupied a lower position in this hierarchy, followed by masters and substitute masters.

Teachers in Turnu-Severin participated actively in political life through their work as communal councillors, through candidacies on political party lists, and, in some cases, through administrative functions such as mayors or prefects. Very few teachers from Turnu-Severin became deputies or senators representing Mehedinți in the Parliaments of Greater Romania during the fourth decade of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1938, teachers were prevented from officially expressing their own political preferences, the only remaining option being support for the single ruling party. It is noteworthy that women teachers were largely absent from local political life. The presence of Maria Justinian Ionescu and, later, Eugenia Bobei among communal councillors constituted exceptional cases. Relative to the overall number of local politicians, teachers represented only a small proportion of the political elite in Turnu-Severin, with most prominent local and national politicians being lawyers.

Chapter II focuses on students, since schoolchildren were an important, vibrant, and dynamic component of the community of Turnu-Severin during the interwar period, many of whom were enrolled in secondary schools. In Turnu-Severin, as in other cities of the Kingdom of Romania, there existed separate schools for boys and for girls. Girls could also pursue studies privately at boys' schools, where they sat only for the end-of-year examinations. In Turnu-Severin, their number was relatively small, and they were taking examinations, especially at the local boys' high school, "Traian" High School.

Children were educated in theoretical schools - a boys' high school and a girls' school established in 1919 as a secondary school and later transformed into a girls' high school - as well as in vocational institutions: two teacher-training schools, one for girls and one for boys; commercial schools, including elementary and evening courses, as well as a higher commercial school. Boys more interested in practical than theoretical knowledge attended the Lower School of Arts and Crafts. Girls also had access to a vocational school and, beginning in 1931, to a housekeeping school. Major enterprises maintained apprenticeship schools in which they trained future employees; both the Romanian Railways (C.F.R.) and the Shipyard operated such institutions.

The number of students attending schools in Turnu-Severin was influenced by the fact that numerous rural families made considerable efforts to send their children to schools in the city. Consequently, one may observe an extension of rural society into the urban environment, a phenomenon characteristic of Romanian society during the period. In relation to students, the dissertation analyzes numerical evolution, social origin, scholarships, tuition fees, uniforms, nutrition, lodging arrangements, rules of conduct within schools, rewards and punishments administered by teachers, as well as the role played by religion and politics in students' lives.

Archival materials have allowed the partial reconstruction of the number of male and female students attending secondary schools in Turnu-Severin. The boys' high school had the largest student population. Enrollment at "Traian" High School varied between 673 students in the 1919–1920 academic year and 930 students in 1927–1928, while the girls' secondary school and subsequently the girls' high school enrolled between 74 students in 1919–1920,

when the girls' secondary school was established, and 394 students in 1927–1928. Many students enrolled in commercial schools because, during the second and third years of study, particularly diligent pupils could theoretically receive remuneration for the practical training undertaken in workshops, factories, restaurants, shops, bookstores, and banks within the city, thereby securing a minimal income necessary for daily subsistence. Enrolment at the commercial school fluctuated between 574 and 290 students between 1924 and 1937, with the clarification that between 1931 and 1937 the school retained only its elementary course, as the evening classes were abolished in 1931 during the Great Economic Crisis.

The number of students in each class varied according to the school and year of study. At the boys' and girls' high schools, classes consistently exceeded thirty students. At the beginning of the interwar period, especially in the first and second years at the boys' high school, classes often contained more than sixty students. In the 1925–1926 academic year, the commercial school enrolled sixty students in each of its four first-year classes. At the boys' and girls' teacher-training schools, class sizes in the 1921–1922 academic year ranged between a minimum of sixteen and a maximum of fifty-six students. At the girls' vocational school, classes initially had relatively few students, but toward the end of the period, enrolment increased, ranging between fifteen and fifty-five students, with larger enrolments in the lower grades and fewer students in the seventh and eighth grades. At the private institute, the number of female students in secondary classes was rather small, ranging, for example, in 1935–1936 from thirty students in the first secondary class to only four in the fifth secondary class.

Because the demand for places exceeded the state's educational capacity, extrabudgetary classes were established at the boys' and girls' high schools, as well as at the commercial school. The number of available places in these schools was insufficient, admission being based upon competitive examinations even for the extrabudgetary classes, and numerous candidates were sometimes rejected because all available places had been filled. Parents of students enrolled in these classes paid annual tuition fees for their children's education. For example, during the 1925–1926 academic year, parents of students enrolled in the extrabudgetary class of the Elementary Commercial School paid an annual fee of 3,500 lei, while in 1931, the parents of girls studying in the extrabudgetary class of the Girls' High School paid 5,000 lei annually.

In interwar Romania, secondary education was not free even for students enrolled in budgetary classes, and those attending both lower and upper secondary levels paid tuition fees and purchased textbooks at their own expense. Annual tuition fees varied according to the type of school attended and could differ from one academic year to another; in state schools, the maximum amount was established at the beginning of each academic year by the Ministry of Education. Tuition fees were determined according to the student's status: students could attend budgetary or extrabudgetary classes and could be either day students or boarders. They could also receive partial exemptions from tuition fees or hold scholarships, whether as day students or boarders, scholarship recipients paying reduced fees. Tuition fees further depended upon the status of the school. Archival documents indicate that during the third decade of the twentieth century, students in budgetary classes in Turnu-Severin paid the

highest annual fees at the boys' high school (1,500 lei in 1924–1925) and at the girls' high school (1,400 lei in 1924), whereas students in vocational schools paid lower fees. Higher fees were charged for extrabudgetary classes - for example, 3,500 lei at the elementary commercial school in 1926 and 5,000 lei at the girls' high school in 1926 and at the boys' high school in 1932–1933 - as well as for boarding students (10,500 lei at the boys' high school in 1932–1933 and at the girls' high school between 1936 and 1938).

Tuition fees were established by the Teaching Council and approved during the meetings of the General Assembly of the School Committee. The same body also approved full or partial tuition exemptions proposed by the Teaching Council for meritorious students, taking into account attendance, grades, conduct, and academic achievement, and whose parents could demonstrate financial inability to pay school fees. Students were also required to pay examination fees each academic year. On the basis of archival evidence, we concluded that despite tuition fees and the additional expenses associated with maintaining students and purchasing textbooks, secondary schools in Turnu-Severin remained highly sought after by parents. Both theoretical and vocational schools established extrabudgetary classes, despite the higher tuition fees required. Certain categories of students, depending upon their circumstances, benefited from partial or total fee exemptions and scholarships: war orphans, children of disabled war veterans, orphans, children whose parents had participated in military campaigns and had been decorated, students from territories annexed in 1918, or children of Romanians living outside the country's borders, as well as children of lower-paid public employees (in 1937).

From the perspective of social origin, many students were sons and daughters of peasants and therefore originated from rural environments. The analysis of the social origins of students attending the boys' high school, the girls' secondary school and later girls' high school, the boys' and girls' teacher-training schools, and the girls' vocational school clearly illustrates this reality. At the teacher-training schools studied, the children of peasants, teachers, merchants (some from rural and others from urban environments), civil servants from various sectors, priests, deacons, church singers, as well as small entrepreneurs, shoemakers, and tailors, whereas representatives of liberal professions such as notaries, lawyers, and physicians were less numerous. While the teacher-training schools were attended predominantly by children of peasants from rural areas, the boys' and girls' high schools enrolled a larger number of children from intellectual and urban backgrounds.

Concerning academic performance, one aspect differing significantly from the contemporary Romanian educational system was the large number of students who failed one or more subjects during the June examination session each academic year. In general, however, students were declared promoted following the September session. The strictness of teachers, the insufficient diligence of students, and the fact that students were frequently sanctioned for breaches of school regulations through temporary expulsions from classes, ranging from several days to several months, explain both the high number of failures in June and the larger number of repeaters and expelled students in comparison with present times. Scholarships and end-of-year prizes rewarded meritorious students. The education of schoolchildren did not depend solely upon the state, which lacked the financial resources

necessary to cover all educational expenses, but also upon parents through Parent Committees, the General Assembly of the Committee, and especially through the tuition fees they paid for their children. Secondary-school students were also required to pay a mandatory fee known as *sohvă*, which covered material necessities, building maintenance, and the salaries of the school's administrative staff. One important criterion for the granting of scholarships and fee exemptions was the financial condition of the student's family. In this way, access to education, and therefore the possibility of overcoming one's social condition, was opened even to poor students.

During the interwar period, the School, as an institution of the Romanian state, supervised and regulated students' behaviour both during classes and outside school. At least at the declarative level, through regulations, decisions of teaching councils, and sometimes through the personal example of teachers, the values cultivated by schools among students included respect for others, politeness toward the elderly, responsibility, duty toward the community, modesty, honesty, dignity, discipline, observance of rules, as well as obedience and submission to authority. Most students complied with these rules, although there were also students who violated them, without thereby endangering the moral norms that underpinned communal life.

Within a society in which schools promoted a certain degree of uniformity, attempts to depart from accepted norms through outward appearance were sanctioned. Students were required to wear school uniforms; their attire had to be proper; boys were expected to keep their hair short, while girls were required to wear their hair neatly tied in simple hairstyles. Aggressive behaviour toward teachers or classmates, absenteeism, and violations of moral norms, such as theft, were likewise sanctioned.

Throughout the interwar period, and especially after the changes introduced in 1938, the Christian dimension of education became increasingly accentuated. Teachers and students participated in religious activities both within the Church and within the School, especially through the intermediary of Străjeria. At the same time, students were kept away from political activities, such prohibitions being intended to protect the younger generation from the perceived evils of politics while simultaneously educating them in a spirit of obedience toward state authorities.

In **Chapter III**, we analyzed how national ideology was reflected in education and school activities. After 1918, in the process of constructing and consolidating the nation - a process to which educational and cultural institutions contributed significantly, with the school occupying a central role - patriotic education represented an important component in the formation of students.

According to contemporary opinion, national celebrations played the role of developing national consciousness, contributing to the "education of the masses" and to the creation of civic solidarity. The school, together with the Church and the army, educated the younger generation in a spirit of patriotic and dynastic sentiment. A review of these celebrations includes 24 January, 10 May, Heroes' Day, to which were gradually added,

especially after 1930, the birthdays or name days of the Romanian sovereigns: 16 October, 25 October, 8 November, and later also 8 June, the Day of Străjeria. All these occasions represented opportunities for the School to enter the public sphere.

The mobilization of students and teachers to participate in performances, festivities, and sporting events, both on stage or in stadiums and as spectators in theatres or grandstands, whether on the occasion of national, religious, or royal celebrations, educated an entire generation in the spirit of attachment to national values and to the dynasty. Such activities ensured the cohesion of a community animated by common activities and ideals. Participation was initially marked by enthusiasm until the moment when these manifestations became obligatory, associated with burden and constraint, and no longer enjoyed the adherence of all participants, many of whom increasingly sought to avoid attending such events.

Chapter IV outlines the image of extracurricular activities in which students from the schools of Turnu-Severin participated together with their teachers. Without doubt, teachers and students constituted two highly dynamic categories within interwar society in Turnu-Severin. Visible in the public sphere through their activities - from end-of-year celebrations during which prizes awarded to meritorious male and female students were presented within ceremonies sometimes held in the public gardens, as occurred in 1931, to the reception of distinguished guests visiting the city - their presence contributed to shaping the city's identity. Excursions, șezători, and competitions represented additional opportunities for interaction outside the formal setting of the classroom, intended to complement the formation of the younger generation's personalities through the direct involvement of teachers.

Teachers and students from Turnu-Severin participated in the activities of the cultural society Casa Luminii, which continued the cultural manifestations that had existed before the First World War and organized conferences accompanied by musical activities (choral compositions, piano, violin, or flute recitals) and other artistic productions (theatrical excerpts, recitations, readings, dances). The artistic activities organized before and after the conferences were performed by students from the schools of Turnu-Severin under the guidance of their teachers, as well as by the choir "Doina." Conferences and șezători took place on Sunday mornings at the municipal theatre.

The lecturers included teachers from the city's secondary schools (Alexandru Bărcăcilă, Elisa Vorvoreanu, among others), professors from Romanian universities, and researchers (Constantin Daicoviciu, Fr. Rainer, Dr. Ion Jianu, etc.) who presented diverse themes concerning important events in Romanian history, such as 24 January, as well as literary and scientific subjects with which the speakers were particularly familiar or passionate. In the autumn of 1924, the Free University or People's University was also established, organizing conferences on Saturday afternoons in the cinema hall, located within the theatre building. The lecturers included university professors, historians, politicians, and clerics, among them the historian and politician Alexandru Lapedatu, the mathematician Gheorghe Țițeica, the diplomat Gabriel Puaux, French Minister Plenipotentiary in Bucharest, and others.

At both the conferences organized by Casa Luminii and those of the People's University, a significant part of the audience consisted of teachers and students from the city's secondary schools, admission being granted based on tickets or subscriptions. Through their involvement in the activities of Casa Luminii and through attendance at the lectures of the People's University, teachers and students from Turnu-Severin knew the ideas circulating within the cultural and scientific milieus of the time, as well as with personalities who could serve as intellectual and moral models. The activities of these two cultural institutions facilitated access to culture for the inhabitants of a small provincial town, contributed to the formation of local elites, and strengthened national sentiment.

Chapter V, "Forms of Association: Scouting and Străjeria," examines the ways and extent to which children and young people from Turnu-Severin integrated themselves into the Scout and Străjer movements during the interwar period. The Scouts of Turnu-Severin belonged to the cohortă "Apolodor din Damasc," founded in 1915 and active after the war as well. Captain Dumitru Temelcu, commander of the Scout cohortă in Turnu-Severin, and the forensic physician N. Ciurea played important roles in the reorganization of local Scouting. With the support of several teachers, scouting units were established at the commercial school - the "Sever" unit - and at "Traian" High School - the "Dacia" unit - while additional units were organized at the vocational school and at the apprenticeship schools of the Shipyard and the Romanian Railways (C.F.R.). In 1932, through a ministerial order, the Scouts at the boys' high school were organized into three units, each of whose activities, conducted during afternoon sessions, was coordinated by form teachers and by the unit commanders. The cohortă "Apolodor din Damasc" belonged to the "Traian" Scout Legion, which had been established in Banat.

In 1935, there also existed in Turnu-Severin the girls' Scout cohortă "Drubeta," whose honorary president was Eliza Vorvoreanu, principal of the Girls' High School. The cohortă had its headquarters at the Girls' High School and formed part of the Great Legion of Romanian Girl Scouts. Scouting merged with Străjeria within the "Phalanx of Male and Female Străjeri" on 24 January 1937, with the aim of ensuring unity in youth education.

Documents preserved at the Mehedinți Branch of the National Archives highlight the activities of schools in Turnu-Severin connected to "Straja Țării," especially during the years 1936–1939. These documents provide information concerning the initiation of teachers into Străjeria, the Străjer program, and the activities in which Străjeri participated, including both male and female students between the ages of seven and twenty-one, as well as teachers from the schools of Turnu-Severin.

Străjer activity in Turnu-Severin was subordinated to the Străjer Legion of Mehedinți County and involved the participation of male and female teachers in initiation courses held at Sfântu Gheorghe, Breaza, and Predeal between 1937 and 1938, followed by the implementation of the Străjer program in the schools of the city. Between September 1937 and July 1938, according to the information identified thus far in archival fonds, seven male teachers and fifteen female teachers from local schools were initiated into Străjeria at these centres, although their actual number may have been higher.

The archival evidence, corroborated by historical logic, allows us to assert that all schools in the city had teachers trained in Străjer initiation centers and organized *stoluri* of Străjeri. In some cases, the archives contain direct evidence concerning the training of teachers and the organization of these *stoluri*. Such formations were organized at Boys' School No. 2, Boys' Primary School No. 4, Girls' School No. 3, Girls' Primary School No. 4, the "Principesa Elena" Girls' High School, the Girls' Teacher Training School, "Traian" High School, the Commercial High School, the Housekeeping School, the Girls' Industrial High School, the "St. Maria" Institute, and the C.F.R. Apprenticeship School. In the case of other schools, indirect evidence survives in the archives of other institutions, such as the Prefecture.

Straja Țării was an institution of the Romanian state, and school principals certainly could not afford to ignore the orders and circulars issued by the Ministry of Education or by the Regional Inspectorate of Craiova concerning Străjer activities. Several schools organized ceremonies for the raising of the National Flag. Some schools acquired for their libraries books concerning Străjeria, including works by Major Sidorovici, commander of Straja Țării, and subscribed to the journals published by the organization. Male and female student Străjeri participated, together with their commanders, in festivities organized by local authorities on the occasion of national and traditional celebrations. Young Străjeri attended meetings, *șezători*, excursions, and camps organized by Străjer commanders.

Beyond the ceremonial dimension of these manifestations, the weekly activities (held on Thursdays), as well as the *șezători*, excursions, camps, and the reading of journals and books devoted to the movement, represented opportunities for interaction among Străjeri from different schools in the city. At the same time, these activities aimed to cultivate among Străjeri a spirit of order and discipline, to encourage harmonious physical development through sports, to provide practical knowledge - from healthy nutrition to first aid - and to foster solidarity and attachment to ancestral traditions.

The Romanian political regime regarded Străjer activities as a means of consolidating national sentiment and attachment to the monarchy, the education of Străjeri being subordinated to the cult of the dynasty. In fierce competition with the Legionary Movement for control, disciplining, and nationalist education of youth, King Carol II sought to shape the future generation. The "new man" of the "generation of tomorrow," envisioned by Carol II's authoritarian regime, was expected to be disciplined, courageous, healthy, and strong, but also obedient to authority, capable of acting on command, and contributing to the formation of a homogeneous society, both in action and appearance.

At the same time, the King-Străjer, together with the male and female Străjeri of the country, were entrusted with the mission of defending the Kingdom of Romania, threatened by the revisionist policies of neighbouring states (Hungary, the USSR, and Bulgaria) within an increasingly unstable and threatening international context. This was the perspective of a society governed in an authoritarian manner, excluding the pluralism and freedom of choice characteristic of democratic regimes, while attempting to unite society around the king in the face of external danger.

The dissolution of Străjeria in September 1940 was regarded by Carol II as a personal defeat. On 8 September 1940, he recorded in his Notes: “Then came a direct blow against me, through the dissolution of Străjeria, according to some reports, or according to others, its suspension pending reorganization, meaning its complete Legionary transformation.” Nevertheless, the organization of “Straja Țării” and the implementation of its program within schools constituted an undeniable historical reality.

In **Chapter VI**, we analyzed the efforts undertaken by the Municipality of Turnu-Severin to identify and provide material support to segments of the population facing hardship: war orphans, orphans from other causes, and the poor of the city. At the same time, the chapter presents the results of research concerning the activity of local charitable societies that functioned during the interwar period.

Immediately after the war, the most vulnerable category within local society was represented by war orphans. Deprived of one or both parents, these children required both material and moral support from adults. The care of war orphans in Turnu-Severin and Mehedinți County rested not only upon relatives, but also upon the Society “Protection of War Orphans” and the president of its local branch, Ecaterina Greceanu-Severin, the Municipality, and the “Mișoiu” Foundation, which provided space for the orphanage in the Mișoiu houses on Renașterii Street no. 13 from the spring of 1919 until March 1920 and also contributed financially to the purchase of food for the children.

The relief campaign organized in 1929, the year marking the onset of the Great Economic Crisis, for the starving population of Turnu-Severin was primarily a private initiative to which the city’s public authorities later associated themselves.

Alongside the local branch of the Society “Protection of War Orphans,” the Turnu-Severin branch of the “Prince Mircea” Society and the “Petre and Constantina Mișoiu” Orphanage constituted additional institutions through which the charitable activity of the local community materialized in support of children and adolescents in need of material and moral assistance. The activity of all these institutions was closely connected to the actions of the Municipality of Turnu-Severin and was supported by leading female personalities of the city, such as Ecaterina Greceanu-Severin, Maria Justinian-Ionescu, and the directors of the “Mișoiu” Orphanage. It is noteworthy that initiatives in the sphere of social assistance were primarily private undertakings, their origins being linked to personalities occupying important positions within society who succeeded in mobilizing people around them and in obtaining the support of state institutions.

In **conclusion**, the present research contributes to the understanding of a segment of the history of Turnu-Severin that is valuable for the local community, encouraging attachment to a shared past. Researchers and the broader public are thus provided with an analysis that complements the broader image of interwar Romanian secondary education.

In characterizing the socio-professional category of teachers, the present study focused less upon exceptional personalities, although several examples of teachers whose energetic activity gave a strong impulse to the modernization and advancement of the community were

identified, and more upon the collective body of individuals constituting the teaching profession. Although relatively few within the local community, educated in universities of the Kingdom of Romania or even abroad, as well as in other higher educational institutions, the teachers of the schools in Turnu-Severin shaped future generations and imposed models and values. Together with parents, they supervised the activities of their students both inside and outside the classroom.

Student life in the schools of Turnu-Severin differed significantly from that of students today. First of all, boys and girls studied in separate institutions: schools for boys and schools for girls. Students were required to sit annual examinations in order to advance to the following academic year; end-of-year averages were important but not sufficient in themselves. Girls educated privately could also sit examinations at boys' schools - for example, at "Traian" High School - as evidenced by yearbooks, matriculation registers, and minutes of teachers' council meetings. During the interwar period, the general tendency was for students to wear uniforms and, especially, matriculation numbers. The behaviour, clothing, and appearance of both male and female students were carefully supervised, and any deviation from regulations was sanctioned. At that time, many punishments involved the temporary expulsion of students from classes for varying periods depending upon the seriousness of the offense, a practice that affected academic preparation and helped explain the large number of students failing subjects at the end of the academic year.

The political and economic context of interwar Romania left a significant imprint upon the characteristics and evolution of these categories within the society of Turnu-Severin. Periods of economic recovery and economic crisis, the functioning of the democratic regime, within the limits and particularities specific to Romanian society, as well as the authoritarian political system established in 1938, whose signs had already become visible from the beginning of the fourth decade of the twentieth century, influenced the evolution and activities of teachers and students just as they affected the other components of Romanian society.

Remunerated according to their educational qualifications, belonging to the middle class of interwar Romanian society in terms of standard of living and to the country's intelligentsia in terms of education, teachers carried out, alongside their classroom duties, a series of activities within the local community ranging from extracurricular cultural initiatives to political engagement. Although relatively few teachers became involved in political activities, as local councillors, prefects, or parliamentarians, a much larger number participated in cultural activities and enjoyed considerable prestige within society.

Personal aspirations and individual effort, together with the social environment in which they took their first steps and the teachers who guided them, enabled some graduates of the secondary schools of Turnu-Severin to join the ranks of Romania's intellectual elite.

Particularly during the fourth decade of the twentieth century, teachers contributed to the promotion of national ideology in schools and in society, educating the younger generation in a patriotic and national spirit while cultivating attachment to the monarchy, to

the past, and to the homeland as national values. The formation of youth was strictly directed and controlled by the state, which, through O.E.T.R. and Straja Țării, and with the assistance of part of the teaching profession, supervised not only students' activities within schools but also their leisure time, seeking to shape both their behaviour and their consciousness.

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