

**BABEȘ – BOLYAI UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY**

*The Society of Reghin and Modernity Dilemmas*  
*(1850-1950)*  
PHD THESIS  
Summary

**Scientific advisor:**  
Prof. univ. dr. Toader NICOARĂ

**PhD Candidate:**  
Dan Maria

CLUJ-NAPOCA  
2012

## CONTENT

### Introduction

<b>1. Modernity</b>	4
1.1. Theoretical Perspectives	4
1.2. Modernity as State Policy. The Habsburg Empire (Austro-Hungaria)	14
1.3. Romanians and Modernity Projects	24
<b>2. The Saxon Reghin. Historical Landmarks (from the beginning until the 1848 Revolution)</b>	33
<b>3. 1848 - Nation, Violence, Modernity Projects</b>	44
3.1. Revolution. The Romantic phase, Adhesions and Enthusiasm	47
3.2. First Tensions	50
3.3. „Hungarians Time”	52
3.3.1. The Outbreak	55
3.4. „Romanians and Saxons”	57
3.5. Hungarians Return	58
3.6. Evaluation	59
3.7. Escape from Violence	60
<b>4. Modernity in a provincial town</b>	63
4.1. Population. A Spectral Analysis	64
4.1.1. Modernity and the Demographic Factors	64
4.1.2. An Ethnic Perspective	69
4.1.3. A Confessional Perspective	73
4.1.4. Majority and minority in the first half of the XX century	76
4.2. The city, the Industry, Owners and Workers	79
4.3. Urban Culture	87
4.3.1. Education	88
4.3.2. Associations	94
4.3.3. Daily life	99
4.4. The Romanian State and Transferring authority	109

<b>5. Romanians and Modernity. Creating an Urban Community.....</b>	<b>120</b>
5.1. Church and Modernity.....	124
5.1.1. The Intellectual Level of the Clergy .....	125
5.1.2. The Priest as a Model.....	129
5.1.3. The Priest – a Moral Instance.....	141
5.1.3.1. Marriage .....	144
5.1.3.2. Mix marriages .....	148
5.1.3.3. Marriage between Traditions and Modernity.....	153
5.2. The Priest and the Nation.....	163
5.2.1. The Priest and the School.....	163
5.2.2. The Priest – as a Cultural and Political Actor .....	176
5.2. Nation and Culture .....	181
5.3. Modernity and Leisure.....	205
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>Annexes.....</b>	<b>230</b>

## Keywords

Modernity, Tradition, Transylvania, The Habsburg Empire, Revolution, Identity, Nation, Urban Evolution, State Policies, Diversity, Local Strategies, Intellectuals, Leisure, Church, Education.

Bringing together under its spectrum the political, economical, social and cultural phenomena, that humanity has passed in the last centuries, modernity is a subject which has constantly attracted the interest of scientists, concerned to understand the way society has evolved, the sense and consequences of this process. The Romanian research joined this trend at the beginning of last century. Historians, sociologists, economists have tried to identify the causes and resorts of Romanian modernity. The rise of a Marxist ideology has put for a long time the phenomenon under an economical sign; the aspects of cultural, intellectual and social life were listed in subsidiary. The fall of the wall that separated Europe reestablished the contact with the European values. In this context, Romanian historiography redefined its methods and practices; themes buried under the pressure of ideological constraints are rediscovered, the project of modernity being one of them. New grids of interpretation are suggested, starting from its chronological landmarks.

Given that *the way back home* has proves to be longer and more difficult than expected, the reviewing of the modernity project may help to a better understanding of the dilemmas we face today, which in Romania as in fact in whole area of Central and Eastern Europe are a consequence of a particular course to modernity. The cultural, confessional, national diversity of the area often made that the projects undertaken by existing state structures to stir up various reactions as the people inhabiting assumed their own priorities and strategies. The national states created after 1918 kept between their borders the same dilemmas, which neither the unifying model of communist order could resolve. The fall of the wall that divided Europe, and even the whole world, has brought them back to the forefront, creating the same atmosphere of uncertainty, the same crises which accompanied the modernization of communities in this area. The town of Reghin, due to its multi-ethnic and multi-denominational structure, is, like many other Transylvanian towns a relevant example.

Founded by a Saxon population in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of the colonization policy practiced by the Hungarian Kings, the town of Reghin became in the next centuries an

important trade centre in the area. The privileges enjoyed by the Saxons have greatly contributed to its economic development and prosperity. Although surrounded by strong Romanian and Hungarian communities, in the spirit of medieval tradition, the town had remained closed to the outsiders for centuries.

The Austrian conquest and Vienna's policy of integration opened the road to profound transformations. Undoubtedly, the practice of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Habsburg's reformism triggered a process, which, in spite of Metternich's absolutism could not be stopped. The existing political and social order was strongly contested by the Revolution of 1848. In terms of urban evolution, the period between 1848 and the World War I marks the entry on the path of deep reforms, which will erase the medieval legacy and will consecrate the modern urban model.

Considerably affected by the conflicts in the year 1848 and 1849 Reghin owes its subsequent development mainly to Government policies. The government loan amounting to 210,000 florins granted to the town in 1850 represents the first impetus towards economic and social recovery after the tragedy in the year 1848. The economic liberalism promoted in Vienna in the era of neo-absolutism, the dissolution of guilds, the regulation of ownership, as well as the laws governing the protection of national capital, create a favourable environment for the development of the market economy and production. In addition to the traditional artisans, the merchants are more and more present, the growing activity of whom results in the creation of the first associations and businesses. Indeed, at first, the factories in the town are small since the owners work with few employees and use a small number of machines, but their activity develops systematically and the signs of industrialisation are more and more conspicuous.

The city is gradually connecting to the economic life of the Dualist State since the factories in Reghin export their products outside the boundaries of the Province, and even of the Monarchy. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the entrepreneurs in Reghin participate in international fairs in Bucharest, Budapest, London, and they even organise the first local industrial fairs. The development of the industrial activity is supported by town planning through training of the Mureş and Gurghiu rivers, the development of the Reghin-Toplița road and the commissioning of the Tîrgu-Mureş-Reghin-Deda-Ciceu-Braşov railway and the Reghin-Lăpuşna narrow gauge railway. In addition, the town planning criteria in Reghin are enriched by organisation and development works: the streets are paved, the power and water supply and sewerage systems are built, and the town is connected to the telephone circuit. The Town Hall and the Law Court are built and so are the first post office and the first railway station. All this constitutes the framework of a modern urban structure.

Economic progress, urban development, the growth of the human factors led to a different meaning of leisure. Gradually, the bourgeois culture is arising. The theatre, the press, the choirs, the orchestras, the amateur theatricals, different associations are all an indication of a new urban lifestyle. Unlike other small provincial towns, in which, until the 1860s, the cultural life was limited to the activities organised by schools and the rare performances of the strolling players, in Reghin, the first cultural societies are created at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; in 1788, the first “reading hall” is created and attended by intellectuals of different nationalities. On the eve of the Revolution of 1848, the Saxon community, as well as the Hungarian community benefit from reading clubs that are annually increasing their collections: in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were 1,000 volumes and subscriptions registered for the current newspapers. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of these societies considerably increases and they have a more and more active role in the life of the town. In 1867, the first casino is established, followed by a second one in 1894. In 1860, a choir of the German inhabitants is created, followed by the “Hungarian Citizens Music Society” in 1883. Towards the end of the century, the sports activities also developed. As of 1895, as part of the leisure park of the town, there was a swimming pool, a swimming school and a playing field.

The city, under the impact of modernity invented new communities. After all, the Romanians living in the town of Reghin as the Hungarians also, are the result urban development projects. Our research includes as a case study in the last chapter, the creation of the Romanian community, and its way to modernity. Due to its traditional structure, the relation church-priest-community best expresses the dilemmas of the Romanian community. For a traditional community like the Romanian one, the Church provides the only framework for community life; the priest represents a life model both in family relationships and for the relationship with political power and other state institutions. For the Church the pressure is double. We are now, in the era of secularization, the state is trying to submit its authority. Concerning the national movement, we are witnessing a transfer of leadership (we say here today in a modern term) from ecclesiastical to the secular world. Thus, dilemmas church are twofold: the dilemma secular state, national, multinational state church.

Dominant element in a still mostly rural community with limited educational universe, the priest is, I would say, the first invited to the great debate of consciousness caused by modernity. Thus, starting from one of the defining elements of modernity, a meritocratic society model (a model that the Romanian society tends to align; the supreme argument being the unprecedented action, begun in the mid-nineteenth century to acquire a higher education

system), first we analyzed the priests education. Although a Saxon town, Reghin became during the second half of the nineteenth century a cultural, religious and even political center for the Romanian in the area. Under these circumstances, it benefited of priests with superior intellectual training in the major universities of the time: Basiliu Ratiu, graduated University of Vienna, Peter Uilăcan, also a graduate of the University of Vienna, Ariton Popa graduated the Theological Seminary in Budapest.

The Romanian priests have, at least until the First World War a leading role concerning the education. They are administrators of the school, often teacher, participating in public examinations, supervising the activity and the behavior of the teachers and even dealing with their employment. The problems of the Romanian schools often generated an interdenominational collaboration in the benefit of education. The efforts of the church contributed to the development of the Romanian education system.

In terms of attitude and behavior both Romanian churches tried in the second half of the nineteenth century to institutionalize strong rules of conduct, as the priest ought to be a model of virtue and morality, to avoid litigation, scandals. Priest's behavior is closely supervised through canonical visits, and annual synods, a good opportunity for dissertations on theological topics. However, the documents reveal numerous "deviations" from the official recommendations, which vary from inadequately behavior of some priests accused of drunkenness, fornication, corruption and appointments of individuals based on degrees of kinship. All this generates tension in the community. A large number of documents (at least the Greek Catholic deanery) cover the administrative behavior of the priest in the process of reforming and restructuring the internal register. The priest has a number of duties in this regard, the establishment and maintenance of orderly archives containing all papers parish church to the preparation of many statistics and reports on the status of parish and community he leads. These behavioral aspects reflect the dilemmas of the priest in a changing world. He is subject to a double pressure, on one hand the higher authorities seeking to regulate community life and on the other, the communities question its decisions and criticize his action.

But perhaps the greatest challenge to the authority of the priest is the introduction of civil marriage in the late nineteenth century. State interference in this area will trigger a vast campaign, trying to maintain a position of authority, matrimonial behavior of believers being carefully watched the priests were charged to take steps to avoid committing a civil marriage only. Statistics compiled in the parish in the first half of the twentieth century reflects a still maintaining ecclesiastical authority in this plan. Studying church history from the perspective

of modern meeting I realized that modern structures have not always created through a divorce with tradition, on the contrary they cohabit.

The year of 1918, although undeniably a turn in the evolution of the Transylvanian province through the integration into the Romanian state, doesn't bring significant changes in the modernization proces, it continues its course previously assumed. Fully initiated into the 1848 violence, modernity as a process ended in 1948, the same violent manner, by installing a new power and misappropriation of Romania and Romanians to another model that offered by Moscow.