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***THE NATIONAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL LIFE OF THE  
ORTHODOX ROMANIANS FROM THE CLUJ COUNTY  
BETWEEN 1864 –1918***

**SUMMARY**

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## Summary

The interethnic and interconfessional dialogue held locally and internationally, receives in the contemporary society a well-deserved influence for building a constructive religious and social context, but also for a better understanding of the historical events. The communication between different confessions involves more than empathy towards the spiritual and social needs of the others; it refers to finding God’s will through our fellows.

Due to the political context throughout the history of Transylvania, the religious discourse has confined itself to immediate social and religious solutions among the Christian Churches existent in this multiconfessional area.

The national, cultural and religious impediments or successes that the Transylvanian Orthodox Protopresbyters and priests had to face in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century were similar to the struggles arisen for the Greek-Catholic Church from Transylvania, or other national Churches in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The analysis of the Romanian Orthodox communities from Cluj County, center of the Hungarian ruling at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1864-1918), defines a local Orthodox Church fighting for a considerate relationship with the state authorities and with the clerical institutions of the time.

The present thesis, entitled “*The National and Religious Life of the Orthodox Romanians from the Cluj County between 1864 –1918*”, gives a detailed account of the events



involving the Romanian Orthodox believers, the starting point being the Reestablishment of the Metropolitanate of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania and Hungary up to the Unification of Transylvania with Romania in 1918. It also formulates answers to the following questions: „How was the autonomy of the Romanian Orthodox Church received by the local communities?“, “What events influenced the most the local Orthodox church life?” and “Which of the social changes brought prejudices to the countryside communities, what were their causes and effects?”. The analysed documents offer an objective overview of the official papers preserved by the local Churches and communities, covering inventories, book lists, deeds of conveyance, but the testimonial value of the letters sent by individual communities capture every spiritual struggle of the communities impoverished financially and culturally.

The lack of Romanian state-run authorities imposed a Romanian Church able to undertake the formative role of the nation by developing the confessional schools, by educating the clergy and the confessional teachers, and by facilitating the scholars’s discourse for the commoners.

These historical facts have made me analyze the whole Transylvanian socio-political context, especially in highlighting the hierarchical and organizational changes of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania, The role of the protopresbyters and priests from Cluj will be identified with the help of statistical method, exploring the documentary resources of the Archives belonging to the Metropolitanate of Transylvania from Sibiu, the Metropolitanate of Cluj, and the National Archives, correlated with the socio-economic data from the contemporary statistics, and the correspondence of the parishes with the Eparchy, later the Metropolitanate from Sibiu.

The main area of interest of this thesis revolves around the Orthodox communities from the Protopresyterate of Cluj and from other Orthodox parishes included in the Cluj County, affiliated to the protopresbyterates of Unguras and Turda. The outer villages of the County, important from the religious point of view, have also been included in order to bring forward the social, pecuniary and spiritual local context by using the noteworthy correspondence.

By using the inductive method on the Orthodox parishes, a historical framework has been constructed and furthermore integrated in the major events that took place in Transylvania and altered the political and social structure of the old Principality.

The years from 1864 until 1918 conveyed a paradigmatic evolution in the cultural and social identity of the Romanians from Transylvania. The cultural and ideological revolutions of the time reflected greatly and syncretically on the manner in which the Romanian Orthodox Church was perceived as a crucial part of the rural and urban communities.

### ***Analysis of the Documents and Works used***

The large majority of the studies referring to the city of Cluj focus on the decisive role that this city has had in the cultural and social life of Transylvania throughout the history.<sup>1</sup> The religious existence of the Orthodox communities from Cluj has been generally integrated in the Transylvanian movement of the Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna or in the emancipation actions promoted by the Casina from Cluj or by the local Greek-Catholic Protopresbyters. The accomplishments of the local clergy and adherents must be take into account the Orthodox community, less present in the city of Cluj and more involved in the isolated villages of the county.

The religious aspects of the inhabitants living at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century have been less approached in the Communist era, the Academician Ștefan Pascu in his book *Istoria Clujului (The History of Cluj)* and the historian Gheorghe Bodea in *Cluj, Pagini de istorie revoluționară, 1848-1971 (Cluj. Pages of Revolutionary History. 1848-1971)* cover the local and economic events. Other works, such as *Izvoare de demografie istorică. Transilvania, (Sources of Historical Demography, Transylvania)* or the collection of studies *Populație și Societate (Population and Society)*, give an overview of the religious sentiments that moved in the past the minds and the hearts of the citizens. By focusing on the social and economic elements, these books set themselves as reference landmarks in the contextual enquiry of the religious aspect. We can also mention the volumes of documents, printed at the Academic Printing House in the 1980s (*Documente privind revoluția de la 1848 în Țările române. C. Transilvania- Documents related to the 1848 Revolution in the Romanian Countries. Transylvania*), *Îndrumător în Arhivele Statului județului Cluj. (Lexicon of the State Archives of the Cluj District)*.

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<sup>1</sup> The works and documents used can be found in the Bibliography section.

The research on the Transylvanian historical context has led to the papers published by Ștefan Pascu, *Marea Adunare Națională de la Alba Iulia*, as well as the publication of the documents referring to the 1918 Unification, *1918 la români. Documente istorice*, as well as new perspectives in the studies published by the G. Barițiu Foundation: *Istoria României. Transilvania*.

Exceptionally well-documented historical investigations with the use of the data collected by the Austro-Hungarian statisticians were accomplished by Adam Iosif and Ioan Pușcaș in their volumes *Izvoare de demografie istorică. Transilvania (Sources of Historical Demography. Transylvania)* and their articles published in *Populație și societate (Population and society)*: ”La structure de la population de la Transylvanie du point de vue des recherches hongroises de 1900 et 1910”, and ”Considerations sur l'exode de la population de Transylvanie entre 1899 et 1913, basées sur le statistique officielle des emigrations”.

Their endeavor has been continued with Traian Rotariu’s publication of the censuses entreprised by the Transylvanian authorities from 1850 to 1918<sup>2</sup>. These raw figures have been the starting point in the analysis of the social, ethnic and confessional factors, that corroborated with the documents found in the Archives of the Metropolitanate of Transylvania from Sibiu (*Șematismele Bisericii Ortodoxe din Transilvania, Protocoalele sufletelor și Protocoalele școlare*), outlined the Orthodox cultural, economic, but mostly the religious phases, of the population from Cluj.

The papers printed by the Ecclesiastical Publishing Houses in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the ones referring to the Orthodox Church at a local level (*Monumente istorice și de artă religioasă din Arhiepiscopia Vadului, Feleacului și Clujului*, father Florea Mureșan’s *Biserica din Deal*), and also the books written by the professor Mircea Păcurariu, *Politica statului ungar față de biserica românească din Transilvania în perioada dualismului, 1867-1918*, are the foremost important sources. They embrace more than the social and political actions of the local communities, but the books also mention the religious structures developed by the laymen for their Church’s welfare.

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<sup>2</sup> *Recensământul din 1857, Recensământul din 1880, Recensământul din 1900, Recensământul din 1910 (The 1850 Census, The 1880 Census, The 1900 Census, and The 1910 Census)* published at the Staff and Presa Universitară Clujeană Printing Houses, from 1996 to 2006.

Other documents concentrated their attention towards the religious Transylvanian context influenced by the Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna's attempt to develop the Church life and schools, such as *Învățământul confesional ortodox din Transilvania între anii 1848-1918, între exigențele statului centralizat și principiile autonomiei bisericești, Reforma Constituțională din Biserica Ortodoxă a Transilvaniei între 1850-1925*, written by Paul Brusanowski. The newly published correspondence of the Orthodox Metropolitan with his parishes has had the editorial help of the professors Nicolae Bocșan, Ioan Vasile Leb, in the work: *Andrei Șaguna. Corespondența*<sup>3</sup>.

The monographies of the Orthodox villages from Cluj have been a priority for the history researchers, without an extensive study to incorporate all the Orthodox communities from this region. We can mention: Dacian But-Căpușan, *Luna de Sus*, Adriana Florica Munteanu, *Considerații privind problema familiei și a structurii ei de-a lungul secolului al XIX-lea în satele Gilău și Alunișu*, Gheorghe Bodea, *Cluj. Pagini de istorie revoluționară*, Andrei Nicolae Gocan, *Două sate din Transilvania: Dângăul-Mic și Dângăul-Mare. Monografie*, but also the publications of Vladimir Cinezan on the villages Aphaida and Mociu. The local folklore and church documents were used as reference point and completed by the data found in the Archives, without restating the information already published by other authors.

### ***Thesis Structure***

The present thesis explores the religious and the national struggle of the Orthodox adherents from the Cluj County in the European political and economic framework, as well as the interpersonal relationships established between the clergy and the laymen in order to support the existence of their own cultural identity.

The first chapter of this thesis, entitled "The Cluj City and County in the Transylvanian Social and Religious Framework in the Second Half of the 19th Century until the Unification of 1918" evaluates the impact the major events had on the national struggle for social and political independence of the Romanian Orthodox communities. The importance of the Emperor's decision to allow the Romanian Orthodox Church from Transylvania and Hungary to become independent, with its own Metropolitanate under the guidance of the Metropolitan Andrei

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<sup>3</sup> The third volume, published in 2009, at Presa Universitară Clujeană, has a chapter referring to the Protopresbyter Petru Roșca of Unguraș.

Șaguna, is analyzed in depth due to the administrative power given to the Church by this resolution.

The constant Orthodox ecclesiastical and laical common actions prove the close link between the Romanian national entities that believed in uniting all the Romanians under the same ruling, against all confessional differences.

The key moments in the Transylvanian milieu, the Memorandum movement or the Unification of Transylvania with Romania, have not been fully covered in the current paper due to the extent of the topics, and also because these events have been already dealt with in numerous collections of documents, scientific studies and articles.<sup>4</sup>

The administrative, political and economic structures of the Cluj County between 1864-1918 are scrutinized in the second chapter, especially in reference with the geographical limits and the diachronic changes of this county and its subdivisions, as well as the impact on the local communities. The necessity of the topographical delimitations is highly stringent in order to reveal the ethnic and economic differences between the two main regions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: the Upper Cluj and the Lower Cluj.

The administrative and political power of the city of Cluj, dominated by the Hungarian authorities, increased their political influence due to the legislative facilities approved by the Parliament from Budapest after the formation of the Dualist Empire.

The Romanian cultural associations proposed actions and projects to increase the economic strength of the Romanians, even if the results did not majorly improved the prosperity of this ethnic group. The new founded Romanian banks were essential for the improvement of the local enterprises.

The third part of the paper, “The Political and Economic Development of the Cluj City and County”, examines the county political and economic structures and their impact in the modern progress of the region. The mobility of the rural peasants towards town plants and their shift in status as factory workers has been evaluated, especially based on the studies elaborated by Ștefan Pascu and Gheorghe Bodea.

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<sup>4</sup> Important Titles on the topic belong to: N. Bocșan, *Memorandul (1892-1894)*, I. Clopoțel, *Revoluția din 1918 și Unirea Ardealului cu România*, Șt. Pascu, *Marea Adunare Națională de la Alba Iulia*, G. Neamțu, *Procese politice de presă antiromânești din epoca dualismului (1868-1890)*.

The ethnic changes examined in the fourth chapter, “The Ethnic Situation of The Orthodox Romanians from The Cluj County between 1864-1918”, start from the social and political events that led to demographic alterations – wide-spread disease outbreaks or the role of the family in the modern civilization. The differences between the villagers and the town inhabitants grew over this specific period of time that is why the lack of uniformity between these communities has been explained with the help of the graphs.

The figures presented in the censuses published in the Romanian language by Traian Rotariu and in Hungarian by Varga Árpád were used additionally to the data provided by the documents from the Archives of the Orthodox Metropolitanate from Sibiu in order to contextualize the social events that altered the destiny of the inhabitants of this old Principality: the decisions and laws adopted by the state, the diseases, the droughts that affected the towns and villages, but also the national actions promoted by the Church.

Another key aspect referring to the county’s citizens is linked to their confessional observance, explored in the fifth chapter, “The confessional Status of the Orthodox Adherents from Cluj”, based on the figures of the state censuses and the Church Records. There have been noticed many inconsistencies but going beyond the statistics, the Romanian Orthodox communities and the other confessions of the county tried to preserve the religious sentiment in the county families.

It has been established the fact that, despite the Austro-Hungarian attempts to estrange the believers from their millennium-lasting Church, the laymen remained faithful to the Holy sacraments: The Holy Baptism, Marriage, the Holy Unction or the Funeral Service. On the other hand, there has been detected an increase in the number of the unmarried couples with illegitimate children, especially in isolated communities without a permanent priest.

In order to portray the life of the Romanian Orthodox adherents from the Cluj County, the information obtained from the Calendars of the Metropolitanate, the Souls’ Conscriptions, the Conscriptions for Schools, the Matriculas, the Goods’ Inventory, and the parochial registers. The documents and letters in the period 1850 to 1918, sent by the protopresbyters, by the clergy or the faithful to the Consistory from Sibiu, have been examined in the Archives of the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Transylvania. The study of these manuscripts revealed an

objective perspective with a sustained argumentation in understanding the challenges and the problems the devotees and priests faced in Transylvania.

The sixth chapter surveys the political, social and religious context of the Romanian Orthodox Church of Transylvania in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a passageway towards a detailed and specific analysis of the social and financial situation of the local Orthodox Church.

The structure of the Cluj Protopresbyterates are also explored in this chapter, based on the changes that took place from a statistical, structural and functional point of views which led to an territorial decrease of the protopresbyterates. The role of the archpriests in supporting the communities' religious and moral conduct, as well as their involvement in the preparation of the local priests' conferences were key elements in need of a strict research in order to highlight the link between the clergy and the laymen in an area with an Orthodox minority.

The national positive changes were not replicated in a positive evolution of the Orthodox protopresbyterates from Cluj that headed towards their annihilation because of the decrease in the number of parishes due to financial reasons, especially in the Secu and The Upper Cluj Protopresbyterates. The documents present a disturbing situation of the status of the Orthodox priests and confessional teachers that performed their daily services in the main three protopresbyterates of the county: Cluj, Unguraş<sup>5</sup> și partially Turda. Up to the year 1868 there had been two archpresbyterates with the name Cluj: The Lower Cluj with its seat in the free city of Cluj and the Upper Cluj with its main seat in Călata Mare. The Protopresbyterate of Secu, with the main parish in Sic, would eventually dissolve after the reorganization of the Orthodox protopresbyterates from Transylvania in 1881, with an immediate result in the Magyarization of the area at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The second component of the Orthodox clergy, the local priests, the clerical elections, education and parochial behavior, is under the scrutiny of the seventh chapter: "The Orthodox Priests and the Parochial Life in the Cluj County". Sensitive topics, such as the differences between the priests and their higher hierarchical structures or various behavioural unconventionalities, have been also examined.

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<sup>5</sup> The name *Protopresbyterate Unguraş* refers to the village Unguraş (*Alsóegregy*), currently named *Românași* from the Sălaj county, and not the the village Unguraş (*Bálványosvára*) located in the eastern part of the Cluj county.

Parrallel to this, the financial means of the Orthodox clergy and the laymen from Cluj has been considered in reference with the lack of prosperity of the parishes. Their need to solicit state aid had its main reason in the hard-collectible expenses for the priests and teachers imposed by the state authorities. Because of the low parochial income, some of the local church committees were forced to sell their land and mill rights in order to be able to support the quotes for buildings insurances, the ground taxes and the renovation of the edifices. The local historical monographs present the employed priests, the churches and the local traditions as well as the main events from the villages. Against all the research performed, the life and activities of the local priests could be completed only schematically, the data collected being merely fragmented. The majority of the churches made of stone or wood had been built particularly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, because the erection of new churches was only scarce in the county, without a genuine involvement of the state in developing Romanians' religion and morality. During my research, I have noted a high demand for an exhaustive study of the parochial achives from the Cluj County in order to have a comprehensive overview of this topic and of the context that led to the social and political changes, a scientific work that exceeds the framework of this study.

It can be concluded that the Church's mission was revealed on many levels: social, cultural, educational, and national, without forgetting its' purpose given by Jesus Christ – leading the faithful towards their redemption.

The evaluation of the Orthodox confessional education system from the Cluj County is the subject of the eighth chapter that begins with an outline of the Austro-Hungarian legislation applied in schools that brought many disadvantages to the Romanian pupils due to the closing of the confessional schools and the Magyarization of the children educated by the superior schools from Cluj. The youth benefited of catechetical instruction at the Orthodox parishes that faced a major lack of books and money, but also the pupils' inability to use the Romanian language properly, which compelled the priests and catechists to teach the pupils informally the Romanian reading and writing.

Another important subchapter refers to the endowment of the elementary confessional schools, the education offered to the pupils in the legislative circumstances of the time, and the distressing deficiency of the qualified teachers as an annual problem for the school committees.



The strict school legislation, imposed by the Austro-Hungarian Government, asked for an upgrading of the school buildings or an addition of supplementary school classes. The parochial committees purchased books for worship or schooling, unable though to cover all the requirements. The financial aspects were less problematic than the employment of well qualified teachers, willing to be hired for the minimal wage by a community pushed to send their children to the state-run schools.

The enrollment of the rurally originated children in the newly built state schools had a major impact in the decrease of the Romanian Orthodox schools. At the end of the First World War, the Protopresbyterate of Cluj had only eight fully functional confessional schools, four schools were still running in the ten villages of the Protopresbyterate of Unguraş, and the schools in the three parishes of the Protopresbyterate of Turda belonging to the Cluj County had already been closed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

With restricted political means, the only efficient solutions established by the Metropolitanate of Sibiu and by the local protopresbyters were obtained after the successful teachers' conferences and the protopresbyters' canonical visitations at the confessional schools.

In improper schooling conditions, the Orthodox confessional instruction, as well as the Greek-Catholic one, built the Romanian element in the Transylvanian system of education able to support and to promote the values of the traditional spirituality and national heritage.

The paper's annexes offer detailed information about the villages that belonged to the Cluj County, presenting the evolution of the Orthodox family life, the level of education, the qualification of the local priests, for an in-depth study of the Orthodox phenomenon in this area.

All the parts of this thesis display a distraught territory fighting against the assimilation and Magyarization promoted by the Austro-Hungarian authorities towards the Romanian communities.

The willpower of the Orthodox communities of the Cluj County is in fact the main theme of this thesis because, against all of the financial and social pressures to provide for their own school or church, they achieved to survive with their head up until their long time dreams have been accomplished at the Great Unification with Romania in 1918.

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