

„BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

**THE INTERWAR INTELLECTUALITY FROM NORTHERN  
MOLDAVIA**

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Starting from the premise that local history represents a secondary part of national history, but that the local can sometimes bring surprising elements through its identity and through the connotations that it gives to the national, this pinaper has the purpose of representing a reconstruction, on historical, geographical and sociological coordinates, of a social category that carried on its shoulders the progress of the province by means of culture. The intellectual class of Northern Moldavia, as part of the Romanian interwar intellectual class, has been defined, in the introductory chapter, as a creative and culture distributor socio-professional group, placed particularly in a cultural field where intellectual creation represented the foundation of national culture that the province was contributing to.

From a geographic point of view, the researched area covers the interwar counties from Northern Moldavia: those belonging to the Romanian Old Kingdom – the counties Baia, Botoșani, Dorohoi, and those from Bucovina: the counties Suceava, Rădăuți, Câmpulung Moldovenesc. Tracing those limits makes the present paper fall under the category of historical papers concentrated on the local-regional axis, that more and more researches focused on in the last two decades.

*The motivation* of dedicating this research to the provincial intellectual class is, on the one hand, the awareness of their contribution to Greater Romania's process of modernization in the political, economic and social context. On the other hand, the endeavour started from noticing the small amount of studies dedicated to the Romanian intellectual class from this area. More than that, Romanian intellectuals from Transylvania and Banat have been discussed in elaborated papers by last decade historians. For Northern Moldavia, the researchers focused particularly on the relevance of the contributions and works of the personalities emerging from this area, but active in the capital's cultural and political life.

The deprovincialization of figures such as Iorga, Enescu or Lovinescu did not fade away their belonging to their area of origin. Then, individual studies in monographs or local and regional periodicals have been dedicated to the intellectuals of local recognition, often with an impact reduced to the borders of that particular area. Recovering those figures was done mostly through encyclopaedias and dictionaries that presented such names in an alphabetical order,

without any time structuring, based only on their belonging to the Northern Moldavia area. Certainly, these papers represent critical instruments for future articulate analyses that can contribute to a better knowledge of local or regional history.

We considered necessary that, before approaching aspects such as the formation and structuring of North Moldavian intellectuals, it would be necessary to sketch the cultural atmosphere of urban areas of the province, where the intellectual activities were taking place and where the institutions that contributed to the modernization of area were activating. For this purpose, the first chapter – *The cultural environment of interwar Northern Moldavia* - begins with an argumentation that the area of Botoșani and Suceava is included in the marginal area called Northern Moldavia, a „province in a province” whose identity is also given by local intellectuals that strove for promoting a marginalized corner of the country. We have tried to capture the distinctive image, dominated by tranquillity and stillness, of the cities of Botoșani, Dorohoi, Fălticeni, Suceava, Siret, Rădăuți, Siret, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Gura Humorului and Vatra Dornei, an image that was contrary to a rich cultural activity performed within cultural societies, high schools, athenaeums, theatres, libraries, but also editorial offices of local journals and newspapers. Thus, the cultural environment influenced the formation of future intellectuals and also of those that were already activating at the local level.

The evolution of the educational system at the beginning to the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to a strong connection between school and future intellectuals. Thus, the years of training influenced the trajectory of those that, after graduating higher education, occupied intellectual positions in the Romanian society. From this perspective, we have considered that theoretical secondary education represents a primary, even though not singular, source in forming North Moldavian intellectuality, given the fact that high school represented the highest form of education that the province could provide. Thus, the second chapter – *Interwar secondary education – primary source of formation of the interwar intellectuals of Northern Moldavia* – presented the network of high schools from the area, with emphasis on the social and educational role of the school, not before diagnosing the Romanian interwar secondary education.

The new post-war context raises a series of issues regarding the construction of school buildings, the reorganization of teaching staff decimated during the war, the levelling of

education, the high school access to villagers and to young girls. Thus, the secondary education reform represented a major challenge for ministers of public teaching. Among them, the main reformer, dr. C. Angelescu, conceived theoretical high school as being the main laboratory of creating the elites of the country, secondary education having had a privileged position in the interwar period. The liberal educational policy, that was encouraging the attendance of theoretical high schools, followed by the efforts of the parents and of local authorities to create such high schools in every city, led to a real fascination of intellectuals concerning interwar youth, for which graduating secondary education represented the chance of acceding to highest levels of society. Such an evolution of school policy led to the rising of intellectual unemployment, which increased in the context of the 1930s economic crisis, indicating that the magnitude that secondary interwar education has reached also had its negative aspects. Finally, another aspect brought into discussion refers to making education an instrument of unifying neighbouring provinces, with all the consequences of this policy on the minorities that were trying to maintain certain autonomy through having their own language of teaching and organizational systems.

After tracing this general framework, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter we presented the network of theoretical secondary high schools from Northern Moldavia, composed of 11 high schools for boys and 6 secondary schools for girls. The monographs of these institutions focused mainly on their role in forming intellectuals, during the educational process, and, also, within extra curricular activities – conferences, student scientific journals, teachers' literary and scientific activities – that have proven the diverse cultural functions that high school coordinated in the cities of the interwar provinces .

The presentation of the institutional framework was followed by a quantitative analysis of the graduates and of the North Moldavian school population, based on school yearbooks, transcripts of records and graduation certificates. For the period 1918-1938, the calculations indicated a number of 3310 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduates in the counties of the Romanian Old Kingdom and of 2663 graduates in the counties of Bucovina, which represent, yearly, a means of around 3% of high school graduates of the country. Some archives revealed also the higher education preferences of some of these graduates, but a statistics that follows their higher education and professional evolution has not been done yet.

Regarding school population, the analysis criteria focused mainly on their confessional and social belonging. Both in the counties of Romanian Old Kingdom's Northern Moldavia and Bucovina, the orthodox represented a majority of over 60%, followed by the young Hebraists (35% in the counties of Romanian Old Kingdom, and 24% in those of Bucovina). Other minorities register percentages of, depending on the area, 1-12%.

The different historical conditions that made a distinction between the counties of Romanian Old Kingdom's Northern Moldavia and Bucovina are also reflected in the social background of the students. Thus, if in the Romanian Old Kingdom most young people originated from families of merchants (30%), magistrates (20%) or intellectuals (19%), in Bucovina, 28% of peasants families send their children to high school, proving the availability of the Romanian population, that had been under occupation for more than a century, towards secondary school, by which peasants could overcome their social status. Finally, entering the life of the interwar students, the analysis of North Moldavian school population ends with the presentation of some activities that the students were involved in, at an age of research and adventure, materialized for some in extreme political views, and for some as first steps towards creativity in the field of literature.

If interwar intellectuals emerge from the large spectre of high school graduates, the next step in presenting this social category was the analysis of intellectual professional structures where former higher education graduates perform. The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter – *The structure of interwar intellectual class from Northern Moldavia* – begins with tracing some conceptual coordinates that bring into discussion the intellectual class as middle bourgeoisie or pseudo-bourgeoisie, which improve their social status, as a result of educational and not economic reasons.

The intellectual professional has a triple role in the interwar period: that of cultural producer, distributor and consumer of culture. His functions in the cultural environment gave the intellectual this aura of bohemian scholar, owner of a symbolic capital that generates social prestige, given both by the high level of education and by the intellectual profession that he unfolds. The awareness of the belonging to different intellectual professional categories led them to associate; these associations were meant to promote their interests and to define the interwar intellectual's status, based on his activities and his cultural contributions.

Some categories are representative to our analysis: teacher, lawyer, doctor, military, writer, journalist, artist, and engineer. For each of these categories we elaborated a series of

micro-monographs, based on the evolution of that activity in the Romanian environment, its regulation and the socio-cultural image of the person performing it. We also discussed the aspect of Romanianization within different professional categories, an aspect strongly related to intellectual unemployment, whose roots can be found in the liberal interwar educational policy. Focusing on the North Moldavian area, a primary source is represented by the Census of 1930. The calculations indicated a number of around 3000 higher education graduates, activating in the area in 1930, and an analysis of the main fields of activity of intellectuals and freelancers generated a number of around 4000 professionals. Comparing these numbers to those obtained at the national level, the intellectuals of Northern Moldavia represent 4% of the total number of 101000 professional, and comparing them to the active local population, intellectuals score 7%. Thus, we are dealing with a not so large category, but that evolved in number from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the first half of the 20th century. Data also indicated that teachers and lawyers were the largest intellectual categories of the area. The activities of some important figures revealed their involvement in the cultural evolution of the province, especially through their rich publishing activities.

The next chapter introduces the aspect of North Moldavian intellectual production in the discussed period. The 4<sup>th</sup> chapter – *Creative localism in Northern Moldavia* – is focused on placing the creation of the province in the theoretical framework of creative localism. For a relevant contextualization of this concept, the chapter begins with a presentation of the great interwar debate, between traditional and modern waves, on the cultural progress of the new state. We highlighted the literary Sămănătorism visions, promoted by the historian Nicolae Iorga, by reporting it to the theory of Synchronism of Lovinescu; the argument is that within this wave, creative localism proposes the exploitation of the history and tradition of the provinces, of local folklore, transforming it into an instrument of authentic culture formation. Cultivating creative localism represented the prerogative of province intellectuals, which activated most of the times from the tribunes of local journals. For the authors of the provinces, localism had two main significations: on the one hand, the phenomenon was being generated by a series of complexes that gravitated around the binomial centre-periphery; on the other hand, localism appeared also as cultural strategy, of deprovincialization and of entering the cultural life of the centre. Thus, the analysis dealt with this issue of provincialism, establishing that a complex of the province differs from the areas of Romanian Old Kingdom's Northern-Moldavia and Bucovina.



After discussing the theoretical framework of the interwar North Moldavian creation, the last chapter – *North Moldavian intellectual production. Index of intellectuals with written contributions* – presents a listing of 121 intellectuals with written contributions or masterpieces. We took into consideration those intellectuals originating or „being adopted” in Moldavia, which activated in that area in the interwar period. Clearly, we do not state that every author automatically turns into an intellectual, but we must consider that writing is the main instrument connecting the intellectual to society. The prosopographic study revealed 121 cultural producers, 28 in the counties of Romanian Old Kingdom’s Northern Moldavia, and 83 in the counties of Bucovina. The analysis is based on age criteria, in order to highlight the majority of those trained before 1900, over those trained after 1900, but also on intellectual activity, studies, domain of activity. As a result, most intellectual producers of that time were teachers, with patents in different fields, obtained in the country or abroad, activating particularly in literary or opinion journalism.

If the contributions of these authors to the cultural promotion and progress of the province cannot be denied, the national impact of their creations is represented by the way they have been perceived by literary criticism. To this purpose, we made use of different encyclopaedias, dictionaries of important figures, and Romanian literature histories. At the local level, the affiliation of the authors to the galaxy of figures of that area often reached apologetic tonalities, the criticism was revealed in a more exigent manner, recognizing the importance of exploiting the local, but demonstrating the limits of this creation, often falling under the category of literary Sămănătorism by which the province tried to trace its identity.

The monographic reconstruction of Northern Moldavia intellectuals has proven to be a complex and difficult enough endeavour, which involved the analysis of a series of aspects specific to the interwar period, when the coagulation of national identity reflected in culture was the concern not only of the young generation of intellectuals, but also by the old one. The intellectuality of the province, which was trying, by means of self promotion, to bring its contribution to the progress and affirmation of the new state, was also wondering on that road. Thus, the importance on studying the local aspect was put in a nutshell by the author of the monograph of the movement from Bucovina, *Iconar*, whose words are suitable in the closing of this endeavour:

*The theory of peaks and monocentrism must rely on the knowledge of the environment, of the excitement of ideas, of the conditions that award, in reality, even if just as framework, a genuine identity to the analysed period<sup>1</sup>.*

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<sup>1</sup> Mircea Diaconu, *Mișcarea „Iconar”*. *Literatură și politică în Bucovina anilor 30*, Iași, Timpul, p. 180.