

The Commission for History and Cultural Studies  
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**Abstract** (The Relation between State and Church and the Identity of Greek-Catholics in Transylvania, 18<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries). My thesis relies on the thorough study of archives, reflecting in the same time the performances of Romanian historiography on the topic of Greek-catholic identity formation and consolidation in Transylvania.

In 1700, the Transylvanian Romanians looked up to Catholicism as a way to achieve the *emergence from the self-imposed immaturity*, their acknowledgement as a nation, similar to the other communities in Transylvania, and to overcome their inland status of tolerates by acceptance of their confession among the acknowledged religions of the country. Romanians regarded Catholicism as the way to emancipation, to progress, as it provided the possibility to go to catholic schools. With the unification with Rome, the Romanians also assumed their spiritual role of cultural mediators between Orient and Occident. This was the role they honoured in the time we are talking about. All this time, the Romanian Uniate clergy preserved the tradition of their faith, but also developed a real interest of western culture and civilization. My effort was to understand 1. how the local elite guided itself through the ideas of Catholic Reformation; 2. with regard to its relation to the state, how did the Church guide itself on the way that was leading, inevitably, to *Aufklärung*; 3. the effects of the relation between State and Church (Vienna, Rome, Ezstergom and Blaj) on the modernization of Romanian Transylvanian society.

I present and research texts and documents from the modern age that allow us today to understand what religion meant to Transylvanian Romanians. I tried to present people's relation to religion in Transylvania, regarded as the driving force of that age, in a time of bitter interconfessional disputes among the Transylvanian Romanians. I considered religion as the main source of national identity and I analysed its contribution to the construction of confessional solidarity. I was also interested in the relation between old religious texts and the modernization of society, in the way this change took shape and manifested itself and as far as we are able to identify it in people's attitude and mentality. The intransigence of theological controversies and the way the new theology's discourse managed to provoke the crisis of traditional conscience and forced its integration into the modern conscience reveals the fact that some elements of modern conscience were gradually expanding to this European area as well. I chose to focus on the issue of synodality as an expression of confessional identity, and the fact that this analysis extended over a period of two centuries (18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>) has led to relevant conclusions. They emphasised, on the one hand, the normative capacity of the synods and proved their will for social modernization. On the other hand, the synodal decisions, as a result of debates and consensus, illustrated in the end the social dimension of faith. Regarded from the perspective of the relation Catholic Reformation - *Aufklärung*, the constantly and coherently formulated synodal regulations prove the success of the principles of Catholic Reformation in the Romanian Uniate Church of Transylvania.

The Habsburgs saw the religious unification of 1700 as paving the way towards the catholicization of Romanians. At stake was the stabilization of the Empire's new province. The unification of Romanians with the Church of Rome meant the extension of Vienna's authority in Transylvania, at the expense of the dominant Statures. Catholicism opened the access for Romanians to the stable institutional structures of the Principality. Romanians could become this way the main annihilation force standing in front of the power accumulated by the other, socially and confessional privileged Transylvanian communities

that were forming the country's Diet (Hungarians - Catholics and Reformed, Saxons - Lutherans, and Szecklers - mostly catholic).

In the above mentioned complex context, where political and confessional interests were amalgamating with external and internal factors, sometimes also with contradictory interests and motivations, we tried to identify the moments when the basic principles of governance were changing, in Transylvania as well. My research records the transition in Transylvania, from confessional absolutism to enlightened absolutism, as an expression of the practical policy led by the rulers of the Habsburg Empire. Following the regress of Vienna's initial optimism, Maria Theresa's reforms policy was a sign of irreversible modernity, but it expressed also the limits of enlightened absolutism and showed how far the Theresian *Aufklärung* reforms were. In the same time, we must admit Vienna's pragmatic reform policy, which was adapted to Transylvanian realities. The sources we analysed proved that the ideas of the Enlightenment had not reached yet the Romanian countryside, a place where religion was still traditional and intransigent. This is an aspect of Transylvanian modernity that may generate attractive, high potential research themes.

The vulnerability of the individual standing between tradition (norm) and the external pressure (Rome, Esztergom, Vienna) or the way how the social and political context and the external factors influenced the construction of the Uniate confessional identity in Transylvania can be the sources of further productive research. Possible analyses and interpretation traces, based on still unexplored archives are available. We are working on editing a volume of documents together with Keith Hitchins and Attila Varga, intending to valorise the more than 100 *documents concerning the relation of the Roman Catholic archbishopric of Esztergom to the Greek - Catholic Church of Transylvania* (18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) traced in the archives of Esztergom and Alba Iulia.

Together with Alin Mihai Gherman we are working on two publishing projects showing the role of the church in modernising the Romanian rural society. The first one, which is being completed, is a critical edition of the most representative work of the Romanian *Aufklärung* in Transylvania, Petru Maior's *Prediche*. In the second project, we set out to valorise the files of the informative protocols, drafted for the appointment of Romanian Uniate Bishops by Rome, files that have been very little investigated so far, and are being kept in the *Archivio Segreto Vaticano*. It is a research in accordance with the European tendencies in this field, with the intention of understanding the dynamics of the relation between the Catholic Church and *Aufklärung* from a still unexplored perspective in Romanian historiography, which we consider to be extremely useful and attractive. I am referring to the way how the ideal of post-Tridentine bishop in the Romanian Church of Transylvania was illustrated, but also to the relation between the leader of the Church and the evolution of confessional identity; in the same time it would illuminate us on the progressive consolidation of the Uniate ecclesial identity in Transylvania.