

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH,
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DISSERTATION

(Abstract)

Romanian Confessional Education in the Orastie Area : 1868-1918

**SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR:
PROF. UNIV. DR. IACOB MÂRZA**

**DOCTORATE STUDENT:
CARMEN MARIA BARNA**

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Key words: school, student, teacher, legislation, nation, culture, school program, textbook, attendance, examination, community, school timetable, teaching material, curriculum, school network, Orastie, Hunedoara County

Argument

The present study focuses on the issue of the Romanian Orthodox and Greek – Catholic confessional primary education in the Orastie area between 1868 and 1918. Our intention was to recreate an image as authentic as possible of the evolution of this educational process in the chosen period of time, highlighting all the changes that occurred both in terms of management and organization, and of content, and, beyond the legislative framework, suggesting the atmosphere of the old Romanian school from Transylvania, including the way in which the relation teacher – student, priest – academic community manifested.

The main research resources used in the present paper were the historical records from the collections of the Hunedoara County Department of National Archives, as well as the collection of documents from the Museum of the Dacian and Roman Civilization from Deva. We considered that the documents were the ones to provide us with direct and unassailable information, that the possibility to clarify the problems regarding the evolution and history of Romanian education would find its bases and answers in the sources of our history, in their complex and unbiased analysis. We also tried to corroborate the historical records with the specialist bibliography that is really helpful in our research. The results of the research were particularly fructuous, due to the significant number of documents owned by these institutions, 90% of these documents being unpublished before and carrying information that had to be given full value.

For the last years, the Romanian historiography has been witnessing the return to and the development of certain traditional themes, whose research was interrupted for a while due to certain political regimes. Among the subjects that researchers study today, there is the history of the Romanian church, approached in a different manner now, as well as the history of education, considered from the perspective of local history, of the particularities of each historic region, but also of the uniform components that can be found all over Transylvania. The present paper is part of this direction in historiography, aiming to contribute to the documentary and interpretative resurgence of the history of the Romanian Orthodox and Greek – Catholic confessional education from Transylvania, of the history of the Romanian culture during the Austrian – Hungarian dualism.

Historiography of Romanian education in Transylvania (1869-1918) – with a special focus on Orastie

Simply reading the Romanian historiographical texts from the interwar period, the communist regime and after the Romanian revolution of 1989, all referring to the history of Transylvania in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, we reveal the almost constant presence of the themes and subjects related to the confessional school. Together with the two churches of the Romanians from Transylvania, schools represented “national” institutions, playing a major part in the shaping of our nation and the affirmation of its identity. The frequency of the themes related to the history of confessional schools in the works of the historians interested in the 19th Transylvanian century equals the importance of the academic institutions and settlements belonging to the two Romanian confessions – Orthodox and Greek – Catholic - in those times. It is equally true that, in a certain period, historiography made no mention of the confessional character of the schools that we refer to, preferring to elude, in the 1948 – 1989 period, the adhesion of these schools to religious structures, as well as the support that the churches provided to the educational process from the confessional primary and secondary schools. Minimizing the issues concerning the church history, the religious life or the figures of clerics in the national history of the Romanians from Transylvania, as imposed by the ideological commandments the communist regime, also made that the history of confessional be approached in a partial or incomplete manner, by omitting its close links with the institution of the church. Of course, all these papers focus only on certain aspects of the past of the Romanian confessional education in the Orastie area in the period of the Austrian – Hungarian dualism, so that we do not currently have a synthesis paper dedicated to the whole area that would also treat the educational aspects from all points of view.

Political and cultural background in Transylvania (1869-1918)

In the middle of the 19th century, after the Revolution of 1848-1849 and despite its defeat, the life of Romanian society and that in Transylvania as well, witnesses a number of changes in all fields: social, political, cultural, and economic. In a rather short period of time, as a consequence of the revolution, we assist to the social liberation of the serfs, to the acknowledgement of the fact that, in 1863, the Romanian nation had a status equal to that of the former privileged nations, to the religious autonomy through the founding of the Greek – Catholic Metropolitan Church in Blaj in 1853 and the Orthodox one in Sibiu in 1864, to the expansion and consolidation of cultural establishments, to the creation of a quite large number of Romanian foundations and funds. At the same time, the middle of the 19th century brings out

the growth of the contingent of intellectuals, a phenomenon that continues until 1918. In the villages, the older group of priests, whose instruction gets gradually better and better, is joined by schoolteachers, and in the cities and the towns, the number of Romanian civil servants, teachers, high-ranking clerics and freelancers increases. There is an increase as well in the number of Romanian city inhabitants that create their own parishes, thus showing the first signs of a more elevated public life. At the same time, we discover the first cultural associations, "ASTRA" being one of the most important of them.

In this age of major changes, especially from a politic perspective, for all the Romanians living in the provinces under foreign domination, it seems that the Romanians from Transylvania defended their national existence most resolutely. They were aware of the historical rights of their nation in Transylvania and the long past period of common battle offered them unity. They also benefited from two influential national institutions – the Orthodox Church and the Greek-Catholic Church, with powerful centers at Sibiu and Blaj and, starting from the late 19th century, from the even tighter connections with politicians from the Kingdom of Romania.

In the last decades of the 19th century and until the onset of the First World War, the movement of the Romanians from Transylvania was led by a small-sized, yet growing, middle-class. This was formed of businessmen and members of the liberal professions, mainly lawyers, who gradually took the place of the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic priests as national leaders. Their main objective was political autonomy and self-determination. The defeat of the Revolution of 1848 and the imposition of a centralized regime in the following decade destroyed all these hopes, but the idea of autonomy remained the vital cohesive force in the Romanian political circles. In the early 1860s, this autonomy finally seemed within reach, as Vienna needed the help of Romanians and Slaves in order to counteract the aspirations of the Hungarians and to experiment new forms of constitutional governments. In Transylvania, Vienna allowed the convocation of the Diet with a large Romanian representation, adopting a legislation that recognized the political equality of the Romanians with the other nations from Transylvania, and conferred to the Romanian language the same official status as the Hungarian and German. Most Romanian leaders hesitated about interfering with the fundamental political structures, being certain that an autonomous Transylvania would provide the essential constitutional frame in which the newly conquered national equality could be transformed into national autonomy.

Aspects of the history of Romanian confessional education in Transylvania (1848 – 1868)

In 1858, the number of schools from Transylvania was up to 2399, 982 of them being Romanian, 957 Hungarian and 468 Saxon. The number of Romanian schools increased with 239 new schools between 1851 and 1858, while there were only eight Hungarian and two German new schools. But, in proportion to the total number of Romanian population, the number of schools was far from satisfying, more than 60% of the Romanian children not attending school.

The situation of the education in the Zarand and Hunedoara Counties was even more difficult. Only the most important cities of the two counties, Deva, Hunedoara, Geoagiu, Orastie, Brad, Sacarâmb and Tebea had schools on a permanent basis. The situation of the schools in the Hateg County was even worse, as it results from the memorandum presented by the vicar Stefan Moldovan to the governor of Transylvania on August 19/31, 1852. The memorandum showed that there was not a single elementary school in 60 larger and 22 smaller communities.

With all these hardships, Andrei Saguna, as well as the bishop Alexandru Sterca Sulutiu, were unyielding in their conviction that elementary and secondary schools had to function under the supervision of the church, as they considered the educational process to involve not only the assimilation of knowledge or preparation for a career but also a moral and spiritual experience.

Complying with the measures taken by the management of the two Romanian national churches from Transylvania, most communities from the Hunedoara area proceeded to reopen or create Romanian Orthodox or United confessional schools. Despite all adversities, many rectors, in their capacity of school inspectors, focused their attention on village schools, convincing communities to make efforts in order to support them. Worth mentioning is the example of the Orthodox rectors Iosif Basa from Zarand, Petru Moldovan from Halmagiu, Nicolae Crainic from Dobra, Ioan Papiu from Deva, Ioan Ratiu from Hateg, Nicolae Popovici from Orastie. Also worth mentioning are the Greek-Catholic rectors Benjamin Densusianu from Sacarâmb, Petru Valean from Orastie and the vicars Stefan Moldovan, Gavril Pop and Petru Pop from Hateg. Due to their activity, the schools from the villages from the southern – western part of Transylvania would make slow, yet undeniable, progresses.

Legislation on education in Transylvania between 1868 and 1918: problems and cultural and political subtext

Immediately after the signing of the Pact, the Hungarian government issued a series of laws intending to strengthen the domination of the Hungarian nation on the other nations, The Nationalities Act of 1868, promulgating the existence of a single nation in Hungary, which was “the unitary, Hungarian nation”. All the other nationalities from the kingdom were considered to be “Hungarian political nations of citizens of various languages”.

The instauration of the Austro – Hungarian dualism would produce the immediate reorganization of the primary education system, in accordance with the interests of the Austro – Hungarian state. The education reform of the Hungarian minister of education and religious affairs, Iosif Eotvos, was articulated in the Education Act no. 38 from 1868, voted by the Hungarian Parliament on the 7th of December of the same year, providing the foundations for the modern education from Transylvania.

In 1872, the portfolio of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction was granted to Trefort Ágoston. He continued the program of minister Eötvös, both as regards the education issues, and the relations between confessions and state. The minister Trefort reinforced the control of the state over the confessional schools through the legislation from the years that followed. At the same time, in order to complete the excessive centralization program of the state, the minister Trefort was interested in the other nationalities whose school systems relied on the autonomy of the national church (for instance, Romanians, Transylvanian Saxons and Serbians). As a consequence, the Hungarian government authorities were interested in adopting measures that would limit the rights of the church authorities on the confessional schools.

This tendency of the state to penetrate and interfere with the school and cultural life of the Romanians was accurately articulated in the Act no. 28/1876. The Act stated that the royal school inspectorate was to verify and approve all programs of study, textbooks and teaching material that teachers would use. The legislative framework became even more rigid and restrictive as regards the minorities from Hungary through the provisions of the Act no. 18/1879 or the first Trefort Act, the minister who implemented it becoming famous. The Act stated the compulsory teaching of the Hungarian language in all the confessional schools. The exclusive politics of the Hungarian government were continued through the implementation of new laws in the beginning of the 20th century. This is when the Act no. 27/1907 appeared, upon the initiative of the minister of religious affairs and public instruction, Albert Apponyi, who

also gave his name to this law that was voted on March the 19th, 1907. This act, with tough provisions, especially in relation to the material conditions of the schools, essentially aimed at closing Hungarian national confessional schools, consequently the Romanian ones from Transylvania as well.

Stages and moments in the development of the education process in the Orastie area (1868 – 1918)

Studying the Greek – Catholic and Orthodox confessional education in the Orastie area and underlining its role in the formation process of the Romanian intellectuals from Transylvania in the period preceding the Unification from Alba Iulia imposes the special research of the school population. We also considered necessary to present some legislative aspects regarding the course of confessional education during the Austrian – Hungarian dualism as well as certain aspects connected to the organization and management of the education process in the area subject to our investigation. Taking into account the researched historical records, we reached the conclusion that the analysis of schoolchildren is impossible without previously presenting the confessional school network in which they performed their activity, as well as the way in which Romanian confessional schools were built and supplied.

The analysis of schoolchildren also imposed the study of the geographical and social origin of the students, students' number, school attendance, results obtained at school exams, as well as an account of the extracurricular activities in which they were involved.

Content of education

The implementation of the provisions of the Act no. 38/1868 produced major changes in the content of the programs of study, curriculums and textbooks used in the confessional schools. Until the issue of this act, the subject matters that were known and studied in this type of schools were writing and reading, grammar, orthography, religion, arithmetic and civic duties. The new law introduces the study of subject matters with a scientific character and practical orientation, which corresponded to the requirements of the epoch and even to those of the Austrian – Hungarian dualist state. As a consequence, the abovementioned law introduced subject matters such as: geography of the country and of the world, history of the state, natural history, rural economy and practical exercises on agriculture, gymnastics.

A particular problem, which encountered some major difficulties in order to be solved, was supplying the confessional schools with the necessary teaching material. The education legislation stipulated that the confessional schools be supplied with the strictly necessary

teaching material, such as blackboards, writing materials, calculating machines, geographical and historical maps, drawings for natural sciences and for agricultural practice, necessary tools for the school's gardens, calligraphy slates, terrestrial globes, etc. All these teaching materials were missing to a considerable degree in the first part of the researched period, but as central or local confessional school authorities were able to ensure their existence in schools with a great deal of effort, the education process improved and diversified to the benefit of many generations of students.

The teaching staff from the confessional schools in the Orastie area (1868 – 1918)

The activity performed by the teaching staff, the dimensions and the implications of this activity in the cultural, political and religious life of the Romanians from Transylvania in the Austrian – Hungarian dualism period, represent aspects that must be researched further on, starting with the documents that we have. In the case of the schools in the Orastie area, the teachers played a significant role in the educational process of the students, deciding the subsequent evolution of their disciples, in accordance with the specific character of the culture from this part of Transylvania. We can most certainly affirm that there existed a permanent and indissoluble connection between the teachers and the national history from this period (1868-1918). The teachers' direct involvement in crucial moment during the foundation, development and evolution of the schools must be understood in connection to the cultural, political and religious life of the Romanian nation. An important part of the research of this social category represents the way in which their continuous improvement took place, in conformity with the legislative requirements in effect, but the aspects related to the teachers' wages and retirement are of a real significance as well.

Instead of conclusions: Accomplishments of the confessional education in the Orastie are: the formation of the Romanian intellectuality from Transylvania at the turn of the century

The middle of the 19th century brings out the growth of the contingent of intellectuals, a phenomenon that continues until 1918. In the villages, the older group of priests, whose instruction gets gradually better and better, is joined by schoolteachers and notaries, and in the cities and the towns, the number of Romanian civil servants, teachers, high-ranking clerics and freelancers increases rapidly. There is an increase as well in the number of Romanian city inhabitants that create their own parishes, buy land, build churches and schools, found banks, thus showing the first signs of a more elevated public life. In parallel with the numeric growth

of the Romanian intellectuals, their possibilities for action grow as well, just like their influence in society. In this epoch, in addition to the old religious and education centers, such as Blaj and Sibiu, we notice the new dioceses from Gherla, Lugoj and Caransebes, the gymnasiums from Brasov, Nasaud and Brad, the seminars from Sibiu, Gherla and Lugoj, the teacher training colleges from Blaj, Sibiu, Gherla and Sighet, and a large number of normal schools, cultural associations and societies. Associating various political, cultural and religious events with the names of certain students that started their education in the elementary schools from the Orastie area, from the first graduates since the beginning of the Austrian – Hungarian dualism and until the generation that planned the Union from Alba Iulia, we come to believe that some of them, as their life and work show it, are part of the Romanian generation of intellectuals that was formed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. From the large number of students that attended these schools, we notice Aurel Vlad, who was born in the small community of Turdas, near Orastie.

Aurel Vlad was a lawyer, doctor of law and promoter of the Union from 1918. He was also a member of the Ruling Council and of the Romanian National Party. Between 1919 and 1920, he was Romania's minister of finances, afterwards becoming the minister of Religious Affairs and Arts. The list of his functions would not be complete without mentioning his position of manager of the "Albina" Bank, from which supported and sustained many confessional schools in the Orastie area, or the function of manager and owner of the *Herald of Justice* newspaper from Orastie.

Aurel Vlad played an important part in the revolution from the fall of 1918, being elected the president of the Romanian National Council from Orastie. Following the Great National Assembly from Alba Iulia from December the 1st, 1918, Aurel Vlad was elected as a member in the Ruling Council, being assigned the financial sector.

Another personality that was formed in the confessional schools in the Orastie area is Aurel Vlaicu, inventor and pioneer of Romanian and international aviation. In his honor, the small community of Bintinti, where he was born in 1882 and where he made his first studies, is named Aurel Vlaicu today. Internationally recognized, this is what the "Neue Freie Presse" newspaper from Vienna wrote about him: "wonderful and courageous were the flights performed by the Romanian Aurel Vlaicu in an original airplane, built by the aviator himself, with two propellers, the aviator being seated between them. Every time the machine would rotate, leaving the impression that it would stumble and fall, the audience repaid the Romanian with passionate ovations, acclaiming him with an unimaginable enthusiasm."

In this category of Romanian intellectuals formed in the United or Orthodox confessional schools from the Orastie area, we can also include Valeriu Bora, professor, poet, journalist, Cornel Carpinisan, surgeon, dedicated member of the Academy of Medical Sciences, Ioan I. Mota, Aron Demian, professor and school inspector, principal of the “Aurel Vlaicu” high school from Orastie, president of the Astra Division from Orastie and teacher in the schools from Folt and Orastioara de Sus.

The activity of the United and Orthodox confessional schools from the Orastie area in the troubled period of the Austrian – Hungarian dualism, integrating due to its accomplishments and cultural and educational content, was carried out with certain sacrifices, yet relentlessly, in order to conserve the national ethnic character and to achieve our state unity – the ideal of the Romanian people. The contribution of the confessional school to the achievement of this aspiration consisted of preparing and educating the generations that would accomplish the Union from Alba Iulia.

In approaching the theme of this paper, we started from the principle of the historian’s impartiality. We wished not to hide or to avoid the positive parts that the Austrian – Hungarian administration and authorities had in the organization and evolution of the school activity in general, and in the Orthodox and United Romanian confessional schools in the Orastie area in particular. Similarly, we did not wish to elude the negative aspects (the antinational political feature) of the measures that these same authorities took.

We also tried to highlight the best or not that good in the school activity of the local and archdiocesan United or Orthodox confessional authorities.

Therefore, we conclude by saying that the schools from this corner of Transylvania had a sinuous yet ascending evolution despite all the obstacles and hindrances that they had to face between 1868 and 1918. The school achievements, although significant, did not succeed in placing the county on the first position from the point of view of the school supplies and enrollment. Nevertheless, due to the fructuous activity of the teachers from the schools in the Orastie area, a brilliant group of intellectuals that promoted the Romanian language and culture was formed. Through the ideas that they promoted, they contributed to the survival of the Romanian school during hardest period of the dualist domination and to the accomplishment of the Romanian ideal, the Union with Romania.

The appendices increase the originality and authenticity of the paper, thus contributing to the improvement of the content of the present paper. We mention that all enclosed documents were not published before.

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Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Cigmau

Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Geoagiu-Joseni

Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Geoagiu – Suseni

Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Folt

Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Ludesti

Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Mermezeu

Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Orastioara de Jos

Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Pischinti

Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Rapolt

Fond Parohia Ortodoxa Renghet

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Colectia de istorie moderna a Muzeului Civilizatiei Dacice si Romane Deva

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