DOCTORAL THESIS

-_SUMMARY_

CHURCHES, SCHOOLS AND
ROMANIAN RURAL COMMUNITIES
IN COVASNA AND HARGHITA (1850-1918)

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“Churches, schools and Romanian rural communities in Covasna and Harghita (1850-1918)”

-Summary-

**Keywords:** administrative organization and religious life, deaneries, parishes, churches, confessional schools, Romanian communities, Romanian presence, continuity and discontinuity, material status, Covasna and Harghita, “the Szeklerland area”, history and national unity, the period 1850-1918.

The thesis „Churches, schools and Romanian rural communities in Covasna and Harghita (1850-1918)” having as its object of research the life of communities and Romanian Churches, the issue of the Romanian confessional primary school, Orthodox and Greek Catholic from the area of Covasna and Harghita, in the chronological interval between 1850-1918, in the continuity with the period starting before the year 1850, showing the same Romanian presence bearer of the spirituality, culture and civilization, expressed by many churches, schools, testimonies and Romanian values.

Our intention was that to reconstruct an image as possible veridical of the life and of the evolution of the "Triad Romanian existence": Village, Church and School, in this thorny part of the country, in chronological segment chosen, emphasizing the concerns and endeavors of people who lived in this geographical area, next "favorites of the time"-Hungarian and Székely. Working people, Romanians of good faith, just like their ancestors (forebears), have raised their churches and schools and have increased in these their descendants, those who have fulfilled their spiritual longing for freedom and national unity with all Romanian brothers.

The content of the doctoral thesis has been divided into five chapters, as follows:

1. The first chapter, **The geographical and historical framework. Szekler Seats between 1850-1914**, opens the exposure of the whole doctoral thesis issue by the geographical and historical framing of Covasna and Harghita, showing that the existence and continuous/uninterrupted survival of the Romanian communities here, creative of the culture and civilization can not be proved and understood without a spatial and historical basis, which explains the existence in general and survival of a settlement or community. The same, the history of the Romanian communities from Covasna and Harghita is undoubtedly closely related to the history of a Latin people, knead in the hearth of ancient Dacia, which has long lead a vigorous and tenacious battle with neighboring empires to keep ethnic being, language and Orthodox Christian religion, to defend the village, church and school, the battle which is actually the fundamental characteristic of our national history, putting his stamp on this mode of existence, the actions, concepts and ideals of the Romanian people in general and of the Romanian communities from our area of research in particular.

The Christian vestiges, discovered through research and archaeological excavations on the territory of Covasna and Harghita Counties, supposes the existence of a hierarchy and church institutions in the civil settlements of that time, having sufficient elements for a church organization in Transylvania, recover since IV-V centuries, the organization which has not avoided our area. This organization, both political and religious state has improved and strengthened over time, so during the whole period the first millennium until the fifteenth century, the Romanians in the Carpathian Arch have lived organized in kniezates, and from religious point of view were under the guidance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Since the late XIV century, on the territory of the Covasna and Harghita County counties current, have worked specific institutions, respectively Székler seats, which otherwise have been constituted on the model of organization of Romanians kniezates and have more been perfected over time. Administrative-territorial organization of the "Szekely" will register the profound
changes during the period 1850-1918: the abolition of Szekler seats, after the Revolution of 1848-1849 and the establishment of military districts, of circles and undercircles, then restore the old Seats in 1861, followed by their dissolution on the Act XXXIII of 1876 and the establishment of counties; amendments by the Act XXI of 1886 regarding the municipalities, under this final form, the administrative-territorial organization of the Székely counties (comitats) will hold until the Union of Transylvania with Romania, on 1 December 1918.

However, socio-economic transformations, political and cultural monarchy, on the one hand, and on the other hand the changes that have occurred in the administrative-territorial of Szekler seats influenced population’s dynamics and structure of these administrative units of the period, whose territory may be circumscribed today, existing Covasna, Harghita and a part of Mures County.

The seven censuses which were done during the period 1850-1914, allow notification of the major trends in the evolution of the Transylvanian population, but also of the Szekler Seats in our area of the research, over six decades, as well of the mutations occurred in the ethnic composition and confessional of population both the Province and the counties of Harghita and Covasna. If, between 1850-1914, the population of Transylvania increased from 2,073,737 inhabitants to 2,908,507 inhabitants, corresponding to an increase of 40.2%, respectively with an average annual growth rate of 0.56%, the population of Szekler Seats increased from 371,584 in 1850 (17.9% of the population of Transylvania) to 539,961 in 1910 (18.5% of the population of Transylvania), corresponding to an increase of 45.3%.

Ethno-confessional structure of Szekler Seats also changes as a result of Government efforts from Budapest to consolidate demographically the positions of the the Hungarian dominant nation.

In the localities actually included in Covasna county, Romanians represented, in 1850, 14.1% of the total population and 82.8% Hungarians; in 1910, Romanians represented only 11.5% while the Hungarians increased to 87.5%. Orthodox and Greek Catholic confessions represented, in 1850, 15.4% and in 1910, 17.3%. Starting from the premise that the Orthodox and Greek Catholics in Transylvania overlap, almost entirely, with the Romanian population, we can see from statistical data regarding the confessions that have increased the number of Magyarized Romanians who have declared Orthodox, respectively Greek Catholics, but of Hungarian mother tongue. For the locations of Harghita County current, the ethno-confessional situation was similar. In 1850, Romanians represented 8.5% of the total population, and the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic denominations 8.8%. In 1910, relations are changed: the Romanians constituted 6.1%, and the two religions 8.9%, from which almost 2.8% of inhabitants declared themselves Hungarian Greek Catholic and Orthodox religion, they not were only Romanian Magyarized citizens at the first or second generation.

At the end of the XIXth century and beginning of the XXth century, a feature of the Szekler seats, respectively Ciuc, Odorhei, Háromszék comitats is represented by the dimension of the movement of population, over time, and especially the magnitude that took it.

And in these areas as well as throughout Europe of the XIXth century the main cause of mass emigration was the demographic “explosion”, whose direct consequence was a reduction of the surface of the lots of land and the formation of an overneed work force in rural areas which could not be absorbed entirely in urban areas been found in full process of industrialization. So, demographic pressure, poverty and lack of land are the factors most highly associated with migration, adding and national oppression, especially for elite involved in the national movement, and the government policy from Budapest to facilitate, social and economical, Hungarian people, limiting Hungarian emigration among the Hungarian peasantry and to increase the number of Romanian immigrants and also Saxons. For those who left the Ciuc, Háromszék county the main direction remains Romania for blue-collar, hoping to return home with a good gain to enable them to improve their socio-economic status. Instead, those who left the Odorhei county recorded a higher share to America. Most of them went to the interval 1904 to 1913. Between 1899-1900 the largest share of those who emigrated are recorded in Three Seats County with 1595 people (back – returned only 130), followed by Tarnava Minor with 650
(returned 220), Ciuc County with 437 people (back 59) and Turda Mures county with the lowest number of 100 people of which almost half (49) returned.

2. The second chapter, *Romanian churches in the Three Seats, Odorhei, Ciuc-Giurgeu, Reghin Deaneries (1850-1918)* is structured in three chapters which presenting: important aspects of life and organization of the Romanian Orthodox Church, during the period 1850-1914, in the transylvanian general context, referring to the efforts of Bishop Andrei Şaguna and of the Greek Catholic Church in order to obtaining independence of the Romanian Churches and also restoration of the autonomous national Metropolitan; administrative organization and religious life in deaneries and Romanian parishes of the "Szekler", in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century; material situation of the Orthodox parishes and Romanian Greek Catholic from Covasna and Harghita (1850-1918); social, moral and material status of the priest in the Romanian communities.

As regards to administrative-ecclesiastical organisation, both the Orthodox and Greek Catholics, this has undergone qualitative stages, reaching a real improvement during the shepherding of the Metropolitans Andrei Şaguna and Alexander Sterca Şuluţiu.

For reconstitution of the history of the Romanian deaneries and parishes from Covasna and Harghita, I chose to go to the “beginning”. In this sense, I watched what happened with the administrative-ecclesiastical organisation after the religious Union with Rome (1698-1701) and up to 1850. Thus, the administrative organization of the ancient Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan, after The religious union with Rome, was suppressed, its Key link-deaneries ceased their activity. It is understood that religious orthodox life continued in the communities, the existing parishes, without being embedded in an organizational structure such as parish-deanery-diocese, respectively Metropolitan.

Ghedeon Nichitić, who was one of the most active bishops called for the Orthodox Church in Transylvania for his four years of pastoral activity, in the desire to know how the priests fulfill their mission and for make order in the religious life, he needed the one well-designed organizational structure and the link between the diocese and parishes that have continued to carry on the Orthodox ecclesiastical life. Thus, at the beginning of 1786, he made a new assignation of the Diocese, and many of the old deaneries were reactivated, recreation, and others newly created.

For the period 1850-1918, numerous documents (The Archive Funds, Deaneries and Parishes List, Directories, Protocols of souls and schools, circulars, inventories, etc.). from Transylvanian Metropolitan Archives in Sibiu, Covasna, Harghita, Mures National Archives, Alba-Iulia, Cluj and the "Metropolitan Nicolae Colan" Documentation Ecclesiastical Centre in St. George town allowed us to obtain information, not less, about the administrative organization and functioning of the local administrative structures of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania of the second half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the XXth century.

Following the structure of deaneries Three Seats, Gurghiui, Odorhei was discovered that not found all localities which interested us and now we are in the Covasna and Harghita. So I got to see that these were not only in Three Seats and Odorhei deanery, but in other deaneries such as Cohalm deanery (Varghis parish and Large Batanii and Small Batanii parishes), and Valeche Haghis deaney, Muresiu-Osorheiului Deaney, Gurghiuului Deaney (orthodox parishes from Toplita), Sighisoara Deaney, Higher Tarnava Deaney (Vidacos), the Upper Turda and Reghin Deaney (Toplita I and II). All these localities, according to informations from the Deaneries and Parishes List of Church and said documents have been subordinated, during the period which we deal, varied, and the structure of deaneries undergone many changes with the passage of various parishes in the deaneries subordination, especially Assignation and again Assignation of the branches. There were several Assignation, we remember those in the years 1843 (under Bishop Vasile Moga), 1871 (under Bishop Andrei Saguna), 1875, 1881, 1885, there after were not significant changes, except one or two communes church (affiliates) from each deanery will move to another deanery than before. This is the case for religious commune, Large Batanii, which until 1890 was subsidiaries to Varghis (Vargias), in the Cohalm (Rupea) deanery, and from this date is established as a parish with branches: Dry Aita, Zalanului Valley, Bodos, Small
Batani, Herculian, Biborteni, Baraolt. In "Szeklers", Orthodox parishes in 1850, which today are found in Covasna and Harghita, were subordinated to 7 deaneries which functioned as local administrative structures: Brasov II Deanery, Three Seats Deanery, Cohalm Deanery, and Haghigh and Valcele Deanery, Gurghiuului Deanery, Sighisoara Deanery, Superior Tarnava Deanery. Instead at 1900 and 1918, the Orthodox parishes from Covasna and Harghita we will find only four deaneries: Three Seats, Cohalm, Sighisoara, Reghin.

Regarding to parishes and Greek-Catholic deaneries from our area, we have shown that these are the result of the whole process of Religious Union with Rome. As Three Seats deanery traditional located in the sphere of influence of Brasov, just a number of ten parishes of the remaining Orthodox parishes composed the Greek Catholic Deanery with the base in Poian, and in deaneries Giurgeu and Odorhei, most Orthodox parishes until 1701 became Greek Catholics in the late eighteenth century.

According to dates published in the "Deaneries and Parishes List" in 1900, in Covasna and Harghita were established as a Keys link of the Fagaras Diocese, and later of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Fagaras, three deaneries (districts): Three Seats District, Giurgeu District and Odorhei District. If in 1850 there were 10 parishes in Covasna, in 1900 we know that there were 11 Greek Catholic parishes, 91 affiliates, 2 parishes, 4 parish administrators. In Harghita County in 1850 are registered parishes 16 subordinated to Giurgeu District, and eight parishes with 96 affiliates subordinated to District Odorhei.

From Inventories of movable and immovable property of the church, I could noticed that in the our area were wealthy Romanian communities and others poor or very poor. But there was, on the advice of Metropolitan Andrei Saguna, the archpriests at that time, a mobilization of forces to ensure basic needs for a good activity of the church ministers to which they have belonged, and ultimately to support church and confessional schools from "their poverty" as important in their cultural and spiritual raising.

For the Romanian Greek Catholic parishes, churches inventories, drawn up by parish priests from the area, sometimes surprising "ruined state" of the church buildings and material support very low power of the parishioners and village church in general, other wise good and very good condition for churches, reflecting a greater financial strength of the parishioners to support. In "Szekler", the parishes were poor (30-40 Greek Catholic families) than those in the plains of Transylvania on the Mures Valley and of Tarnave with 300-400 families. In 1900 in "Szekler" (Three Seats, Giurgeu, Odorhei Districts) were 14 stone churches, 23 wooden church, a wood chapel, 25 wood parish houses, three stone parish houses, a stone school, and 12 wood schools. In Orthodox parishes from Covasna and Harghita are registered 65 churches built before 1918, of which two (the Lady’ s monastery church from Moglanesti, Harghita county and the church from Bodogaia) are from the eighteenth century, 18 churches of the eighteenth century, 38 of the nineteenth century, and seven were build during 1900-1914.

The Church and priest represented the spiritual center of the community. The priest has authority in the community, exercising a decisive influence in the village, not only spiritual life matters, but also in the administrative, legal and school matters. He was the moral example for community, the morality and reputation of the priest was a necessary imperiously concern for both the bodies lay, especially for religious bodies of Sibiu and Blaj.

Regarding the social origin of Romanian priests in the period 1850-1918, the largest share is held by those who come from the priests families, in our area as in all Transylvania, instituting a real tradition, that at least one of the sons of priest pursue a career of the father, taking birth truly "dynasties of priests," that we can track over several generations. Another category of priests came from teachers families and other from farmers families, merchants and small entrepreneurs.

The social and material status of priests was very diverse, conditioned by countless factors, primarily the size of the parish, the geographical area where they were situated. In addition the„canonical portion” always being the exclusive use of the parish priest, existed in some localities the lands of the church, especially forests, meadows, also a modest property of the cantor, a small built (intravilan), an arable land, a meadow, which add ordinary parish house,
sometimes a house for church singer and one for ringer church. Revenues of Greek Catholic priest as well as of the Orthodox have long been conditioned by the contributions of the parishioners, they did not have a salary fund. Deans received little aids to the Archdiocese. priests were remunerated by contribution of the faithful people, salary is determined according to the number of souls of believers, each of them annually contributing with a florin. In this situation, most of the priests, relating to the parishes population, had salaries below 400 florins. In the parishes of Szeklerland, poorer, the salary of priest was between 10-100 florins, received less than a simple civil servant. We presented the case when salary exceed 400, or 800 florins, but also were the cases when salary was only 7 fl. (the case of Ozun parish, Covasna county). This aspect address to one of the realities of the Romanian village, school founder from Covasna and Harghita in the period that followed of the Revolution of 1848 until the beginning of the World War I. So, the financial situation of the priests and teachers was not one corresponding, but they do not gave back to these difficulties, but as leaders of the villages, these ministers of the altars have worked to illuminate the believers by word and grace, take care for the church and schools for fully spiritual and cultural growth of the parishioners.

3. In the third chapter, Romanian village in the "Szeklerland" - community church and school founder (1850-1918) presents the existential concerns of the Romanian village, which early in its existence, has articulated almost all aspects of public life, spiritual, cultural, economic, and even political-social ones around the church. Being submitted with all intensity to Magyarization process in the second half of the nineteenth century, many of Covasna and Harghita Romanian village fought and succeeded to preserve their language, traditional costumes, confession, habits, and others, the more confession. From the documents of the period we studied, either ecclesiastical of the two dioceses Romanian church in Sibiu and Blaj (Deaneries and Parishes Lists, Protocols of souls, School lecture notes, parish registers, etc.) or assessments, censuses, general documentary information or assessments, we brought valuable information, concrete, absolute evidence of the existence of Romanian religious communities in Covasna and Harghita, with small parishes or their branches, wooden churches more numerous than those of stone churches, cemeteries and schools.

In these communities, the Romanians have lived with Szeklers and other nationalities (it is true in a very small percentage), to devote agriculture, especially cattle and sheep (those Bretcu and Voinesti, Covasna), rafting (in parts Giurgeu Toplița Gheorgheni-Mures), but they were and also rural artisans.

Starting from the observation, very realistic in fact, that the development of human life in a region, as in our case in Szeklerland is influenced more by living resources, these in their turn conditioning the occupation, the level and way of life of inhabitant, I looked in the present study to highlight the main sources of income, all leaving a trace both in distribution and density of the population.

The main sources of income in the Giurgeu, namely in the localities Gheorgheni, Toplita Tulgheș, Bilbor were timber harvesting, timber, rafting, farming and agricultural production. A enriching of this palette meant establishing of the Armenians in Gheorgheni Frumoasa, which led to the development of trade and industry in the area. The timber trade and rafts was one of the most important activities practicated by the inhabitants of surrounding villages on Mures Superior. Rafting with shepherding, which people have did also today to the surrounding mountains and also the prosperous agriculture in Giurgeu, then copper mines in Balan and those of iron in Upper Ciuc, it made, as in this area to focus most dense population of the whole land and to have here those largest and most dense human settlements.

The mineral waters and many establishments baths are also an earning source for residents. Is the case of the Tusnad resort complex for which his arrangement has a special contribution the Romanian merchant Tache Stanescu from Brasov.

In the last three decades of the nineteenth century appears slowly the factory industry, the first being in general, breweries and alcohol factories, in greater numbers in Targu Secuiesc. Later, at the end of last century and early twentieth century, and other factory are established,
developing and other branches of the industries, such as those dealing with the manufacture of footwear and clothing, the food industry and wood processing, especially in Gheorghieni.

By summarizing the mode of living, occupation and main source of living we had in view to highlight the changes that have occurred in the distribution of population by socio-professional categories. Thus the share of population employed in agriculture in the period 1850-1914, begins to diminish, in Transylvania, nearly 25%. In the Ciuc Seats, Odorhei Seats and Three Seats, the agriculture occupies an important place, the overwhelming majority of inhabitants from villages and towns living from agricultural occupations or related to agriculture until the late nineteenth century, after which loses from his importance with diversification of professions and industrial development.

A subsection of this chapter has been reserved for issue involvement for Romanian communities from Covasna and Harghita in the National Movement of Romanians from Transylvania (1850-1914) by his three exponents: priest-teacher-believers who were in the most important moments of this national movement and especially the Memorandum Movement. An important contribution returned the young generation, among whom I chose to talk about the youth Elie (Miron) Cristea from Toplița, the future Patriarch of Romania left the Harghita lands, who was involved in the Movement Memorandum, Student Congress of Constance in 1894 with more responsibility, contributing to public solidarity, along with other young Romanian students who worked in European Universities and Departments of Cultural League.

4. The fourth chapter, Confessional teaching/education in the Romanian Deanears from Covasna and Harghita (1850-1914) presents the quantity and quality evolution of the whole Romanian education in the area and the period throughout under we discussion and also the economic and material status of the Romanian confessional schools, Orthodox and Greek Catholic from Covasna and Harghita (1850-1918); the confessional and educational statistics and the problem of low school attendance; the professional training (qualification) of Romanian teachers; the teacher status and remuneration of teachers, observing that a similar situation with the village priest had and Romanian teacher.

In the period 1850-1914, the evolution of Romanian education in our area, broadly followed the evolution of the Transylvanian Romanian education in the same period. So, at that time, the confessional education from Covasna and Harghita, as well as, all the confessional education in Transylvania, has also seen ups and downs, due to legislation emitted by the central authorities.

On the basis of the existing archival documents and analyzed, and previous research, we could capture the quantitative and qualitative evolution of the entire Romanian education in the area and period under discussion, highlighting the special care of Romanian village that founding and to support the two fundamental institutions, Church and School. Therefore, trying a centralization follows that, in Covasna and Harghita have worked since the second half of the eighteenth century until the late nineteenth century, more than 60 Romanian confessional schools, some operating without interruption throughout the period mentioned, others with larger breaks or just a few years due to weather adversities. In these schools, the young Romanian generation from Covasna and Harghita received a proper education, of whom 114 were supported in addition of education within the higher education institutions in the country and abroad and they are forming as future representatives of the nation in which they have their roots.

5. The fifth chapter, Priests, teachers and believers from Covasna and Harghita during the First World War and their participation to the Union of Transylvania with Romania on December 1, 1918 presents three exponential categories of Romanian communities - priest, teacher and believers-who wrote not only the history of churches and schools in the villages where they were born, and for which they took care with the considerable efforts, but also the nation's history, passing through many sufferings and through the Passions of the First World War, but fighting for the liberation of whole Transylvania and her union with the Country, on December 1, 1918. In the midst turmoil of the history, Romanians from this part of the country is naturally bended under the heavy burden of that time, but were not broken, a witness are today
the multitude of documents and testimony and their persistance itself in the same places and nesting earthly of their ancestors. The Romanians contribution in the "Szekler region" was not modest at all to be passed unnoticed. This is a prime reason why I added to thesis the chapter Priests, teachers and believers from Covasna and Harghita during the First World War and their participation to the Union of Transylvania with Romania on December 1, 1918.

And another reason, equally imperative necessary is that the meaning of their suffering and struggle, of the Romanians in this area of research, for church and school and other national rights, in the second half of the nineteenth century, finds “clarification and fulfillment” in the period 1914-1918, culminating with the Union of December 1, 1918, and it is true that marked no end of their struggle with “historical enemies” but, an another battle began, strengthened and motivated. The calvary of Romanian priesthood and teachers from Covasna and Harghita area, suffered during the First World War until 1918, facing difficult years in prison, deportation or forced residence in other cities from Transylvania, proved an example of sacrifice and dedication to their family, nation, that was followed by the great mass of people, the believers. In this sense the statistics presented, regarding to the Romanian priests and teachers during the First World War from Covasna and Harghita, is a painful witness of that historical reality. Most teachers are mobilized to the front line (war front), the priesthood of the villages remained “para-lightning in which hit all ransgressions (iniquities)”. Statistical situation of the Romanian priests during the First World War from Covasna and Harghita was as follows: in Covasna county were 8 imprisoned priests, 12 deported, and in Harghita were three priests deported, a priest imprisoned, all beaten, abused and who died in shortly after they are released from prison because of torture suffered in jail.

At these testimonies are added and those of the Romanian heroes during the First World War, represented by numerous monuments and cemeteries of war from Covasna and Harghita. The number of them covers, in the counties mentioned, almost all area living by Romanians. We must not forget that these heroes of nation were added to the living book of the Church’ history and Romanian village, which is none other than the cemetery, from Covasna and Harghita, and their graves as of the ancestors, which I like them called "dead-alive" of Romanian villages remain "open to speech and witness" for the history which have written by the Romanians and their communities in this part of country.

Are cognition of these worthy facts of our forefathers from Covasna and Harghita, urgently required to day as says the call (as currently) of His Grace Emilian Antal-in 1918 was any young student, active fighter for the Union, his baptismal name was Dumitru Antal from Romanian Toplița: “When life does not serve us in every decade with historical events, we have a duty to know those which passed, at least indirectly to feed our soul, with the paper putting in the hard work the love’ feeling formation until it to be become to the guard of dignity and of the Romanian character.”

These words can be considered a real motivation for the thought and deed that advised us to fulfill the desire of knowing of the rich history past of Covasna and Harghita, revealing the mysteries of this area through which the Romanian communities from here, founders of churches and schools, and especially preservers of being and national values offers us to research and study.

We want that this work to be useful to anyone interested in discerning the mysteries of our national history, with the laudable intention to always discovering the history truth regarding the place and role of Covasna and Harghita area within the ancient historical Romanian province-Transylvania, and together, within our tumultuous national history, in the context of the fight of the Romanian people for freedom and unity.

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1Dumitru Antal, How the Romanian Army entered in Toplița in 1918. Memories, a manuscript foundat the monastery “St. Elias Toplița”, Harghita county.