

**Babeş-Bolyai University**

**HABILITATION THESIS**

**Ecclesiastical Elites, Education and War among  
the Romanians in Transylvania in the 19th and  
the Early 20th Centuries**

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## Abstract

Proposed as a Habilitation Thesis, this work summarises the main scientific, professional and academic achievements obtained since completing the doctorate to the present day. The thesis is divided into three separate chapters, each with its corresponding chapters. Thus, while the first chapter is devoted to the main directions of research and to the research subjects approached during the postdoctoral period, the second chapter addresses my scientific, professional and academic career plan. The last chapter focuses on a selective bibliography used both to illustrate the results obtained during the period under analysis and to support the argumentation of this thesis.

The first chapter synthetically presents the most representative scientific and professional results obtained in the period 2009-2015. Thus, since the defence of my PhD thesis, entitled *The Relations between the Holy See and the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church during the Second Half of the 19th Century*<sup>1</sup>, my scientific research has followed three main directions of analysis and interpretation. These have, in fact, continued to address in greater depth the major theme regarding the retrieval of the history of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church in Transylvania, ranging from the mechanisms adopted towards the formation, recruitment and promotion of the ecclesiastical elites, to the role of the Church in the education and modernisation of the Romanian society, and all the way to the role and prerogatives of the ecclesiastical institution powers during World War I.

As regards the ecclesiastical elites and their history in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, it should be noted that they still represent today a little known segment in the specialised historiography. Partially recuperated in recent years, especially in the Transylvanian area, this research has captured especially aspects pertaining to their intellectual training, their social origin, their economic status and their perception in the collective mind. On the other hand, what has remained sequentially or completely unknown concerns many other aspects that can provide a unified perspective on their role and place among the Romanian elites and, respectively, at the level of the national politics and culture of the time. In this sense, I have

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<sup>1</sup> Completed under the supervision of Professor Nicolae Boșan, my doctoral thesis entitled *The Relations between the Holy See and the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church during the Second Half of the 19th Century* has been published under the title: Ana Victoria Sima, *Affirming Identity. The Romanian Greek-Catholic Church at the Time of the First Vatican Council*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 2013, 442 p.

shown that my postdoctoral researches have endeavoured to answer especially questions regarding the recruitment and promotion mechanisms encountered with this elite segment. Their reconstruction had proved all the more necessary since it contributes to the reconstruction of the unofficial routes and avatars that the election or appointment of hierarchs to senior positions often pursued. I have granted special attention in this regard to the election of the Metropolitan of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church in the aftermath of World War I. The results I have obtained show that the election of a hierarch was a difficult decision, marked, on the one hand, by a natural canonical significance, and on the other, by a real, burdensome intervention on the part of the state and its policies. That is why the reconstruction of all these factors and mechanisms of decision is designed to contribute to acquiring in-depth understanding of the state-church relations, of the relations between the central and the local decision-makers in the church, of the political and ecclesiastical games at level of the higher clerical institutions (episcopate, metropolitanate), whose leaders asserted themselves as both spiritual and political-national leaders.

A separate line of research has focused on education and the role of the church institution in the process of literacy spreading and the modernisation of the Romanian society. In this context, I have shown the profoundly modernising role played by some of the great currents of pedagogical thought in the 19th century. This was the case of Philanthropinism and Herbartianism, whose dissemination and reception in Transylvania contributed to the displacement of the old methods and concepts of education and to their replacement with modern teaching/learning techniques and methods. These were new concepts that evolved gradually, over the course of a century, from a pragmatic, utilitarian sense, specific to the school, to a broad vision of the role and need for human improvement through education and culture. Through its network of denominational schools and through its clerical elite, the Church played a fundamental role in the reception and implementation of these pedagogical methods and concepts. It contributed thus to expanding the frontiers of literacy and to connecting the Romanian society to the Western European system of values.

The third major research direction addressed in this chapter is the cultural history of World War I. I have presented here the research I have initiated and carried out on several themes, which are relatively new in the Romanian specialised literature: more specifically, I have primarily tackled the psychological and mental changes that the war generated at the level of the

Romanian society, but also other aspects, such as war patriotism and its socio-political connotations, churches and the war propaganda, or its effects on the mobilisation of the population.

Each of these research directions and themes has been illustrated with publications and participations in specialised scientific events, attesting the scientific achievements obtained by the candidate. I have attempted to illustrate my participations in international conferences and scientific events that have led to my inclusion in specialised scientific groups and circles, facilitating my familiarisation with new methods of interpretation and contributing to the introduction and dissemination of Romanian researches in the international scientific circuit.

The second chapter of the thesis presents the scientific, professional and academic career plan, outlining both the previous achievements and the most innovative methods and research topics I am currently engaged in. In essence, this career plan aims to achieve several major objectives, namely: editing and publishing two volumes of correspondence resulting from the studies conducted by the Romanian Greek-Catholic elite in Rome and Vienna; writing a monograph dedicated to the recruitment and promotion mechanisms among the ecclesiastical elites in Transylvania during the 19th century; continuing the in-depth research on the cultural history of World War I among the Romanians in Transylvania; preparing a course reader for the special course on *Modern Romanian Institutional Structures*.