

„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY FROM IAȘI

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**The Catholic community of Moldavia.
Social dynamics and rapports with the state in the
first half of the XIXth century**

Abstract of the doctoral thesis

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The history of Catholic community, along with the one of the Catholic Church of Moldavia, has become lately a field of research of more and more interest in current Romanian historiography. Given that a big part of the literature from this field of study was dedicated to the theories regarding the origin of Catholics from Moldavia, the approach of such a theme can generate partisan interpretations or hasty conclusions.

In our thesis, we wanted to accomplish an analysis of the defining components of the Catholic community from the principality, starting from its evolution in the first half of the XIXth century, the legal status, the relations with the authorities in that period, and reaching to the analyze of the ethnic and confessional structure of Moldavian population from that period, using as many reference book as possible. In our entire process we tried to make an objective description as much as we could of the historiographic issue regarding the origin of Catholic population from Moldavia.

The efforts we made were mainly focused on identifying the bonding and cooperation mechanisms of the minority congregation with the officials of the Orthodox majority, given the roughnesses produced by the competition which the local Orthodox hierarchs felt coming from the Catholic missionaries.

Far away from considering that we will cover such a wide domain, still suitable for interpretations and polemics and having an enormous reference book, partially unexploited, we want to offer an image of the Catholics from Moldavia, emphasizing their socio-

demographic evolution and relations with the institutions of the state, but also analyze the ethnic and confessional evolution of the Moldavian population.

Of those who firstly studied the history of Catholic communities from Moldavia, we mention Nicolae Iorga and George Călinescu, which, at the beginning of the past century, made efforts to discover and publish documents from the archives that helped them to bring to light aspects regarding their daily life. Also in the first half of the past century, Radu Rosetti and V. Mihordea, in the context of some well-documented studies, had approached various aspects regarding the evolution of Catholic communities from Moldavia.

The insertion of the *ceangău* term into the historiographic line, starting with the second half of the XVIIIth century, determined the appearance of two counter currents, one of the representatives of Hungarian school, which claimed the magyar lineage of moldavian catholics, and the other of the historiographic romanian school, which touched the spiny problem of the *ceangău* term's etymology and reasoned with in favor of the romanian lineage of these communities (Dumitru Mărtinaș, Iosif Petru M. Pal, Anton Coșa and Ioan Dănilă); among these ones, we found, however, romanian historians which credited the hungarian theories, Marius Diaconescu beeing an illustrative example.

Ample works, with universal character regarding the history of the catholic communties from Moldavia were made by Petru Tocănel, Emil Dumea, Ion H. Ciubotaru, Jean Nouzille.

Alongside these works, we mention also the presence of an important amount of some monographs dedicated to catholic villages as Adjudeni, Cleja, Faraoani, Gherăești, Hălăucești, Horlești, Mărgineni, Pildești, Răchiteni, Sagna or Săbăoani, useful due to their wealth of information about those local communities.

The funds of published documents are very important, by the originality and the veracity of the given information. Therefore, the huge fund of documents edited by Eudoxiu Hurmuzachi, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, provides for consultation many references on the subject of catholics from Moldavia. Here are published papers issued by local authorities, or notes sent by the foreign diplomatists in Moldavia to their superiors.

Another document publisher, Dimitrie A. Sturdza, in his fund *Acte și documente relative la istoria renascerei României*, gives to the researcher valuable information, so in terms of catholic clergy's realtions, but also in terms of social, economic and political situation from Moldavia in the refered period.

Not lastly, we mentioned the fund of documents coordinate by Daniela Bușă, *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, new number, volumes III (1831-1840), IV (1841-1846), V (1847-1851), VI (1852-1856), București, Editura Academiei Române, published between 2004-2010, data source and valuable information given by the numerous visitors in Principalities of Romania in the designate period.

Another importante source for documenting was represented by *catagrafi* (fiscal censuses) from XIXth century,

published in time; archivistic sources of first rank, due to the wealth and variety of information, they reveal important clues especially on the harshly disputed subject of the origin of catholic population from Moldavia.

Useful in the deliniation of that period's depiction are also the works or the funds which published laws or official documents (form letter, anaforala) issued by the agencies of Moldavia.

As unusual sources, we cite the consultation of some records from *Fondul Colecția „Manuscrise Vatican”* (Direcția Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale), *Fondul Documente, Pachetul 1078, Fondul Planuri și hărți, Fondul Vistieria Moldovei, Fondul Isprăvnicia ținutului Bacău, Fondul Isprăvnicia ținutului Roman* (Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Iași), *Fondul Parohiile catolice, Fondul Isprăvnicia ținutului Bacău* (Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Bacău), *Fondul Moldavia* (Arhiva Curiei Generale a Ordinului Fraților Minori Conventuali Roma). We must specify that the archival funds analyzed by us cover only partially our theme, provided that a very important part of the documents regarding the Catholic mission in Moldavia are in foreign archives.

Consulting *Fondul Colecția „Manuscrise Vatican”* (a microfilmed fund) has given us important information, especially statistic, regarding the dynamics of Catholic population from Moldavia in the first half of XIXth century and the nascency of new communities, information regarding the structure and the activity of the Catholic mission from the principdom: facts about catholic missionars, the evolution and the (re)arrangement of catholic

congregations, as a natural consequence of the evolutionary process that occurred in the midst of catholic communities, the building of new churches, but regarding also the ethnic and confessional evolution of entire moldavian population from the first half of the XIXth century.

By studying *Fondurile Vistieria Moldovei, Isprăvnicia ținutului Bacău, Isprăvnicia ținutului Roman*, we had access to information regarding the migration phenomenon of population from Transilvania to Moldavia, mainly catholics, phenomenon which had a significant contribution to the evolution of the catholic communities from here and the nascency of some new ones.

Our work aims, through its four chapters, to realize a depiction of the catholic communities from Moldavia in the first half of the XIXth century, going in the main for the social dynamics of these communities (the increase of the number of the catholic population from Moldavia in that epoch, and the catholic settlements made in this time lapse, the analyze of the rapports between catholic clergy and the authorities of the state and the analyze of the legal status of catholics in Moldavia, but also the evolutions mentioned in ethnic and confessional structure of population in Moldavia).

We also found, worthing the interest, to briefly present the theories regarding the lineage of the Catholics in Moldavia, same as the role and the place of migration from Transilvania in nascency and evolution of new Catholic communities in Moldavia.

Firts chapter, *Social dynamics of Catholic communities in Moldavia*, approaches the evolution of Catholics in Moldavia in the second half of the XVIIIth century and the first half of the XIXth century, complexion captured by inspecting and comparatively analysing the following sources: statistic datas (statistics belonging to Catholic Mission in Moldavia, inventories and censuses of population), rappers (ones of the Catholic missionaries sent to their superiors in Rome parity of „*De Propaganda Fide*” Congregation, others of foreign diplomats who were at that time in the pricedom), narrative sources(narrations of priests and magyar researchers, stories of foreign travellers about Moldavia).

Thus, the Catholic community in Moldavia had in these period a significant evolution, thing that allowed it to rise from the ranks and come into prominence as one of the main religious minorities in prinedom; according to the numbers, statistics shows us that: if at the mid of the XVIIIth century there were about 6.000 catholics, at the beggining of the next century there were about 12.000 catholics in Moldavia (or 14.000, according to other sources), we discover that at the mid of the XIXth century, there were 50.135 catholics (according to the last statistics taken in consideration, the one made by the apostolic traveller Iosif Tomassi in 1859).

As regards the settelments where the catholics were spread, the numbers are illuminatig: at the mid of the XVIIIth century there were about 40 settlements, at the beginnig of the XIXth century , 78 settlements, as after half a century, their number went beyond 200.

The causes of these „demographic explosion” of the Catholic community in Moldavia are varied, a part of its causes should be searched along the XVIIIth century, the moment that, after the massive depopulation of the country, the authorities embrace a series of measures intended to encourage those who wanted to make a way in life here, measures which seduce big masses of people, especially from Transilvania.

In second part, „*New Catholic communities in the first half of the XIXth century*”, we made a „fund” of the new settlements inhabited by Catholics, focusing especially on the information that certify the first mentions of the Catholics in those settlements, their origin, and their numerical evolution in the first half of the XIXth century.

The number of the settlements in Moldavia where the Catholics lived varies from one source to another, probably depending on how much the author knew Moldavia's territory, same as the route he chose to make his apostolic journey. For example, in the mid of the XVIIIth century period, somewhere in 1743 we find 10 settlements where Catholics were living, meanwhile in 1745 we find 21 settlements, as in 1762, Catholics in Moldavia were spread in more than 40 settlements; there are so significant disagreements in a short time, hard to explain, and only just in terms of the judgement presented above.

At the beginning of the XIXth century, in Moldavia were known 78 settlements inhabited by Catholics, as in 1823 there were 140 settlements, and in 1829, there were 137 settlements, in

conclusion a positive evolution in the number of Catholic communities. These evolution is argued against by the bishop Rafael Ardiuni, who, in 1838, concludes only to 104 settlements, where lived Catholics, but his information must be treated with scepticism.

In 1842, according to a map made by the geometrician engineer Baiardi, the Catholics were found in 178 settlements, and in 1878, according to *Vederea generală a Misiunii romano-catolice din Moldova*, made during the bishop Paulo Sardi, there were 213 settlements. Two other sources, both during the bishop Antonio di Stefano, attest the presence of over 200 settlements at the beginning of the XIXth century where lived Catholics (in 1851, according to *Schematismul Misiunii romano-catolice din Moldova*, there were 204 settlements, and in 1854, there were 212 settlements, hence a relatively identical number).

The third chapter, *The relations between the Catholic clergy from Moldavia and the main authorities of the state*, offers an analysis of these relations, which, we think, it shall be judge closely related to the internal and external political developments, but also with the legal status of Catholics in Moldavia.

Growing in numbers, the Catholic community also needs a proper ecclesiastic institution, able to give spiritual care to its parishioners; if in the first two decades of the XIXth century, The Catholic Church in Moldavia keeps the organization of The Episcopacy of Bacau (which functioned from the beginning of the XVIIth century), starting with 1818, due to the opposition of the local orthodox clergy, especially that of the Metropolitan Veniam

Costachi, The Holy See must use the institution of Apostolic Vicariate, a different formula, which provides further hierarchical and administrative continuity to the Catholic ecclesiastic institution.

In the first half of the XIXth century, an area of interest was represented by the legal status of Catholics in Moldavia, area which has two different levels of accessibility: one referring to the legal status of Catholic communities – made of natives, and the other referring to the legal status of the catholic clergy – made of foreigners, vassals of different political powers, existing some differences between these two levels. This epoch is marked by diplomatic issues between the Great Powers, mainly between France and Austria, for obtaining the protectorate of the Catholics in Moldavia, seen as a good way to represent the political and economic interest in the area.

The issue regarding the legal status of Catholics in Moldavia will be solved in two steps: first in 1839 (with the order given by the padishah on 4 may which allowed the staying of a catholic bishop in principedom) and the second in 1858 (with the article 46 of the Paris Convention from 7/19 august, which specified that: *“Moldovenii și valahii vor fi toți deopotrivă înaintea legii, înaintea contribuțiilor (dărilor) și primiți deopotrivă în funcții publice [...] Moldovenii și valahii de orice rit creștin se vor bucura deopotrivă de drepturile politice. Exersarea acestor drepturi se va putea întinde și la celelalte culte prin dispoziții legislative”*, approving thus the conferment of political rights for Catholics in Moldavia).

Taking in consideration the fact that the protectorate problem regarded, besides the eventual authority (Austria, Russia, France), primarily the Holy See and the Moldavian state, both the internal Moldavian authorities, and The Holy See will be aware of de fact that the external protective claims can only be removed with the granting of a local legal status to The Apostolic Vicariate of Moldavia, which will be done later, by the establishment of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Iasi.

Last part, “*Beyond authorities, hierarchy and institutions*”, we wanted, in one hand, to picture the theories regarding the ethnic and confessional origin of the Catholics in Moldavia, same as the evolutions on these levels, and, on the other hand, we tried to give a basis for the discussion about the part and the contribution played by the migration from Transylvania in the evolution of the Catholic communities in principedom in the first half of the XIXth century.

Regarding the lineage of the Catholics in Moldavia, there were strengthened two ideas: first, adopted and reasoned by the representatives of the Magyar historiography, which sustain that these people are Magyars or Székely who were assimilated by the Romanians among whom they lived, and the second, reasoned with historical and linguistic arguments by the Romanian historiographers, who considered that they were the descendants of the old Magyar settlers, or the Transylvanian immigrants arrived in Moldavia in XVIIth century.

The issue has its roots in the late XVIIth century, when, referring to the Catholics in Moldavia, the székely priest Péter Zöld

uses for the first time the term of *Csango*. Few years later, in a letter seted at Delnița on 15 June 1780 in Latin and sent to the Franciscan priest Vincze Blahó, the same Péter Zöld names the Catholics in Moldavia *csángó Magyar-estranged Magyar*, inserting so the term of *ceangău* in the historiographic circuit.

Another subject that caused arguments refers to the synonymy of the term *Magyar-Catholic*, made by the Orthodox population for the Catholics faithfuls. From the analysis made on the equality of the “*Catholic*” and “*Magyar*” term (used in parallel to name the Catholic population, along with that of „*ceangău*“ , inserted later in the circuit), we concluded that each of the terms refers, in meaning, to the same subject: the person who is part of the Catholic population, arrived from Transylvania and established in Moldavia.

When it was taken in consideration the religion, they were called “*Catholics*”, and when the reference was to the idiom they used, they were called “*Magyar*”; ergo, the “*Magyar*”, appellation does not appoints the ethnos, but the nature of the spoken idiom. More, we can talk about an extrapolation of the “*Magyar*” term on the whole Catholic population in Moldavia, most authors tending to generalize.

To understand yet how this exaggeration was perpetuated, we must take in consideration the ideas from this epoch, when the religion inflicted the nationality. Thus, a person convert to Catholicism becomes for the Magyar Catholics a Magyar. In many

situations, even the Catholic missionaries came from Italy were named Catholics in documents.

In conclusion, we can say without any mistakes that, in the first half of the XIXth century, after an evolutionary process both in terms of population dynamics and relations with the authorities of the state, the Catholic community gains its right place in the society of Moldavia.

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