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Ethnicity, Confession, Nation – The Development of Concepts in the History of Transylvania in Religious Life²

*Abstract*³.

The church has had to accept the national division of Europe since the Middle Ages and adapt to this situation. This issue is relatively unclear in the case of Transylvania. N. Iorga stated about the Orthodox Christian consciousness that “it was so strong that it hindered the creation of a strong national consciousness”, and this would allow us to see in the ecclesiastical organization a form of expression of unitary organization of Romanian ethnicity in Transylvania. The time of Transylvanian principalities and voivodeships shows us that most often the ecclesiastical leaders were also the political leaders (see the case of Prince Andrew Báthory who was Archbishop of Warmia – Poland); so, the two concepts of ethnicity and confession reflected the same historical reality during those times. The two concepts will

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³ This study is a synthesis of two previous studies that had as a convergence point two key concepts in the Transylvanian context: ethnicity and confession. The studies are the following: “Etică/morală, etnie și confesiune. Relevanțe biblice”, in: Ștefan ILOAIE (ed.): *Ethos și etnos: aspecte teologice și sociale ale mărturiei creștine*, Cluj-Napoca, 2018. 9-21 and “Etnie și confesiune, evoluția termenilor în cadrul istoric transilvănean în secolele XIII-XIX”, in: Ioan Vasile LEB (ed.): *Teologie și cultură transilvană în contextul spiritualității europene în sec. XVI-XIX*, Cluj-Napoca, 1999. 23-37.

become separated only later, after the emergence of confessions other than the Eastern rite. In support of our statement, we have the correspondence between the Hungarian kings and officials and the papacy. Before dealing with these perspectives, we shall pin down the terminology to grant the reader the possibility to understand the historical situations through a kind of thinking marked by the imprint of the Holy Scripture.

Keywords: ethnicity, people, confession, dynamic status, national consciousness, Transylvania, the church.

1. Conceptual Distinctions

a. Ethnicity. The term in its technical form and meaning of ethnicity appears in the event of the “Tower of Babel” (Gen 11). However, it can also be found earlier in the sense of “people” – “Now the whole world had one language and a common speech” (Gen 11:1). We deem that ethnicity roots here are not part of the creational act but rather the consequence of the fall of man, the slide of humanity on the slope of gradual alienation from its Creator until it reaches the illusion of total isolation from Him. The unnatural amalgamation of languages means a partial break of the possibility to communicate and a configuration of the language and location-based groups that will bear the name of *people/peoples*, which is more relevant in the field of theology than *ethnicity*. Such linguistic differences are only applicable to the Romanian vocabulary; they cannot be extended to another linguistic space.

The situation of the concept also changes in the context of choice. The theological topic of choice appears in Chapter 2 of *Genesis*. It is also present throughout the entire Scripture and reaches the choice fulfilled by the Saviour Jesus Christ. Then, the issue of peoples appears in its eschatological relevance in the context of the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), which, alongside *Revelation* (chapters 20–22), shall make understanding possible in the sense of the existence of peoples in the context of the history of salvation. The miracle of understanding that the Gentiles present at the act of Pentecost transcends our possibility of rational comprehension and requires a spiritual approach.

We would just say that in the case of the sermon it is about a single subject-person-act, the risen Saviour – the uniqueness of the subject and its full openness have the potential to generate a unity of understanding even if, subsequently, the lexical structures of expression are not phonemically identical. It is certain that the peoples were not eliminated as a matter of fact by this miracle; what changed was only the type of inter-relationship and the type of communication. Therefore, ethnicity is not a limitation, is not a structure meant to generate antinomies, it is rather a historical certainty that we must ennoble with the capacity to manifest doxologically, liturgically, and confession-wise, featuring the capacity of opening/agapic service towards the other, the neighbour that he himself is “in his image” just like you. It is anyway the “mystery of the people of Christ”,² belonging to Christ’s people meaning acquiring the understanding and wisdom of the kind bestowed by the mystic act of Pentecost.

b. Confession. Most certainly, experts in the field of systematics shall refer to the applied meaning of the concept of confession. Nevertheless, we shall choose Ruth’s example as we shall carry on with the previous topic of the people from the perspective of the concept of the chosen people underlining its meanings or approaches in its static, historical sense, strictly perceived through Abraham’s choice, and its dynamic sense revealed through the promise made to Abraham, testified by Ruth’s confession, heralded as a prophetic event by Ezekiel and the other prophets, and fulfilled by the mandate commissioned upon the Apostles by the Saviour: to herald it to all the nations (Mt 28:19–20) in the whole world (Mk 16:16). Thus, we shall not refer to the idea of confession as *denomination* built around one kind of confession of faith and a certain kind of mystical liturgical union for the simple reason that the biblical text claims one single object of knowledge and confession: the knowledge of God confessing Him.

Israel’s choice is the pillar that supports the Scriptures from *Genesis 12* to wisdom literature.³ The deuterocanonical books deal with the topic in the *Book of Jubilees 15:31–32* and in *Solomon’s Psalms 9:8–9*. The choice is expressed in the gift of the Law and Sabbath.⁴ In Qumran, the covenant is construed as the observance of the com-

² We refer here to the text in Gal 3:24. See the topic in burial hymnography.

³ MANNIS, Frederic (1996): *L’Israel de Dieu*. Jerusalem. 75.

⁴ Ex. 31:16–17; Deut. 5:15; Jub. 2:17–33.50.6–13.

mandments.⁵ However, along with the birth of Christianity, this pillar of Judaism was attacked by a new interpretation which followed the objective of “replacing the synagogue by the church” or the continuation of the synagogue service in the service of the church.⁶ That is why, after long analysis of biblical and patristic texts, in F. Manns and the authors quoted by him there is one question remaining: and yet, which is the chosen people? We argue that the answer to this question can be found in Ruth’s case. The chosen people are the Living God’s people/nation. For whoever reads this appendix to the *Book of Judges*, it will be clear that Ruth was a Moabite and could re-become one after her husband’s death. But she preferred something else: to follow God, Naomi confessed, and confessing Him she herself becomes a partaker of the fruits of *Shema Israel*. Her statement “Your God will be my God” (Ruth 1:16) is the act of confession grafting on the stem of the cultivated olive tree (Jer 11:16; Rom 11).

However, the Lord did not cut the natural branches, says St Paul the Apostle. We believe that Saint Paul’s term of “natural branches” should draw our attention more. Anytime we approach the issue of *am and goim*, we tend to fall in the same damaging dichotomism that we have mentioned earlier, even a manicheic dualism. We believe that we ought to pay more attention to the exegesis/the accomplishment of the Law brought/revealed by Jesus Christ. He says that He has revealed His Father to us in everything and that He has opened the Kingdom of sight. Everything she saw was convincing for Ruth as well: the sight led her to the conviction that Naomi’s God is the Living God. And in this case the issue of the “rest” that is going to be redeemed does not refer – as we Christians would like to believe – to the Jews that adopted Christianity. They are Christians, they have the freedom of Christ, the freedom of the truth revealed and assumed in all its personal glory. “The rest” are the ones faithful to the Law and the Living God about whom Christ Himself said they would convert, this being one of the signs of Christ’s second coming; they will then recognize him as Lord and God because Jesus Christ and the sign of His victory appear in the sky – the Cross, that madness of divine love for man which requires from us, too, a mad love for Christ, and “he who has seen Me has seen the Father”.

If we admit this exegetical appendix, we will be able to answer the question: who are the chosen people? It is – and here we are using St Paul’s terms – first the Jews and

⁵ *Rule of the Community manuscript from Qumran Cave 1 (1QS) 1:7–8.5.1–3.*

⁶ MANNIS 1996, 75.

then the Gentiles because “there is neither Jews nor Gentiles” in his Kingdom. In other words, “those who do by nature the things contained in the law” are the natural branches that are not cut and among which the nations are grafted as a new edification in Christ. That is why we speak about two meanings of the concept of chosen people: the static and historical meaning deriving from Abraham’s choice and faith and the dynamic meaning deriving from the promise made to Abraham, in which it is said that he is going to be a source of blessing for all the nations. The two meanings are not parallel realities, but rather they are a nation and nations converging towards unity thanks to the subject of their faith: Yahwe Hai(im).

c. Nation. The nations are not a created given but rather the fruit of sliding and deepening into sin as a state of fact and in history, and the Pentecostal solution/understanding is found in the birth of the unity of faith and knowledge via the Holy Spirit so that all “tongues” praise the Lord and then become silent when they see Him (how beautiful the *Cherubikon* of Holy Saturday is: “May the whole human body shut up...”). Sight convinces and gives birth to those words that keep you in the scope of resurrection: how to be silent if we have seen?! And Isaiah says: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! Or the fruit of the blessing perfectly poured forth by Jesus Christ for all the nations on earth. We would opt for a spiritual touch that would take us out of the trap of excessive dualizations: in this sense, you are kindly invited to look at Abraham’s request: I am not fulfilled without the third, he is of me, but he remains forever; therefore, when he will return, the fat calf is waiting for him as a sign of Your mercy and pity.

One of the Christian desires that the Saviour Himself heralds (John 17:21) is the unity of mankind. The pan-human unity does not annihilate the national specificity of any nation (Rev 21:24.26 – the term ethnicity is clearly pinned down), but rather, from the perspective of faith, it transcends the geographical limits and gives back the common Christian thinking to mankind. The research of the past decades in European historiography has greatly shaded the issues proving the birth of feelings of ethnic solidarity both for the Catholic West and the Orthodox East as well as their manifestation along with the Christian universalist solidarity promoted by the church.⁷

⁷ BOCȘAN, Nicolae – POP, Ioan Aurel (1994): *Etnie și confesiune în Transilvania (sec XIII–XIX)*. Oradea. 5.

This ethnic-based division appeared in the church as early as the apostolic age (Acts 6:1, Gal 2:12),⁸ but we cannot talk about an eminently ethnic split until the Middle Ages together with the conversion of various peoples to Christianity.⁹ In the general framework ensured by Christianity, or even more often under the rule, the approval, and encouragement of the church, many of the mediaeval nations preserved and strengthened their identity.¹⁰ This gave birth to the so-called *diversas ecclesias speciales* by countries where the religious authority geographically overlapped with the political authority.¹¹ The rise of monarchies, the disputes on domination areas, the status of vassal states, and later the development of the concept of natural rights determined the separation but not the antinomy between *corpus mysticum patria* and *corpus mysticum ecclesiae*.

2. Ethnicity and Confession in the Light of the Correspondence between Hungarian Officials and the Papal State

The first and the clearest documents regarding the existence of a Romanian Orthodox ecclesiastic institution in Transylvania date back to the 11th century. In the opinion of ft. Mircea Păcurariu, Member of the Romanian Academy, the ecclesiastic establishment in this area is much older,¹² the Greek monasteries being mentioned, which confirms their origin in the Byzantine rite as well as their existence prior to the Great Schism. We can follow the dating back to the Apostolic Age for the area of Scythia Minor:

⁸ The *Acts of the Apostles* make the distinction between Hellenistic Jews and Jews (6:1); the *Epistle to the Galatians* makes the distinction between the Gentiles and they which were of the circumcision (2:12).

⁹ We are referring to the 9th and 12th centuries, the conversion to Christianity of the Slavic people, the Goths and Hungarians. We must note that in the Eastern Church, the administrative and organizational structure around Constantinople did not create the necessary requirements for autonomy for this period.

¹⁰ BOCȘAN – POP 1994, 5.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Mircea PĂCURARIU: *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Sibiu, 1978. 45-46.

back to the 4th century for the Banat area, while for Transylvania we must limit ourselves to the archaeological research in Dăbâca, namely to the 9th and 10th centuries,¹³ which does not mean that there was an ecclesiastical organizational vacuum.¹⁴

Ioan Zonaras tells us there was a byzantine bishopric here prior to the Catholic missionary “concern” regarding the Transylvanian religious area. The byzantine mural found in one of the churches discovered in Dăbâca testifies for it. We have inserted this historical overview aiming to create the premises of a terminological delimitation on the term “Greek” used in both Eastern and Western sources. I. Zonaras states that Bishop Ierotei was brought to Transylvania from Constantinople, which means that the ecclesiastical organization did not offer the possibility for the election of a local bishop. But here “Greek” does not refer to ethnicity but rather to confession; the faithful in his bishopric were of Eastern faith. We must note that the dividing line between the Orthodox and the Catholic faith in the South-Eastern European area at the time we are referring to was made up of Romanians, Serbians, Bulgarians, and Greeks, and this confessional reference could have been applied very well to any of the former, but from the ethnic-confessional perspective it referred only to the Greeks. Moreover, the term has an ironic connotation when used in papal documents, being synonymous with schismatic – this will be covered in the explanations further below.

The written reference dating back to 1011 regarding the episcopal castrum in Tibiscum (Jupa) or Tibisco (Timiș), belonging to the Archbishopric of Ohrida, is prior to the Great Schism of 1054. This gives us the opportunity to notice two elements that we deem important for church history: a) before the Great Schism, there was already a “confesio” division and rite-based division between the Eastern and the Western Church. This division was reflected both in the confession of faith and the administrative as well as missionary organization; b) there was a state of conflict between the two churches due to the claims of the primate, which in the case of the Crusades turned the “war of liberation” into a war of conquest, at least religiously if not territorially. After the 12th century, Byzantium entered a downward spiral of imperial decadence, and its place could not be taken by any other Eastern ecclesiastical capital city, which led to a Catholic missionary

¹³ Ioan Lupaș: *A existat în Transilvania o episcopie ortodoxă înainte de întemeierea regatului ungar?*, in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 5/1924, yr. LII (52), Bucharest, 2016. 149-153. 151.

¹⁴ See details in A. BEJAN: *Banatul în secolele IV-XII*, Timișoara, 1995.

assault. The same happened in Transylvania. The episcopal centre in Timiș ceased in activity during the first half of the 13th century when it was dissolved due to the pressure of the Catholic bishopric of Cenad.¹⁵

When the Orthodox episcopal castrum in Banat was dissolved, another Romanian bishopric was mentioned in North-Western Transylvania, around Beiuș in the first years of the 12th century. It is referred to in the letter sent by the Hungarian kings to the pope in the year 1204, mentioning the existence of some churches with Greek monks¹⁶, which were falling into depravity because of the diocesan bishops.¹⁷ Based on this information, Pope Innocent III wrote to the bishop in Oradea, asking him to visit the said monasteries to see the real situation, convert the Greek monks to Catholicism, and found a bishopric loyal to the pope, i.e. a Catholic bishopric.¹⁸ Another letter mentioning the existence of the Orthodox bishopric is the letter written by the Archbishop of Kalocsa to the pope indicating the location of the bishops' residence on Knyaz Bâlea's estate (*in terra filiorum Bele knese*). The pope's reply was favourable to the archbishop's request to establish a Catholic bishopric under his jurisdiction as recorded in the letter dated 3 May 1205.

The two letters reveal that the term ethnicity was identical to the term confession, and it was often pejoratively used as "Greek", that is, of Eastern rite. Nevertheless, this approach highlights that in the concerned area there was no other Romanian Catholic bishopric as they were born as a Christian people of Latin tongue and byzantine rite.¹⁹

Ethnic diversity was strong and obvious in the Eastern European world. The Ecumenical Patriarchy of Constantinople had to admit the national character of the Eastern churches at an early stage. In this respect, we would mention the stavropegial monastery in

¹⁵ SUCIU, I. D. (1977): *Monografia Mitropoliei Banatului*. Timișoara. 43.

¹⁶ It refers to the Romanian monks of Greek rite and not to Greeks that had nothing to do in Bihor.

¹⁷ "Guedam ecclesiae nachorum Graecorum in Regno Ungarie canstituto per incuriam diocesanorum episcoporum ei per ipsos Grecos, qui valde sunt, sicut asserit disolutis pentius destruunlur. HURMUZAKI, Eudoxiu – DENSUȘIANU, Nicolae (1887): *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*. Vol. 1, Part 1. Bucharest. 39.

¹⁸ "Unus fierit episcopatus ex illis qui nobis sit in medietate subiectus." Ibid.

¹⁹ See details in: TURCUȘ, Șerban (2001a): *Sinodul general de la Buda*. Cluj-Napoca; (2001b): *Sfântul Scaun și români în secolul al XIII-lea*. Bucharest.

Perii Maramureşului, Transylvania (14th century), whose prior had almost bishop-like prerogatives. In the Romanian geographical area, we can find another form of solidarity worth mentioning although it does not relate to Transylvania. During the time of the Orthodox bishopric of Bihor, there was an Orthodox bishopric in Moldova for Romanians, Hungarians, and Germans. These ethnic groups were said to recognize the authority of some “fake bishops” of Greek rite (*pseudo episcoporum graecorum ritum tenentibus*), as the papacy considered them in 1234, but who were real Orthodox bishops.²⁰ This situation reveals that the denominational reality went beyond ethnicity, but a longer time had to pass until all the concerned became aware of it. We have used this example to obtain a documented argument for the previous statement that the bishops of Greek rite were considered schismatic and fake. This proves that in the Catholic missionary vision of the 13th and 14th centuries the term ethnicity was not identical to faith, the object of their mission being the people that would change its faith but not its ethnicity (for the time being!).

Historian I. Ganoczi states that upon the establishment of the Catholic bishopric of Oradea, during king Saint Ladislaus (1085–1097), there were inhabitants of Greek rite (*graeci ritus homines habitabant*)²¹ in the area of Bihor – so, Romanian Orthodox ethnics; but if we were to think about Banat, they can be just as well Serbians of Orthodox faith. It is evident that during this time ethnicity and faith meant two different issues that did not have the same area of extension: ethnicity was narrower, while faith was wider, without being properly and clearly pinned down.

Mentioned in the years 1204, 1205, 1234, and 1247, the Orthodox ecclesiastical institutions spread around the Romanian ethnic territory were most certainly older by decades or sometimes centuries than their first written documentary evidence.²² Although the Catholic mission determined some of the bishoprics to cease activity (the Bishopric of Timiş), this does not mean that they completely disappeared after the conversion. The 1215 Council of Lateran requested that the Catholic bishops should

²⁰ PASCU, Ştefan (1956): Mişcările țăărăneşti prilejuite de intrarea lui Mihai Viteazul în Transilvania. In: *Studii și materiale de istorie medie* 1/1956, 129; IORGA, Nicolae (1987): *Conferințe, ideea unității românești*. Bucharest. 215–216.

²¹ GANOCZI, I. (1755): *Disertatio historica – critica de Sancto Ladislao Hungaricae rege fondatore Episcopatus Varadiensis*. Vienna. 71.

²² See PĂCURARIU, Mircea (1980): *Începuturile Mitropoliei Transilvaniei*. Bucharest.

have high clergy members of Eastern rite for the faithful of the rite. The Byzantine ecclesiastical institution of the Transylvanian Romanians, called “stubborn schismatic Wallachians” by the Hungarian royal authority and the Latin ecclesiastical authority, faced many difficulties hindering its organization and strengthening process during those times as well as in later periods. The official Catholicism supported by the Hungarian apostolic kings fulfilled its duty to spread Catholicism by all means: propaganda, persuasion, threats, persecution. These might have been the circumstances in which the two Eastern Romanian bishoprics in Banat and Bihor got dissolved pursuant to the agreement between the Hungarian coregent, Béla, and the papal legate, Jacob of Preneste. Béla would promise under oath that he would force all those insubordinate to the Roman Church to obey keeping their rite, which is not against the Roman Church, as the Council of Lateran ruled.²³

3. The Ecclesiastical Institutions during the 14th–16th Centuries. The Evolution of the Two Terms in the Orthodox–Catholic Confrontation in Transylvania

We could notice that in the 13th century the term *populus* mainly meant a human group within a political or ecclesiastical body,²⁴ its Greek equivalent being ethnicity. The alternation between “fake bishops” and “schismatic bishops” indicates that both terms referred to confession. Concerning the research, the two terms meant the same population group, namely the Romanian population in Transylvania that formed the majority and was an obstacle in the way of Catholicism.²⁵ The use of force and the mix

²³ POP, Ioan-Aurel (2011): *Din mâinile valahilor schismatici. Românii și puterea în Regatul Ungariei medievale (secolele XIII–XIV)*. Bucharest. 70–80, 274–291.

²⁴ BOCȘAN – POP 1994, 20.

²⁵ The registers of papal tithes from 1332–1340 mention between 954 and 2,200 settlements with Catholic parishes in Transylvania, Banat, and the neighbouring regions. Orthodox Christians also lived in some Catholic parishes, and in some cases they were obliged to pay Catholic church tithes. Based on these ecclesiastical data, Acad. Ioan-Aurel Pop is of the opinion that “it can be said that the settlements with the Catholic parishes in Transylvania and eastern Hungary accounted for 43–45% of the total number of certified settlements”. The same proportion was

between proselytism and the act of political and military conquest determined the Romanians to oppose the Catholic propaganda. That is why the latter not only opposed conversion but also turned the direction of the action in their favour, attracting the foreigners towards their rites and customs, and maybe their language as well, since they were one single people, i.e. one single country or ecclesiastical establishment. This is an example of ethnic identity preservation through faith different from that of the conquerors.

The Catholic Church did not act directly among the Romanians but rather through the Hungarian kings as apostolic kings. The mission was carried out by the Catholic monastic orders that were working hand in hand with the royal court. For this reason, the Romanians perceived the proselyte mission as an attack on their ethnic/religious identity and independence and would react accordingly, turning to the relations with their brethren in the other Romanian regions.²⁶ Thus, the ecclesiastical unity foreshadowed the unity of the state. The proselyte actions were milder until the 13th century, but they became more violent especially during the time of Louis I in the 14th century. He also acted as censor of the papal correspondence.²⁷ The Hungarian king would consider himself the “secular arm of papacy”, leading a series of military actions called crusades although the enemies were all Christian. An ecclesiastical letter dated 1356 ordered the Dominicans in Hungary to preach the crusade against “all Transylvanians, Bosnians, and Slovenians who would be heretics”.²⁸ Determined to solve the issue of the Romanians, King Louis came to Transylvania in April 1366 and spent six months there. In his opinion, Transylvania was not allowed by any means to follow the mutiny of the other two Romanian countries. However, the Transylvanian Romanian élite seemed much more inclined towards this evolution despite the measures taken by the central power and the colonization with foreign populations.²⁹

confirmed for the late fourteenth century by Antonio Bonfini, the official chronicler of Matthias Corvinus, who appreciated that at the end of the reign of Louis I (1342–1382) the Catholic faith became widespread as it was adopted by more than one third of the kingdom’s population, the rest being “stubborn schismatics” or “heretics”, their ranks being made up of “Greeks”, “Wallachians”, or “Slavs”, who still had to be converted. Cf. POP 2011, 280–313.

²⁶ SZILAGYI, Sándor (1866): *Erdélyország története tekintettel mivelődésére*. vol. 1. Pest. 122.

²⁷ BOCŞAN – POP 1994, 24–25.

²⁸ *Documenta Romaniae Historica C, Transilvania* 9/1987. 13.

²⁹ POP 2001, 112–163, 314–344.

The Romanian élite was a force until the 14th century in Hungary. In Transylvania, this élite was able to preserve its status partially and could centrally represent their people among the estates despite the invasions and usurpations caused by the conquerors and the colonists.³⁰ It identified itself as Romanian and had two aims: to protect its religion and to ensure a possibly independent status. That is why it was considered schismatic. The religious problem was also a political problem for them, wherefore they turned to the Romanian countries. This fact proves that in the 14th century the knyazes defended the ethnic specificity of their people via the Orthodox confession. Therefore, it was ruled that ownership of the land was exercised based on a written act, but it was conditional upon belonging to the Catholic denomination. Thus, the Transylvanian princes and knyazes were dispossessed of the land properties traditionally held for ages.³¹ Therefore, the Romanians, like the other Orthodox in Hungary, were deprived of their own élite to represent them, by converting the latter to Catholicism and removing the clergy. Being left without leaders in the name of their ethnicity and confession, Transylvanian Romanians could no longer turn Transylvania into a Romanian political country. To stop the actions of their Romanian opponents, the king introduced a special legal establishment aimed at “annihilating or destroying the villains of any nation, namely the Romanians in the country”.³² But it did not have any success as the unrealistic national and confessional policy of Hungary smoothened the way of hierarchical orientation towards the Romanian principalities and Constantinople. Thus, we have the clear example of the actions undertaken by Balcz and Sas (1391), who founded the monastery in Peri thanks to the support of Patriarch Anthony IV of Constantinople.³³

The 15th century brought a distention of the relations by the resolutions of the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1439). The documents prove the opposite. John of Capistrano asked the Transylvanian nobility to expel the Romanian priests from the country and seize their estates.³⁴ Thus, John Sigismund’s political views are continued

³⁰ BOCȘAN – POP 1994, 28.

³¹ PAPACOSTEA, S. (1988): *Geneza statului în evul mediu românesc. Studii critice*. 85–89. See also: DECEI, A. (1940): Contribution à l’étude de la situation politique de Roumains de Transylvanie au III-e et au XIX-e siècle. In: *Revue de Transylvanie* 6, 2.

³² BOCȘAN – POP 1994, 29–30.

³³ POPA, R. (1970): *Țara Maramureșului în veacul XIV*. Bucharest. 218–221.

³⁴ LUPSA, Ștefan (1929): *Catolicismul și românii din Ardeal și Ungaria până la anul 1556*. Cernăuți. 83.

in Transylvania by the line of his predecessors. Matthias Corvinus manages to smoothen the situation.³⁵ This is also due to the ecclesiastical institutions led by Stephen the Great in northern Transylvania. The relevant conclusion is that during the voivodeship the Romanian society in Transylvania, although stateless, still managed to find in itself the cultural and civilizational depths in order to annihilate, discard, or assimilate the foreign factors that had come with a casual mission. It happened at the price of marginalization, but it still ensured the ethnic and religious survival of the Romanians. The relationship with the other Romanian provinces that were expected to help in the fight for emancipation creates the consciousness of unity and foreshadows state unity at least in the ecclesiastical environment.

The 16th century amplifies the series of confessional, political, and national confrontations in Transylvania. This amplification is the fruit of the new schism in Christianity. The religious system correlated with the political system, adopted in the principality born on the ruins of a broken Hungary, highlights even more the exclusivism towards the Romanians, although in the second part of the century there was a small triumph of the Christian spirit of tolerance. This took place through the official recognition of Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Unitarianism as recognized religions alongside the impoverished Catholicism. For the Romanians, that is, for most of the country's population, this was a false tolerance since it left them outside the power structures, strengthened the exclusivism of the privileged, and persecuted Orthodoxy on legal grounds.³⁶

In this political and religious context, a new perception of the notions of ethnicity and confession appears. Thus, the Lutherans are Saxons, the Calvinists are Hungarians, and the Orthodox are, as before, Romanians. The documents call the privileged *Christians*, and the subjects *Valachi*, that is Orthodox.³⁷ The term *Wallachian* started to mean ethnicity, the Orthodox faith, and the servant status of the Romanians of the times, as a preamble to the petitionary movement of the Age of Enlightenment. The Romanians claimed the old freedoms, bringing forward the number of petitioners and

³⁵ DRAGAN, I. (1985–1986): Româniile din Transilvania în lupta antiotomană din a doua jumătate a veacului al XV-lea. In: *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie din Cluj* XVII, 27. 72. See also: PACURARIU, M. 1978, 277–282.

³⁶ BOCȘAN – POP 1994, 43.

³⁷ POP, Ioan Aurel (1987–1988): Confesiune și națiune medievală: solidarități românești în secolele XIV–XVI. In: *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie din Cluj* XXIX, 29. 183.

the public tasks as arguments.³⁸ Transylvanian officials, although they sometimes tolerated such actions, were far from encouraging them or changing their discriminatory attitude towards Romanians.³⁹

In the second half of the 16th century, the Calvinization campaign against the Romanians started to cut any connection with the other Romanians beyond the mountains,⁴⁰ but it was not as successful as John Sigismund imagined. Stephen Báthory allowed Bishop Eftimie to exercise his authority over the Romanian churches observing the old Eastern rite.⁴¹ The three political nations – with a more pronounced modern national hue – would not have agreed with the conversion of the Romanians to any of the recognized denominations if they had preserved their national group entity. Their conversion to any one of the recognized religions would have meant to be included among the privileged nations, which the leaders of the time could not accept. Moreover, the resistance of many Romanian families who converted to Catholicism, also reflected by the designation *nobiles Valachi*,⁴² made them understand that if the Romanians gained access among the privileged, it would change the political orientation of the principality.

The recognized religions rejected the religion of the Romanians, calling it schismatic. The tolerance of the Transylvanian principality was merely theoretical.⁴³ In the Transylvania of the time, the land itself belonged to a certain ethnicity (Saxon land, Szekler land, Hungarian land; social categories: serf = Romanian), Orthodoxy was considered “the Romanian law”, and Romanian was used instead of Orthodox.⁴⁴

³⁸ POP, Ioan Aurel (1988): Solidarități medieval românești pe bază social economică (sec. XIV–XVI). In: *Istorie și civilizație*. Iași. 502–504.

³⁹ See the Implementing Regulation of Article 28 of the Diet in Târgu-Mureș (1552) regarding the punishment of criminals. PRODAN, D. (1984): *Supplex Libellus Valachorum. Din istoria formării națiunii române*. Bucharest. 108–109.

⁴⁰ IORGA, Nicolae (1915): *Istoria românilor din Ardeal și Ungaria*. vol. 1. Bucharest. 164.

⁴¹ HURMUZAKI – DENSUȘIANU 1887, 647–648.

⁴² RUSU, A. A. (1983): Un formular al cancelariei regale din epoca lui Iancu de Hunedoara, pentru nobilii români din Transilvania. In: *Acta Musei Napocensis* XX, 20. 155–171.

⁴³ See Verentius’ confession in: POP, Ioan Aurel (1993): Ethnic and Confessional Sensibilities in Transylvania during the Time of Nicolaus Olahus. In: *Transylvanian Review* II, 3. 95–96.

⁴⁴ See details in: BOCȘAN, N. – LUMPERDEAN, I. – POP, I.-A. (1994): *Etnie și confesiune în Transilvania (secolele XIII–XIX)*. Oradea. | PALI, Fr. (1993): *Romanians in Transylvania in the Middle Ages*. Cluj-Napoca.

4. The New Perspective of the Terminology in Mihai Viteazul's Political Views. From the Great Unification to the Unification of Some of the Romanians with Rome

In the tradition inherited from Mircea cel Bătrân, Mihai Viteazul placed the Romanian Transylvanian churches under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Wallachia by the Treaty of Alba Iulia in 1595.⁴⁵ The spiritual unity of the Romanians beyond the political borders was thus recognized and approved by the Prince of Transylvania himself. At the turn of the century that overshadowed the modern national solidarity, Wallachia clearly started exercising the mission it had undertaken already in the 14th century by its very name; it meant the reconstruction of the unity of the nation whose name it bore.⁴⁶ This political trend in Mihai Viteazul's ecclesiastical polity arose at a time when the Reformation was losing ground in Central and South-Eastern Europe, and the Counter-Reformation was rising. It aimed at the inclusion of the Romanians among the estates of the realm, as *nationes*. His gesture was interpreted by Rudolph II as an anti-Calvinist movement, against the Reformation, but it aimed at the inclusion of the Romanians among the recognized religions.⁴⁷ For the Romanians, the deed of the unifying voivode was a blessing, turning it into a national symbol although it gave rise to terrible oppressions.⁴⁸

In Mihai Viteazul's political, ecclesiastical, and, later, military actions, we note that the term ethnicity is identical to confession. His gesture or attitude towards Perii Maramureșului confirms his pro-Constantinople orientation, and the two terms have a much wider scope: ethnicity – all Romanians; confession – Romanians and the subjects of Constantinople.

The end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century changed the meaning and the connotation of the term confession: the term ethnicity remained unchanged but in a more extended form than confession regarding the two separate components (Orthodox and Greek Catholic). The fight for the emancipation of Romanians deter-

⁴⁵ STOICESCU, N. (1983): *Unitatea românilor în evul mediu*. Bucharest. 120.

⁴⁶ PAPACOSTEA 1988, 145.

⁴⁷ CRACIUN, I. (1936–1938): Dietele Transilvaniei ținute sub domnia lui Mihaiu Viteazul (1599–1600). In: *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională Cluj* 7.

⁴⁸ PASCU 1956, 129; IORGA 1987, 215–216.

mined Greek Catholicism to remain attached to Orthodoxy in the 18th century, revealing the passage from an instinctive ethnic solidarity to an effective ethnic solidarity⁴⁹ that announced the near genesis of the modern Romanian nation.

Conclusions

The various ways of understanding and applying the terms in the period we referred to confirm a different structure of the European political mentality. It found its reflection in the mentality of the Transylvanian Romanians through historical-political-ecclesiastical determinants that they transmitted to this area. Their coercive aspect made the terms identifiable, although for the Romanian in Transylvania the Romanian ethnic group consisted of him and the brothers from beyond, and the Orthodox confession was his faith and everything that represented the Eastern doctrinal and liturgical corpus. This conjunction between the terms up to the point where they reached synonymy was determined by the fact that Orthodoxy was the strong binder that provided the necessary configuration for the blockade in the face of Catholicism accompanied by political and military expansion. The modern interpretation of the meaning of the terms and the political emancipation of Romanians has determined the detachment of this misunderstood conservatism; actually, it continued the dialogue with European civilization, Europe's cultural borders being expanded by including Romanian culture among its structures.

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⁴⁹ TEODOR, P. (1993): Politică ecleziastică a lui Mihai Viteazul în Transilvania. In: *Revista istorică* VI, 5–7. 482.

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