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**The Identity Crisis of the Moldavian Catholics –
Between Politics and Historic Myth.
A Case Study: the Myth of Romanian Origin**

The Catholic inhabitants of Moldavia have been suffering from a deep identity crisis for more than a century. Many of them are not convinced of their origin or ethnic affiliation. And those who have a conviction of some kind do not dare to undertake it in public. Their uncertainty is strengthened by the intensity of the official or semiofficial discourse after 1989. The two confronting extreme discourses only cause the identity crisis and the differences created between the inner groups of the Moldavian Catholic communities to deepen. The idealistic unity of the Catholic communities is more like an unknown memory, existing mostly in the reports of the 17th and 18th century missionaries than in the local tradition.

The tradition of Hungarian and Saxon origins was already alive in the second half of the 18th century. In 1781 the Sekler priest Péter Zöld wrote down all the traditions he had heard during his adventures in Moldavia between 1765 and 1768: “The remaining Hungarians are organized in nine parishes and spread all over the territory of the principality, naming themselves Csángó Hungarians to this very day. But also in the tradition of their ancestors many families are considered of Saxon origin... although none of them speak Saxon dialects, all of them speak Moldavian, that is Valachian as well as Hungarian, even if in the latter pronunciation differs in many ways from ours.” (Szócs 2002: 52)

After six decades Incze Petrás, one of the first Moldavian Catholic intellectual, answered a 38-item questionnaire sent by Gábor Döbrentei, a member of the Hungarian Academic Society. To question six, “What kinds of traditions live among them regarding their settlement in Moldavia? Who led them there?”, the answer was: “The Hungarians of Moldavia are of two kinds, the Csángós and those who moved here from Transylvania. The settlements of the former are the bigger ones. About their name and date of settlement, in spite of all my efforts, I could not find out any reliable information. I do not know if this is due to their history, war or lack of knowledge... So we cannot make an appropriate estimation... However, it is true that they consider themselves very old settlers...” (Petrás 1842: 24–26)

We wanted to start our exposition with these two determining points in the formation of the identity of the Moldavian Catholics, because they were formulated in a period of time when this topic claimed no political attention.¹

¹ About the formation of the historical consciousness and identity of the Moldavian Catholics see Pozsony 2002: 86–101, 129–139.

In the last two centuries two other factors were attached to this opposition, which we consider of major impact on the formation of identity: politics and historical myths, which are strongly related to each other. Hungarian, as well as Romanian, historiography created similar myths, but not all of them had a determining role in the emergence of the identity crisis. No matter how we define myths (see Boia 2002: 53–55), we cannot avoid the fact that for those who created them, they offered a kind of validity and ideality. We have no interest or aim in destroying these myths, but we consider it necessary to analyse their formation from an ideological context within which they were formulated and became accepted. Political ideologies have always been a real threat to historiography. The more politically debated a topic is, the more ornamented the historical product will be. This remark is valid for both Romanian and Hungarian historiography.

The Romanian origin of the Moldavian Catholics was formulated in the 1940s. And it had not even started with the work of Dumitru Mărtinaş (1985), so overvalued by his followers and so heavily attacked by his critics. Dumitru Mărtinaş was a product of the theory which he overtook, giving it a new image and completing it with so-called scientific arguments. The Romanian origin of the Catholics was first mentioned by Constantin Lozincă, who sent a letter to Nicolae Iorga in 1935, describing the Romanian folk costume, customs and names of the Catholics around Bacău.² The author probably wanted to make a good impression on the renowned Romanian historian, who actually wrote about the Csángós, considering them of Hungarian origin.³ The latter impressed Iorga only to some extent, but he published it with a brief introduction, questioning the truth of the facts included: “we got these words which reveal the Romanian origin of *many* Csángós” [emphasis added – M. D.].⁴ After a few months in an article he signed Constantin Lozincă promised an upcoming study on the Romanian origin of the Moldavian Catholics.⁵ He could not keep his promise, and the study was never published, but it is worth mentioning, because – as far as we know – it was the first composition of the Romanian origin. No scientific arguments supported the work; probably the author structured his ideas according to his own belief and capacity. But it might have influenced Iorga in a way, because in 1939 the renowned historian offered a mixed origin in the case of the Moldavian Catholics: Romanian and Sekler origin.⁶

The leader of the Franciscans of Moldavia, Iosif Petru M. Pal was the first to base the Romanian origin of the Moldavian Catholics on so-called scientific arguments. In 1941 he published a book titled *Originea catolicilor din Moldova și Franciscanii, păstorii lor de veacuri* [The Origin of the Moldavian Catholics and the Franciscans, their Sheperds for Centuries]. The author mostly debates the topic of origins, following the traditional scheme of the time, using historical, ethnic, ethnographic, geographical, ethnological,

² The letter was published in *Revista Istorică*, 1935. nr. 10–12. 402–403.

³ In the same year (1935) in his work called *Oamenii care au fost IL.*, Iorga mentioned on page 192 that “even the Hungarian peasants living in the mountains call themselves »Romanians«”. A statement of a Romanian consciousness, but of the Hungarian origin at the same time!

⁴ See *Revista Istorică*, 1935. nr. 10–12. 402.

⁵ See *Poporul românesc* (1936) nr. 3. 52.

⁶ See *Neamul românesc* (1939) February.

linguistic and logical arguments in illustrating the Romanian origin of the Moldavian Catholics. In the following year he republished his book, completing it with a second part: *Franciscanii păstori de veacuri ai catolicilor din Moldova* [Franciscans, the Sheperds of the Moldavian Catholics for Centuries]⁷, in which he presented Franciscans as real champions of Romanian propaganda. In 1941-1942, he published two articles in the *Viața* almanac, a publication produced with the Franciscans' support.

Another Catholic priest, Ioan Mărtinaș⁸ was the next in line to publish a brochure with a meaningful title: *Cine sunt catolicii moldoveni?* [Who Are the Catholics of Moldavia?]. This was in fact about a more radical reformulation of Iosif Pal's views. Mărtinaș, who considered himself the historian of the Catholic Church⁹, affirmed the Romanian being of the Moldavian Catholics, but at the same time he attacked all actions or attitudes against Catholics (Mărtinaș, I. 1942: 35–36).

In order to understand and to interpret the formation of the Romanian origin correctly, we have to analyse two basic premises: the political and ideological context of the 1940s, and the circumstances of the integration of the Moldavian Catholic Church into the modern Romanian state.

Great Romania, formed in the year 1918, changed the ethnical and confessional structure of the country. National minorities held almost 30% of the population (Livezeanu 1998: 17–20). The peace treaties granted many rights for the minorities, but these conventions were merely the theoretical foundation of the Romanian governments' minority politics. Between the formulated directives and the realities of the region there were quite significant discrepancies.

Some of the minorities, especially the more numerous ones, did not accept the new frontiers, they displayed an attitude of rebellion, usually within the institutions less controlled by the state – schools and churches –, hoping for the restoration of previous conditions. It was mainly the case of the Hungarians of Transylvania, who did not want to integrate into the new Romanian state. Their attitude was also supported by the revisionist propaganda in Hungary and by its representatives abroad. Hungary's territorial loss at the end of World War I created a sentiment of frustration in Hungarians regardless where they lived. And this frustration determined a more radical political and cultural discourse. In the domain of Hungarian historiography a specific school was formed, which directed its efforts towards proving the historic rights over the lost territories, especially upon Transylvania. As a consequence of these revisionist movements that appeared in the case of other defeated nations of World War I, discourses of the same nature became more and more dangerous in the realm of politics, too.

⁷ The book was republished in Bacău, in 1997, but without respecting the rules of reprint: in the top left corner of the cover there is the Romanian flag, while in the middle of the volume, between the two parts, another passage was inserted containing the comments of the author on the studies of Petre Râmneanțu.

⁸ Ioan Mărtinaș was the brother of Dumitru Mărtinaș

⁹ During WWII he published a series of articles on the history of Moldavian Catholicism in the paper *Lumina Creștinului*.

These were the attitudes feeding Romanian nationalism as well. Fear of a forced mutilation of the united territories, especially in the 1930s, led to a very strong upsurge of nationalism in the middle of the Romanian society. The biggest possible enemy was Hungary. There had already been a propagandistic fight in the press of that time. The exposed views, in relation with the number of readers of the newspaper or magazine in charge, resulted in a general feeling of nationalism among the Romanian population. Anti-Hungarian feeling was only one dimension of Romanian nationalism besides an accentuated anti-Jewish attitude. But we have to mention also that at such times, the penetration of the discussed attitudes into the mentality of that era was only eased by the lack of an official state programme regarding the assimilation of national minorities.

The more or less conflicting attitudes towards minorities strengthened a specific Romanian conscience which, in its most extreme forms, outlined the idealistic utopia of a nationally, ethnically, culturally and confessional homogeneous structure (Boia 2002: 102–103). For the two main characters of nationalism from the interwar period – Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu – Orthodoxy was a basic component of Romanian nationalism (Boia 2002: 102–103, Livezeanu 1998: 22–23). The national Orthodox discourse became very popular between the two world wars, and its directives were well spread by the press, by books and by intellectuals.

Between the two world wars, Romanian Orthodox nationalism endangered the Catholic communities in Moldavia, too. Reports of the clergy mirror the real image of the illegal actions performed by state officials, and especially the spirit of either the officials or the Catholic elite, acting as a quite accurate barometer of the community.

The Moldavian Catholics had been consequently mocked as “Hungarians” (“unguri”). This denomination was not something new between the two world wars, because Catholics had been named “Hungarians” since the Middle-Ages, proving the origin of most of them. But it is true that this denomination gained its pejorative meaning between the two world wars. The claims formulated in 1933 by the priest from Săbăoani to his bishop about “perjuring Hungarians” bear evidence to this.¹⁰

About the meaning of the name “Hungarian” there is an important note by Iacob Ferent from 1943. When he went to hold mass in the village of Oituz in February 1942, he used the opportunity to “dissolve a few unjust prejudices and judgments against the Moldavian Catholics. The recent allegation according to which to be a Catholic means to be a Hungarian, a traitor, a stranger, etc. is well-known. Our Catholics are offended by these remarks, and they are right to feel so. All the disabled, the deceased, the awarded, who returned from the front, from the war against bolshevism, have proved that this judgment against them is unjust and vicious” (Iacob 1943: 60). He tried to calm the believers explaining that they are no strangers, and their laws are neither Hungarian nor German, but Christian ones. We will return to this case later, because as a result, a trial was set

¹⁰ AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1866. f. 109: “In our courts of law Catholics are frequently treated like perjuring Hungarians...”

up against Iacob Ferent, preceded by a house search. He was accused of mocking the Orthodox Church. If we take a look at his discourse, we can see the signs of anti-Catholic attitude and the pejorative character of Hungarian identity. However, this aspect became more accentuated after the war, but the problem itself is older than that.

The Romanian Orthodox nationalist discourse could be sensed among local intellectuals who were following the reports of the press and the contemporary ideological debates. We cannot overlook the fact that some of the officials were from other regions of the country, so they were not familiar with Catholics. In this category were included the policemen and the teachers working in the area. However, most troubles and discrimination was created by them.

Due to the appointment system of that time, police chiefs arrived from their native lands with already formed views and ideas on the Catholics. For example the chief of Bălțați confiscated the religious paper *Lumina Creștinului*, which was popularized by the local priest, and forbade ringing the bell in the morning and in the evening, because “it might sound like a warning”¹¹.

Religious practice became more and more difficult, especially because of overzealous civilian and military officials. They took advantage of anything to teach the children and the youth the national character of the Orthodox Church. Due to a law initiated in 1934–1935, during the period of military instructions, young Catholics were taken to Orthodox churches, “telling them that those were the real national churches”.¹²

Most discrimination took place in schools. The teaching staff, as the officials in direct contact with Catholic children, played a decisive role in modelling the students’ conscience, which often did not match the views of the Catholic priest. Some of the teachers forced the children to go to Orthodox churches, to cross themselves in the Orthodox way, plus they forbade Catholic priests and cantors to hold their religious education classes. The priest of Văleni complained about such actions of the teacher in Gioseni¹³, and in 1934 he reported that religious education classes had been banned by the school principles.¹⁴ Religious classes were one of the most important factors in the evocation of conflicts, the most suitable occasions for attacking the Catholic clergy at the same time.¹⁵

Another relevant source in this respect is the report of a priest from Suceava dated October 22, 1939 and addressed to the bishop himself, according to which: in mixed Orthodox–Catholic marriages, the clerk refused to register the child as a Catholic despite the parents’ request; teachers forbade children to go to Catholic churches, especially at festivals; and also forced them to cross themselves in an Orthodox way, using three fingers.¹⁶ Another note of the same personality is also important in understanding the nationalistic

¹¹ See AERC Iași, Dosar 2/1855. f. 262.

¹² See AERC Iași, Dosar 2/1859. f. 337.

¹³ See AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1847. f. 383.

¹⁴ See AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1847. f. 400.

¹⁵ See AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1864. f. 127.

¹⁶ See AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1866. f. 239.

zeal: “all officials, clerks, policemen, teachers, most of who are not even of Romanian origin, *but are quite zealous and submissive*, are fooling around against religious goodness” [emphasis added – M. D.].¹⁷

In the above, we have presented a few isolated cases, which have been kept until today by different documents. Generalization cannot refer to all Catholic communities and to each and every official, but certainly to most of them. Anyway, the complaints formulated by the Catholic clergy show that there really was an anti-Catholic attitude in interwar Moldavia.

The situation worsened after 1938, when laws regarding minorities became more severe. It is probable that many officials’ anti-Catholic behaviour was supported or even caused by these laws and regulations. In this new situation the bishop forbade praying and singing in Hungarian.¹⁸

After the cession of Northern Transylvania and the instauration of Antonescu’s dictatorship, the anti-Hungarian attitude gained almost national dimensions. In the other parts of Transylvania there were a few hundred thousand Hungarians left in Romania, who experienced first hand the influences of actions taken by their co-nationals abroad. It was not only Hungarians who were affected by this situation, but also the Moldavian Catholics who were enrolled along with the Hungarian minority and were considered anti-Romanians. In 1941, Iosif Petru M. Pal condemned the writers who considered the Catholics Hungarians, and “even suspected and accused us of hostilities against our Romanian country” (Pal 1941: 11). The statements of the clerical historian are supported by several contemporary sources.

In 1941 a local teacher stated the following to his Catholic pupils: “At the end of this war all Catholics will move to Hungary, will convert to Orthodoxy or will be shot in the head.” (Coşa 2001: 37) This might be a singular case, an extreme one, but it still reflects the anti-Catholic attitude promoted by a modeller of conscience, the teacher himself!

Local authorities did not issue any papers concerning citizenship for Moldavian Catholics, because they considered that “all those born and baptized Catholic cannot be regarded as of Romanian ethnicity or of Romanian origin” – referring to a decree of the Ministry of Home Affairs (Coşa 2001: 35).

Some of the Catholic officials were afraid of being removed from their positions.¹⁹ Iosif Petru M. Pal, who fought for the Moldavian Catholics’ civic rights in his books, complained: “there are some who deny their public, military and even educational rights” (Pal 1941: 19). The severe laws within the police and the army did not allow their officials to belong to the Catholic confession.²⁰ Probably these rumours made the mayor of Hălăuceşti and his family convert to Orthodoxy, after having a really hostile attitude towards the Catholic Church and priests.²¹

¹⁷ See AERC Iaşi, Dosar 1/1866. f. 239.

¹⁸ See AERC Iaşi, Dosar 1/1848. f. 254.

¹⁹ See AERC Iaşi, Dosar 2/1859. f. 389.

²⁰ See AERC Iaşi, Dosar 2/1859. f. 399.

²¹ See AERC Iaşi, Dosar 1/1866. f. 291.

The most elementary civic rights were violated to such an extent that in 1942 in a Catholic village the authorities withdrew the right to vote of those considered “Hungarians”. A similar anti-Catholic attitude was also displayed by the prefect, the local representative of the government. The prefect of Bacău wrote the following to the leader of Franciscans, Iosif Petru M. Pal: “*Whoever is not Orthodox cannot be a Romanian either*, that is why you, Catholics, are not Romanians” [emphasis added – M. D.] (Coșa 2001: 37).

A few military formations were established for the consolidation of the frontiers, but only Orthodox men were accepted, the order of the general staff being more than clear: “CATHOLICS ARE NOT ACCEPTED!” The staff was very well informed, that “in World War I the German and Hungarian troops were greeted with stuffed cabbage by the local Catholics”, and that “if there was a Hungarian intervention, the CATHOLICS would slaughter the Romanians!”²²

The authorities’ anti-Catholic behaviour was adopted by the Orthodox inhabitants, too. The confessional segregation shown by the military urged the Orthodox inhabitants to curse and threaten the Catholics: “In the spring we will throw you in the hell abroad, from now on we will tear you down and give you 25!! After the Jews you are next, you damned Hungarians (Banghens)!! You will be worse off than the Jews!!”²³ The Ciugheș priest complained that he had to defend his congregation, who were innocently suffering of an anti-Catholic and anti-Hungarian attitude. They were cursed and insulted in various places: at the mill, at the baker’s or at food distribution points: “Look at this, the Hungarians again, you have no room because of them! ... Go somewhere else!”²⁴ Even in mixed communities, where there had been no precedents, several conflicts were recorded as a result of the authorities’ attitude. The model was easily followed by the people.

Such was the dominating spirit in the Moldavian villages in the first years of World War II. Of course, it would be wrong to state that this was the only generalised attitude, but we have to admit that the phenomenon was widespread. The Catholics’ spiritual leader was their priest. There was a tight relation between the clergy and the congregation, which is maintained to this day. The priest was the only Catholic intellectual in those communities, regardless if he was of a foreign mission or of the local clergy. However, a “native” clerical stratum did emerge thanks to the Moldavian seminars.

It was always the Catholic priest who defended his believers. We have already mentioned Ferentz Iacob, who tried to encourage his Oituz congregation during mass on February 1, 1942. After mass, there was a house search at his place, followed by his trial. The accusations were formulated on behalf of a poor woman, who got so scared that she denied the false accusations in court: “*It had been written by others, and I was forced to put my fingerprint on it, and now I have to walk this road because of them, me, a poor woman*” [emphasis added – M. D.] (Iacob 1943: 62). At the same time, a local paper published an article stating that the case was taken to court because “he cursed the Saviour

²² See AERC Iași, Dosar 2/1859. f. 389.

²³ See AERC Iași, Dosar 2/1859. f. 389.

²⁴ See AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1834. f. 400.

by stating that Orthodox faith is inferior to the Catholic one!” (*Bacăul*. April 29. 1942, quoted by Iacob 1943: 61).

“How could I be silent, when people are shooting at my congregation in broad daylight? »Come on boys, let’s shoot some Hungarians!« Only the locals can understand and know our situation. Especially since the frontier is here, too!”²⁵, argued the Ciugheș priest, who was probably advised to be more tolerant with the authorities.

Catholic priests were not the only ones to defend their congregation. Due to their repeated requests, archbishop Robu sent a petition to general Antonescu requesting to solve this situation. The author of the petition was Iosif Petru M. Pal himself²⁶, the leader of the Franciscans, the same person who pointed out the Romanian origin of the Moldavian Catholics in several books and articles. The petition is a synthesis of the Catholics’ condition, of the authorities’ attitude and of the spirit dominating the two sides: “a situation of conflict aroused a while ago to the disadvantage of the peaceful people living here. On each and every occasion they are stigmatised as Hungarians, “Unguri”, Csángós, “Banghen” and not only by private persons, but by officials originally from Catholic settlements. Some of them treat these people like foreigners, like the enemies of the state, denying them even the right to bear Romanian names.” (Coșa 2001: 36)

In an official statement, the government informed the archbishop about the measures taken, and also asked him to notify the central authorities directly if the measures were not observed. The archbishop did so a few months later, because Catholics were further deprived of their rights (Coșa 2001: 36–37). They were not allowed to get certificates of citizenship or to buy land; they were only allowed to sell land.²⁷ As at the end of 1943 the reports and allegations of Catholic priests were not that frequent, we may conclude that the measures were finally respected.

In this new situation the priests themselves were the ones to prove the patriotic feelings and the Romanian origin of the Catholics. Ciugheș priest Iosif Petrișor addressed the following message to a military leader: “Sir, I do not understand why we are hated so. I am neither a Hungarian nor a Csángó, and I have papers to prove that *I am the descendant of a long line of Romanians ...* Appointing me to this settlement near the border was done with the goal of *supporting the Romanian cause*, serving the interests of our country...” [emphasis added – M. D.]²⁸.

For defending their congregation, the priests had to prove their Romanian being and the falseness of the accusations. They increasingly quoted the number of medals awarded to Catholics, and the big number of victims in the fight against bolshevism²⁹. But it did not really impress the local officials. Therefore they appealed to history in order to assure the civic rights of the Catholics. To a history which would prove the Romanian origin

²⁵ See AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1834. f. 400.

²⁶ See AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1848. f. 229.

²⁷ See AERC Iași, Dosar 2/1859. f. 411, 413.

²⁸ See AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1834. f. 390.

²⁹ See AERC Iași, Dosar 2/1859. f. 389.

of the Catholics, because that was the main problem. They did not receive Romanian certificates because they were considered Hungarians, in spite of the fact that in the last census entire villages declared themselves Romanian. In this anti-Catholic atmosphere the intellectual elite with historian ambitions tried to prove the Romanian origin of the Moldavian Catholics. We cannot understand the constructions of the mentioned authors without placing them into the context of that time and without considering the role of the clergy as defenders of their congregations.

In his book, Iosif P. Pal clearly stated his goal. On the contrary, Ioan Mărtinaș did not create a systematic and scientific argumentation, his style being more rhetorical. His influence on the theory of Romanian origins only showed later, in his brother Dumitru Mărtinaș' work.

The historical paper with an immediate impact was written by Iosif Petru M. Pal. He is the creator of the Romanian origin! After his book was published, the Catholic clergy adopted his argumentation, adapting it to the situation in their parishes.³⁰

Nevertheless, for the authorities the historical arguments listed in the first edition of Iosif Petru Pal's book were not enough. They probably did not sound persuasive enough because the author was accused of attacking the authorities. As a consequence, the government introduced another method to reveal ethnicity: the blood test. Dr. Petru Râmneanțu³¹, a researcher of the Hygienic Institute of the University of Cluj moved to Sibiu, and was assigned to analyse the anthropological and biological structure of the Moldavian Catholics.³² As a result, another Romanian study and a German brochure were published on the Romanian origin of the Moldavian Catholics, which was "demonstrated" by racist methods (Râmneanțu 1943: 51–65).

Râmneanțu's assignment had positive consequences for the Moldavian Catholics. His results influenced the Antonescu regime to act against the local officials' anti-Catholic attitude. For a few years – but not for too many – the Moldavian Catholics posed no problems for the authorities. The case was closed by both the authorities and the historian clergy. Both sides found what they had been searching for: the Romanian origin of the Catholics had been proved by the newest (racist!) methods, so they had been integrated into the Romanian nation, granting them the same rights as to the Orthodox citizens. Of course, there were some attempts from the officials to maintain the state of conflict, but far less significant than previously.

The political and ideological context was only a catalyst of a process that had started with the conflicts between the Hungarians and Italian missionaries. Due to the influences of the Italian missionaries a real antipathy emerged against the Hungarian clergy, who were removed from the Moldavian parishes. When the native clergy took over the parishes, they also took over the attitudes towards the Hungarian clergy and the Romanian language. So the Moldavian Catholics' Romanianization was not only the outcome of the

³⁰ See AERC Iași, Dosar 1/1834. f. 390.

³¹ About Petru Râmneanțu and his work, see Bucur 2002: 36–37, 136–137, 143–146.

³² About the official assignment of Petru Râmneanțu, see Petru M. Pal 1942: 92–93.

deeds of the Romanian state, but mostly of the Catholic clergy, first of all the Italian one, then the local “native” one. The Iași Seminar, which trained the members of the local clergy for the first fifty years, was founded as a compromise made by the bishop of Iași, according to which education would be provided in Romanian, and the coming of the Transylvanian Hungarian priests would be stopped. This measure was a part of the educational reform set out by Spiru Haret. Before we judge these measures, we should think about the fact that assimilation through education was common practice in Europe, or at least in Central Europe, in the context of a modern national expression. Hungary was no exception in this case.

The Romanian origin theory was developed and consolidated during the war, in a quite tensioned context. Evaluating the situation of the Moldavian Catholics, we must not forget that in Southeast Europe the national minorities were considered “foreigners” in spite of the fact that their families had been living in the area for thousands of years (Jelavich 1983: 135–136, see Livezeanu 1998: 20). And besides this, nationalism was at home in Europe between the two world wars and during the wars as well.

The position of the Budapest government had a major role in the worsening of the Moldavian Catholics’ problems. Acting upon hearing news broadcast by a radio station in Budapest, father Ioan Mărtinaș raised his voice against Hungary’s territorial claims regarding the areas inhabited by the Moldavian Catholics (Mărtinaș 1942: 67).

It would be very interesting to read the list of article titles published during this time in Hungary, especially regarding the attitude of the non-constructivist so-called authors. They reflect on the authors’ preconceptions regarding Romania and on the objectivity of a less scientific research. In 1940, Sándor Baumgartner published a book with a meaningful title: *Moldva, a magyarság nagy temetője* [Moldavia, the Great Cemetery of Hungarians]. István Györffy published several studies on the Csángós in his volume entitled *Magyar nép – magyar föld* [Hungarian Nation – Hungarian Land]. A monograph on the Csángós was edited by László Mikecs in 1941; two years later, the same author wrote another study in a volume published out of political interests: *Magyarok és románok* [Hungarians and Romanians].³³

In 1942, an author using the pen-name Siculus published a book using very violent language against Romania. The ending part, in a rhetoric style, adequately reflects the specific use of language in the Hungary of the 1940s, when public opinion was intoxicated by the desire to regain some of the territories lost at the end of World War I: “In rebuilding Europe, Hungary was given the role of a middle power. Our country earned it by its millennial history, its sacrificial defence of Europe, its state-building aptitudes and cultural evolution. The Hungarians in Moldavia will surely hear the calling voice of this new Hungary. The importance of Hungary and the friendly powers remodelling Europe will grant the most elementary human and national rights for the Hungarians in Moldavia.” (Siculus 1942: 181)

³³ See Mikecs 1943: 441–507. In the same year he published his material also in German: Mikecs 1943: 247–280.

The published works (in the interwar period, in two or three years, more books and articles had been published about the Csángós than about any other topic), and the media (press and radio) in Hungary had a determining role in the promotion of the Romanian origin of the Moldavian Catholics exactly by the response they raised. In the last two decades, this duel restarted and has become permanent, a fact which only deepens the Moldavian Catholics' identity crisis.

I shall end my study with the words of Ioan Cavaler de Pușcariu, one of the most respected Transylvanian Romanian military personalities of the Habsburg regime: "In civilized countries, the barometer of patriotism is not set by the origin of the local inhabitants, but by their education and by their sense of responsibility towards the country they live in, and especially by the peacefulness granted to them by the institutions of the same country."

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