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THE PROFESSIONALIZATION
OF THE ROMANIAN GREEK-CATHOLIC CLERGY
IN TRANSYLVANIA DURING THE MODERN PERIOD:
THEORETICAL APPROACHES[2]

Abstract: Starting from a series of sociological studies, this article embarks on a theoretical approach to the theme of the professionalization of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy from the Archdiocese of Alba-Iulia and Făgăraş, during the second half of the 19th century. The study is organized along two directions: an analysis of the major social theories of professionalization set forth by British scholars in the field, followed by an assessment of their degree of applicability to the case study of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy in Transylvania. Analysing the defining elements of a profession – specialized education, a particular code of conduct, altruism in relation to people who resort to professionals, the system of licensing specialists, social prestige, a considerable financial reward, promotion based on a certain hierarchy, the monopoly of the services offered and autonomy – in the case of the clergy, we believe that this category complied with many of the characteristics of professionalization. There are interesting foreseeable variations, such as the national-religious component, clerical marriage or priestly dynasties, which highlight the peculiarities of the professionalization process undergone by the clergy in the Greek-Catholic Archdiocese of Alba-Iulia and Făgăraş.

Keywords: professionalization, priests, Romanian Greek-Catholic Archdiocese of Făgăraş, 19th century, control.

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This study adopts a twofold perspective, opening with a theoretical approach to a theme of considerable import in the sociology of the 20th century: that of professionalization. In the second part of the study, I attempt to show that such a theoretical framework can be applied to my research topic: a community of professionals, analysed from the vantage of its historical past.

The perspective that I have pursued has led me to outline the features of a professional group that was deeply involved in the needs of the Romanian society in 19th-century Transylvania: the Romanian Greek-Catholic priests. Identifying these features among the clergy dedicated to the *cura animarum*, those priests who formed the cornerstone of a profound religious life, has been a genuine challenge, especially since the study explores a reality that occurred more than one century and a half ago.

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The training of priests, their behaviour, their relations with the faithful and the state represent a few fundamental areas of interest in this research.

1. Theories of professionalization

In a volume dedicated to the phenomenon of professionalization in the German State, Charles E. McClelland shows that several sociological studies regard priesthood as one of the oldest professions, while clerics are considered to have been among the first professionals, along with lawyers and physicians, since their professionalization took place before the 19th century.[3]

Studies dedicated to the professionalization of various categories of specialists have been undertaken ever since the interwar period, but they reached consecration especially in the aftermath of World War II, in the research conducted by sociologists from the United States and Britain; sociologists from the rest of Europe were less concerned with this issue, which they began to address quite late, in the 1990s, through researches such as that which McClelland dedicated to the German space. For this study, I have used a series of sociology studies published in the 1960s-80s, as they represent works of reference for research dedicated to professionalization. Methodological debate has focused both on theoretical aspects, such as the definition of professionals, and on some practical issues, such as the establishment of scales for measuring the degree of professionalization identifiable in various categories of specialists.

Initial approaches mainly targeted professional communities; foremost among these was William Goode's study, which examined professional communities as "communities without physical locus," without a common origin, but whose members were bound by a series of features such as: a certain sense of common identity, a lifelong membership in the community, a common value system and specific language, understood to a lesser degree by those outside the community.[4] Among other features, Goode included the control exerted by the community over the individuals who were part of it and controlled access within the group, by establishing clear rules of training and promoting its members.[5] One of his extremely pertinent observations concerned the fact that the strength of a community lies in its right to judge its own members, a right that was to be recognized unanimously by its members, but also by society. This internal investigation authority appeared in order to protect the community's members from being judged by the civil society, which might disregard the internal statutes of the profession in question in evaluating certain behaviours or actions of the professionals.[6]

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[3] Charles E. McClelland, *The German Experience of Professionalization. Modern Learned Professions and Their Organizations from the Early Nineteenth Century to the Hitler Era,* Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 15, 43.
[4] William J. Goode, "Community within a Community: The Professions," in *American Sociological Review*, vol. 22, No. 2, 1957, pp. 194-200.
[5] *Ibidem*, p. 194.
[6] *Ibidem*, pp. 198-199.

In the following years, sociologists endeavoured to answer questions related to the professionalization tendencies of different categories of specialists, approached from the perspective of social theories. Harold Wilensky was concerned with outlining the structural model of a typical professionalization process, which he identified in his researches devoted to 18 occupational categories; he ascertained the existence of certain stages these occupations had gone through in the process of their professionalization and assessed a number of obstacles that had interfere with this process. His conclusions were those that one could speak of a profession when there was a group of specialists that held the monopoly over the provision of services or over various technical skills, a monopoly recognized as such by the State and society.[7]

Another aspect I have considered in the present study resides in W. Richard Scott's approach to the right of control and supervision in professional organizations. Based on Max Weber's theories concerning the autonomy degree of professional organizations (autonomous and heteronomous organizations), Scott stated that in heteronomous professional organizations, the control exerted from outside over their activity was accepted as inherent to the situation. The higher the degree of professionalism, the stronger the realization that this control was imposed from outside and the greater the preference for internal control, exerted by the organization's own hierarchy.[8] Thus, the higher professionalization of a heteronomous occupational group, the less willing it was to accept rules, evaluations and controls imposed from outside its own professional category.

A step forward was represented by Richard H. Hall's research, which established a 10-item assessment scale for the degree of professionalization, based on the 5 attitudes of professionalization: "Professional organization as reference," "Belief in public service" "Belief in self-regulation," "Sense of Calling to Field" and "Feeling of autonomy."[9] As a result of applying the professionalism assessment scale, what was highlighted was the fact that the more autonomous a professional organization was, the lower was its level of bureaucratization and, conversely, excessive bureaucracy was directly related to the control exercised from outside over the category of professionals in question.[10]

In this study, Hall also revealed that something that also mattered in choosing a career was the safety it offered: many women chose less well paid careers, for instance, teaching, nursing and social work, which were nonetheless considered "safe" for them.[11] This choice, however, was correlated with other factors, such as faith in the service they provided for the public use, for the community, as well as a sense of having a calling for their chosen field.

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[7] Harold L. Wilensky, "The Professionalization of Everyone?," in *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 70, No. 2, 1964, pp. 137-158.

[8] W. Richard Scott, "Reactions to Supervision in a Heteronomous Professional Organization," in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 10, No. 1, Special Issue on Professionals in Organizations, June 1965, pp. 65-81.

[9] Richard H. Hall, "Professionalization and Bureaucratization," in *American Sociological Review*, vol. 33, No. 1, 1968, pp. 92-98.

[10] *Ibidem*, pp. 101-104.

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 97.

In addition to the studies produced in the 1960s-70s, there are several recent directions, initiated by Douglas Hall and Dawn Chandler, who have attempted to quantify the vocation or calling for a specific occupation, especially when the profession in question was deeply involved in public service.[12] By "calling," the two authors understand an activity, a field to which people feel attracted because they consider that this is their purpose in life.[13] Still, the authors have felt the need to differentiate between a religious and a secular calling.[14] At the same time, they have highlighted the fact that there are some contextual factors that may influence the decision to follow this calling, as is, for instance, the socio-economic context: an appropriate family background, with family members already active in the chosen field, or adequate financial resources.[15]

Most of the studies above are grounded in a sociological perspective or even evince a group psychology perspective, being easily applicable to current population groups. An approach that is closer to what I intend to accomplish belongs to Charles McClelland; he has investigated the professionalization of several categories of specialists in German territories throughout the 19th and the 20th centuries, as part of a long-term study, targeting several categories of professionals, including German priests.[16]

According to McClelland, the professions have certain characteristics, including the existence of specialized instruction and higher education systems, a particular code of ethics, a degree of altruism, the conscience of public service, a system of rigorous testing before granting a license, high social prestige, significant financial rewards, associated with the services rendered, a pattern of career advancement, a service monopoly on the market, and professional autonomy.[17] These characteristics can offer a support for analysis, which can nonetheless be supplemented by other theoretical insights.

Applying this professionalization grid to the German clergy, McClelland has noted the fact that many of its characteristics were relevant for the priesthood; however, as regards the clerics' financial reward or social prestige, were placed at lower levels than those reported for other categories of professionals, but were offset by the altruism the clergy displayed.[18]

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[12] Douglas T. Hall, Dawn E. Chandler, "Psychological Success: When the Career Is a Calling," in *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, vol. 26, No. 2, Special Issue: Reconceptualizing Career Success, 2005, pp. 155-176.

[13] *Ibidem*, p. 160.

[14] In the case of a religious calling, the source of the calling resided in God or another deity; the person in question was to perform his activity in the service of the community, the method of identifying the calling consisted in prayers or in listening to the needs of his fellow humans, and his mission was to enact the divine plan targeting one person or another in the community. In the case of a secular calling, the source of the calling resided within the individual himself. It served his personal interests or those of the community, and it could be carried out through introspection, reflection and meditation, the mission being that of reaching personal fulfilment. *Ibidem*, pp. 162-163.

[15] *Ibidem*, p. 167.

[16] Charles E. McClelland, *op.cit.*, pp. 15, 43.

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 14.

[18] *Ibidem*, pp.16-18.

In his examination of the degree of professionalization, McClelland has emphasized the importance of professional autonomy from other reference groups; most often invoked, in this sense, is the conflict with the civil state and its modern bureaucracy, from the 19th century.[19] Nonetheless, many Catholic states were relatively sheltered from the brutal intervention of the civil administration in the ecclesiastical sphere, especially if those states had entered into concordats with the Holy See.[20] The professionalization of the German clergy occurred later, under the influence of industrialization, urbanization and state interference, which had eroded the priests' traditional authority. In this process, an important role was given to the instruction of the clergy and to the formation of an ecclesiastical elite that could control and impose discipline among the group of professionals.[21] The professionalization attempts of the German clergy envisaged achieving autonomy from the state and the civil society, but they also imposed greater control on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities, marking thus the transition from a heteronomous to an autonomous professional organization.

2. The professionalization of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy in the 19th century

The main challenge in this research has been that of adapting the sociological methods to a research that has explored the historical past of this professional category. Previous research in this regard, conducted by Wilensky, McClelland and Hall, was aimed at identifying several features of professionalization. The main aspects considered defining for a profession are specialized education, a proper code of conduct, altruism in relation to people who resort to professionals, the system of licensing specialists, social prestige, a considerable financial reward, promotion based on a certain hierarchy, the monopoly of the services offered and autonomy; as mentioned above, these characteristics were highlighted by McClelland. In the case of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy, I wish to propose several other characteristics that might be added to those already outlined, namely the establishment of a pension scheme for the clergy and a specific national and religious mission, which served as catalysts for this calling to the priesthood, because clerics were among the most fervent defenders of the national character.

The main questions that arise in such a scientific approach are determined by two aspects: the peculiarities of the professionalization process undergone by the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy in the archdiocese and, respectively, the time period under study, which requires an adaptation of sociological methods to the historical approach. Since the majority of the aforementioned sociological studies were based on the administration of standard questionnaires to various professional categories and the interpretation of their results, a research on the professionalization of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy in the second half of the 19th century ought to combine historical reconstitution methods with a sociological perspective.

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[19] *Ibidem*, p. 19.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 36.
[21] *Ibidem*, p. 240.

To what extent are the key elements of professionalization applicable to the case of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy? Did the national-confessional component influence the clergy's process of professionalization? Did the priesthood represent a "safe" occupation for the Romanians who were willing to assert themselves in this domain? Can retirement be accepted as an element that rounds off this professionalization tableau?

In attempting to answer these questions, I turned to a series of regulations issued by the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, in force in the Archdiocese of Alba-Iulia and Făgăraş during the period under consideration. I tried to analyse these through the lenses of the professionalization theories proposed by the authors cited above.

The Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy in the Archdiocese of Alba-Iulia and Făgăraş presented many of the characteristics of a professional category, as indicated by the preliminary results of the research, outlined below.

Autonomy: from the standpoint of professional autonomy, the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy presented the features of a semi-heteronomous professional organization, since theirs was a triple subjection: first, their obedience was due to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, second, they had to obey the Holy See and, third, they were subordinated to the civil authorities, whether these were represented by the emperor in Vienna or by the institutions of the Hungarian state. A significant element of ecclesiastical obedience was the profession of the Catholic faith in formula proposed by Pope Urban VIII, which the members of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy submitted several times throughout their ecclesiastical careers: as clerics, at their ordination, as priests, at their installation in office, and then at every promotion and every conciliar reunion; the profession of faith was a reiteration of the religious union with Rome and a proof of their compliance with it.[22] The latter half of the 19th century witnessed, however, the ever insistent intrusion of the Hungarian state, which conditioned, for example, its provision of financial aid to the churches and the clergy on a deeper involvement of the laity in ecclesiastical matters.[23] Some of the problems arising between the Hungarian State and the representatives of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy, especially the ecclesiastical elite thereof, may be subsumed to the efforts undertaken by the ecclesiastical administration to impose its autonomy from the state.

Theological education and licensing: the education of the majority of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy in the archdiocese took place in the seminary from Blaj, established since the 18th century. Their studies lasted four years and those theologians who wanted to continue their studies had to choose between the Universities of Vienna, Budapest and Rome. A Faculty of Theology was a desideratum upheld by the clergy in the entire Romanian Greek-Catholic Church; it was only accomplished partially during the interwar period, when the right of the

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[22] *Conciliul provincial prim al provinciei bisericeşti greco-catolice Alba-Iulia şi Făgăraş ţinut la anul 1872,* second ed., Blaj, 1886, p. 13; *Conciliul provincial al doilea al provinciei bisericeşti greco-catolice Alba-Iulia şi Făgăraş ţinut la anul 1882*, second ed., Blaj, 1886, pp. 66-80.

[23] Covaci Diana, *Mitropolitul Victor Mihályi de Apşa şi epoca sa (1895-1918).* PhD Thesis, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, pp. 257-258.

Academy of Theology from Blaj to grant theology degrees, albeit not doctoral titles as well, was recognized.[24] The impulse to control formative education and grant licensing degrees recognized by the professional group had been present ever since the 18th century, but the achievement of this objective had encountered multiple postponements.

Its own code of conduct: the right of the churches to self-government, recognized even by the Hungarian state under Law 43 of 1868, was applied through the regular reunions of the clergy in their synods. Thus, during the years 1868-1911, there were held three provincial synods and seven archdiocesan synods, while at the level of the local ecclesiastical administration, mention should be made of the organization of archpresbyterial synods twice a year.[25] All of these synodal reunions issued decrees enforceable in the territory of jurisdiction; they were supplemented by archiepiscopal circulars, whose role was to correct any possible errors in the enforcement of the synodal decrees.[26] The permanent adjustment of the clerics' conduct was necessary given that even the Hungarian secular state had a say in many matters pertaining to the state-church relationship. In this context, internal control, exerted by the ecclesiastical authorities, was necessary to avoid potential interferences that could occur if referral was made to the civil authorities.

Social control exercised by its own community: the ecclesiastical courts' right of judgment in matters involving the clergy was one of the issues recognized by the civil law and carefully regulated by the archdiocesan ecclesiastical authorities. Thus, in order to enforce discipline among the clergy, the main judicial authority was represented by the Consistory, acting directly and through the archpresbyterial synods, delegated with judicial powers. Clerical discipline fell within the responsibility of the archpriests, who were bound to issue annual reports in this regard, while at the central level, there was instated a prosecutor of the Consistory, *fiscus consistorialis*, who verified the reports and ruled in the case of complaints about the behaviour of the clergy.[27] However, there were certain offences involving civil jurisdiction as well, especially if a cleric or a priest was accused of nationalist activities undermining the state. These cases multiplied towards the end of the dualist period. During World War I, several priests were incarcerated, their loyalty being questioned by the Hungarian state, at war with Romania at the time.

Promotion: under the Oriental tradition, the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church condoned clerical marriage and the priests' starting their own families. This aspect, however, raised questions about the possibility of promotion in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, since a married priest could advance only to the level of a canon of the royal foundation in the Cathedral Chapter of Blaj; the Latin tradition favored the

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[24] *Conciliul provincial prim*, pp. 155-163; Octavian Bârlea, "Biserica Română Unită între cele două războaie mondiale," in *Biserica Română Unită: două sute cincizeci ani de istorie*, Madrid, 1952, p. 100.
[25] Charles de Clercq, *Histoire des Conciles d'aprés les documents originaux*, Tome XI, *Conciles des Orientaux Catholiques,* Paris, 1952, passim; Covaci Diana, *op.cit.*, pp. 69-129.
[26] *Ibidem*, pp. 106-113.
[27] *Conciliul provincial prim*, pp. 173-177; *Conciliul provincial al doilea*, pp. 138-180.

celibate clergy, who were most often designated to occupy the highest ecclesiastical offices.[28]

A notable exception was Alexandru Şterca-Şuluţiu, the first Metropolitan of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, elected bishop by the clergy in 1848, despite the fact that he was a widower.[29] In the late 19th century, such promotions were also becoming rarer in the Romanian Greek-Catholic Archdiocese of Făgăraş, attesting the fact that the Holy See was extremely cautious in this regard and did not allow deviations from the Latin norm. Again, the heteronomous character left its mark on one aspect pertaining to the professionalization of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy, who were imposed strict conditions and rules for the promotion of its professional group members.

Social prestige: from the Romanians' perspective, the social prestige of a priest was significant, particularly in the countryside, where, next to the teacher and the civil authorities, the priest was one of the most important personalities in the community. Moreover, from a moral standpoint, the priest and his family were models of conduct for the community of believers. The prestige associated with the ecclesiastical office was considerable, especially if we consider the fact that the priesthood represented one of the most accessible careers for the Romanians who were eager to overcome their condition. Further evidence in this regard was provided by an increasingly common practice in the second half of the 19th century, that of the priestly dynasties, whereby a father who was a priest would engage his son or his son-in-law, who was also a priest, as his aid.[30]

The remuneration of the clergy: this was often symbolic, especially when it came to priests in the villages, where the majority of the Romanians resided in fact. In the 19th century, it was increasingly clamoured that the clergy should receive adequate remuneration, based on salary thresholds determined by their studies, their activity in the service of the community and other considerations, such as the family situation, etc. The problem of clerical remuneration was recurrent in the latter half of the 19th century, especially since the completion of the priestly salary by the state – the *congrua* – was to be definitively regulated only in 1909.[31]

The question that arises at this point is what determined the youth to embrace an ecclesiastical career? Adding together the matters of social prestige and the salary, a first possible answer would be: personal *vocation*, the determination to serve the spiritual needs of their fellow humans, to answer their calling to shepherd the flock of God. A second answer would come closer to what Hall identifies as a "safe

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[28] *Conciliul provincial prim*, pp. 137-141; Mirela Popa-Andrei, Diana Covaci, "The Formation of An Ecclesiastical Elite in the Modern Era: A Comparative Approach of Two Cathedral Chapters," in *Transylvania and Habsburg Monarchy in the "Long Nintenth Century" 1800-1914*, ed. Iosif Marin Balog and Rudolf Gräf, *Transylvanian Review*, 2012, XXII, Supplement 2, pp. 140-155.

[29] For more details, see Ioana Mihaela Bonda, *Mitropolia Română Unită în timpul păstoririi lui Alexandru Şterca Şuluţiu (1853-1867)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2008.

[30] Simion Retegan, *Un tată între fiii săi: locul preotului în satul românesc din Transilvania de la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea*, in *Istoria ca lectură a lumii*, ed. Gabriel Bădărău, Leonid Boicu, Lucian Nastasă, Iaşi, 1994, pp. 395-395 and passim.

[31] Ioan Genţ, *Administraţia bisericească*, Oradea Mare, 1912, pp. 240-241.

occupation," in the sense that certain occupations provided a secure living, even if devoid of outstanding material satisfaction.[32] In this case, the existence of a vocation could be sufficient motivation to lead a life dominated by personal rather than by financial rewards.

Retirement of the clergy: the pensions of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy represented a criterion for the professionalization of this occupational category that I have associated with the reading grid proposed by the above-mentioned authors. According to the rules of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, appointment to a priestly office was made for life, and priests could require the appointment of an aid if they could no longer cope with the demands of a priestly life. Launched in the mid-19th century, the pension system of the archdiocesan clergy was quite limited, being aimed particularly at the retirement of priests who were no longer able to carry out their duties, due to either sickness or old age. The beginning of the 20th century sanctioned, at least at a discursive level, the intention to generalize pensions for the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy in the archdiocese.[33]

Conclusions

Research undertaken so far indicates that this theme promises to be extremely interesting. Each of the characteristics of professionalization represents a possible line of research that deserves to be pursued thoroughly, as it will allow for comparisons to be made and for parallels with similar researches to be established. I also intend to complete this theoretical approach with a quantitative perspective, which, in keeping with the existing sources, will provide a statistical overview of the professionalization phenomenon experienced by the Greek Catholic clergy from the Archdiocese of Alba-Iulia and Făgăraş. In this regard, I aim to answer questions such as those relating to the percentage of married/widowed priests who had access to the ecclesiastical hierarchy or, more specifically, to what extent promotion was influenced by the clerics' status. I also want to study in more depth the subject of the safety offered by the priestly office and to detail the matter of the priestly dynasties, or to highlight the manner in which state intervention marked the evolution of the professionalization process undergone by the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy. The assumption of a national-confessional component represents another aspect that deserves to be explored in more detail, using the grid of interpretation offered by the sociology of professionalization.

The Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy features several of the characteristics of a professional category, as they have been outlined by sociologists. Further, in-depth studies in this sense can supplement this theoretical approach with quantitative and qualitative information, allowing for the articulation of an effective theory regarding the professionalization of this clerical body.

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[32] Richard H. Hall, *art. cit.*, p. 97.
[33] Covaci Diana, "For the Rest of Their Life: the Retirement of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Clergy," in *Transylvanian Review, Vol. XXI (Supplement), No 3, 2012, Scholars in Dialogue: Multidisciplinary Approaches in Dealing with the Past in Transylvania*, ed. Corina Moldovan, Ionuţ Costea, Lavinia S. Stan, pp. 359-369.