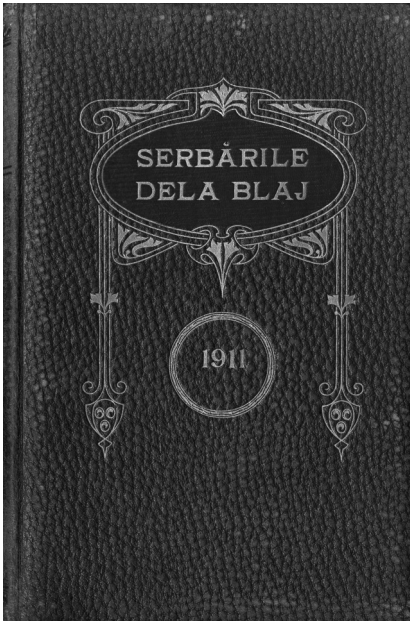

TRANSILVANICA

Jubilee Celebrations in the Romanian Greek Catholic Church (1900–1911)

DIANA COVACI



Serbările de la Blaj 1911: O pagină din istoria noastră culturală (Blaj, 1911).

SOURCE: BCUCLUJ, FG_241812, 1911.

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THE PRESENT study¹ intends to outline a practice observed in the Romanian Greek Catholic Church at the beginning of the 20th century, namely, the celebration of various jubilees connected to the ecclesiastical institutions or members of the high clergy. The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th one offered multiple celebratory opportunities for the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania, like the anniversary of the passing of two centuries from the moment of union with the Church of Rome, the jubilees of ecclesiastical activity for some of the Romanian bishops, or different anniversaries of religious schools, their teachers, or even pilgrimages. All these moments provided the grounds for organizing various, ample ceremonies, many of them widely covered by the Romanian press of the time.

For my analysis I have selected the years 1900–1911, a period of intense celebrations in the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, chronologically defined by two representative moments in

the historical evolution of the nation: the jubilee of two centuries of existence of the Church in 1900, and respectively the celebration of half a century since the founding of the ASTRA, the most important cultural association of the Romanians in Transylvania. There were other celebratory moments outside the selected interval, but their frequency and extent cannot be compared to the festivities from 1900 to 1911. I intend to demonstrate that the celebrations can be associated with a couple of moments when the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania felt they were under attack along both national and denominational identities, and therefore they used the gatherings as a means of coagulating public support for the leaders.

The sources for my study were archive documents of the Metropolitan See of Blaj, held at the Alba County Branch of the Romanian National Archives that kept information about various events that were organized. Just as relevant were some press articles published in *Unirea* (The Union), as a way of popularizing the celebrations: the more prominent the event, the more coverage and publicity it received before and after. A relevant source for my study was also the volume dedicated to ASTRA's anniversary in 1911 which put together all the data about the event, including the program of celebrations and the speeches.

By definition, the jubilee is a special anniversary of a specific moment in the life or activity of a person, as well as a representative episode in the history of a group or a community, usually offering the group the chance of rejoicing in celebration. The festivities are public rituals orchestrated to reunite and entertain the community, mostly with the intent of honoring a moment, an event or a



The old metropolitan residence of Blaj.
SOURCE: BCUCLUJ, FG_241812, 1911, 141.

personality that are symbolic for the respective group.² The study of celebrations, festivities, commemorations, and of the rituals associated with them was extensively approached in the Western historiography of the 20th century, as they are considered to be a form of communication, a sign of control and conformity, or the mark of religiosity of a group.³ Rites can be of many kinds, like commemorative ones, identity rituals, or crisis rituals, and sometimes they can overlap when a specific group is experiencing a crisis that threatens its identity. I will go over some characteristics of each type of ritual, mostly because some of their attributes are noted in the case study I have selected for my analysis.

The Encyclopedia of Religious Rites, Rituals, and Festivals defines commemorative rituals as ceremonies held in the honor of the memory of an historical event or person; their role is to consolidate the memory of it in the minds of the people attending the event. The events have a specific performance, based on fixed gestures, speeches, patterns of celebrations, all of them significant stimuli for the attendants to the commemorative moment.⁴ They tend to emphasize something that the participants have in common, so they bring the past into the present, thus creating a celebrative bond over the years; however, the ritual is broad enough to include a number of practices that do not necessary count as commemorative.⁵

Identity rituals allow the insertion of a certain individual or group into a specific tradition. The choice to belong to a particular group means the exclusion of another identity than the one professed by the group. "Identity rituals help alleviate anxiety about belonging and counting," the inclusion being confirmed through participation. Established rituals confirm both identities and the borders of separation from others, and identity has been linked to the ancestors, to time and space, to a specific activity, or even to patriotism.⁶

The time of celebrations and festivities is also important for the analysis, since there are studies that emphasize their increased frequency during periods of crisis. They are being considered crisis rituals, sometimes called "rites of intensification," and they are employed when the group is affected in its entirety by a major catastrophe or a danger: "Such situations spread anxiety, uncertainty, and fear that can be alleviated through the performance of mass rituals that provide security and hope by reinforcing social ties and pointing to the transcendent dimension beyond everyday experience." Those rituals generate hope, especially because they are allowing groups to face the crisis as a collectivity.⁷

Rituals are being performed and lead by some ritual specialists, usually assuming a sort of leadership in their community, such as priests or politicians. Society creates these positions, then some of its members go through a selection and formation process that allows them to assume leadership.⁸ Sometimes the leaders of the rituals themselves are the subject of celebrations: for the members of the clergy, the jubilees of 25 or 50 years of ecclesiastical activity were vested

with a particular emotional charge, and they were celebrated through special festivities, re-enacting an idealized past in order to educate the present generations. The celebration of a long activity in the service of the church was setting an example for the active members of the clergy.

Most rituals and festivities have a sacred place of meeting, like a memorial or a location that commemorates an event or a person; even other groups recognize the sacred character of that site. Being in the sacred place at the time of a certain ritual connects the present participants to the past events or persons, acting as a communication channel that brings communities together.⁹

Sometimes social change may induce insecurity in the population, and therefore people promote a certain resistance to change. They start mourning the loss of the old ways, and celebrate the idealized version of the past through ceremonies, in order to reaffirm their identity and distinctiveness, as well as the resistance to change. “Political domination by a foreign power and internal domination of one group by another” are some of the crisis situations that are also conducive to mass festivities.¹⁰ The public gatherings are a barometer of change, since they allow the expression of the moments of collective joy or stresses that are important for the particular group. The most present in the collective space are usually the groups that are experiencing conflicts or crisis situations, because they need to emphasize the solidarity that is missing,¹¹ as well as their existence.

The celebrations can be representative at a local, regional, or national level, and they are considered to be the expression of a group’s priorities. Also, through speeches and official positioning, the festivities are a means of disseminating the common interests of the group, letting the outsiders know about the agenda of the respective community. They can fundament the feeling that there are no tensions within the group, that the in-group is dominated by harmony, and that they can be promptly mobilized in case of emergency, that the political unity is fully assumed and it is reflected through the participation in the celebrations.¹²

Ritual control was considered to be a strategy for imposing societal authority over its members; usually, control is embedded into religious systems, because they can exert discipline by offering some answers or directions about life and the world, namely, “the way of life.” In order to exist as desired, society needs order and compromise between individuals, and the ritual control offers such possibilities. Control is stated through the use of rituals that induce submission of individuals to group regulations.¹³

Some of the rituals are religion-based, while others have laic origins, underlying a certain moment or habit relevant for the process of nation-building. They both emphasize the construction of a collective identity, and their main purpose is to divert the attention of the population from its everyday chores and minor issues toward the bigger ideas of group interests.¹⁴ The ceremonies reunite the leaders with those they lead, each playing a well-established role in the group,

and they support the illusion of a solidarity that transcended classes.¹⁵ The frequency of the festivities is a proof for the participants of the value of what they celebrate: moments in history, and cultural and identity features worth to be recognized as part of the common group heritage.¹⁶

AS STATED above, I have selected 1900 as the first year of interest for my study. The year 1900 had a multitude of implications for world history, both secular and ecclesiastic. For the Catholic world, the last year of the 19th century was designated a Year of Jubilee by Pope Leo XIII,¹⁷ honoring Jesus Christ, as well as the Catholic Church at the turn of the century. The pope also granted plenary indulgences to all Catholic believers who carried out a pilgrimage to the Holy See, in order to pray at the churches in Rome “for the forgiveness of sins and the Glory of the church.”¹⁸

The Hungarian state initiated its own parallel festivities, with powerful national implications: in 1896, Budapest celebrated with great pomp the Millennium, namely, the passing of a thousand years of uninterrupted existence of the Hungarian people in this part of Europe; during the festivities, the role and the contribution of the Hungarians to the European culture and civilization were constantly pointed out. As citizens of the Hungarian state, the Romanians were called upon to join in the celebrations, even though at the end of the 19th century they faced many difficulties regarding their national identity in the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹⁹

In this context, it cannot be a surprise that the first official Romanian Greek Catholic statements announcing the 1900 Jubilee of two centuries of existence originated in 1897. The same year marked the resurrection of the project for the autonomy of the Hungarian Catholic Church, after the summoning of a new autonomy Council. The idea of Catholic autonomy dated back to 1848, but it had its heyday in 1870–1871, and stated the importance of the separation between Church and State, similar to the one acknowledged to the Protestant Churches in Hungary. Under the new recognized autonomy, the Catholics would have been able to decide freely upon the administration of the temporal assets of their Church or upon the appointment of the high clergymen, free from the intervention of the state. However, the project of autonomy threatened the independence of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, because it included all Catholics under the same jurisdiction, regardless of their rite. In 1897 the project resurfaced, so in the last years of the 19th century the Romanian Greek Catholics, both laypeople and clergymen, initiated protests against the attempts to include the Romanian Church into the Hungarian Catholic autonomy. In 1900 the Romanians intensified their opposition, taking into consideration that in February Budapest hosted a meeting of the representatives of the Catholic Church in Hungary, with the agenda of finally resolving the autonomy project.²⁰

The year 1900 was called a Year of Jubilee in the Romanian Greek Catholic Church as well, due to its multiple celebratory moments, each of them an opportunity to reaffirm the identity of the Greek Catholics in Transylvania. For the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania, the year 1900 offered two such opportunities for organizing vast celebrations, extended to the entire Romanian Greek Catholic Metropolitan Province of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș, as a way of promoting their national and denominational identity. The first was the jubilee of the ecclesiastical activity of the Metropolitan Bishop Victor Mihályi of Apșa: in February 1900, he celebrated the 25 years as bishop, recalling the time he was ordained as bishop of Lugoj.²¹

Following this personal celebratory moment of the head of the Church, the rest of the year 1900 was dedicated to extended arrangements for the bicentennial anniversary of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church itself. Following a synod convened in Alba Iulia in September 1700, the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan Atanasie Anghel signed the decree of union with the Church of Rome, thus establishing a new Church for the Romanians in Transylvania, beside the Orthodox one. The act of union was signed under the premise of extending to the Romanian people the citizenship rights enjoyed by Catholics in Austria, and therefore the ecclesiastical elite assumed the role of national representatives and declared their allegiance to the Holy See in Rome.²²

The celebration of the Union in September 1900 was completed by a Council of the Metropolitan Province, summoned in order to reaffirm the principles established two centuries prior by the heads of the Church gathered in Alba Iulia.²³ As intended, the decrees of the Third Provincial Council of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church had upheld the act of union, but mostly stated the rights and privileges of the Metropolitan Province of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș: the participants to the Council declared in the adopted decrees that “The present Council still desires that the rights and privileges of this Church Province should remain intact and with full power of law,”²⁴ because they were the basis for their allegiance to the Holy See in Rome.

Among the adopted rules, there was an extended decree dedicated to the autonomy and rights of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, such as the right to manage the financial aspects of various legacies and endowments, to organize and coordinate education in denominational schools, without the involvement of ecclesiastical or lay authorities other than the Council of the Romanian Greek Catholic bishops. The decree also reaffirmed the Romanian language as the official liturgical language of the Church, and prescribed the liturgy as the “center of public ritual.” Another decree was dedicated to churches as places of worship; the bishops were careful to emphasize the characteristics of the building that facilitated the communion with God, in keeping with the identity of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church. The last decree of the Council in 1900 provided for the

publication of another edition of the Holy Bible, in the Latin alphabet and with annotations from the Holy Fathers of the Church and other erudite Catholics.²⁵ Most of the decisions of 1900 took into consideration the identity of the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania, as distinct from the Catholic and the Orthodox ones, just like their predecessors had stated in the act of union from 1700.

The next jubilee, promoted mainly in press in 1901, was the passing of a decade of uninterrupted publishing of the Romanian Greek Catholic official periodical *Unirea*, at Blaj. Its ten years' anniversary was celebrated through a solemn liturgy performed in Blaj in the presence of many personalities of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, some of whom had been present at the time of its establishment. The Metropolitan Victor Mihályi was asked to offer his official blessing to the newspaper so that *Unirea* could defend the interests of the Church and its believers for many more decades to come. Afterwards, the owners of the newspaper held an administrative meeting with the purpose of analyzing the accounts of the magazine, followed by a lunch sponsored by the publication's editor.²⁶ The anniversary had a double significance: the editors had the chance to celebrate ten years of activity, but for the Romanian Greek Catholic Church it was just as significant, since *Unirea* assumed in 1891 the motto "God, my country and my nation!" and announced from the beginning its intention to defend the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania.²⁷

Along the same line, in July 1901 we have to mention the return to Blaj of the remains of Bishop Ioan Lemeni and their burial in the church of the Metropolitan Court, alongside other members of the high clergy of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church. Following the troubled years of the 1848 Revolution, Ioan Lemeni retired in Vienna, after he renounced the episcopal see of Făgăraș in 1850. He died on foreign land in 1861, still hoping he could someday return home. Therefore, forty years after his death, his remains were returned to Transylvania.²⁸ The reburial in 1901 offered the chance of an official commemoration of the Romanian hierarch, as well as the chance to rehabilitate his memory and ensure his recognition as a significant leader of the Church.

Two years later, in 1903, the celebrations were dedicated to the fifty years since the establishment of the two Romanian Greek Catholic dioceses, of Gherla and Lugoj. Prior to those two celebrations, in April 1903 the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania marked the passing of a decade from their first official pilgrimage to Rome, conducted in 1893 under the supervision of Victor Mihályi, the then bishop of Lugoj. In order to highlight the specificity of this anniversary, of great significance for the religious community, another pilgrimage to Rome was set for 1903, and the participants saw Pope Leo XIII during a private audience.²⁹

Also, in the spring of 1903, Pope Leo XIII celebrated 25 years of papacy, as in 1875 he had been elected by the College of Cardinals as the leader of the

Catholic Church and the Vatican. The Romanian Greek Catholics were also involved in these celebrations because the pope was the head of their church as well. The hierarchs sent an official letter to the pope, thanking him for his benevolence toward the Eastern Catholic Churches, and in particular for his kindness toward the Romanians in Transylvania; the text of the letter was also published in the press, together with a large picture of the pope on the front page, and an extended presentation of his life and ecclesiastical activity.³⁰ The official celebrations of the papal jubilee were largely covered in *Unirea*, with details about the events in Blaj (a solemn liturgy, a festive meeting of the schools in the town, and a formal lunch held by the metropolitan bishop, with the participation of clergymen and state officials), as well as in other cities, Budapest included.³¹

At the same time, the entire Church was honoring the passing of fifty years from the moment when, in 1853, the Romanian Greek Catholics had obtained the metropolitan rank for the ecclesiastical jurisdiction under the See of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș. The diocese of Lugoj marked the occasion in June 1903 under the coordination of Bishop Demetriu Radu, as one of his last local actions, since he was proposed for transfer to the episcopal see of Oradea. To mark his departure, and as a celebration of the past five decades of existence of the Lugoj Bishopric, Radu announced the establishment of a foundation that was to grant students scholarships and support the denominational schools of the Romanian Greek Catholics.³² In its turn, the diocese of Gherla held its festivities in



Before the Holy Mass, in front of the Greek Catholic cathedral of Blaj.

SOURCE: BCUCLUJ, FG_241812, 1911, 59.

November 1903, but the ceremonies were not as opulent as the ones in Lugoj. Both dioceses published anniversary *Schematisms* (volumes of church records) that included, besides the general data on the parishes, priests, and believers, an historical overview of the last fifty years in the life of the churches and of the denominational schools in each ecclesiastical jurisdiction,³³ presenting the ecclesiastical activity of bishops and other clergymen. The *Schematisms* were meant to highlight the continuous development of the last two established dioceses of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania.

In June 1903, the Boarding School of Pavel Theological Seminary in Beiuș decided to commemorate a year since the death of its founder, Bishop Mihail Pavel; a solemn liturgy was held, as well as some festivities that enjoyed the participation of the town officials.³⁴ This institution of learning for many young Romanian Greek Catholics wanted to mark the moment according to the status of its founder and benefactor. The year 1903 was a top jubilee year in the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, with four significant celebrations held during its twelve months.

In 1904 there was another significant jubilee in Blaj, the see of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church: the archdiocesan schools were celebrating 150 years since their establishment. The festivities were promoted as a duty for the Romanian Greek Catholics, especially since the Hungarian Parliament was debating a new Law of public education that had profound implications for the education in the Romanian language. The periodical *Unirea* endorsed the celebration of



Festive meal, Blaj.

SOURCE: BCUCLUJ, FG_241812, 1911, 70.

schools in its articles, showing that “a nation who does not treasure its great benefactors does not deserve to have them.” A solemn liturgy was officiated in the Metropolitan Cathedral in Blaj, while the members of the Romanian Greek Catholic Teachers’ Association from the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș held its general meeting on the same occasion,³⁵ highlighting this special occasion for the Greek Catholic education in Transylvania.

Following the initial celebratory fervor there was a period of tranquility, so that in 1905 Victor Mihályi’s celebration of thirty years of activity as bishop passed relatively unnoticed, but for a succinct mention of the moment in the press.³⁶ By comparison to his previous anniversary of 25 years in office, or to the one of Bishop Mihail Pavel of Oradea from 1903, there were almost no festivities. A possible explanation can be that in 1905 the focus of the public was on the parliamentary elections, and the local press was emphasizing the Romanian participation, since the Romanian National Party had embraced activism after almost four decades of political passivism.³⁷

After several relatively uneventful years, in July 1907 the Cathedral Chapter in Blaj announced its centenary celebration of the moment when, in 1807, Bishop Ioan Bob had established the abovementioned institution. Intended to assist the bishop in governing the Făgăraș diocese, the Chapter was deeply involved in the ecclesiastical administration, and its members—the canons—were among the most influential representatives of the Romanians in Transylvania.³⁸ On its hundred years of activity, the newspaper *Unirea* published an extended issue called “The First Hundred,” eulogizing Bishop Ioan Bob for having founded an organization essential to the development of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, and listing the biographies of all 45 canons acting in Blaj from 1807 until the jubilee.³⁹

After 1907, the celebrations continued to some extent, but less frequently than during the first years of the 20th century. The project of Hungarian Catholic autonomy fizzled down, resurfacing only at the end of the First World War, and after the union of Transylvania with Romania, when its impact on the Romanian Greek Catholic Church was inconsequential.

However, in 1907 was promulgated a new Law of education bearing the name of its promoter, the education minister Albert Apponyi, thus putting an end to the debate surrounding the standardization of national and denominational schools that had lasted for more than a decade. The law was considered a real threat to the Romanian nation, and in particular to its denominational schools; the schools as well as the teaching process were modernized, but the standards were considered to be too high for the mainly rural Romanian communities. The Romanian communities complained about the financial burden of modernizing the schools as well as of paying the teachers the new salaries. However, the alternative of closing their schools and sending the children to state schools was considered just as unacceptable, especially because education

in the latter was to be in the Hungarian language.⁴⁰ In spite of all protests voiced by the Romanian ecclesiastical hierarchy in Transylvania, the law was adopted, rendering futile all manifestations against it.

One of the final moments of celebration included in my overview was the fifty years jubilee of the ASTRA, the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People. The festivities were organized in Blaj in August 1911 and they were intended to recall the founding actions of 1860–1861, which preceded the establishment of the Romanian cultural society.⁴¹

The jubilee events were designed to be an elaborate celebration of the Romanians in Hungary, and in August 1911 both the General Assembly of ASTRA and that of the Romanian Theater Society were convened in Blaj.⁴² The two institutions were coordinating the cultural life of the Romanians in Hungary, and they kept in touch with the Romanian Academy, contributing to the cultural exchanges with the Romanians in the Old Kingdom. All the planned actions were expected to attract a large number of participants to Blaj; thus, frequent references were made to the tradition of the great popular meetings of the Romanians in Hungary, who had validated, through their numerous presence, the actions and the statements of the elites.

From the beginning, the 1911 celebrations in Blaj enjoyed significant popular support, all the more so as the jubilee of ASTRA brought together the whole Romanian nation, irrespective of denomination. The press pleaded for an end to denominational division in favor of a truly general national celebration. The chosen moment was an auspicious one, since it enjoyed the official endorsement of all Romanian high clergy, Greek Catholic or Orthodox. Both Victor Mihályi of Apșa and Ioan Mețianu, the Greek Catholic and the Orthodox metropolitans, participated in the event, alongside other bishops and clergymen, representatives of the Romanian intelligentsia, and also press correspondents from Hungary, Romania, and other neighboring countries. In order to avoid any problems with the local authorities, Iuliu Maniu had secured, in advance, the approval of the jubilee program by the Prime Minister Khuen Hederváry,⁴³ and the Lower Alba County Ispán, József Szász, participated in the celebrations, as a representative of the state authorities.⁴⁴

The celebrations in Blaj were fully sanctioned by the Romanian Greek Catholic metropolitan bishop, Victor Mihályi, who welcomed all high clergymen in the Metropolitan Residence⁴⁵ and offered to the organizers of various exhibitions in Blaj a series of valuable objects, religious icons, portraits, and old, invaluable historical and religious manuscripts, from his personal collections or from the library of the Theological Seminary.⁴⁶ Also, on 15/28 August 1911, Mihályi held the solemn liturgy of the first day of the celebrations, with a sermon in which he gave thanks to the Virgin Mary for the help and support given to the Romanian people throughout history.⁴⁷ Mihályi led the procession to the tombs of the great



Metropolitan Bishop VICTOR MIHÁLYI.
SOURCE: BCUCLUJ, FG_241812,
1911, 53.

personalities buried in the cemetery in Blaj, and proposed the draft of an official telegram of thanks addressed to Emperor Franz Joseph I, the one who had supported years ago the establishment of the cultural society. He also hosted a festive reception for all the personalities present at the Blaj celebrations in August 1911.⁴⁸ The Orthodox Metropolitan Ioan Mețianu was permanently by his side: he presided the solemn liturgy in the Greek Catholic Cathedral, and during the first official session of ASTRA, held in the cathedral after the conclusion of the liturgy, he also chaired the first meeting, together with Mihályi and the vice-president of ASTRA, Andrei Bârseanu.⁴⁹ The two Romanian metropolitans were permanently assisted by their suffragan bishops, a sign of support offered to the official heads of the Romanian Churches in Transylvania.

The editors of *Cultura creștină* (Christian Culture), the second Greek Catholic periodical of the Romanian Greek Catholics in Blaj, remarked that the great cultural celebration had brought together the entire Romanian “cultural army”: “We saw in Blaj how many we are, the soldiers of the traditional Romanian culture, we saw how this army, of intellectuals and peasants alike, is devoted to one cause,” namely, the culture of the Romanian people.⁵⁰ The recourse to military terminology in describing the participation of population can also be interpreted as an indication that the press editors understood the crisis that the Greek Catholics were experiencing during those days.

All these statements were made against a complex political background, dominated by the negotiations initiated by István Tisza in 1910, in order to achieve internal peace with the dissatisfied nationalities in Hungary, and in particular to achieve harmony between Romanians and Hungarians.⁵¹ The main purpose of these negotiations, mediated by Ioan Mihiu, was to ensure a final agreement on the nationality issue, in order to integrate the Romanians into the Hungarian state in a more democratic way that would allow a reconciliation between the two nations. However, the negotiations failed in 1910–1911 because none of the parties was fully committed to them, and were resumed two years later.⁵²

Another threat to the Romanian Greek Catholic Church was the establishment of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Bishopric of Hajdúdorogh; its jurisdiction was set to include parishes dislocated from three of the dioceses of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church. The Romanian hierarchy protested against this project for several decades, but its completion came extremely close in 1911,

The aforementioned pilgrimages were both relevant for the Romanians in Transylvania, being the first and the second one of their kind, and both included a papal audience, highlighted in press as a sign of the goodwill of the pontiff. They pointed out that the pope was supporting the rights of the Eastern Churches, and those of the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania in particular. Thus, in a time of crisis, the appeal to papal protection was just another means of support for the actions of the Romanian hierarchy.

Another purpose of the celebratory rituals was the creation of power: as David Holmberg contended, local communities use rituals and festivities to create power for their leaders in opposition to the power of the dominant group.⁵⁸ Therefore, each popular reunion was a declaration of the individuality of the community, an opportunity to mark their distinction in regard to other groups. Many of the speeches held at the anniversaries included in this study reiterated the identity of the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania as unique and particular, but greatly contributing to the progress of the Romanian nation.

IN THE studied decade, 1900–1911, the jubilees were frequent and they were largely popularized through the Romanian Greek Catholic press, as well as through the ecclesiastical circular letters and episcopal pastoral letters. The purpose of such manifestations of adhesion was to recall historical moments or exemplary figures with an important role in the history of the group, in our case the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania. The threats to their national and religious identity, which increased towards the end of the 19th century, generated a plethora of jubilee celebrations, which allowed and encouraged the reaffirmation of the attachment of the group to the common ideal, the one promoted by their ancestors.

The threats to the national and denominational identity were basically the same during the studied period: the laws of education that promoted modernization at the expense of teaching in the language of ethnic minorities, the Hungarian Catholic autonomy, and the establishment of the Hungarian Greek Catholic eparchy of Hajdúdorogh. The affected institutions were mainly the ecclesiastic administration or the denominational schools of the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania, but the impact was felt in the larger population, since the national and religious identity was at stake. The threats lingered for years, and there was no result that could satisfy both parties involved; each time the issues resurfaced they generated an ample mobilization of the Romanian Greek Catholics. The public gatherings were a form of support of the population for their leaders, either religious or secular.

We can even identify a sort of celebratory competition between the Romanians and the Hungarians, but the jubilee trend was not confined to those na-

tions. At the turn of the century, the year 1900 lent itself to jubilee emulation, since the papacy was celebrating it, the Catholic world joined in, and the Romanian Greek Catholics were also having their particular anniversary. The term “jubilee” was overused, being associated with basically every form of anniversary, but a possible explanation can reside in the fact that the people were getting accustomed to it and associated it with the idea of supportive celebrations.

As the leader of the church, Victor Mihályi tried to maintain a unified front of the Romanian Greek Catholics, in an era when they were confronted with various ecclesiastical or political measures that threatened their national and religious identity. Many of his decisions were challenged at the time by his contemporaries, but his firmness played a decisive role in the evolution of the church he was leading. The constant support granted to the cultural institutions, those that defended and promoted the Romanian specificity and the Transylvanian Greek Catholic identity, remained a point of reference. What he had founded in the prewar period, either in education or in the cultural field, outlived the war and ensured the continuity of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church in the 20th century. □

Notes

1. Parts of this study were published in the Romanian language in Diana Covaci, “Sinodul provincial de la 1900: Celebrarea și reafirmarea identității românilor greco-catolici,” in *Identitate și alteritate 5: Studii de istorie politică și culturală*, eds. Constantin Bărbulescu, Ioana Bonda, Cecilia Cârja, Ion Cârja, and Ana Victoria Sima (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2011), 111–123.
2. Marjorie R. Esman, “Festivals, Change, and Unity: The Celebration of Ethnic Identity among Louisiana Cajuns,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 55, 4 (1982): 199.
3. Frank A. Salamone, “Introduction,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religious Rites, Rituals, and Festivals*, ed. Frank A. Salamone (New York–London: Routledge, 2004), xi–xiii.
4. *Ibid.*, 93–94.
5. *Ibid.*, 95.
6. *Ibid.*, 178–191; Lily Kong and Brenda S. A. Yeoh, “The Construction of National Identity through the Production of Ritual and Spectacle: An Analysis of National Day Parades in Singapore,” *Political Geography* 16, 3 (1997): 213–239.
7. Salamone, 101.
8. *Ibid.*, 366.
9. *Ibid.*, 378; Kong and Yeoh, 213–215.
10. Salamone, 102.
11. Esman, 199.
12. *Ibid.*, 206–208; Mike Featherstone, “Global and Local Cultures,” in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, eds. Jon Bord, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson, and Lisa Tickner (New York–London: Routledge, 2005), 169–187.

13. Salamone, 362–363.
14. Kong and Yeoh, 218.
15. *Ibid.*, 228.
16. Esman, 206.
17. Tiziano Scalzotto, “The Four Ordinary Jubilees of the 20th Century from Leo XIII to Paul VI,” *Tertium Millennium* 2, May 1997, http://www.vatican.va/jubilees_2000/magazine/documents/ju_mag_01051997_p-103_en.html.
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Abstract

Jubilee Celebrations in the Romanian Greek Catholic Church (1900–1911)

The study analyzes the practice of jubilee celebrations associated with ecclesiastical institutions or members of the high clergy belonging to the Romanian Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania. All anniversaries provided the grounds for organizing various, ample ceremonies, many of them covered by the Romanian press of the time. The purpose of such manifestations of adhesion was to recall historical moments or exemplary figures with an important role in the history of the Romanian Greek Catholics in Transylvania, in an era when they were confronted with various political measures that threatened their national and religious identity. The public celebrations were meant to coagulate the support of the population for their leaders, as well as to promote the image of a unified group to the outsiders. For the study I have selected the period between the years 1900 and 1911, with many anniversary moments significant for the Romanian Greek Catholic Church.

Keywords

Romanian Greek Catholic Church, Transylvania, jubilee, ethnic and denominational identity, crisis