

Transylvania in the Mid-Nineteenth- Century Accounts of the Papal Legates

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“You are Romans; you should, therefore, profess the Roman faith, which is the faith of your ancestors.”

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THE ESTABLISHMENT of the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan See of Făgăraș and Alba Iulia at the middle of the nineteenth century, under the Papal Bull *Ecclesiam Christi* (1853), brought Transylvania—more than ever before—to the attention of the Holy See and the Court of Vienna. Located on the fringes of the Austrian Empire, in a territory accommodating a mosaic of ethnicities and denominations, the new metropolitan province demanded that joint religious and political efforts be made so as to reinforce its status as a “border regiment area” and turn it into an outpost of religious unification in the region. One may assume, therefore, that the development of the new Romanian metropolitan province could only be ensured if regular contacts were established with it, since this could provide both the Holy See and the Court of Vienna with data and information on

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the evolution and consolidation of this confessional segment. The most efficient way proved to be the dispatching of pontifical envoys to Transylvania: their duty was to inform the Holy See on the real state of affairs in the territory.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, three such visits were carried out in Transylvania by the nuncios of Vienna: Michele Viale Prelà (1855),¹ Antonio de Luca (1858)² and Mariano Falcinelli (1868).³ After the visits they undertook to Transylvania, the reports they submitted to the Holy See confirmed and enriched, to some extent, the set of clichés and stereotypes circulating in the milieus of traditional Western orientation, which generated distorted global visions, often emphasizing the negative dimensions of Romanian life and spirituality. Paraphrasing Ștefan Lemny, a renowned authority on the history of collective imagination and sensibilities, one might say that the reports of the apostolic nuncios of Vienna pertain to the series of accounts by foreign travelers who “could regard the Romanian universe ‘from the outside’ and, moreover, could compare the Romanian realities with other places they had seen in the world.”⁴ The rifts these observers had to explore were all the deeper and more shocking since they came from the metropolises of the modern world, such as Rome or Vienna, the depositories of prestigious civilizations, with equally prominent cultural traditions.

The first who examined the Transylvanian space from this perspective was Michele Viale Prelà, the pro-nuncio of Vienna. His voyage to Transylvania in the autumn of 1855, on the occasion of the installation of the first Metropolitan, Alexandru Sterca Șuluțiu, gave him the opportunity to make a few observations and draw some conclusions concerning Transylvania and its people. The majority of his findings, formulated a priori or post factum, placed Transylvania on the periphery of the civilized world.

In Cardinal Prelà’s correspondence with the Secretariat of State, one of the issues that retained his attention was the perception of Transylvania’s space and climate. Given the coexistence of Transylvania, Vienna and Italy (the Viennese prelate’s area of origin) under the scepter of the same political authority and within the boundaries of the Austrian Monarchy, and in view of the possibilities of modern communication and travel, it would have been natural that imaginary distances should have appeared shorter to him.⁵ However, for Viale Prelà, Transylvania seemed to be a relatively remote area. We are dealing, in this case, with an ante factum projection, with an image he had contrived before his visit to Transylvania: the Romanian space was perceived as a distant realm, with dirt roads which often became impracticable because of the endless cold rains of the late autumn.⁶ The climate visibly contributed to amplifying the mental image of a distant Transylvania, whose wintry territory was inauspicious for journeys, especially during the last autumn months, when the impending visit of

the pro-nuncio of Vienna had been scheduled to take place. Surprisingly, this a priori image projected onto Transylvania completely faded in the reports that followed the visit itself, which suggest that the nuncio had had a clear change of heart after his direct encounter with the realities of the Transylvanian world.

In the mid-nineteenth century, this apostolic envoy's first contact with Transylvania captured an image that was typical of the stereotypes prevailing in the medieval and Enlightenment periods: the low level of civilization in the Romanian space allowed for its sequential approximation to the socio-cultural models of societies located at the bottom of the value scale of civilization. The author's objectivity and rigor also compelled him to underscore highly relevant dissociations, whereby the Transylvanian countryside, marked by ignorance and illiteracy, appeared in stark contrast with the urban milieus, regarded as promoters of civilization: "Unfortunately, there is no trace of civilization in this nation, and I'm referring to the great mass of this population . . . because in the cities there are, indeed, educated people among both the Catholics and the Orthodox who are trying to improve the condition of this nation."⁷⁷

A consistent element of this civilizing trend was the economic aspect, specifically the standard of living that characterized the Romanian society in Transylvania. The impact of discovering the Romanian realities was all the more shocking since Prelà came from the sphere of Western civilization, which featured a high degree of urbanization and modern means of locomotion, and where comfort and cleanliness coexisted with a very diverse dietary regime. Hence, viewed from the perspective of a high civilization, the state of the Romanian society led him to argue that "poverty is the normal state of this population. Romanian peasants are unaware of the advantages of a higher standard of living . . . and corn polenta with a dash of pork is their staple dish..."⁷⁸

In line with older clichés, which dated back to the Enlightenment and relegated this area to the outskirts of the civilized world, the perception that the Viennese cardinal developed on the Romanian realities was also the result of the preconceived images that the Hungarian Roman-Catholic hierarchy in Transylvania had imparted upon him during his visit to Blaj. Despite having been exposed to images and clichés that were far from being consonant with the Romanian realities, the pro-nuncio realized the strained relations between the Romanians and the Hungarians, arriving at a correct understanding of the current state of the Romanians in Transylvania, which was the result of discriminatory medieval constitutionalism: "In the age when the Hungarian constitution was in force, the Romanians were deprived of any political rights, being, in actual fact, mere serfs who were oppressed by the nobles and were condemned to a state of humiliation and misery."⁷⁹ He interpreted the revolutionary events of 1848–1849 with same objectivity, writing that "in 1848 many of the Greek

Catholics' churches were destroyed by the Hungarians..."¹⁰ and invalidating the distorted images that the Archbishop Primate of Hungary, János Scitovszky, had suggested to him.¹¹

A special place in his findings was held by his interest in the Romanians' physiognomy and psychology. Prelà's interest was part of a long series of similar concerns, of classical Enlightenment extraction, whereby a landscape acquired color only if humanized, enriched by the aesthetic and psychological traits of the people that gave it life. Seen thus, given their well-proportioned physical constitution and their energetic nature, the Transylvanian Romanians appeared to have striking similarities with the Italians, with whom the author was familiar.¹² The image depicted by the pro-nuncio of Vienna became thus an additional piece in the file of countless reflections on the perennial characteristics of the Romanians, which were also confirmed by the testimonies of other eras. This type of interest was inseparable from the concern for the Romanians' psychological and behavioral profile. Prelà noted, in this respect, an interesting symbiosis between their merits and defects: their so-called "good qualities" were sometimes converted into bouts of violence, which represented a characteristic of marginal societies, in his own estimate.¹³

Overall, the portrait Prelà sketched bore the negative imprint of older perceptions, specific to the Enlightenment period, according to which indolence and barbarism represented the dominant features of this space, seen as part of the much vaster South-East European area. The only time the author adopted a slightly less acrid and negative tone can be identified in the first part of his intervention, where the semblance between the Romanians and the Italians is emphasized. In fact, the similarities detected here seem to foretell the possibility of extracting this territory from the sphere of Eastern influence and inserting it within the framework of the Catholic world. These common physiognomic traits tend to be among the few bridges (besides the Romanians' Latin descent) connecting Transylvania with the civilization of Western Europe, and the sole concession made to this province in terms of its integration into the circuit of Western values and civilization.

Most of his comments were devoted to the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy, whose mission was to civilize this people. Special emphasis was laid on the priests' rather precarious financial situation, which often made them indistinguishable from the mass of their parishioners: "The priests have very small incomes, amounting to only 150 florins per year in many parishes. Since most of them are married and their parochial revenues do not allow them to provide for their wives and children, it is often the case that, after celebrating the holy sacraments, the priests will put on peasants' clothes and work the land or herd the cattle, as if they were true farmers."¹⁴ Influenced by the paradigm of Latin celibacy, where

the priest's attention was directed primarily towards his flock and only as a last resort to himself, the pro-nuncio was surprised to find that matters were entirely different in the new Romanian ecclesiastical province. Here the vast majority of the priests were married and faced serious material shortcomings, which impelled them to channel all their efforts towards providing for their families and only to a lesser degree towards serving the community they had been entrusted with.

The pro-nuncio of Vienna perceived the clash between the two paradigms—spiritual celibacy and the marriage of Greek-Catholic and Orthodox priests—extremely acutely, realizing that the poverty of the Greek-Catholic parishes made it impossible for the priests to fulfill their mission of civilizing the Romanian space. That is why he advocated the Viennese Government's unconditional commitment to improving the material situation of the Romanian parishes, an obligation the Austrians had actually assumed through a voluntary agreement between State and Church, known as the Concordat of August 1855.¹⁵ The measure was especially necessary since its reverberations in the territory could only be positive, fostering the consolidation and expansion of the religious union in an area that was encircled by Orthodoxy. According to Pro-nuncio Prelà, a substantial material endowment of the Greek-Catholic parishes would have ensured not only full theological training for a larger number of clerics, who would have been thus able to fulfill their civilizing mission, but also an advantage over the less well-endowed Orthodox communities, offering the latter an irresistible incentive towards the religious union.

Prelà's account devoted special attention to the education of the Romanian Greek-Catholic clergy, who were considered to be better educated and more selfless as compared to the Orthodox. Not incidentally, on this occasion the pro-nuncio informed the Holy See's Secretariat of State about the discussions he had had with the Viennese Minister of Religious Affairs, Leo Thun, concerning the allocation of appropriate subsidies for expanding the existing seminaries and establishing new ones in the recently created dioceses.¹⁶

Another characteristic generally attributed to marginal, peripheral societies, which Cardinal Prelà also detected in Transylvania, was the extremely low level of religious knowledge among both the Greek Catholics and the Orthodox. Close to the Greek Catholics by way of their Oriental rite, traditions and language, the Orthodox represented, in his view, a propitious area for the expansion of Catholicism. The success or the failure of this idea would depend on the zeal and intellectual training of the priests involved in such work: "Most of them are particularly attached to the external forms of the Eastern rite, which is entirely identical to that of the Orthodox, and do not realize the difference between truth and sin. That is why these communities depend on their own priests, and where

the latter will not be insensitive, they will easily manage, with some degree of authority, to determine an Orthodox village to embrace the union and maybe even a Catholic village to convert to Orthodoxy, although the latter case would pose more difficulties if the Bishop were careful and zealously fulfilled his episcopal duties.”¹⁷

The validity of this project seemed to be fully supported by the Orthodox who were in favor of the union, some wishing to escape the heavy taxes, others being driven by the spirit of nationalism and willing to be removed from under the authority of the Serbian hierarchy, in full awareness of their Roman origin.¹⁸

By emphasizing the idea of the Romanians’ Latinity, the author deliberately touched an extremely sensitive chord for the manner in which the Transylvanian Romanians related to their representations of themselves. Prelà had come across the thesis of the Roman descent in the Romanian ideological discourse, where it amounted to a mere belief; however, the Viennese cardinal invested it with the value of an argument meant to persuade the Orthodox of the legitimacy of their return to the faith of their “ancestors.”

It may be said that the theme of the Romanians’ Latin origin could be invoked and capitalized upon to support all interests and directions.¹⁹ It was all a matter of the perspective from which things were seen. Thus, while this thesis could take on the most diverse connotations in the Romanian cultural discourse,²⁰ for Viale Prelà the Latin origin of the Romanians had to be valorized so as to serve as a highly effective propaganda tool in a world in which the outposts of literacy were still barely visible: “To this may be added the fact that the Romanians believe themselves to be of Roman origin and suffer greatly under the jurisdiction of the Serbian hierarchy; therefore, the strongest argument that can be used in addressing the illiterate population is: You are Romans; you should, therefore, profess the Roman faith, which is the faith of your ancestors.”²¹ This is how the compensatory function of this glorious past could be converted into an instrument of persuasion, especially in the case of these poorly educated communities, afflicted, as they were, by history and facing extreme situations: their Roman ancestry could represent a valid argument for their conversion to Catholicism.

Sent to the Holy See for information and debate, the findings of the pro-nuncio of Vienna, Michele Viale Prelà, depicted the mid-nineteenth century image of a Transylvanian space of poverty and ignorance, which inevitably relegated it to the edges of the civilized world.

ANTONIO DE Luca, the nuncio of Vienna, read the Romanian realities in a starkly similar manner. During his visit to Transylvania in the autumn of 1858, just three years after the first apostolic legate’s visit, Transylvania had failed to register any notable improvement. Rather, Nuncio De Luca’s

findings tended to emphasize the marginal, peripheral characteristics of this space and sketched the image of a society hovering on the border between norm and practice. Thus, referring to the administration of the Holy Sacraments, Nuncio De Luca discovered that in the Romanian villages there prevailed a custom that fell short of the Holy See's expectations. Consulted in this respect, the Provost of the Diocese of Lugoj, Teodor Aaron, confessed:

On Maundy Thursday, right during the celebration of Mass, besides the piece of bread called Agnețiu, prepared for the offering of the Holy Mass, another piece of bread similar to this one is consecrated for the sick through the same gesture as the first; then, before offering communion, the priest uses the spoon with which the housel is given to those who receive communion, pours a few drops of wine from the hallowed chalice on it, imitating the sign of the cross; then, on the third day of Easter, during Holy Mass, this piece of bread is divided into smaller pieces, which are dried on the fire, on a small paten called discos, and are then stored in a pyxis or chalice to last an entire year; when they are offered to the sick for communion, they are first soaked in a little spoon filled with wine or water, so that they will be swallowed more easily; if the Eucharist, prepared in this way for the sick, should go bad in any way, the priest is obliged to remove it during liturgy and prepare another communion of the sick separately.²²

Also identified in the case of other Orientals, the practice detected in Transylvania had been condemned by the Holy See. For instance, referring to the Italo-Greeks in the constitution *Etsi pastoralis*, Pope Benedict XIV (1740–1757) had described this as an abuse, establishing the obligation of renewing the Holy Communion for the sick every other eight or fifteen days.²³ The measure was intended to correct and, especially, to prevent deviations from the norm, which most often led to negligence and sloppiness in the administration of the holy sacraments.

Issued for the Italo-Greeks, Pope Benedict XIV's instruction could not be applied to the Greek-Catholics in Transylvania, although the realities signaled by Apostolic Nuncio De Luca seemed to necessitate it: "The Nuncio . . . grew sad seeing with his own eyes how, in some country parishes, the Holy Communion was negligently stored in a box covered with a piece of paper."²⁴ The Greek-Catholic Bishop of Gherla, Ioan Alexi, explained it not so much on account of material poverty but of the negligence reigning in the parishes. He supported this claim by making reference to cases of parishes from his diocese, which, despite their poverty, had proved, most of the times, willing to bear the financial costs of purchasing chalices.²⁵

Placed in this context, the negligence found in the administration of the sacraments was the result of a theological education that was not always adequate,

leading to an approximate understanding of the dogma and, consequently, to its misapplication.

In the world of the Transylvanian Greek-Catholic villages, there was some relaxation also as regarded the performance of religious services, which were reduced to a sort of Sunday exercise or to celebrating the annual holidays: "As a rule, except for the cathedral churches, the priests will only celebrate the Divine Liturgy on holidays, on the occasion of an inauguration or if they have another obligation to celebrate." The following explanation was found: "The marital status of almost all the priests, their poverty and their customs make the fulfillment of common liturgical obligations less frequent."²⁶

It can be seen, therefore, that deviations from the norm were not the exclusive result of poor theological training: they were also the consequence of the poverty afflicting the Greek-Catholic clergy, most of whom were married and burdened with large families. This often led to their daily priorities taking precedence over their religious responsibilities. Last but not least, the relaxation or laxity characterizing the performance of sacerdotal obligations was also the result of a legacy in this respect, imposed, in time, through the power of habit.²⁷

In short, theological training, which was still deficient, continued to be a determining factor for the priests' performance of ministry in the midst of their communities. Without any claims to absolute truths, the statements made by one of the members of the 1858 apostolic delegation highlighted a typical reality of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which time and, especially, civilization had failed to dislodge. In his notes, the villages and their priests seemed stuck in a stillness that was difficult to comprehend:

Not to mention the so-called moralists, who within a mere two years will turn from peasants into priests, and they represent almost half of the entire clergy in Transylvania, and although they have been initiated into the holy orders, they do not even know their liturgical rite; the education of the other part of the clergy suffers from many shortcomings: for the youth who are destined for the clerical ranks are educated here and there, at random, hoping to gain the proper perspective on those things they are themselves deprived of, and after returning to their homeland . . . given their discontent, they are of no help to the poor populace but rather crave greater dignities and a fatter income.²⁸

As regards the education of the Greek-Catholic clergy, the accounts of these pontifical envoys seem to reconstruct a reality of the previous century, whose original components had not undergone too much change. Despite the religious book production, which had increased and diversified in Transylvania, reaching the

most diverse domains,²⁹ the level of instruction for most of the Romanian priests was still rather low in the mid-nineteenth century, covering merely the rudiments of religious knowledge. Moreover, the incomplete theological training of many candidates to priesthood and their extremely precarious material situation explain their poor pastoral performance and their limited desire for improvement. It was remarked, in this respect, that “they are almost completely deprived of the necessary books for cultivating the soul, and they also do not have time to study, since besides lacking books, they are equally deprived of will and time, while on the other hand, they read the holy sermons on Sundays from a sort of printed homiliary and they often skip entire passages altogether.”³⁰ Through the eyes of these foreign travelers, we rediscover, therefore, the image of priests who largely identified themselves with the world of the prevalently rural communities they guided. In other words, in the mid-nineteenth century, the clergymen that Rome’s emissaries encountered in Transylvania were insufficiently trained and poorly paid, often encumbered by the burden of large families. Naturally, such a situation was also generated by the destitution of the Romanian clerics.³¹ This was why Apostolic Nuncio De Luca and his companions confirmed to Rome the insufficient material endowment of the Romanian priests and their daily problems, which drew them close to—often to the point of becoming identified with—the community in whose midst they lived. The portrait painted in this respect was that of priests who could be found both in church and on the village fields or at the fairs, seeking “to sell and buy the goods they needed.”³²

No less interesting was the custom of fasting encountered in Transylvania and, in particular, in the predominantly rural mid-nineteenth century Romanian communities. The first thing that was noted was their strict adherence to the four yearly fasts consecrated by codes of the Eastern Church: the fast before Easter or Lent, the fast of the Apostles Peter and Paul, St. Mary’s fast (15 August, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin) and the Christmas fast. The practice recounted by Canon Cipariu revealed an extremely scrupulous observance of the Oriental norm of abstention from the consumption of animal products and their derivatives. Besides these, there were also the so-called “strict fasts” around the time of Christmas, Epiphany and Easter, which permitted only the evening meal and also prohibited the consumption of fish. Fasting was also observed on 29 August and 14 September, irrespective of the weekdays they coincided with. Finally, the days of fasting included the Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, except for those between Christmas and Epiphany, during Easter week and Pentecost.³³ As periods of deep religious introspection, fasts were meant to duplicate culinary efforts, legitimizing in fact through this formal prohibition the everyday realities of Romanian food consumption at the middle of the nineteenth century.

AFTER NEARLY a decade since the presence in Transylvania of Apostolic Nuncio Antonio de Luca, the shortcomings of the Transylvanian society—long deplored previously—were the object of further, extremely interesting comments and observations. They were occasioned by the visit the Nuncio of Vienna, Mariano Falcinelli, undertook to Galicia and Transylvania in the autumn of 1868. His depiction of the Transylvanian society perpetuated the image of a population that was very attached to the external forms of the rite, which had enabled it, according to the nuncio, to maintain its Christian faith. It was a world in which the cult of the saints and, in particular, the Marian cult represented undeniable realities. That was also true of pilgrimages, as forms of popular piety: “The population is deeply attached to the religious rite; it is perhaps this attachment to religion and the lack of education that defended them against the Islam during the previous centuries, and against the danger of losing their faith now. The cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of other Saints is still very strong with them.”³⁴ Given this popular devotion and the poor education of the Romanian population, Falcinelli supported the opportunity of establishing a Catholic mission in Transylvania, after the model proposed for the southern Slavs. The nuncio also detected a particular “predilection” for monasticism and monasteries, as forms of religious life through which the Romanians “had received their first apostles from the monasteries of the ancient oriental Churches.” Appreciated in this context, the Romanians’ attachment to the monastic orders and the monasteries prompted Falcinelli to recommend its use as a vital instrument not only for strengthening the Greek-Catholic Church but also for extending the union with the Church of Rome.

In line with his forerunners’ considerations on the lack of interest in schooling and Catholic education in the Greek-Catholic villages, Falcinelli refused to acknowledge the Transylvanians as an educated population. This was the case, he said, not because they lacked “the means to acquire healthy and sufficient training, but because of the carelessness of this population, which is more accustomed to shepherding. Thus, abiding by old customs, the people do not appreciate intellectual culture.”³⁵ This is how the practices and characteristics of the Romanian villages were deemed to be absolute and were also applied to the intellectuals, who were seen as extremely shallow and non-influential. In search for an explanation to the given situation, the nuncio reiterated that “among the Romanians from those parts [of Transylvania] there is no aristocracy, since over the past centuries, those who had distinguished themselves through their fortune and entered the ranks of the local nobility had also abandoned the language and religion of their ancestors.”³⁶ In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Romanians had thus come to represent mainly a poor population, which was forced to survive by generally toiling in the field. Falcinelli did not, however, deny the exis-

tence of a thin middle-class layer, comprising especially Romanian doctors and lawyers.

Condemned in principle, the Romanians' lack of education nonetheless had a salutary effect on them. It had preserved here a world that was still "not perverted" by modernity's trends and ideas: "It is because of this lack of intellectual culture that here philosophical studies are little known of; consequently, neither philosophical materialism, nor the predilection for false systems and religious indifference have manifested themselves so far..."³⁷

While protected from the modern philosophical trends, which seemed to point unanimously to religious indifference, the Romanian society was nonetheless exposed to the ideas of modern nationalism, whose effects were also felt at the level of the Greek-Catholic segment: "to better understand the general tendencies of the Catholic Romanians in Transylvania, it should be noted that there the spirit of nationality is still well maintained and promoted. Therefore, the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are upheld because they may lead to the reunion of all the Romanians in an independent nation."³⁸

SENT TO the Holy See for the purposes of information and debate, the reports of the three apostolic envoys represented the foundation of the first official database, which the pontifical authorities endeavored to develop and use during the second half of the nineteenth century, with a view to consolidating and expanding Catholicism in this part of the Austrian Empire. Their almost unanimous findings suggest that, for the three apostolic envoys who visited Transylvania in the second half of the nineteenth century, the term "civilization" was perfectly synonymous with the notion of Catholicism or with the Catholic space. In fact, by highlighting this congruence, they continued, in the mid-nineteenth century, the effort of discovering and inventing South-East Europe, which had begun in the Enlightenment period. Following in the footsteps of the eighteenth-century Western travelers, they contributed to consolidating the mental borders of this space by constantly relating it to Western Europe, in contrast with which they had originally been set.³⁹ What distinguished the three pontifical legates from the other travelers was the fact that the frame of reference in their accounts was not merely a generic "Western" Europe but, more specifically, the area circumscribed by Catholicism, whose boundaries could be extended towards the Eastern world.



(Translated by CARMEN BORBÉLY)

Notes

1. Archivio Segreto Vaticano (hereafter cited as ASV), *Segreteria di Stato, Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Carte D’Austria*, vol. 6/1851–1856, file 45/p. 34 A.
2. Ibid., vol. VIII/1858–1862, pos. III, pt. II/August 1858–1859, file 52/p. 139 A.
3. Archivio della Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali (hereafter cited as ACCO), *Ponenze della Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, Affari del Rito Orientale, Romeni*, vol. 2, 11/1874, fols. 576–621.
4. Ștefan Lemny, *Sensibilitate și istorie în secolul XVIII românesc* (Bucharest, 1990), 32.
5. Sorin Mitu, *Imagini europene și mentalități românești din Transilvania la începutul epocii moderne* (Cluj-Napoca, 2000), 72.
6. ASV, *Archivio della Nunziatura di Vienna (Arch. Nunz. Vienna)*, vol. 325, fol. 289r.
7. ASV, *Segr. Stato, Affari Eccl., Carte d’Austria*, vol. 6/1851–1856, file 46/p. 35, report (*dispaccio*) no. 18101, 28 Nov. 1855.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Nicolae Bocșan, Ioan Lumperdean, and Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Etnie și confesiune în Transilvania (secolele XIII–XIX)* (Oradea, 1994), 157.
12. ASV, *Segr. Stato, Affari Eccl., Carte d’Austria*, vol. 6/1851–1856, file 46/p. 35, report no. 18101, 28 Nov. 1855.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid, file 46/p. 35, report no. 18101, 28 Nov. 1855.
18. Ibid.
19. Sorin Mitu, *Geneza identității naționale la românii ardeleni* (Bucharest, 1997), 277.
20. Ibid.
21. ASV, *Segr. Stato, Affari Eccl., Carte d’Austria*, vol. 6/1851–1856, file 46/p. 35, report no. 18101, 28 Nov. 1855.
22. ASV, *Segr. Stato, Affari Eccl., Rapporti delle Sessioni*, sess. 354, fasc. 4/1859, fol. 258v.
23. Ibid., fasc. 3/1859, fol. 199v.
24. Ibid., fols. 199v–200r.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., fol. 200r.
27. Toader Nicoară, *Transilvania la începuturile timpurilor moderne (1680–1800): Societate rurală și mentalități colective* (Cluj, 1997), 113.
28. ASV, *Arch. Nunz. Vienna*, vol. 425 (LII), fol. 379r.
29. Nicoară, 99–100.
30. ASV, *Arch. Nunz. Vienna*, vol. 425 (LIII), fol. 379v.
31. ASV, *Segr. Stato, Affari Eccl., Rapporti delle Sessioni*, vol. 354, fasc. 3/1859, fol. 194v.
32. Ibid., fol. 195r.

33. Ibid., fasc. 4/1859, fols. 260r,v–261r.
34. Ibid., fol. 128v.
35. ACCO, *Ponenze... Romeni*, vol. 2, 11/1874, fol. 599.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., fol. 601.
38. Ibid., fol. 606.
39. See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization in the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994).

Abstract

Transylvania in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Accounts of the Papal Legates

This article describes and analyses the image of Transylvania and the Transylvanian Romanians as it is reflected in the accounts written by the legates of the Holy See in the mid-nineteenth century. This image was constructed from a series of stereotypes and clichés that were commonly used in the milieu of Western extraction and that reinforced, most of the times, the existing negative bias against the Romanians and the Romanian space. The papal legates' accounts included reflections on: the geographical and climatic conditions, the level of civilization, education, the material situation, the bookish horizon and the understanding of religious dogmas and doctrines. All of these aspects were perceived in prevalently negative terms, emphasizing the inferiority of this space and signaling, implicitly, the gap that separated Western and Eastern Europe. The only aspects that were perceived in a positive light were the physiognomic similarities between the Romanians and the Italians, the fact that a part of the Transylvanian Romanians were Catholics (belonged to the Greek-Catholic Church) and the Romanians' Latin descent. As the envoys of the Holy See confessed in their reports, their mission was to pave the way for Transylvania's integration within the value system of Western civilization.

Keywords

Transylvania, nineteenth century, Holy See, Papal Legates' accounts