The Romanians from the former Székely Chairs during the revolution of 1848-1849

Summary

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The thesis, Romanians from the former Székely Chairs during the revolution of 1848-1849, which makes special reference to the Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county aims to recover documentary testimonies, be them published or published for the first time that allowed the recollection of important aspects of the history of Romanian communities from the Székely Chairs during the 19th century. The importance of treating this issue arises both from the historic importance, as well as from contemporary symbolism. The region over which we have focused attention, although it was viewed at the time of 1848 as a multi-ethnic and multicultural space, in most cases, it was and is perceived as a Hungarian (Székely) mono-ethnic area. The majority of Hungarians historians, both before the Great Union of the 1st December 1918 and after, approached the history of Székely Chairs in terms of institutional, historical, ethnographic, linguistic, cultural, almost exclusively through the prism of Székely population, the majority one. Romanians, so many as they have left, were often unmentioned or treated superficially, being remembered briefly in different synthesis or in those devoted to the local history of the area.

The history of Székely population, with all its specific aspects determined on the one hand by the reduced number of the Romanians from this area and the advanced stage of Hungarianisation of the communities of this area, has been addressed as an integral part of the Romanians from Transylvania. Romanians who lived near the border with Moldavia and Wallachia had benefited most from the establishment and maintenance of permanent relationships and solidarity with the Romanians over the Carpathians. The history of Romanian communities from the Székely Chairs, which dates immediately after the settlement of the Székely population in Eastern Transylvania, cannot be researched without taking into account the history of Székely population. This is the reason why the present thesis mentions the main moments of the history of the Székely population and emphasizing the events of the 19th century, particularly those during the revolution of 1848-1849.

Along its content the thesis presents the main demographic, cultural and historical coordinates of Romanian communities from the Székely Chairs in the period before the
revolution of 1848-1849, during the revolution, and the main developments of this period. The theme about the Romanian communities from the former Székely Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county, which are the nowdays counties of Covasna and Harghita, due to its significance and topical importance has returned to the attention, after year of 1990, of specialists from the fields of history, sociology, ethnography or demographics and not only but also in the political debates. There is an important symbolic component reflected in the contemporaneity, present in the collective mentality and obsessively promoted by the Hungarian historiography, in school textbooks and in the media.

The reason for choosing the theme for the present work “Romanians from the former Székely Chairs during the revolution of 1848-1849” is based on the following considerations: firstly, the fact that this historical period, for the South-Eastern Transylvania, an area that differentiates itself through various peculiarities, was less approached by the Romanian historiography; basically there is no distinctive work that approaches the question of the participation of the Romanians from the former Székely of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county to the revolution of 1848-1849; there is a great discrepancy between the works of the Hungarian researchers and those of Romanian researchers regarding the participation of the Romanians from the former Székely Chairs to the revolution of 1848-1849 and a lack of valuing the published sources, be them Romanian or Hungarian; different perspectives between the Hungarian and Romanian historians concerning the development of the revolution in the former Székely Chairs and the participation of the Romanians and the Hungarians to the events of the revolution in the whole Transylvania. Another reason is based on the belief that a better knowledge of the past, an objective approach based on the documents, acquires a special significance in the context of the current debates related to this geographical area of Romania, named in Hungarian historiography “The Land of the Székely”. The speeches and the autonomist and separatist Hungarian projects present in the current Romanian public space are some means of updating some nostalgic desiderata contained in the ideals of the Hungarian revolution of 1848-1849.

The objectives pursued in the structuring of the present paper were: knowledge of the principal moments of the revolution of 1848-1849 in the former Székely Chairs with particular reference to the Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county; restoring an image as truthful as possible on the participation of the Romanian population from the Székely Chairs to the revolution of 1848-1849 and highlighting the obviously special situation in which the Romanian communities of this area found themselves during the revolution of 1848-1849. There were also analyzed the disastrous consequences of the
Hungarian exclusivist policy since then; highlighting the human and material losses both for the Romanians and the Hungarians in the revolution of 1848-1849 and it was also emphasized the positive mutations occurring in the lives of Romanian communities in this part of the country after the revolution of 1848-1849. The work also mentions the specifics of Romanian serfdom and how they freed themselves of it, the diversification socio-occupational jobs and the development of community life; a survey on the changes occurred in the Romanian social and occupational structure in this region immediately in the aftermath of the revolution and all under the impact of upgrading the economical relationships in an agricultural and traditional society which freed itself of serfdom. Particularly important is highlighting the organization and conduct of ecclesiastical life within the Orthodox parishes and the Greek Catholic Church, the role of the bishoprics in Sibiu and Blaj in supporting the Romanian communities and in maintaining the linguistic, cultural and religious identity in an environment not always conducive towards Romanian and the Romanian spirit; pointing out the effects of demographic policy, in a geographical area in which the ratio between the Romanian majority and Hungarian minority differentiates from other regions of Transylvania. At the same time were put in evidence the magyarization process dimensions of the Romanian population in the former Székely Chairs.

Another goal was to approach the lives of the Romanian communities from the former Székely Chairs, as being Church communities and founders of schools, their relations with the State school laws, with the ecclesiastical school forums, specifically with the impact of these factors on the confessional and educational situation of the Romanians of this area; as well as the school policies and the analysis of the impact of the Hungarian Government on the school network and the level of literacy of the population and the presentation of problems relating to the access of the Romanian population of the area to education and spiritual life. Bearing in mind this context it was highlighted how the relation Community-Church, priest-school community, the Romanian community-local administration manifested themselves; rendering also the positive implications of the neighborhood regions of Moldavia and Wallachia on the overcoming of some moments of need of the Romanian communities living in the area, the dimensions of solidarity of the Romanians living on both sides of the Carpathians.

In the paper there are also presented the contemporary outcomes of the Revolution of 1848-1849 in Transylvania, especially from the former Székely Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county. A specific note of the thesis is the translation from the Hungarian language of the historiographic, civic, political discourse, and publishing activities in the local
media with the purpose of getting a glimpse into the Hungarian collective mentality regarding the symbolism of the revolution of 1848-1849 reflected in the contemporary thinking.

After presenting *the historiography of the issue and the sources of the research* I have dealt in the second chapter, entitled *Székely Chairs - a historic perspective* with three topics referring to: Eastern Transylvania in the early middle ages (8th-3th centuries); the beginnings of colonization to the Székely population; the administrative and territorial division organization of the Székely Chairs for an extensive period until 1848; the Székely border regiments and their role in the public life of the Székely Chairs; the attitude of the Székely people towards the Romanian principalities; the shift of the Székely identity to the Hungarian one; the Romanian-Hungarian ethno-cultural interference in southeastern Transylvania, and finally a few contemporary touches on interethnic cohabitation in the nowadays area.

Chapter III, *Romanians form the Székely Chairs* is concerned with: life of Romanians in South-Eastern Transylvania in the 13th-18th centuries; Romanian communities in the area around the revolution of 1848-1849; secular and ecclesiastical demographic sources referring to Romanians in the Székely Chairs from the period 1800-1857; the Church and School, as a fundamental institution of preservation and affirmation of Romanian identity in these administrative-territorial units; the administrative and ecclesiastical organization of the Orthodox Romanians and the Greek Catholics in the period 1700-1850; making the stock of goods of Orthodox parishes, and the Greek Catholic Church from the first half of the nineteenth century; old church book circulation in the parishes of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic; Bishop Andrei Şaguna’s struggle for restoration of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the support of the great hierarch offered to the Romanians from the Székely Chairs; beatification of Saint Andrei Şaguna; the establishment of the Romanian Orthodox Church (1853); considerations on the Romanian confessional educational system in the middle of the 19th century; presentation of the main leaders of the Romanian population in the area (19th century).

In chapter IV, *The Székely population in the revolution of 1848-1849*, I approached issues relating to: aspects of the events during the revolution of 1848-1849 in the Székely Chairs; the role of Székely border regiments in the revolution of 1848-1849; information about the incitement of people with the help of the Hungarian press during 1848-1849; actions of the Székely troops before the moment of Lutiţa; the development of the Székely assembly at Lutiţa; the consequences of the Székely assembly from Lutiţa over the Romanians and Transylvanian Saxons; human and material losses of Romanians in Transylvania after the Lutiţa assembly and Székely casualties in the revolution of 1848-1849.
In chapter V, *The Romanians from the Székely Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county during the revolution from 1848-1849*, I approached the following aspects: moments of the revolution of 1848-1849, and the implications on the Romanians from the Székely Chairs; Romanians from the Giurgeu branch seat during the revolution; the participation of the Romanians from the Transylvanian Bicaz and the surrounding areas to the revolution of 1848-1849; the Romanians from the Háromszék county and Odorhei during the revolution of 1848-1849; Romanians from Buzău during the revolution of 1848-1849; the Transylvanian refugees from the Székely Chairs in Wallachia and Moldova during the revolution; human and material losses on the Romaniana side living in the Székely Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei, Háromszék county, a part form Mures and Brasov district in the revolution of 1848-1849; issues regarding Andrei Şaguna’s involvement in the course of the revolution of 1848-1849.

In chapter VI, *Developments of the revolution of 1848-1849 in the Székely Chairs*, tackled issues relating to: administrative reorganization in the area after the revolution of 1848-1849; the consequences of the revolution on the Romanian, Hungarian and Transylvanian Saxon population with special reference to the Székely Chairs; moments of release from bondage in the Székely Chairs; aspects of the diversification of professions and national emancipation of Romanians from the Székely Chairs after the revolution of 1848-1849; the links of the Romanians from the Székely Chairs with Brasov; Romanian historical personalities who visited Vâlcele resort in the 19th century; aspects of enhancing the process of Hungarianisation of Romanians from the former Székely Chairs after the revolution of 1848-1849.

In Chapter VII, entitled *The Contemporary Emphasize and the Impact of the Revolution of 1848-1849 in Transylvania, especially in the former Székely Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county*, I presented issues such as: the actions taken by János Fazakas for the erection of the monument from Lutiţa (1974); Gábor Arón, myth and historic reality—as he was perceived by the intellectuals of the Hungarian population; the promotion of Gábor Arón's personality in the public space in Transylvania and Hungary; the revolution of 1848-1849 as it is presented in the middle and high school textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and also as this moment is viewed in the school textbooks of history of the Székely population edited by the Harghita and Covasna County Councils; reverberations of the revolution of 1848-1849 in the media immediately after the 1989 revolution both in the Romanian and the Hungarian language.
The paper is accompanied by significant attachments: selected documents from the archives research funds targeted at the issues addressed; maps of the Székely Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county; pictures of ancient Orthodox churches and denominational schools, books and old icons etc. Annexes contain data, statistics, figures, unpublished information that are integrated, commented and interpreted by highlighting the many aspects and components related to the Romanian communities, churches and schools from the area and their evolution during the investigated period. The documents presented in the annexes are meant to back up the argumentation of the revolutionary moment of 1848-1849, to a better knowledge of the history of the Romanians from the former Székely Chairs, the removal of existing prejudices and clichés in Romanian and Hungarian historiography about the Romanians in this part of the country. The rendering of some information that are to be found in some published but inaccessible sources provides an effective tool for further research work concerning the issue of the Romanians from the former Székely Chairs in the revolution of 1848-1849.

The research carried out is meant to point out that in that moment of crossroads of history, which was the revolution of 1848-1849, the Romanians from the Székely Chairs proved to have an active presence. They were involved in all stages of the revolutionary events from their beginning until its completion. The participation of the Romanians from the former Székely Chairs to the revolution of 1848-1849 cannot be researched without bearing in mind the participation of the Székely population as well, and this calls for an analysis into the history of cohabitation of Romanians and Hungarians in the Székely area.

From the data presented, it appears that in 1850, of the total population of the three counties, the Romanians were 27,06% and Hungarians and Szeklers 61,99%. While the Romanians living in the former Székely Chairs accounted for only 12,05% out of the total Romanians from Transylvania, and the Hungarians and the Szeklers mentioned above represented 63,05% of all the Hungarians registered at the Census of 1850 throughout Transylvania.

Figures from the population census of 1850 shows that more than half of the Romanian communities of the present County of Covasna were small communities under 500 members, and in Harghita over 75% of the Romanian communities were in the same situation, a fact that has made all these communities to be "vulnerable" to the process of Hungarianisation and to have minimal resources to sustain the two fundamental institutions: The Church and the School. The Romanian community in the former Székely Chairs was numerically a minority, made up largely of serfs, with a modest community organization,
lacking the presence of local leaders and regional representatives; the only institutions which stand up for their identity were the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic churches and the denominational schools, and the only leaders of the Romanians in the area were the priests, teachers, the Orthodox and Greek-Catholics priests inspectors. Finding themselves in the "most critical situation", isolated from their brethren in other counties and the Saxon chairs, the Romanians from the former Székely Chairs have undergone particularly heavy moments during the revolution of 1848-1849. Their courage to declare solidarity with the ideals of all Romanians in Transylvania meant for them bearing some obvious attacks, accompanied by looting, violence, atrocities or leaving their homes.

In the first stage of the revolution of 1848, taking advantage of the riot of the Transylvanian serfs against the social inequalities, the Romanians from the Székely Chairs have risen along with the Székely peasants insurgents against the Hungarians and Székely nobility. In the second stage, when the national goals of Romanians in Transylvania do not coincide with those of the Hungarians and Szeklers, the Romanians in the Székely Chairs have to face a difficult period. The revolutionary moment of 1848-1849 generated a maximum strain and tension for the inter-ethnic relations, with regrettable consequences.

Through their representatives, the Romanians from the Székely Chairs took part in the meetings at Blaj, and upon their return home they had suffered from the local Hungarian authorities. Although they were isolated from the rest of Romanians living in Transylvania, the Romanians from the Székely Chairs didn't accept either the Union of Transylvania with Hungary or Kosuth’s symbolism. The answer and direct participation in the events of 1848-1849 of the Romanians from the Székely Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county had not only similar issues but specific ones, too - from commune to commune, depending on the geographic location, the demographic potential, the community organization, the involvement of local leaders (priests and teachers) etc.

The Romanians from the mono-ethnic villages located in Ciuc Chair, Transylvanian Bicaz and Buzău the part situated in the Háromszék County, during the revolution of 1848-1849 organized themselves in legions and fought against the Székely troops. Those on the Upper Mureș Valley, in the Toplița area, fought in the legion led by the prefect Constantin Romanu-Vivu and those from the Transylvanian Buzău in the legion led by the revolutionary Constantin Secărianu from Brasov.

The Romanians from the mixed ethnic villages from the Székely Chairs were forcibly recruited in the Székely national guards, being forced to fight against the Saxons and Romanians from Transylvania. Knowing what happened in some Romanian villages
concerning the Romanians’ attitude towards recruitment, we can appreciate that in other Romanian communities from the Székely Chairs, the same damages were to be faced. "The bloody courts" (verbirosag), a sad memory, were in use all over the area of Székely Chairs in order to pronounce death sentences after a superficial trial or in some cases without it at all, and there were also the so called "hunting" teams, which dealt not only with pursuing the Romanians and Saxons "instigators" but also with executions on the spot without a proper trial. Out of these, a particular activity had the courts from Tg.-Mures and Odorhei. In many villages with mixed population, Orthodox Romanians were passed over to the Protestant and the Roman Catholic denominations as a mean of loosing their nationality and identity. In all localities of the Székely Chairs the violent actions and the intolerance of the Székely troops were directed primarily against the fundamental identity institutions-the Church and the school-and against the leaders of the Romanian people-Romanian priests and teachers.

The human and material losses among the Romanians from the Székely Chairs were particularly large. Basically, most Romanian schools churches and were vandalized, the households were looted of their cattle, hay, food, clothes, hives, iron, precious objects. Objects and books of worship were destroyed as well as the church and school archives. In addition to these destructions the Romanians from this region were forced to contribute to the maintenance of the "Székely camps". Summarizing the human losses recorded in documents, it can be concluded that in the Chairs of Odorhei, Ciuc and Háromszék county, during the revolution of 1848-1849 over 550 Romanian people were killed. Among those that fell prey to the Székely troops intolerance are to be mentioned, father Gheorghe Popovici, priests from St. George, Ioan Rus from Feleag, Teodor Dumbrava and Teodor Precup from Dămuc and George Rus from Joseni who was killed in Vlăhița, and teachers like Ioan Popovici from St. George and H. Dogariu from Mărcuş.

One peculiarity is that, while the Romanians from the Transylvanian Buzau and Bicaz after being robbed of their belongings they could take refuge in Wallachia and Moldavia, the Romanians from the Székely Chairs of Odorhei, Ciuc and Háromszék county were compelled to participate effectively in all the revolutionary events together with the Székely population. Among those who have suffered alongside with the Romanians from the Székely Chairs were Székely serfs, too. From the pages of some works of local history is driven the conclusion that a part of the Romanians in the Giurgeu area, during the revolutionary events continued to give support to the Székely population because they were permanently threatened in the same way as the Romanians from Subcetate, Toplița and other localities in the area were.
The consequences of the revolution of 1848-1849 on the Romanian, Hungarian and Transylvanian Saxon population from the Székely Chairs are numerous and with a profound impact for short term, medium and in perspective. It is worthwhile being mentioned the special situation in which the Romanians form the Székely Chairs found themselves in at the end of the revolution of 1848-1849, when, although they were in the winners camp they were under the "losers’ control", supporting all the injustices, especially that of affirmation of national identity.

After the revolution of 1848-1849, there has been a diversification of professions, accompanied by new values of national emancipation of the Romanians from the Székely Chairs. In the industrial, commercial and touristical development of the area, a beneficial role played Brașov and the resorts Vâlcele, Covasna, Tusnad and Borsec. During this period, the main occupation of the Romanians from the Székely Chairs, after the revolution of 1848-1849, was still the branch of agriculture, and within this framework the transitory herding sheep. In the second half of the 19th century, within the Romanian communities from the Székely Chairs a number of important intellectuals were born and formed and they have greatly contributed to the carrying-out of the Great Union. A number of teachers from the Háromszék county region have been authors of textbooks and collections of folklore. Understanding the importance of economic factors in the preservation and affirmation of national identity, the leaders of the Romanian communities have set up foundations, "scholarly" and "Church” funds, popular banks, credit unions and other associative forms of management of material and financial resources, as well as the so called "food stocks", which were intended to provide income for the Church and the school existence.

The issue of revolution of 1848-1849 plays an important role in the monographic works of most localities from the former Székely Chairs, without making any references to human and material losses caused to the Romanians and Saxons in the other regions of Transylvania and from the Székely Chairs. This approach is rooted in the general perspective of the Hungarian historiography which, in its turn, has given and still gives support to the Székely population to fight on the territory of Transylvania and Hungary and to the "war of self defense of the Szeklers". The same historiography always emphasized how much the Romanians stole, robbed and killed but at the same time the historiography does not say a word about the 40,000 Romanians murdered, about the thefts and robberies committed by the Hungarians and Szeklers.

In the Hungarian historiography, "the war of self defense" within the Székely Chairs is considered a glorious local history achievement, but it eludes the intolerance and the atrocities
perpetrated by Székely Hungarians over the Romanians from Transylvania. Marking the day of 15th March and the glorification of the fighting heroes in the revolution of 1848-1849 are part of the arsenal of historical arguments used to obtain territorial autonomy on ethnic criteria for the “Land of the Székely”. A parallel history of the revolution of 1848-1849 is used by the current leaders of the Hungarian community in Transylvania as a tool for demonstrations with autonomist purposes and as a mean of pressure on the Government of Romania, in spite of the fact that Romania and Hungary are members in the European Community.

The knowledge of the historical events of the revolution in the former Székely Chairs of Ciuc, Odorhei and the Háromszék county from 1848-1849 is particularly necessary for a scientific historiography, unalterable by political interests or of any other means, safe from serving any kind of desiderata of some groups or certain ideologies. History of the revolution from 1848-1849 must be known and made known "as it was" in order to counter it from being falsified for revengeful and altering purposes, with great explosive potential. Knowing the real historical situation of that time, historians should no longer allow to falsify history. The Hungarian countrymen should assume what is politically correct and that is their past and they should reconcile with it. This is the history and it cannot be changed. What can be changed, however, is the nowadays relationship between Hungarians and Romanians which must be one of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

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