

**„GEORGE EMIL PALADE” UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE,
PHARMACY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF TÂRGU MUREŞ
DOCTORAL SCHOOL**

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

**THE ROMANIAN COMMUNITIES IN TREI SCAUNE AT THE END
OF THE 18TH CENTURY AND IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH
CENTURY (1760–1850)**

– Summary –

SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR:
Professor Dr. Cornel SIGMIREAN

PhD CANDIDATE:
Tatiana SCURTU

TÂRGU MUREŞ, 2025

Keywords: Trei Scaune, Romanian communities, 18th-19th centuries, Orthodox parishes, confessional schools, interethnic coexistence, archival documents.

This doctoral research undertakes a comprehensive historical reconstruction of the presence and development of Romanian communities within the former Szekler Seat of Trei Scaune, during a period characterized by significant political, social, and confessional transformations – from the final decades of the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. Emphasis is placed on the social-demographic, religious, educational, and cultural dimensions of these communities, situated in a multiethnic region of southeastern Transylvania, within a broader chronological framework marked by imperial reforms, military conflicts, and profound identity shifts.

First and foremost, this study originates from the observation that this historical period – pertaining to a region of Transylvania distinguished by its multiethnic and multiconfessional character – has been insufficiently addressed in Romanian historiography from multiple perspectives. Among the defining features of southeastern Transylvania, historically known as the Szeklerland, several particularities stand out: the atypical relationship between majority and minority populations, as this was the only region where the majority was not Romanian, but Szekler; the region's strong economic dependency on commercial exchanges with the Romanian Principalities; the existence of a complementary economic structure among the settlements of the Inner Carpathian Arc; and the alarming rise in social tensions and emigration, primarily caused by severe economic underdevelopment.

Secondly, understanding the historical past of Romanians in the Inner Carpathian Arc, through evidence grounded in archival documentation, holds particular significance in both the national and international context of today – especially amid increasing discourse surrounding the administrative reorganization of the country and the broader European division into spheres of influence.

In this context, both in certain scholarly works and within the public sphere, the Szeklerland is frequently portrayed as a Hungarian monoethnic bloc, with the presence of Romanians either overlooked or deliberately minimized. Consequently, an objective investigation into the historical evolution of Romanian communities and their coexistence with the Szeklers in the Inner Carpathian Arc is not only necessary, but imperative – an academic necessity to which this thesis seeks to respond. The research has been significantly supported by archival materials preserved in the Romanian National Archives – Covasna County Branch, the Hungarian National Archives in Budapest, and the Austrian State Archives in Vienna. A particularly valuable source is the archive of the “Metropolitan Nicolae Colan” Ecclesiastical Documentation Center in Sfântu Gheorghe, which houses, among others, the following collections: the Orthodox Protopresbyterate of Trei Scaune (with documents from 1760-1850), the Orthodox Protopresbyterate of Oituz, the Greek Catholic Protopresbyterate of Odorhei, and a

documentary collection containing the 1747 census of Romanians in the Trei Scaune seat and the 1843 confessional censuses of the Orthodox parishes in the same region. These sources have enabled the recovery and foregrounding of previously unknown events and aspects related to the Romanian communities of the former Trei Scaune seat during the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century – offering a new and more nuanced perspective on this complex historical issue.

The significance of researching these documents is further enhanced by the fact that they represent some of the few surviving historical testimonies that have withstood the passage of time. Of particular note is the destruction of the archive of the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Sibiu by General Józef Bem during the Revolution of 1848–1849, an act which resulted in the loss of an irreplaceable archival heritage concerning the history of Transylvanian Romanians prior to those events.

As for the contemporary relevance of the topic, this research aims to foreground, select, and systematize the information found in both Romanian and foreign historiography to date, while also bringing to light new documentary evidence that will substantially enhance our understanding of the history and daily life of Romanian communities within the Trei Scaune Seat during the investigated period.

The relevance of the chosen theme is therefore both scholarly – by recovering little-known historical realities of the region – and socio-cultural, by contributing to the consolidation of a historically accurate public perception of the Romanians in this part of the country and by dispelling long-standing stereotypes and misconceptions associated with the Romanian presence in the former Szekler Seats.

The first chapter, *General Considerations*, establishes the theoretical and methodological framework of the research, outlining the rationale for the chosen topic and its relevance to both Romanian and Transylvanian historiography.

Chapter II, *The Trei Scaune Seat in the Eighteenth Century and the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, provides a comprehensive overview of the historical, political, and administrative context of the Trei Scaune Seat during the period under investigation.

Chapter III, *The Romanians of the Trei Scaune Seat in the Eighteenth Century and the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, explores the lives of Romanians in Trei Scaune as reflected in conscriptions and the 1850 census. It examines the development of economic relations, aspects of natural population growth, family life, the scale and dynamics of migration, the existence of Saac (Secuieni) County, the presence of Roman Catholics from Moldova (the Ceangăi) and their connections with the Inner Carpathian Arc, as well as the socio-professional structure of the Romanian population.

Chapter IV, *The Church and National Identity in the Eighteenth Century and the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, examines the structure and dynamics of Romanian church life in Trei Scaune during a period marked by the absence of an

Orthodox ecclesiastical hierarchy – specifically, the era of the Serbian bishops and of the Romanian bishop Vasile Moga. The chapter addresses the protopresbyterates active during the reference period: the Orthodox Protopresbyterate of Trei Scaune, the Orthodox Protopresbyterate of Hăghig and Vâlcele, and the Greek Catholic Protopresbyterate of Trei Scaune. It also discusses the founding of places of worship and the material conditions of both Orthodox and Greek Catholic parishes, the relationship between Romanian churches and the local, gubernial, and imperial administrations, as well as the training and education of Orthodox and Greek Catholic clergy.

Chapter V, *Confessional Education in the Romanian Communities of Trei Scaune in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century and the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, addresses issues related to the organization of education in the Trei Scaune Seat during the reference period, the educational reforms and their effects on Romanian schools in the region, the condition of Romanian schools in the localities where they are documented, as well as the teachers and students from Trei Scaune who attended Orthodox and Greek Catholic confessional schools both within the seat and in other educational centers.

Chapter VI, *Romanian Culture and Civilization in Trei Scaune during the 18th–19th Centuries*, presents elements of local heritage, including churches, dwellings and settlement patterns, as well as markers of identity such as Romanian printed books, icons and liturgical objects, traditional Romanian dress, and the spiritual worldview.

One of the most significant findings of this research lies in demonstrating that the identity resilience of these communities was grounded in three fundamental pillars: the Church, which functioned not only as a religious institution but also as a generator of national consciousness and a center of spiritual resistance; the confessional school, serving both as a means of literacy and a safeguard for the Romanian language; and the local elites, who, through their consistent involvement in community life, upheld national values and aspirations.

The conclusions of the thesis emphasize the need to reassess and restore the historical memory of Romanian communities in this region and to integrate their experience into the broader framework of national historiography. The research challenges prevailing stereotypes concerning the so-called “Hungarian monoethnic bloc” and demonstrates the essential role played by the Church and the school in preserving Romanian identity under adverse conditions.