

INTELLECTUAL CATALYSTS: THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF TRANSYLVANIA ON THE ROAD TO ROMANIAN INDEPENDENCE¹

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Introduction

After being an autonomous principality under the Ottoman Empire until the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, Transylvania came under the rule of Habsburg rule following the decline of the Ottoman Empire. During the Habsburg administration, three different nations and four churches formed the backbone of the Transylvanian autonomy, with Hungarians, Saxons and Sekels holding the monopoly of power and privilege. The other masses were excluded, especially the Romanians, who constituted the majority of the Transylvanian population, were not included as part of this system because they were peasants and Orthodox. However, the people could no longer tolerate social, cultural and religious oppression and started to take concrete steps.

The contribution of the Uniate Church of Transylvania Uniate Church to the intellectual developments in the process of Romania's independence is very important. The cultural movements that emerged in this region in the 18th century

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led to political changes for Romania in the future. The first step was taken with the struggle for “equality” through the members of the Church. The struggles continued with tending to the origins of their own history and language, where they would find a patriotic motive in the name of nationalism.

The main purpose of the study is to evaluate the place of the Latinist activities and propaganda of the members and students of the Uniate Church of Transylvania in the struggle for equality and the revival of the past in the Romanian national movement in the light of research works. The cultural movements that emerged, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries, led to significant political changes on the path to Romania’s future independence. The role of the institution known as the “Transylvanian School” in shaping Romanian national ideology is also evaluated. In addition, it will be emphasized how the institution known as the “Transylvanian School” shaped the Romanian national ideology.

This study aims to investigate the multifaceted cultural impact of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church and its indirect but significant role in Romania’s struggle for independence, revealing how the church contributed to socio-political processes in a historical context. In this regard, it examines how the church’s policy of religious tolerance and support for ethnic-religious diversity accelerated the intellectual and cultural development of the Romanian community and laid the groundwork for the formation of independence consciousness. This perspective provides a new insight into Romanian history and the independence process, making a valuable contribution to the existing literature.

Transylvania, like Wallachia and Moldavia, was an autonomous principality under the administration of the Ottoman Empire until the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699. However, following the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the balance of power in the region shifted, and Transylvania came under the rule of the Habsburg Monarchy. Throughout history, Transylvania has been a region where various ethnic and religious communities coexisted. This diversity has had significant social and political impacts. Transylvania is important for the history of Romania as a whole because the first steps towards independence, which would be achieved in 1878, were taken here.

The occupation of Transylvania by the Habsburg Catholic Kingdom was followed by ethnic, social and religious changes. When Transylvania came under Habsburg rule, its political status changed drastically, its internal autonomy was limited and its external relations were suspended. In addition to the native Romanians, who formed the majority, the region was settled by Hungarians, followed by Saxons and Szekels (Jelavich, 2013: 169-171). “The League of Three Nations”

was formed between the Hungarian, Saxon and Szekel nobility, which gradually removed the native Romanians from the constitutional life of Transylvania.

After the Battle of Mohacs in 1526, the Kingdom of Hungary was divided between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Dynasty, leaving many Hungarians under Vienna's rule. In the 16th century, due to the Protestant Reformation, Hungarians became Calvinist and Unitarian, Saxons became Lutheran, and Székelys became Calvinist (Hitchins^{2014: 58}). With the emergence of these three new denominations alongside Catholicism, a unified church was formed. The Transylvanian Unitarian Church, established in the 16th century, played a significant role in shaping the region's cultural and intellectual landscape. Its influence extended beyond religious areas, contributing to the socio-political developments that led to Romania's independence. This article explores the multifaceted cultural impact of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church and its indirect yet significant role in Romania's struggle for independence.

Historical Context of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church

The contribution of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church to Romania's independence holds a significant place in historical context. To understand the role of the Transylvanian Uniatic Church, it is necessary to consider the church's historical development alongside Romania's independence process (Wilbur, 1952). From 1541, the Principality of Transylvania became an autonomous province under Ottoman rule, governed by either Hungarian princes or Hungarianized Romanians. Along with these political changes, significant changes also occurred in church life.

In the 16th century, King John Sigismund of Transylvania (1540-1571) called a meeting of representatives from the competing Christian churches and denominations in the region. This meeting, held in 1568 in the city of Torda, resulted in the adoption of a policy of religious tolerance for all religions in Transylvania. He also supported the establishment of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church. Sigismund promoted dialogue between Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Unitarians. This policy, known as the Diet of Torda (Toptaş, 2021: 93), allowed various Christian denominations, including Unitarians, Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, to live together in peace (Yılmaz, 1994: 72-80). However, Romanians, with their Orthodox faith, were left out and deprived of their rights in their own land. The Romanian community was excluded and denied the religious and administrative privileges enjoyed by other communities in the region.

Under Habsburg rule, three different “nations” and four churches formed the backbone of Transylvanian autonomy. The main power and privileges were monopolized by the Hungarians, Saxons, and Székelys. Other groups were excluded, especially the Romanians, who made up the majority of the population but were not included in this system because they were peasants and Orthodox (Georgescu, 1991: 89).

The exclusion of the Romanian community from the political structure and their lack of recognition as a fourth “nation” stemmed from the feudal system prevalent in Europe at the time. In this feudal order, which was based on nobility, Romanian traditional leaders, the Voivodes, assimilated into Hungarian culture to gain respect and status, while the rest remained as peasants and lost their political identity (Bozbor, 2007: 4). On the other hand, the fact that the Orthodox Romanian clergy, who adhered to the rules of the Eastern Church, did not have any administrative power despite the Catholic Episcopate, which was the only official religious structure within this feudal order, left the Romanians outside this official structure in religious terms (Bozbor, 2007: 4).

The political and religious exclusion of the Romanians, who were the majority population, drew attention from some groups. Popes, Hungarian kings, and various Catholic missionaries began an intensive religious propaganda campaign in Transylvania. After 1690, under Habsburg control, Jesuits arrived in Transylvania and focused their missionary efforts on Orthodox Romanians instead of Lutherans or Calvinists. By bringing Orthodox Romanians into union with Rome, the number of Catholics would increase, resulting in more Catholic representatives in the Transylvanian Diet. This support led to intellectual development among the Romanian community, thanks to the contributions of educated individuals. The growing awareness of nationhood and unity, along with increased education and cultural development, fostered the idea of political freedom among Transylvanian Romanians. This socio-cultural development, which later spread to Wallachia and Moldavia, significantly contributed to Romania’s independence.

The Role of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church

National Identity Formation and Unity Consciousness

The Transylvanian Unitarian Church contributed to the development of national identity and unity among Romanians living in different regions of Romania. The political struggle of the Romanians aimed to create a fourth community to represent them alongside the Hungarians, Saxons, and Szekels. It strengthened the ties

between Romanians in Transylvania and those in Wallachia and Moldavia. These ties played an important role in the unification and independence process of Romania.

In 1781, Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II issued “the Edict of Tolerance”, granting most non-Catholics the right to practice their own religion. Additionally, the enlightened reforms of Emperor Joseph II coincided with the Romanian intellectual elite’s interest in their ethnic nation and had a significant impact on them. Joseph’s reforms enabled Romanians to access education and knowledge, changing their perception of nationhood and giving them hope that their lives could improve.

In 1791, a significant event occurred in Romanian history. Taking advantage of Emperor Joseph II’s atmosphere of tolerance, a group of Romanian Church clergy prepared a petition. The contributors to this petition included Romanian students who had received education in Vienna and Italy. The petition asserted the equal rights of the people and the absence of national privileges (Chambell, 1971: 18). The national movement was evolving in character with ideas brought by young people from the West and intellectual efforts of the bourgeois aristocratic class, gradually gaining momentum.

King’s reforms profoundly shook the existing order in Transylvania, giving Romanians hope for rights and benefits. By relaxing censorship and encouraging broader debate, the reforms integrated Romanians into the general reform movement. Joseph’s decrees granted religious tolerance, civil rights, and educational opportunities to Romanians. His decisions to abolish serfdom resonated strongly, especially among dependent peasant Romanians.

The religious persecution against Orthodoxy and the serfdom system imposed by Austria-Hungary led many Transylvanian Romanians to flee to Wallachia and Moldavia (Georgescu, 1991: 89). However, the people were increasingly unwilling to accept social, cultural, and religious oppression and began taking concrete actions. In 1784, peasants in the western mountains of Transylvania, facing forced conscription and heavy taxation by Habsburg authorities, led a rebellion under the leadership of Nicolae Horia, a Romanian citizen (Florescu, 1967: 332). While the rebellion did not achieve the desired results that would change their future, their intentions were clear. They sought not autonomy or independence but equal political, social, and economic rights like the recognized “nations” of Hungarians, Saxons, and Székelys. The group that would shoulder the struggle was the educated segment of society, particularly members of the church.

One of the contributions of the Union was transforming the clergy’s identity into a new concept of nationhood. Bishops, viewing their Roman origins and

churches as a bridge between East and West, inspired by Ion Inochentie Micu-Klein, reimagined the nation in a distinct way. This ethnic nation encompassed all Romanians and acknowledged their Roman origins. Romanians believed in their Dacian ancestry originating from Rome and their language being of Latin origin (Hitchens, 2014: 60).

The Unitarian Church made significant contributions to the development of Romanian national identity through its educational and cultural activities. Advocating for the use of the Romanian language in education and religious services, the Church helped preserve and promote Romanian cultural heritage in a region dominated by Hungarian and German influences.

Furthermore, the Church's teachings emphasized the importance of moral integrity, social justice, and societal responsibility. These values resonated widely among the broader Romanian population, fostering a sense of unity and collective purpose. The Church's support for the cultural and linguistic rights of Romanians in Transylvania laid the groundwork for a national awakening that eventually led to the pursuit of independence.

Educational and Cultural Contributions

The Transylvanian Unitarian Church undertook significant efforts in education and cultural development. By establishing schools, the Church contributed to the education of individuals who played a role in shaping Romania's national consciousness. Especially during the 19th century independence struggle, intellectuals educated by the Church took leadership roles in national movements. Influenced by European thought currents and behavioral models, these intellectuals and clergy members entered the modern world.

One of the Unitarian Church's profound cultural impacts was its commitment to education. The Church founded numerous schools and colleges that became centers of learning and intellectual development. These institutions played a crucial role in spreading Enlightenment ideas, supporting critical thinking, and fostering a spirit of inquiry among the youth of Transylvania.

The Unitarian College in Cluj was one of the best example of this commitment. Founded in 1568, this school became a stronghold of liberal education by producing knowledgeable graduates in humanities, sciences, and modern political thought. These educated individuals played key roles in cultural and political movements that paved the way for Romania's independence.

Thus, church members who developed themselves culturally played a significant role in the formation of Romania's national identity and unity consciousness. They also served as catalysts for cultural change and supporters of political movements that would contribute significantly to the path towards independence.

By the late 18th century, Romanian intellectuals, closely associated with Western European thought, embraced Enlightenment ideas and guided societal change as leaders of Romanian society. Educated primarily in Uniate schools in Transylvania, these intellectuals focused on societal issues, particularly education and political liberation. Their productive efforts aimed to enhance the general welfare of Romanians based on the notion of nationhood.

This intellectual generation emerged as a result of the political action of Orthodox clergy who accepted union with Rome in 1700. While the union did not bring significant changes to religious life, it redirected Romanian intellectual life towards the West, creating a new class of intellectuals. These intellectuals served as intermediaries between a cosmopolitan Western world and a traditional, rural, and Eastern-facing society. The Union with Rome marked a turning point in Transylvanian Romanian history. Especially by providing unprecedented higher education opportunities to Catholic Romanian clergy in Transylvanian Roman Catholic schools, and universities in Vienna and Trnava (Nagyszombat), the Habsburgs aimed to inspire support for the Union among rural masses and create a well-educated and loyal populace. However, events took a different turn. Over time, limited educational opportunities for Romanians and experiences in Central Europe organized Catholic clergy to end discrimination against Romanians and elevate themselves to a higher rank, enabling them to assume political and spiritual leadership among Romanians (Hitchens, 2014: 60). They fought against discrimination by dominant nations in Transylvania; Hungarians, Saxons, and Szekels by attempting to liberate Orthodox and Uniate Romanians.

During the 17th century in Transylvania, recognition of the rights of the Romanian population was primarily based on religion. The Orthodox denomination was not one of the officially recognized four denominations: Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Unitarianism. These denominations were accepted following Transylvania's separation from Hungary after the Ottoman defeat of King Louis II at Mohács and the spread of the Reformation. In 1542, Lutheran Johannes Honterus published Reformation writings in Braşov, and in 1556, the Catholic bishop was exiled, with Catholic monasteries converted into schools. Lutheranism was adopted by the Saxons, Calvinism by the Hungarians, and in 1568, Unitarianism was officially recognized. However, this tolerance extended only to these four denominations; the Orthodox Church was not protected, and

Romanians were not represented in the The Transylvanian Diet (assembly). There was a brief change in the status of the Orthodox denomination during the brief reign of Michael the Brave (1599-1600), but it did not last, and the system of the three official nations remained unchanged.

The struggle for equality by members of the Uniate Church in Transylvania (McGuckin, 2008: 66-68) and their efforts to revive the past through Latinist activities should be considered as intellectual endeavors in Romania's national movement. For many years, the people who had endured economic oppression and socio-cultural exclusion under the feudal system slowly began to raise their voices.

In terms of press and publishing activities, very few Romanian works were printed from the conquest of Transylvania by the Habsburgs until the 18th century. (Table 1 and Table 2 explain the situation by comparing the values in Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania) (Drace-Francis, 2006: 72-73). These works belonged to those attempting to establish the Greek Catholic or Uniate Church through the efforts of the Jesuits. Equipment was obtained from German printers in Sibiu. The works printed here aimed to legitimize the Union with Rome. These efforts were built upon the foundations laid by Gherontie Cotore in 1744. The works reflected the new religious and political context of Romanian identity, with some printed in Latin script. Romanian and Greek intellectuals contributed to these presses (Drace-Francis, 2006: 60). The influence of Habsburg cultural policy spread rapidly, leading to the printing of various educational and religious texts. These efforts supported the Enlightenment of the Romanian intelligentsia.

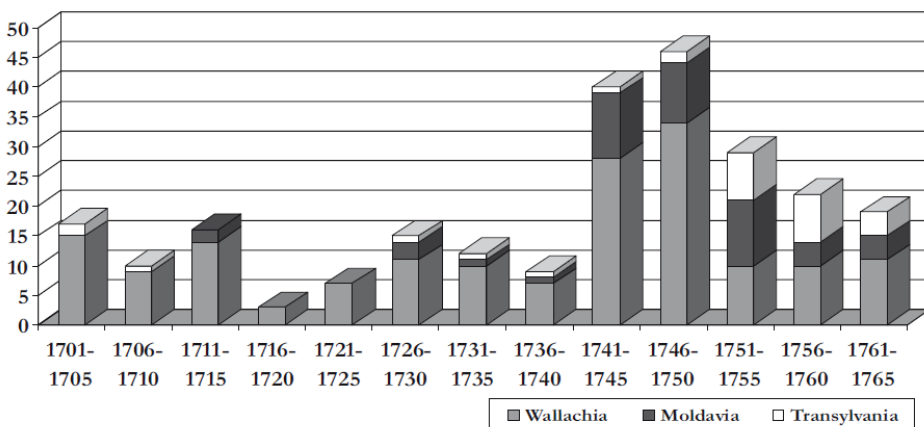


Table 1. Romanian-language printing 1701-1765: by province

Source: (Drace-Francis, 2006: 72)

TOWN	1766-1770	1771-1775	1776-1780	1781-1785	1786-1790	1791-1795	1796-1800	1801-1805	1806-1810	1811-1815	1816-1820	1821-1825	1826-1830	Total
Buda			2				6	8	25	38	35	24	32	170
Vienna		3	5	12	12	6	1			1	1	3	1	45
Czernowitz								2	3	3	2	2		12
Lemberg					1	2		1	-	-	-	-	3	7
Other	1		1		1				-	-	1	-	1	5
Sibiu		1		2	8	13	11	20	21	7	11	6	24	124
Blaj	10	8	12	8	6	7	5	15	11	8	6	3	2	101
Braşov		1							9	6	3	4	3	30
Oradea									-	-	-	1	3	4
Cluj	1								1	-	-	1	1	4
Bucuresti	6	7	11	10	2	7	8	3	6	-	21	24	52	157
Râmnic	8	1	17	17	7	7			1	5	6	-	1	70
Craiova									-	-	-	-	-	6
Buzău	3								-	-	-	1	-	4
Tîrgovişte					1									1
Căldărăşani	1													1
Iaşi	5	5	3	7	9	14	2	8	8	14	36	10	17	138
Neamţ									-	5	19	11	7	45
Movilău/Dubăsari						2	4							6
Chişinău									-	-	4	14	7	34
St.Petersburg									-	-	-	3	-	4
Unknown			1					1						2
TOTAL	35	26	52	56	47	58	37	63	89	105	153	94	159	974

Table 2. Romanian-language printing 1766-1830: by locality

Source: (Drace-Francis, 2006: 72)

Among the Romanians, a response to the sense of degradation emerged from the “Helot” class (Florescu 1967: 335). The spirit that would breathe life into the Enlightenment movement found expression among the Helots, who spoke Romanian and were exceptionally loyal to Orthodoxy, as well as among clergy who rose up on behalf of the entire people. Bishop Inocenţiu Micu-Klein, a prominent advocate of the Romanian cause, served as the head of the Uniate Church from 1729 to 1751 (Georgescu^{1991: 89}), seeing himself not only as its leader but as the representative of all Romanians (Stavrianos, 2000: 359). He repeatedly demanded that Romanians be included among the “recognized, accepted nations” and aimed to establish this equality through the “Transylvanian School” (Seton-Watson 1924: 305-306). He expressed their desire to have equal rights with the other privileged three nations: Hungarians, Szeklers, and Saxons. Inocenţiu Micu-Klein, who reiterated the historical rights of Romanians many times, proclaimed their rights deriving from their Roman origins and their presence in these lands since ancient times. His political activism unsettled Vienna, leading to his exile in Rome (Georgescu^{1991: 89-90}). However, the Uniate Church left behind theology students who would propagate the theory of Romanian nationalism based on their Latin origins: George Sincai, Samuil Micu, and Petru Maior (Campbell, 1971: 23). These students assumed leadership in intellectual and national movements.

The Uniate Church, facilitated by various Western cultural and intellectual influences, and the “Transylvanian School” it housed, played a significant role in

shaping the Romanian national ideology. Under Habsburg rule in Transylvania, a single assembly included representatives from the Saxon, Hungarian, and Szekels regions, along with high officials of the church and state, and delegates appointed by the court (Jelavich 2013: 173). Despite demographic advantage, Romanians were denied any voting rights in this assembly. Furthermore, Protestant Hungarians opposed the Catholic Habsburg dynasty's control over the region. In seeking allies to end the dominance of the three nations, the Habsburgs encountered the marginalized Romanians, who were viewed as foreigners. The discontent of Romanian Orthodoxy in Transylvania was evident. Under these circumstances, an unexpected nexus of interests formed between the Habsburgs and the upper clergy, the prominent element of Romanian society. The principles of the Union of Florence-Ferrara declared at the Council of 1439, including the union with the Roman Church, temporarily ended the division between the Byzantine and Western churches (Hitchins, 2014: 59). This union served the Habsburgs' intention to use the Roman Catholic Church as a tool to maintain unity among various ethnic groups across their empire.

As a result of closer ties with the Habsburgs, Romanian clergy were promised equal political and economic status. The dynasty offered unprecedented educational opportunities for new Greek Catholic clergy in Transylvania's Roman Catholic schools and universities in Rome, Vienna, and Trnava, opening Western cultural and intellectual doors for them (Hitchins, 2014: 60). The Habsburg goal was to create a well-educated and dedicated Greek Catholic clergy to gain support for unity among the predominantly Orthodox rural masses. However, despite the expectations of its members and King Leopold's decrees, the clergy of the Uniate Church did not achieve equal status with representatives of officially recognized religions (Jelavich 2013: 174).

In the latter half of the 18th century, intellectual leaders like Micu-Klein and his followers would mobilize organizational strength and initiate efforts to have Romanians recognized as a nation constituting Transylvania. The unfolding events indicated that while aiming to control the Romanian people, the Uniate Church inadvertently stirred national sentiments. The Uniate Church not only became the epicenter of a Romanian intellectual revival that left profound marks in both Transylvania and Moldavia but also shaped the Romanian national ideology in the following century through the endeavors of the institution known as the "Transylvanian School" (Jelavich 2013: 175). By the mid-18th century, both the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia and the Transylvanian Romanians found themselves on the threshold of the modern world. The political, economic, and intellectual elites of the principalities, along with the elite members of

the Transylvanian Church, were drawn towards the currents of European ideas and behavioral models.

Intellectual Identities: The Efforts of Samuil Micu Clain, George Sincai ve Petru Maior

Uniate Church, due to its relations with Rome, increased its contact with the West and eventually took concrete steps to elevate the educational levels of its followers and foster their cultural development. The city of Blaj became the center of Romanian cultural activities with the establishment of the first printing press in 1753 and the opening of a secondary school in 1754 (Jelavich 2013: 176). The three pioneers of the cultural awakening in Transylvania; Samuil Micu Clain, George Sincai, and Petru Maior, received theology education at universities in European cities with the support of the Uniate Church (Stavrianos, 2000: 360). While continuing their education in Vienna and Rome, they began studying ancient monuments. Through their research, they enthusiastically popularized the theory that they were descendants of the Romans (Stavrianos, 2000, 360; Ristelheuber, 1971: 111). Rome, which they described as the eternal city, inspired them through its monuments left from the Roman Empire, especially the famous Trajan's Column, and its connection to their homeland; Dacia (Chapbell, 1971: 23). The pioneers of the Enlightenment movement detailed their past with the Daco-Roman theory to determine their national destiny (Hitchins, 1974: 662). Alongside their ideological work developing historical-based nationalism, their interest in philology also intensified, making Latinization efforts a primary goal among the Romanian intellectual elite. Therefore, they directed their efforts towards the sources of their own history and language, where they would find national sentiments and patriotism. Their strong attachment to their religion enabled them to act together and prioritize education, contributing to the preservation and development of national feelings among Romanians.

Historical research has led to increased cultural production and the formation of national movements. Particularly, three Romanian citizens; Samuil Micu Clain, George Sincai, and Petru Maior made significant contributions to the preparation of textbooks for newly established Orthodox elementary schools focusing on their history and language (Hitchins, 1974: 662). In 1780, they authored the first modern Romanian grammar book titled *Elementa linguae daco-romanae sive valachicae*, which advocated for the use of Latin letters instead of Cyrillic characters (Seton-Watson, 2015: 271). In 1812, Petru Maior published *History of the Beginning of the Romanians in Dacia* aiming to elucidate the true historical origins

of the Romanians (Drace-Francis, 2006: 87). The notable development of linguistic studies alongside history and archaeology laid the foundation for awakening national consciousness in Romanian society.

Placing such emphasis on Latinization meant asserting chronological precedence for Transylvanian Romanians, implying that later arrivals would infringe upon Romanian rights (Fischer-Galati, 1994: 374). Samuel Clain argued for translating the Romanian language into pure Latin and claimed in his historical writings that the peoples of Transylvania and Moldavia constituted a single nation of Latin origin (Berkes, 2012: 153). Thus, they emphasized the importance of language as a national cultural element, attempting to adapt Latin instead of Slavic and Greek words found in their native languages. In Eastern European societies, language became a more significant symbol of nationality, leading these societies to focus more on linguistic elements during national struggles. Among the Romanian people, nationalism was built upon the efforts of intellectuals to create a literary language based on a national culture.

Pioneers of the Romanian Enlightenment sought to reach a wider audience, thus Samuel Clain and Petru Maior began incorporating their ideas into the church's sermon collections as an easier way to reach the public (Hitchins, 1964: 663). Gheorghe Sincai, on the other hand, wrote works such as *Istoria naturei sau a fire* on natural history and *Învățătură firească spre surparea superstiției norodului* to combat superstitions, providing people with scientific knowledge about nature to encourage more rational thinking (Hitchins, 1964: 663). Actually, all these efforts aimed to foster awareness among the Romanian people for enlightenment and cultural movement.

The individuals engaged in intellectual activities dedicated themselves to serving the needs and interests of the people. They provided opportunities to enable society's education and aimed for the eradication of ignorance and superstitions. Rather than being seen as oppressed or marginalized among other ethnic groups, they strove to portray themselves as part of a strong society with equal rights. In pursuit of their goals, Samuil Micu and his colleagues submitted a lengthy petition in March 1791 known as *the Supplex Libellus Valachorum* to Vienna, advocating for the rights of the majority population within the principality (Georgescu, 1991: ⁹¹). They sought validation from the Habsburg ruler of their Roman origins and demanded equal status in the parliament alongside the other three nations: Hungarians, Saxons, and Szekels (Fischer-Galati, 1994: 375). Their demands were not new; Bishop Inocențiu Micu-Klein had previously raised the issue of equal recognition among all nations. However, the petition sent by Emperor Leopold II to the Transylvanian parliament was rejected by Hungarian and

Saxon members (Seton-Watson, 1977: 177). They were unwilling to relinquish political and social control, which they had held for years, to the Romanians, who outnumbered them demographically. Moreover, Vienna was concerned that granting these demands could lead to a swift shift in power dynamics and potentially incite nationalist sentiments among the Romanians, who represented the majority population (Georgescu, 1991: 91).

Samuel Clain and his contemporaries made significant efforts in the Romanian Enlightenment and passed on their legacy to future generations. They emphasized the development of culture as a prerequisite for national liberation and stressed the necessity of close collaboration among intellectual circles. While the Enlightenment pioneers in Transylvania advocated for cultural unity, they did not take concrete steps towards unification with the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. However, they fostered a spiritual bond among them.

Through the Latinist School in Transylvania, cultural nationalism was also promoted in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. In these principalities, under the administration of Greek voivodes and the Greek Orthodox Church, Catholics faced the threat of Hellenization. Intellectuals educated in Rome began to emerge among them, learning Latin and Roman history, and started to identify themselves as “Romanians” (Berkes, 2012: 153). They propagated the belief that they descended from Roman civilization, belonging to the Latin race. Despite the Orthodox world’s tendency towards isolation, relationships were never completely severed. Additionally, in 1816, Wallachian Prince John Caradja invited Transylvanian scholar Gheorghe Lazăr to teach arithmetic and geometry in Romanian rather than Greek at the Aziz Sava Monastery (Florescu, 1967: 339). Lazăr accepted the invitation and transmitted all his knowledge and the theories of Micu, Maior, and Sincai to his students, both in Transylvanian schools and in the Principalities (Florescu, 1967: 339). Through educators coming from Transylvania, education in the national language with a national character was provided to the Principalities, laying the foundation for cultural nationalism and fostering national awareness. Regarding the Transylvanian national movement, it is essential to highlight the role of intellectuals in contributing to the development of national thought in other principalities through their political, social, and literary activities.

Conclusion

The intellectual environment nurtured by the Unitarian Church of Transylvania produced many significant figures who played crucial roles in Romania's independence movement. Influenced by the liberal and progressive ideals of Unitarianism, these individuals stood at the forefront advocating for political and social reforms. Members of the Unitarian Church can be considered among the first intellectuals to make significant contributions to Romania's independence history.

The rights gained through the church's unification and the opportunities it provided for education abroad brought about significant changes. Upon their return, these educated Romanians established schools and helped many citizens realize their national identity. Proposing certain myths such as their Roman origin and Latin character colored the thoughts of intellectuals in the country. Romanians claimed to be a people descended from Roman civilization, serving as an outpost of Latin culture against Slavic and German barbarism.

In a feudal society, having a certain quality to make their voice heard and obtain political rights was crucial. Therefore, declaring their Roman origin and Latin character was readily accepted by intellectual and popular leaders in Transylvania and the principalities. Anchoring their historical past in a prestigious lineage like Rome proved effective in achieving their goals and greatly encouraged the development of Romanian national consciousness. The Transylvanian Romanians were the first to refer to themselves as a nation and develop a discourse on this matter.

One of the pivotal turning points was the union between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in 1700. This union granted education and political rights to Romanians, leading to the formation of an intellectual elite that would develop the concept of the Romanian nation. The ideals of freedom, equality, and fraternity spread through Unitarian educational institutions inspired many Romanian intellectuals and leaders to pursue political activism and reform.

The European-wide Revolutions of 1848 also had a significant impact on Romania's independence movement. The Unitarian Church played a supportive role during this period of uprising. Many Unitarian leaders and members actively participated in revolutionary activities by advocating for civil rights, national sovereignty, and social justice.

The church's dedication to the revolutionary cause demonstrated its commitment to the principles of freedom and equality. During this period, there was

also an increase in collaboration among various religious and ethnic groups in Transylvania around the common goal of autonomy and self-determination. While the church did not directly engage in political movements, its members and educated intellectuals actively contributed to Romania's struggle for independence. The Romanians in Transylvania articulated their demands for independence and freedom more forcefully. The education and social solidarity provided by the church were crucial factors in the success of national movements during this period.

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