

PREEMINENT SOUTH-DANUBIAN ROMANIANS: ANDREI ȘAGUNA AND EFTIMIE MURGU

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Abstract: At the end of the First World War in 1918, after the break-up of the Habsburg Empire, several national states were constituted, reconstituted or completed. Among them, Romania realized the Great Union on December 1, 1918 by unification with Transylvania and Bessarabia. This was the realization of an ideal pursued for centuries by the Romanian people despite historical vicissitudes. The purpose of the paper is to highlight the special contributions of two personalities, South-Danubian Romanians that stand out in the social, religious, political and economic life in Transylvania and in the rest of the Habsburg Empire in the 19th century, thus creating the prerequisites for the Great Union. The method we used in our research was the direct analysis of various materials such as studies, basic documents, and historical texts concerning the South-Danubian Romanians. Andrei Șaguna, one of the greatest Romanian Orthodox hierarchs, re-established the old Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania in Alba Iulia. He also activated in the political field especially during the revolutionary year 1848, promoting the rights of Romanians in the Habsburg Empire and strengthening their national identity. Andrei Șaguna also developed the Romanian education system. Eftimie Murgu, emblematic fighter for the rights and the liberties of Romanians in Transylvania, professor and lawyer, revived the flame of national consciousness in the Romanian historical provinces. He has a great contribution in the affirmation of the Latin origin of the Romanian people, and of its national identity. Andrei Șaguna and Eftimie Murgu had an decisive contribution to the preparation of the unification of the country, one as a priest and the other as a civilian.

UDC Classification: 323.1; **DOI:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.12955/cbup.v6.1223>

Keywords: national rebirth, independence, the Great Union, South-Danubian Romanians

The Evolution of the South Danubian Romanians in the Balkan Peninsula

The year 1918 brought the end of the First World War and led to major changes in Europe. In this context, the Austro-Hungarian, the Tsarist, the German, and the Ottoman Empires collapsed. The dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire made possible the unification of Romania. The doctrine underlying this historical moment was that of American president Woodrow Wilson. A doctrine which fostered the coagulation of national states within their natural borders so that they no longer engage in any wars in the future.

In this context, the year 2018 is a centennial year, as a century has passed since these events took place.

For Romania, the hardships of history made the Romanian people settle to the north and to the south of the Danube while the national state centralized in the north.

The Romanians from the south of the Danube are the successors of those who withdrew over the Danube due to strategic reasons, at the command of Emperor Aurelian, in the spring of 275 A.D. The latter mingled with the Romanized Thracian populations already settled in the Balkans.

This study will focus on the less known South-Danubian Romanians². It will first put forth a short history of their evolution, of their existence to the south of the Danube, and then it will discuss their emigration due to the oppressive politics of the Balkan peoples which took place in the 18th and the 19th century. South-Danubian Romanians emigrated to the northern Danube and Central Europe, especially in the provinces with a predominant Romanian population belonging to the Austrian Empire.

South-Danubian Romanians became important for the Romanian communities from an economic, cultural, ecclesiastic, political, and military point of view, having an important contribution to the awakening of the patriotic feeling, to the national-cultural emancipation movement of the Romanians from the provinces of the Habsburg Empire, which was a lead-in to the Great Union. Out of the numerous examples, we selected only two: Andrei Șaguna, the great hierarch, who re-established the old Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania, and Eftimie Murgu, a pre-eminent revolutionary figure who fought for the Romanian people's independence and reunification. They carried out their activity in the Habsburg Empire and they contributed to the creation of the prerequisites for the 1918 Great Union. What happened on the 1st of December was not spontaneous, instead it was the result of a thorough preparation of the great event by personalities who had dedicated their lives to this ideal.

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² South-Danubian Romanians are called Aromanians in the history treatises

The Great Union which took place on the 1st of December 1918 represented the wish of the Romanians all over the provinces to belong to only one unified country.

The aim of the paper is to highlight the special contributions of two personalities with South-Danubian origins to the fact that Romanians managed to stand out in the social, religious, political and economic life in Transylvania and in the rest of the Habsburg Empire in the 19th century, thus creating the prerequisites for the Great Union.

The method we used in our research was the direct analysis of material at our disposal: basic documents for the presentation of South-Danubian Romanians, studies, and analyses carried out by researchers, historical texts with documentary and memoir-like value.

A Short History of South-Danubian Romanians

Between 271 and 275 A.D. the Romanians settled to the north of the Danube withdrew; this entailed the evacuation of the army and of the administration in South-Danubian Dacia. That part of the civilian population which was better-off withdrew as well. This happened because of the need to establish the border of the empire on the Danube, a natural obstacle which was easier to defend against the repeated invasions of migratory peoples, invasions which were becoming more and more frequent. These invasions split the Romanized population in two large communities, thus severing the links between the branch situated to the north of the Danube and that situated to the south of the Danube. According to Tanaşoca "the destiny of the South-Danubian Romanian people was different from that of the North-Danubian Romanians" (Tanaşoca 2001, p.103). He considers that "Roman or Romanized populations of the Balkan area of the Roman Empire, or even Romanians who migrated from the former Dacia, crossing the Danube have formed what has been called the *Balkan Romanian Vlachs*" (Tanaşoca 2001, p.94).

Throughout time, various Roman, Byzantine, Serbian, or Ottoman sources confirmed their presence in the entire Balkan Peninsula (Trifon, 2013). These sources use the term "Vlachs" to denominate the Romanic populations who lived and still live in the south of the Danube and who preserved the elements of Roman culture and Roman language. At present these populations are settled on the territory of the following states: Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Macedonia, and the rest of former Yugoslavia. From a linguistic point of view, the great resemblance between the language spoken in the north and that spoken in the south, both of Latin origin, may lead to the conclusion that they are actually one and the same language, born before any other influence, possibly with two dialects (Caragiu Marioţeanu, 1985).

The main occupations of South Danubian Romanians were shepherding and commerce. The obtained products were transported to the Austrian Empire in order to be sold. Consequently, they became good merchants and in order to protect commercial routes, they became good fighters. Shepherding was localized in the mountains of the Balkan Peninsula, especially in the Pindus Mountains. Although due to the invasion of migratory peoples, the population had to take shelter especially in the mountains, they remained scattered all over the Balkan Peninsula, to the west of Istria Peninsula situated to the north of the Adriatic Sea, up to the outskirts of the city of Constantinople (Vlaherne neighborhood), in the east. The name of the Blachernae (Vlaherne) neighborhood in Constantinople comes from the word "Vlachs" and it dates back to the 6th century; the Vlachs had a colony near the capital (Diaconescu, 2014).

The religion of South Danubian Romanians is Christian-Orthodox. The Romanians to the south of the Danube benefited directly from the teachings of Apostle Paul, who christened them.

In the Ottoman Empire they were considered a privileged minority. The Turks acknowledged their autonomy in exchange for taxes and for the defense of the passes in the mountains.

In addition to their rural localization, they also focused on the cities where they traded in dairy brought from those in the country. The most important urban center was the city of Moscopole (today a small village in Southeastern Albania on the shores of Lake Ohrid), founded in the 14th century, which developed under the Ottomans. Moscopole became the second most important city, after Constantinople, in the Balkans and in the 18th century it was considered the cultural center of the Balkans and of the Eastern Europe. In Moscopole there were buildings with special architecture, a printing house, a library, and an institution of higher education called the New Academy, which was unique in the Eastern Europe (Diaconescu, 2014). Thanks to its prosperity, this city was plundered on

several occasions (1761, 1769 and 1788), which led to several migration waves (Djuvara, 1996, p.101).

The South-Danubian Romanians played an important role in the economic-financial, cultural, and political life in the places where they settled down. They contributed to the economic prosperity of these states, and most of them became important from an economic, financial, social, and cultural point of view; they also got involved in politics. Moreover, they were loyal to the Austrian authorities (Djuvara, 1996, pp.114-119). Some South-Danubian Romanians became pre-eminent historical personalities in Europe and worldwide. In the context of the centennial year, recalling them is not just an act of public consciousness, but also the expression of posthumous gratitude.

Andrei Şaguna-One of the Great Hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania

Andrei Şaguna was born in 1808 and was the descendant of a family that left Grabova village situated near the city of Moscopole in the 18th century, a region which was repeatedly robbed by both Christians and Ottomans. His family settled in Miskolc, in the north-east of Hungary. Subsequently, he settled in the province of Transylvania, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at that time.

Andrei Şaguna is a remarkable personality from 19th century Transylvania who carried out a wide range of activities related to the promotion of the rights of Romanians in the Habsburg Empire and to the reinforcement of their national identity. Both a Bishop and a metropolitan, he was one of the greatest hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania. He led a remarkable life and his activities contributed greatly to the spiritual life of Romanians in Transylvania and Hungary.

Ion Th. Simionescu, who was the President of the Romanian Academy between 1941 and 1944, considered that Andrei Şaguna is "the most precious gift the Romanians of Pindus gave to the whole nation" (Berényi, 2013, p.112).

Although initially he had a background in Roman Catholic Theology, as he graduated from the Catholic Gymnasium in Miskolc and Pesta where he studied in Hungarian, his devotion to both the Orthodoxy and the national traditions of his family remained firm. After graduating, he expressed his decision to return to his ancestral church, the Orthodox Church, declaring "I want to live and die in the religion in which I was born" (Todoran, 2009/1910). In 1829, Şaguna finished his Philosophy and Law studies at the University of Pest, then he graduated from the Orthodox Theological School in Vrşac (Serbian Banat). He climbed the ecclesiastical ladder and was appointed General Vicar of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church (1846), then Bishop of the Transylvanian Bishopric (1848). In this capacity, he took measures to improve the situation of the Orthodox Romanian Church in Transylvania.

As well as his ecclesiastical activity, he also carried out secular activity in both the political and administrative fields during the revolutionary year 1848. He was involved in the Romanian people's national and political life, and he was considered the "diplomat" of the Revolution of 1848. He started his revolutionary activity in particularly critical historical circumstance, when the entirety of Europe was engulfed by revolutionary movements, including Transylvania and Hungary. Under these circumstances, the priests' involvement in the political issues of the time was mandatory. As co-president of the Blaj National Assembly of 3/15-5/17 May 1848, Şaguna supported the Romanian people's requests for rights: freedom, independence, the recognition of the Latin origin of the Romanian language, and its use in schools and churches. These requests were the subject of a document with sixteen political-national claims that was presented by Şaguna in front of Emperor Franz Ioseph. "As a political man, aware of his responsibility for the Church and for his nation, striving for the realization of the revolutionary program of the Romanian nation emancipation, Şaguna searched for solutions appropriate to the historical moment" (Păcurariu, 1998).

Although the revolution was suppressed, after 1848 for twenty-five years, Andrei Şaguna continued to support all the requests stated in the resolution of the Blaj Assembly in all the petitions addressed to the Emperor of the Habsburg Empire.

One of Andrei Şaguna's exceptional achievements was the re-establishment of the old Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania in Alba Iulia. This was founded by Michael the Brave, the author of the first Union of the Romanians in 1600. The old Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania was dismantled by the order of the Empress of Austria in 1701.

After fifteen years of numerous efforts and of continuous struggle against the opposition of the Habsburg authorities, of the Serbian Church, of the Catholic Church, and the Hungarian governments, he succeeded in separating the Roman Orthodox Church from the Serbian Church. On the 24th of December, 1864, the Emperor of the Habsburg Empire had to acknowledge a single Orthodox Metropolitan for all Romanians of the Empire. Andrei Şaguna was appointed the Metropolitan of the Romanians in Transylvania and Hungary. After the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian dualism, the confirmation from Pesta was also required. This confirmation took the form of the special law of 1868. The rules for the functioning of the new metropolitan church formulated by Şaguna in 1864 in 174 paragraphs were the foundation of the Organic Statute of 1868 (Păcurariu, 1989). This document recognized by Emperor Francis Joseph I on the 28th of May 1869, played an important role in the rediscovery of the national consciousness by Romanians in Transylvania. The Orthodox Church was entitled to regulate, administer, and manage its ecclesiastical activities, operating independently of other churches. In addition to this, schools were set up in churches.

Andrei Şaguna reorganized the Romanian educational system in Transylvania by setting up primary and the secondary schools (high schools) in the Romanian language under the protection of the Orthodox Church. It was a great achievement in a period when the rights of Transylvanian Romanians were denied. These basic rights were an education and religious service in their native language.

In parallel with the development of the Romanian education system, Andrei Şaguna founded a printing house in 1850 (at his own expense) where books and newspapers were printed in Romanian. The newspaper "Telegraful Roman", founded in 1853, is still published today (Damian, 2009). He wrote textbooks for didactic purposes, printed the Bible, and edited all the books necessary for the religious services in Romanian.

Andrei Şaguna was a providential personality, a diplomat, and an unmatched negotiator in the history of Transylvania. For his special merits in the religious and cultural field he was elected honorary member of the Romanian Academy (1871). He was one of the South-Danubian Romanian personalities who contributed to the revival of the feeling of national identity of Romanians from Transylvania. He identified himself with the aspirations of the Romanians from Transylvania in their struggle for the achievement of national independence.

The revival of the Christian-Orthodox religion in Transylvania, of the Romanian language, of the specific customs of the Romanian people made possible the Great Union on the 1st of December 1918. For his exceptional activity in the Orthodox Church of Transylvania, he was canonized by the Romanian Patriarchate in 2011, and he is celebrated on the 30th of November.

Eftimie Murgu – A pre-eminent fighter for the rights of the Romanians in the Habsburg Empire

Eftimie Murgu was born in 1805 and was the descendant of a South Romanian family settled in the Carpathians of Banat for several generations. His father was employed in the regiments of Romanian border guards established by the Austrians in order to protect the frontier around Caraş-Severin.

He studied philosophy and law in Budapest. The environment in which he completed his professional training was the same as the one in which his predecessors, bright personalities of the Transylvanian School (a movement of political and social emancipation of the Romanians in Transylvania) had carried out a brilliant activity meant to support the ideas about the Roman (Latin) origins of the Romanian people and its unity in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic space.

Eftimie Murgu rejected the theses that were denying the Latin origin of the Romanian people and the continuity of the Latin element in Dacia. His arguments were based on historical, logical, philological, and philosophical sources. This was reflected in his books (as cited in Berényi, 2013, p.88): "Arguments against the treaty entitled: Evidence that the Wallachians are not of Roman origin..." by S. T. in Buda, 1827 (Widerlegung der Abhandlung, welcheunterdem Titelvorkommt: Erweis, dass die Walachennichtrömischer Abkunnftsind...durch S. T. in Ofen 1827) and "Evidence that the Wallachians are the undoubtedly descendants of the Romans..." by E. Murgu, Buda, 1830 (Beweis: dass die Walachen der RömerunbezweifelteNachkömlingesind...Verfasst von E. Murgu, Ofen 1830).

He argued that national identity is defined by "language, traditions, customs, and names" (Berényi, 2000, p.46), and he put forth original arguments for the support of the Latinity of the Romanian language. Murgu has manifested a special interest in folklore considering music, dances and folk tales as pieces of evidence of one's own national identity (Goian, 2013/ 1972).

As a professor, he carried out an apostolate in Moldavia and Wallachia, and he rekindled the flame of national consciousness in the Romanian Principalities. Due to his revolutionary ideas he was expelled from Moldova.

Upon his arrival in Wallachia in Bucharest, in his capacity as schoolmaster, he was inspirational for his disciples who became pre-eminent characters of the 1848 Revolution. In 1840 in Bucharest, together with Dumitru Filipescu and Vaillant, he started a revolutionary movement which attracted numerous young patriots such as Nicolae Bălcescu, Dimitrie Macedonski, Cezar Bolliac, C.A. Rosetti and others. It intended to create a republic based on democratic and progressive foundations (Murgu & Suci 1969, p.22). After the conspiracy was discovered, he was forced to leave Wallachia. After then, he returned to Transylvania where he actively participated in the 1848 revolution.

He supported and raised people against the social injustices they were subjected to and he made numerous requests addressed to the Austro-Hungarian feudal domination, this is why he was called "the Romanian people's tribune".

He was imprisoned for this activity, for example in 1848 he was in the military prison in Budapest. That year, the revolution broke out in Budapest, and, given the circumstances, he was freed by the young Romanians who were studying in this city. He went to Transylvania and took part in the Transylvanian Romanians' revolution. He was present in Lugoj for the Great Assembly which he presided and where he supported the Romanians' requests, with the disapproval of the Hungarian revolutionaries.

He requested the establishment of a Romanian national army. After the failure of this plan, Eftimie Murgu continued his activity around the parliament in Budapest, but Kossuth Lajos, the Hungarian revolutionary leader, rejected Murgu's requests made on the behalf of the Romanian people. The Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation envisaged by Murgu failed.

The revolution was suppressed by the Tsarist and the Austrian troops, and he was arrested and sentenced to death. However, the sentence was changed and he was released after four years.

Eftimie Murgu was an emblematic fighter for the rights and the liberties of Romanians in Transylvania. He played a decisive role in the birth of a national revolutionary consciousness both in the Romanian Principalities and in Transylvania: "Both Nicolae Bălcescu and C. A. Rosetti in Bucharest, as well as Ion Ionescu Brad, Dimitrie Gusti and the Scriban brothers (Iași, n.a.), enlightened unionist fighters, and were Murgu's devoted disciples" (Berényi, 2013, p.103).

Although he was of South-Danubian origins, he loved Transylvanians and Transylvania as if he had been born there. In all the historical provinces, in Transylvania, in Wallachia and in Moldavia, he is considered to be "the apostle and the martyr of the Romanian people" (Berényi, 2013, p. 104).

Conclusions

Historically speaking, the Romanian people originated from the Latinized population living to the north and to the south of the Danube (the Thracians with the Geto-Dacian and Illyrian branches).

Historical circumstances divided the Romanian people into two parts, according to geographical areas: the Romanians settled to the north of the Danube and those settled to the south of the Danube. The centralized state was built to the north of the Danube while the Romanians to the south of the Danube did not have the opportunity to build a state because of their historical context.

Throughout time, between the 17th and the 19th centuries, due to the ethnic persecution of the Balkan peoples, a part of them had to emigrate to the north, and to the Central European states. In the countries where they settled, the families of South-Danubian Romanians contributed to the economic progress and to the growth of civilization, while maintaining their national identity, language, customs, and habits. They supported and financed their co-nationals, they also supported and funded the Romanians from the Habsburg Empire and the Romanian Principalities. They fought for the rights of Romanians to be educated in schools and to practice their religion in their own Neo-Latin language common to all Romanians in the Empire, contributing to the strengthening of the Orthodox Church's influence.

Although they lived in a multinational empire like the Habsburg Empire, they preserved their identity and they contributed decisively to the awakening of the patriotic sentiment and the awareness of their Latin origin, which led to the achievement of the ideal of the union of North-Danubian Romanians,

creating the prerequisite for the formation of the future centralized state on the 1st of December 1918. Andrei Șaguna and Eftimie Murgu contributed to the achievement of the national ideal, one by wearing priestly clothes and the other by wearing lay clothes. The progress of world civilization is due to enlightened minds, to some special personalities who inspired the evolution of humanity. Thanks to the two personalities discussed in this paper and to many others, Romanians have not made an exception and they brought their contributions to great accomplishments throughout time.

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