

The Ethnic Pluralism of the Nineteenth Century in Transylvania according to the Ecclesiastical Painting of the Grecu Brothers

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Despite the development of the iconographic programs, the frescoes painted by the Grecu brothers remind us not only of the large ensembles beyond the Carpathians in Walachia and Moldova but also other Transylvanian decorations. These frescoes express not only the spirit of the time or the mentality of the community to which they belonged, but they also represented an opportunity to show the painters' originality and personality, their need for personal affirmation and artistic individuality, connected to a new sensitivity of a given historical context. The representation of the inhabiting nations in Transylvania in the Passion's Cycle highlights the disadvantaged status of the Romanian people who were oppressed by the privileged nations: by the Habsburg military force, the inequitable judgement of Saxons and the torments inflicted by Hungarians through their policies. All of these recreate mutatis mutandis the dramatic setting in which Christ was crucified.

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Amid all the historical regions of Romania, Transylvania has a special history regarding the relations among the inhabiting nations even if it is often stated that it was not cohabitation, but rather colonization. It should be noted that, throughout time, a balance was created among all the ethnicities present in Transylvania even though the relations between them were not necessarily mutually beneficial, the Romanians being excluded from the political life without even fighting back violently. More than that, they assumed the status of a tolerated nation and a tolerated religion. But this balance would be irreparably disrupted at the end of the seventeenth century through the creation of the Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania.

Whether we like to admit it or not, the founding of the Greek Catholic Church represented a milestone in the evolution of this historic region, influencing all populations inhabiting here. Despite its much disputed genesis, Uniatism remains an undeniable reality, viewed in a very different way according to the confessional background of the historians who have classified it either as a socio-cultural emancipation, or as a form of compromise, or even as a betrayal of the ancestral religion, denouncing it as a schism.

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