

community and the power during that epoch on the other hand. The first plane contains the biography of the protagonists of the Hunedorești family, John and Matthias, while the second contains the relations between the Romanian community from Transylvania, and from the Hungarian Kingdom in general, with the power structures. On the one hand, as a historical biography and, on the other hand, as a history of the Romanian community from the Hungarian Kingdom in the Middle Ages, the historian explains the social, political, confessional and cultural mechanisms that define power in its medieval limits in this kingdom from Central Europe. In this sense, the biography of John and Matthias represents a mark of the prestige and an illustration of the power that the Romanians from the Hungarian Kingdom were able to obtain. In other words, from a “powerless” community, that of the Romanians, in the Middle Ages, illustrious figures emerged and were assimilated by the culture of the dominant power.

At the end of these brief remarks, as a result of the observations above, once again calling on a note made by the historian from the University of London, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, we may conclude that the book dedicated to the Hunedorești family, to the epoch in which they lived and to their posterity, their relation with “us”, offers a broader perspective in understanding the Middle Ages in Hungary and Transylvania (thus “broadening the mind”) and allows us to become more tolerant and open to one another, thus becoming “better people” – as such, history proves its moral effects on those who read it (Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, p. 154). Professor Pop’s book provides this very opportunity.

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Antal Molnár, *Confessionalization on the Frontier. The Balkan Catholics between Roman Reform and Ottoman Reality* (Rome: Viella, 2019)

In rather original manner, this book deals with Catholic confessionalization in the Balkans, a topic that has benefited from limited attention in extant literature. The choice of subject seems to have been stimulated by the fact that the Catholics, despite being the smallest religious community in the Balkans, were beyond doubt the most significant, a view supported by their commercial and diplomatic contacts with the west and by the strength and liveliness of their cultural expression in the region. As the book deals with confessional minorities, such as the Catholics in the Balkans,

it primarily refers to mechanisms of confession-building often initiated by the Holy See, but implemented locally by various agents, such as secular elites, secular clergy and religious orders. In terms of its chronologic span, the book mostly deals with developments in religious life during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, because strategies of confessionalization came to a halt in this region during the eighteenth century, as convincingly demonstrated in chapter nine. In terms of its geographical span, partly following in the footsteps of Fernand Braudel, the study focuses on the whole of the Balkan peninsula, with the exception of Greece, but including Ottoman Hungary as a part of the Ottoman Balkans, proposing a broader understanding of the region. Thus, the book succeeds in transcending national frameworks and evolves towards a macro-regional analysis.

Although the book does not have an over-arching research question, as it brings together a series of articles previously published in several languages, Hungarian, English, Italian and German, it does contribute to the field of ecclesiastical history and religious studies in significant ways, as previous conclusions have been expanded and reshaped by new findings. Moreover, all the chapters address the issue of confessionalization as a heuristic tool and possible interpretative paradigm, when applied to a minority confession living in the Ottoman Empire.

Consequently, the study wishes to trace the distinctive features of Catholic confessionalization in this particular region, by moving away from a historiographical narrative that emphasized the triumphant, militant or sacrificial nature of Catholic missions, embracing instead a more balanced view of the interaction between "Rome-centred Tridentine Catholicism" and local Catholicism on the peripheries of Europe. The author contends that, in this region, Catholic confessionalization was not a homogenous process, but rather "a complex of local versions emerging in different political and confessional contexts."

If one wishes to place this book within the author's work and research interests, it is noteworthy that the project builds on previous research for a PhD dissertation concerning Catholic mission institutions in Ottoman Hungary and the broader area of the northern Balkans during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The thesis was eventually developed into a monograph, published in Hungarian and French, focused on the history of these institutions. The monograph thus remained firmly anchored within the field of ecclesiastical history. However, the research undertaken for that particular project seems to have raised issues that could not be answered within the framework of this particular field and thus needed to be approached from the perspective of cultural history and with the tools

provided by micro-analysis. This must have logically led to the outlining of the current project.

When compared with other contributions to this field, the book has the merit of detaching itself from previous approaches to the topic, which had been impacted by both nationalism and confessionalism, often resulting, in the author's own words, in a "lay martyrology". Instead, this book has chosen to incorporate the Ottoman viewpoint and to look at the history of Christian communities, albeit mostly with the help of Christian sources, within the framework of Ottoman confessional policy. This approach is not entirely new, as it builds on previous research on Christian communities in the Balkans, which has privileged a detailed study of parallel structures, broader social and political contexts and interactions among the various religious and confessional communities.

Stemming from this particular trend in existing scholarship, the book provides a new perspective on the history of Balkan Catholicism during the early modern period. On the one hand, Molnár succeeds in clearly defining the condition of the Balkan Catholic Church, which, in his view, was facing four major challenges: the circumstances imposed by Ottoman authorities, the pressure of the Orthodox Church, the right of patronage claimed by the Hungarian sovereign and what the author calls "the Franciscan Church" and its autonomous status. The book has the further merit of considering the history of Balkan Catholicism within the framework of Ottoman religious policies, dominated in the author's view by pragmatism, with the general aim of consolidating Sunni Islam, and little interest in the hardening of confessions initiated by the communities themselves. Within this framework, the book accounts for specific local developments by considering both medieval traditions and the constraints of Ottoman religious policy. Thus, Molnár astutely points out that Balkan Catholicism, surviving in regions where Islam was the state religion, was a rare and unusual breed, as it functioned within uncertain jurisdictional boundaries, had severe problems of church discipline, was unable to properly indoctrinate communities and had to accommodate strong trans-confessional links. On the other hand, the book identifies the main reasons for the demise of Balkan Catholicism. In the author's opinion, the process began with the Great Turkish War (1683-1699), as this considerably diminished the economic, social, military, political and intellectual force of the Balkan Catholics. This was followed by the decrease of the Catholic population, caused by losses during the war, emigration and forced Islamization. Consequently, Balkan Catholicism in Bosnia and Bulgaria lost its urban character and became a purely rural denomination, without an elite. This impacted on its confessional weight, its ability to represent its

interests and its cultural significance, crucial to its place in Balkan nation-building. Moreover, during the eighteenth century, the European powers, the Holy See and the Congregation of Propaganda Fide gradually showed less interest in Catholics living in the Ottoman Empire. Molnár ultimately claims that the great achievements of Innocent XI's papacy may be seen to have had catastrophic implications for the Balkan missions.

Thus, one of the major contributions of this book is a profound and nuanced understanding of Catholic missions in the Balkans during the early modern period. First of all, Molnár has an innovative way of looking at the missions, taking into account several, sometimes overlapping, models: missions initiated in Rome, which relied on secular priests based in Ragusa, missions led by the Franciscans based in Bosnia who held a hegemonic position in these territories, and later missions carried out by Franciscans and Jesuits under the authority of Hungarian bishops. Molnár suggests the possible existence of a fourth plan hatched in Venice and convincingly argues that this may have fed local rivalries by establishing an economic axis Sarajevo-Spalato-Venice, which aimed at dislodging Ragusan hegemony in the region. Secondly, the book outlines several stages in the development of the mission, discussing separately the pontificate of Innocent XI and the impact of his reform policy, particularly the stricter centralization of the missions. The author points out that, initially, the Holy See did not have a central authority to direct the affairs of evangelical missions and that it was only the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, set up in 1622, that established its objectives, *modus operandi* and intellectual aspirations. While the popes did not control the missions, they did wish to set some general objectives for the course of evangelization. Moreover, the strategy of the Propaganda Fide combined the principle of universality, ensconced within the universalist mission strategies of the papacy and the ideal of uniformity, with a practical pastoral strategy focused on the "special needs of the nations". Thus, as Molnár persuasively argues, these institutions made considerable allowances for differences among the nations. Accommodating these regional needs, the aims of the seventeenth century missions in the Balkans were the promotion of local clergy and church hierarchies. Thus, within the Balkan missions, support was given to new institutions, such as mission dioceses, and apostolic prefectures, to the consolidation of ecclesiastical hierarchies, with resident bishops, to the curtailment of patronage rights and the privileges of religious orders, and ultimately to the elimination of religious orders from the missions and their replacement with secular priests formed in mission seminaries. The consolidation of ecclesiastical institutions led to control exercised through apostolic visitations, while the general objective was to bring the religious life of the clergy and the faithful in line with Tridentine

requirements. While the missions began with a vague intention to bring the Muslim population and even the members of the Orthodox Church to the Catholic fold, the conversion of Muslims and Orthodox believers had come off the agenda at an early stage, while aspirations of union with Rome were only present to a modest extent. Molnár seems to suggest that, throughout the seventeenth century, the Balkan missions were primarily concerned with pastoral care for Catholic minorities living throughout the region.

Equally noteworthy is the conclusion regarding Union with Rome. As during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, in the age of confessionalization, the Catholic Church initiated unionist movements, the author chose to discuss the attempts of some of the members of the Serbian Church to achieve union with Rome, although, as it has been pointed out, this did not figure prominently among the mission's objectives. In Molnár's opinion, the failure of the union among the Serbs owes much to tensions generated by the pursuit of confessional exclusivity at the intersection of two religious and cultural worlds, the Eastern and Western Churches. Thus, the cultural and national role of Serbian Orthodoxy and its relative autonomy in Ottoman and Christian political structures rendered attempts at union meaningless. While explanations for its withdrawal from Western Christianity, which "had been transformed by the Reformation and Catholic Reform and became increasingly intellectualized" seem less persuasive, in view of recent literature that has emphasized continuities between traditional and reformed religious cultures, arguments concerning the development of a special status of the Serbian Church as a repository of medieval Serbian statehood are highly convincing. In the author's view, the disappearance of the Serbian state increased the role of the upper ecclesiastical hierarchy and the monasteries. Whilst the patriarch took the place of the monarch as the secular leader of the nation, the monasteries became the holy places of political tradition and the locus for the cult of monarchs, or the local dynasties. Moreover, Molnár would have us believe that the strength of the Serbian Church lay in its adaptation of religious practices to folk religiosity, its relinquishing of training and theology in favour of liturgy and paraliturgical practices, and its retention of political ecclesiology. The author further argues that, while the Ottoman religious policy of pitting the two churches against each other greatly contributed to the acrimony of Catholic-Orthodox relations, the movement towards union was equally undermined by the bishop's refusal to consider setting up an autonomous Uniate Church. Finally, the local clergy did not believe in evangelization among the Serbs because of the differences between Orthodox and Latin religious cultures. Thus, Molnár is ultimately led to conclude that the union was a marginal phenomenon in Balkan relations

between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Tensions between them lay less within Roman proselytizing than within divisive Ottoman religious policy.

Choosing a novel approach, this book embraces the confessionalization paradigm, launched in the 1980s within German historiography by Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard, in the wake of Ernst Walter Zeeden's book, while taking into account its development in time and its refinement by the many scholars who have tested it in various circumstances, geographical as well as religious. The author is particularly interested in the adoption of the paradigm by several scholars, intent on interpreting changes in Orthodox Christianity, Judaism and Islam, a tendency that has highlighted the dynamics of institutionalization and focused attention on the march towards modernity. Consequently, one of the principal contributions of this book is to the refinement of the concept of confessionalization, as Molnár uses this particular interpretative paradigm in his exploration of Catholicism in the Balkans. The author wishes to place Ottoman areas of the Balkans within the international research on confessionalization, joining a more general trend in various historiographies which have tested this heuristic tool in different environments, most notably the Ottoman Empire, as suggested by the outstanding work of Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu.

In this context, a few points need to be brought to the attention of the readership. First of all, Molnár restricts his investigation to Catholic confessionalization, although he often draws interesting parallels with the Serbian Orthodox Church. Secondly, he argues that, in the absence of Christian secular authorities, it was the elites of the region who gave an impulse to confessionalization. Moreover, in the absence of a landowning aristocracy and urban patricians that constituted the traditional secular elites, it was wealthy merchants who had secular authority and developed religious policies in the towns under Ottoman control. By the late seventeenth century, this group had come to perform a variety of functions: they ultimately became influential bearers of a religious culture that was increasingly adopting national features and thus shaped the course of confessionalization. Thus, one important merit of the book is this discussion concerning agency in confessionalization strategies, as illustrated by chapters three and four, which deal respectively with the Holy See, the previously unknown involvement of the Roman Inquisition in the missions conducted in the Balkans, and the Republic of Venice. In this context, Molnár highlights the role of merchant communities in the development of the confessionalization process, for instance in chapters five and six, which focus on the patronage over the chapels at Belgrade and Novi Pazar, an object of disputes between the merchants and the Church, suggesting that the usual

agents supporting these policies, such as a secular confessional state, or a “feudal ruling class” were more or less absent, fostering the forging of a specific model of confessionalization, different from the “feudal-territorial” one. The author argues that, by the time Innocent XI became pope, these factors had combined to create a model of confessionalization with a peculiarly Ottoman structure. This model deviated from western Catholic or Protestant patterns and took a path similar to that followed by the Orthodox Churches, precisely because the two Churches had to adapt in similar ways to the Ottoman system of religious regulations. These conclusions dovetail with the suggestions of Kristić and Terzioğlu, who have focused on the increasing processes of Islamization and Sunnitization, paralleled by growing intolerance towards Christians and Jews living in the Ottoman Empire. Molnár concludes by positing that this Balkan model of Catholic confessionalization constitutes a ‘hybrid confessionalization’, which fell short of the Roman centralizing ideal and the version of an episcopal national church and was, in fact, a “dual church reform model”. The author thus successfully manages to refine a well-worn concept, by positing that, by the end of the seventeenth century, a “special Ottoman confessionalization model” was created, distinct from western Catholic and Protestant traditions. This new model was shaped by the fact that Ottoman rule made confessional territorialization impossible, while the resistance of local structures to reforms prescribed by Rome, as illustrated by the second chapter of the book, did not lead to their successful implementation. The author further points out that the kinship system, prevalent in the Balkans, favoured the formation of interest groups, which forged different strategies when asked to implement orders from Rome. Although one may not entirely agree with the notion of testing transnational paradigms within new and extremely changeable circumstances, one still finds the in-depth study of the mechanisms of confessionalization initiated by the Catholic Church in the process of adaptation to regional/local contexts both challenging and, as this book successfully demonstrates, fruitful.

The author’s contention that Catholic minorities had an “extraordinary” role in forming “early national consciousness”, while perhaps less persuasive, is certainly provocative. This point is well-illustrated by chapter seven, which examines the role of Albanian priests trained in Rome who were concerned to give literary expression to the rudiments of Albanian identity. In the author’s view, national identity also comes into play in chapter eight, which deals with plans for a Catholic union among the Serbs in the context of a Balkan mission, challenging views in both Croatian and Serbian historiographies. Successful confessionalization generally leads to a strong confessional identity but, in this case, the author

links the latter to national identity. Relying on the in-depth analysis of the Albanian case study and helped by forays into other regions of the Balkans, Molnár suggests that Catholic missions made a much greater contribution to the foundation of the early Balkan national consciousness. The cultural-linguistic-literary programme of the missions effectively shaped the early conception of Balkan national identity, first of all the Illyrian and later the more particular Bulgarian, Bosnian and Albanian ones. The book argues that, in the eyes of the missionaries, national identity was closely related to the Catholic Church. They sometimes identified the national characteristics of their countries, they rewrote history and created heroes and they set out ambitious literary programmes.

In contrast to confessionalization and identity, religious and social disciplining are less clearly defined, as social disciplining is equated with the eradication of “traditional customs, folk practices and pagan cults” and even with conversion, blurring the boundaries between the two concepts. The author seems to suggest that, in a region where confessionalization was initiated by ecclesiastical institutions, social along with religious disciplining became the responsibility of the Church. This could have been further explored as a specific feature of the region, because it was markedly different from western European practices.

Beyond the innovative approach and the introduction of new or refined concepts, the merits of this book include commitment to interdisciplinarity. The micro-historical approach favoured in this endeavour reaches a peak in the tenth chapter which, by exploring gender transformation, informed by Catholic female mysticism and Balkan folk tradition, deals with the little-known history of women in this region and reinforces the author’s conclusion that Balkan Catholicism is an almost freakish mixture of European and Balkan elements. However, the option in favour of micro-analysis is not substantiated in this case by the minute examination of one subject from all possible perspectives, but rather by the presentation of several individual conflicts and careers.

The book is informed by current historiographical debates centred on confessionalization, the regional factor in historical analysis, taking on board the results of Sergio Anselmi and the ‘Ancona School’, various types of detailed reconstruction, for example Noel Malcolm’s attempt to explore the interaction of two cultures during the sixteenth century through the minute examination of collective biographies. The book shows familiarity with regional historiographies published in local languages, which are thus made, even indirectly accessible to a western audience. Moreover, Antal Molnár’s book shows extraordinary familiarity with the literature dedicated to the study of early modern Catholicism and particularly missions in the Balkans.

In most cases, the book adds to existing scholarship by offering alternative interpretations of the rich source material and by refining firmly entrenched conclusions. Sometimes, the author contends with the conclusions of previous scholarship, providing a detailed critique of various trends tainted by either nationalism and/or confessionalism. Finally, the author astutely highlights gaps to be filled in existing literature pointing out opportunities for future research.

It is almost superfluous to say that this book is based on an impressive array of primary sources, many of them formerly unknown, produced in Rome by the Holy See and the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, or locally, by missionaries and envoys or by Ottoman authorities. These have been subjected to detailed analysis and criticism. The text is accompanied by twelve maps, useful in orienting the reader in the religious/confessional complexity of the region.

Reading through the book, one may have wished that the content of these studies had been melted into a structure better able to highlight the book's major contribution to the study of confessionalization. As things stand, the reader has to sift through the, sometimes overwhelming, details in order to put together the new confessionalization model. This does not, however, diminish the book's contribution to the field, securing its place on the shelves of university libraries all over the world.

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Judit Pál – Vlad Popovici – Andrea Fehér – Ovidiu Emil Iudean (ed.), *Parliamentary elections in Eastern Hungary and Transylvania (1865–1918)*, Berlin, International Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2018.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, many archives and libraries have closed down, “starving” researchers of their working material. In such cases, we start to truly appreciate digitalized databases, as well as books that can compile sizeable amounts of data, based on a large number of sources, with a good critical apparatus. One such book is entitled *Parliamentary Elections in Eastern Hungary and Transylvania (1865–1918)*, and was edited by Judit Pál, Vlad Popovici, Andrea Fehér and Ovidiu Emil Iudean, the latter three being members of the teaching staff of the Faculty of History and Philosophy of Babeş-Bolyai University, and the former being a researcher at the same university. The volume describes Hungarian parliamentarism, and features a wide variety of information about the elected deputies from