

STUDIA HISTORICA

**THE PORTRAIT OF BISHOP IOAN PATACHI AND
THE TYPOLOGY OF THE GREAT HIERARCHS
OF THE ROMANIAN UNITED CHURCH –
ASPECTS OF THE DISCOURSE OF IDENTITY,
FROM THE CORYPHAEI OF THE TRANSYLVANIAN
SCHOOL TO THE INTERWAR PERIOD**

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ABSTRACT. *The Portrait of Bishop Ioan Patachi and the Typology of the Great Hierarchs of the Romanian Uniate Church – Aspects of the Discourse of Identity, from the Coryphaei of the Transylvanian School to the Interwar Period.* The present study aims to recreate the image of the Uniate bishop Ioan Patachi as depicted in the official discourse of identity elaborated by the intellectual elite of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church from the second half of the 18th century to the Inter-War period. A controversial figure in the Church history, with rather few information and documents available for the general public, bishop Patachi's figure evolved over time, from a rather negative overall picture in the writings of Samuil Micu or Petru Maior, to a more positive one, built around his description as one of the Founders of the Uniate Church in Transylvania and a predecessor of bishop Inochentie Micu Klein, the symbol of the struggle for national, social and economic emancipation of the Romanians.

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Cuvinte cheie: Ioan Patachi, discurs identitar, greco-catolic, portret oficial – evocare, tipologie ierarh.

In the official discourse of the Greek-Catholic Church in Romania, the image of the hierarchs transmitted over time is an essential and effective instrument for the construction and strengthening of the confessional identity. Its origins are found in the writings of the Coryphaei of the Transylvanian School from the late 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, having their first officially assumed form in the introduction with historical character of the *Schematismus* published in Blaj, in 1835. Short portraits were drawn for each Uniate hierarch, from Teofil (1692-1697) to Ioan Lemeni, the bishop in office at the time. The practice and the main themes were continued over time, consolidating the general threats. A relevant example is the Pastoral Letter of the Uniate hierarchy from 1900, celebrating 200 years since the realization of the Union with Rome. The letter developed several main topics: the historical context of the Union which followed the model of the Union in Florence, in 1439; the Union with the Church of Rome was made *in fide* – in faith, with the preservation of the Eastern character and Tradition (both ideas had been formulated by the group of theologians led by bishop Petru Pavel Aron at the middle of the 18th century); the historical evolution of the Uniate Church, pointing out the important accomplishments and the personalities who achieved them; the struggle for the national and cultural emancipation of the Romanians; and the benefits brought by the Union for the Romanian people – as a general conclusion of the entire message (the topic of the Union's benefits has been evident since the middle of the 19th century, in the work of Iosif Pop Sălăjean, from 1845¹).

A standardized discursive framework was developed, transmitting a repetitive message, easy to understand and impactful for the clergy and the faithful. The portraits of the Greek-Catholic bishops and then the metropolitans were drawn inside a series of patterns which, put together, created the typology of the “ideal” hierarch. There are five distinctive models:

¹ I. Pop Sălăjean, *Scurtă istorie a credinței românilor*, Blaj 1845, p. 64-72.

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- The hierarch involved in the pastoral activity, the promotion of the Union, the spiritual growth of the faithful, and the social support for those in need (the sick, the orphans, the widows);
- The hierarch – Founder of ecclesiastical institutions, of solid administrative, economic, pastoral and juridical structures, which allowed the organic development of the Church and gave consistency to the activity from all the other fields of action;
- The hierarch involved in the struggle for the national emancipation of the Romanians, for the equality of political, social, economic or cultural rights, for the accomplishment of the national ideals;
- The hierarch involved in the process of school development, at all levels, supporting pupils and students, with an extraordinary impact on the Church, as well as on the entire nation;
- The hierarch involved in the cultural and scholar activity, preoccupied with Theology, History, Philosophy, Philology etc.

All these elements describe, in fact, the directions of strategic development of the Greek-Catholic Church, with its main areas of development. They represent a real plan with long term objectives, whose accomplishment influenced the positive evolution of the Romanian nation in general, not only of the Greek-Catholics in particular. Therefore, all these elements, considered as a whole, speak of the role assumed by the Uniate Church in the history of the Romanian people. They illustrate a model of leader and of leadership.

The way in which different hierarchs were presented in the official discourse of the Uniate Church represented the attempt to place each one of them in as many of these categories as possible. Amongst the most important figures of this history, in the interwar period, some portraits stand out – the ones of the “Founders” of Blaj: Inochentie Micu Klein, Ioan Vancea, and Vasile Suciu,

Inochentie Micu Klein was always mentioned for his role in the foundation and development of Blaj, the spiritual capital of the Greek-Catholics and the See of the metropolitan, for the creation of the monastery and the first schools, for the construction of the cathedral, promotion of the Union and the fight for the national, social and economic rights for the Romanians. It was the specific image of the fighter, the visionary, of the one who overcame extraordinary hardship and never gave up on his goals. For the celebration of 250 years since Inochentie’s birthyear, Corneliu Coposu

wrote about the Uniate bishop: “He was the greatest hierarch of our people. Through his strong personality as a fearless fighter, Inocențiu, the first bishop of Blaj, is recorded by history as the most important political figure of his century”; “brilliant leader of serf peasants awoken and alive, Inocențiu Micu remains for our millenary struggle, the creative energy from which the national consciousness and struggle emerged as well as the desire for freedom of our persecuted people”. This article is representative from another perspective as well. The author presented the great accomplishments of Micu related to the foundation of the cathedral and the schools, but they were used as arguments supporting the image of Inochentie as a national leader.²

This pattern is applicable to Vancea as well. In an article dedicated to him after his death, it was written: “The new Blaj is his work. Every stone speaks of his name”.³ And it continues: “Who has ever given more subventions for our young people who prepared or are preparing for the scientific careers? Who has ever grown more young students from all the academic institutes in Blasius? ... Who has ever protected more orphans, brought comfort to more sadden widows and wiped more tears than our regretted Hierarch?” The care for schools, for the tradition of the Uniate Church, the activity at the Vatican I Council, the decisions of the archdiocesan and provincial councils for the clarification of the disciplinary systems, for the improvement of the pastoral activity and the regulation of the spiritual activity of the parishes, all these elements are mentioned in the long line of his achievements.⁴

Therefore, the key-words are: church, nation, people, school, students, support for those in need – either identified as the serf peasants from the time of Inochentie, or the widows and the orphans from the time of Vancea. Struggle, relentless effort, perseverance, resilience, courage, all these add to the portrait.

In addition, we must mention the special attention given to Blaj, placed in the centre of this narrative. A true Blaj-centrism. Blaj, as the symbol of the development of the entire Uniate Church, as the source of light and inspiration for the Romanians, raised by these truly extraordinary leaders, identified in the persons of the three Founders: Inochentie Micu Klein in the 18th century; Ioan Vancea in the 19th century; followed by Vasile Suciu in the 20th century.

² *Ardealul*, 1942, f. 317.

³ *Unirea*, 1892, year II, extraordinary no. from 31 July 1892, p. 2.

⁴ *Unirea* 1892, year II, no. 32, p. 250 - 254.

And something else, perhaps even more important: the idea of suffering, of martyrdom, of heroism. A continuous and deep suffering, bringing these hierarchs closer to the image of saints. Their passing placed them in the book of saints. The comparison with the martyrs underlines the idea that the Uniate Church was built and faced all this historical hardship based on this suffering, as the Christian Church of the first centuries resisted persecution and evolved due to the blood of the martyrs, as Tertulian wrote so inspirationally.

Alexandru Rusu described Inochentie Micu in an article from 1921, as “the first bishop of our Church who had his residence in Blaj, that he founded, this first martyr apostle, with the voice of archangel announcing our complete freedom”.⁵ In 1935, another author wrote about metropolitan Vasile Suciu: “The Church and the people were in his great soul. He served them both without rest, until his last breath, with unmatched heroism ... For him, there was only sacrifice, deprivation, struggle and pain. Metropolitan Suciu was a great man. He was a great Hierarch. He was a great Romanian. A martyr”.⁶ Metropolitan Vasile Suciu, “a figure of a saint and soldier”, as described by historian Nicolae Iorga, also calling him “Vasile Voivode” with reference to Vasile Lupu, the great prince of Moldova (1634-1653) with whom metropolitan Suciu resembled physically as well as in determination, perseverance and courage.

Over time, until the interwar decades, each hierarch received a specific label transmitted to the clergy and the faithful, as an image meant to remain permanent in the collective mentality of the Greek-Catholic community: Inochentie Micu Klein – founder of Blaj and fighter for the national rights; Petru Pavel Aron – founder of schools, a saint; Atanasie Rednic – ascetic; Grigore Maior – fighter for the rights and promotor of the Union; Ioan Bob – administrator, great institutional organizer; Ioan Lemeni – distinction, exiled due to injustice; Șuluțiu – fighter for the nation; Vancea – the second Founder of Blaj; Mihalyi – merciful / pastoral care; Vasile Suciu – the third Founder of Blaj.

These labels receive a special symbolic value when they are integrated in presentations aiming to describe the hierarchical succession on the See of Blaj. An illustrative example is given by the article announcing that Ioan Vancea was to be buried in the crypt of the bishops alongside “his immortal predecessors Petru Pavel Aron, Atanasie Rednic, Grigore Maior and Ioan Bob”. Then the main qualities of

⁵ *Unirea*, 1921, year XXXI, no. 20, p. 1.

⁶ *Unirea*, 1935, year XLV, no. 5, p. 1.

Vancea were listed in comparison with the ones of the other mentioned bishops: “he loved his clergy as Aron … loved order and discipline as Rednic … loved his faithful people and the entire Romanian people as Grigore Maior. For his people, he had continuously fought, for his people he had suffered … he was prudent as Bob. Foundations, institutions, and his blessings rivals the ones of Bob”.⁷

And a few years later, in an article referring to Vasile Suciu’s consecration as metropolitan in 1919, it was written: “And of course, he thought of the long line of the icons of his great predecessors on the See of the Bishops and Metropolitans of Blaj: the icon of Inochentie Clain, the creator of the programme of claims for the Romanian people from Transylvania, the icon of Petru Pavel Aron, the ascetic person wearing the iron wire around his bare waist, the founder of the high Romanian schools in Blaj, the icon of the always fasting Rednic, who fed only on vegetables, the icon of the popular and restless promotor of the Union, Grigore Maior, the one who was imprisoned in Muncaci, the icon of the prudent and organizer Bobb, of the distinguished Lemeny, the icon of the Metropolitan Şuluşiu, on whose gravestone are forever encrypted in black marble the words: *only death can separate me from the Nation*; in the end, the icon of Vancea, the second Founder of Blaj, the icon of the merciful Mihalyi, all great and righteous alike, in their private life as well as in their national and church activity”.⁸

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, at the basis of these images there was the way these hierarchs were presented by Samuil Micu, Petru Maior, Dimitrie Vaida or in the first *Schematismus* of the Uniate Church – the first two editions from 1835 and 1842. The period from 1750 and 1850 represents the first stage of the elaboration of the Greek-Catholic discourse of identity, establishing the main topics and directions for the future. So, how was bishop Ioan Patachi described in these primordial writings?

Samuil Micu presented Ioan Patachi as the hierarch who fought for the official foundation of the bishopric, as he obtained the canonical recognition of the pope. One of his aims was to be able to improve the material situation of the Church. Micu added though: “he would have better asked the Pope to strengthen the Metropolitan See!” But nevertheless, the overall picture was favorable to Patachi: “this Ioan Patachi was a very good and merciful bishop, a cheerful man and a good father for the

⁷ *Unirea*, 1892, year II, no. 32, p. 249.

⁸ *Unirea*, 1935, year LXV, no. 5, p. 3.

Romanian people, a defender of the Church and a loving of people person". He died tragically: "in 1725, being called somewhere for lunch, and loving to drink spirits, there, in the drinking of alcohol it is said to have been poisoned, causing him to die".⁹ A negative endnote.

Petru Maior insisted as well on the move of the bishop's See to Făgăraș and the foundation of the bishopric through the papal bull from 1721. Although the move of the See was presented as a negative action for the Church of the Romanians in Transylvania, Maior did not blame Patachi for it. He blamed the Jesuits and the existence in Transylvania of a Roman-Catholic bishop as well – following his main line of argument. Maior argued that the Latins did not want the Uniates to have a hierarch with a superior rank in the same province. He was rather critical on Patachi, mentioning his intellectual and spiritual formation of Latin, Jesuit, origin, considering him guilty for the further evolution of the events described as detrimental to the Romanian clergy and people. He wanted to introduce new, "papist" practices, thus "turning away" people from the Union. Maior also mentioned the receipt, in 1717, of the domains from Gherla and Sâmbăta de Jos.¹⁰

In his work from the beginning of the 19th century, theologian Dimitrie Vaida used a totally different tone. Ioan Patachi was presented as a very well-educated man, an alumni of the Jesuits – the link with the Jesuits was now considered a positive element of Patachi's pastoral activity and evolution. The bishop had merits in the preservation of the Union, of the peace in the Church, and in the defense of the privileges obtained for the clergy. Patachi "obtained" the title of bishop of Făgăraș, and the domains of Gherla and Sâmbăta de Jos as endowment for the Church.¹¹ The critical attitude is missing, his pastoral activity being characterized positively, although the Uniate bishop led the Church in a period full of conflicts and uncertainties.

Canon Teodor Pop continued on the same line. Ioan Patachi, acting with "godly zeal", "received" the residence in Făgăraș and the two domains.¹²

The *Schematismus* showed that he was appointed in 1716, being ennobled by emperor Charles VI. The bishop's residence was moved to Făgăraș, and in 1721,

⁹ S. Micu, *Istoria românilor*, vol. 2, București 1995, p. 286-287.

¹⁰ P. Maior, *Istoria Bisericii*, vol. 1, București 1995, p. 123, 168-170, 239, 244-246.

¹¹ D. Vaida, *Cuvântări ținute în numele clerului greco-catolic*, Sibiu 1809, p. 14; D. Vaida, *Cuvântări în cinstea excelenței sale Ioan Bob*, Blaj 1813, p. 27-28.

¹² T. Pop, *Tristă predică care la îngroparea excelenței sale prealuminatului și preamaritului Domn Ioan Bobb de Kapolnok Monostor*, Sibiu 1830, p. 15.

pope Innocence XIII issued the bull of foundation of the bishopric of Făgăraş. Patachi died in 1727.¹³ The overall review is positive.

One can easily notice that the image of Ioan Patachi is rather different in these texts with more official character than the one pictured by Petru Maior and, partially, by Samuil Micu. After all, for the discourse of identity realized by the clerical elite, the events from Patachi's pastoral activity represent some of the most important foundational acts on which the Union evolved. That is why, they could not have been presented in a negative or critical light. Which is the direction that will survive over time?

After a period of relative silence, the narrative line was restored by the Pastoral Letter issued by the Greek-Catholic hierarchs in 1900, for the celebration of the Union Jubilee. The letter made reference to some aspects of the activity of the Uniate bishops. A special attention was given to Ioan Patachi and Inochentie Micu Klein, who are thus integrated in the category of the Union Founders. Patachi is presented as an erudite, who supported the clergy and the nation, obtaining the domains from Gherla and Sâmbăta de Jos. Inochentie took over the domain of Blaj, founded the monastery and the schools, built the cathedral and fought for the rights of the clergy and the nation.¹⁴

At this point, we can approach the interesting topic related to the very beginning of the Union. The *Schematismus* from 1835 and the one in 1842 placed the beginning of the Union in 1697, starting the history of the Uniate Church with the metropolitan Teofil, who opened the bishops' succession. Atanasie Anghel was “*secundus autem ab inita Unione Episcopus*”, whereas Petru Pavel Aron, for example, was presented as “*ab Unione quintus episcopus*”.¹⁵ On the other hand, the Pastoral Letter from 1900 was celebrating a Jubilee of 200 years since the foundation of the Uniate Church, which excluded Teofil and started the line of succession of the Uniate hierarchs with Atanasie Anghel. A similar suggestion was made in 1845 as well, when Iosif Pop Sălăjean wrote that the Union was reestablished by metropolitan Atanasie, who ruled over the old bishoprics of Vad, Maramureş and Sălagiu.¹⁶

¹³ *Schematismus*, Blaj, 1835, p. IX; *Schematismus*, Blaj, 1842, p. XII.

¹⁴ *Epistola Pastorală pentru jubileul Sântei Uniri dată de Episcopatul Provinciei metropolitane gr.-cat. române de Alba-Iulia și Făgăraş anul Domnului 1900, de la Sânta Unire anul 200*, Blaj 1900.

¹⁵ *Schematismus*, Blaj, 1835, p. VIII, X.

¹⁶ See C. Ghişa, *Biserica Greco-Catolică din Transilvania (1700-1850). Elaborarea discursului identitar*, Cluj-Napoca 2006, p. 347.

This order in the succession of the bishops left traces in the interwar period of time as well. Let's say from the very beginning that the mentions of Ioan Patachi in the official press of the Uniate Church in the interwar period were very few. In 1925, in an article meant to be a reply to a controversy linked to the foundation of the bishopric of Gherla, Gheorghe Mânzat addressed to the Orthodox historian Silviu Dragomir reminding Patachi several times, presenting him as "the second Romanian Uniate bishop who had to live in Făgăraș, but because he did not have an appropriate residence, he often spent time on the domains from Sâmbăta de Jos and Gherla".¹⁷ And if Patachi was the second hierarch, then he deserves to be included amongst the Founders of the Romanian Uniate Church.

Considering the canonical perspective, the following observation can be made: Patachi could be considered as the second "bishop", as Atanasie Anghel was the first hierarch who held this title officially. Teofil could not be taken into consideration, as he held the title of metropolitan throughout his entire pastoral rule. As mentioned above, the *Schematismus* from the first half of the 19th century included Teofil in the enumeration of the bishops ignoring the title as such. Teofil was the first hierarch, during whose leadership the first step was made towards the Union with the Church of Rome. Thus, Patachi was the third. But if the moment of effective realization of the Union is considered the synod from 1700, then Atanasie Anghel was the true Founder, and the Patachi is the second. The argument is valid if one considers the three synods of the Union, the ones from 1697, 1698 and 1700, as a process started in the time of Teofil and having its final act in the synod of the clergy and the representatives of the laymen from September 1700.

The great achievement of Ioan Patachi, the receipt of the bull *Rationi congruit* from pope Innocence XIII, in 1721, as an official recognition of the foundation of the bishopric of Făgăraș, was mentioned sporadically as well, or just collaterally in the Greek-Catholic press from the beginning of the 20th century and from the interwar period. In *Cultura Creștină* from 1911, Nicolae Brânzeu published an article on the relationship between the Uniate Church and the archbishop of Esztergom, making reference to the bull *Rationi congruit*, which did not make any reference to the subordination of the bishop of Făgăraș to the Archbishop Primate of Hungary, but did not specifically mention Patachi.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Unirea*, 1925, year XXXV, no. 42, p. 2.

¹⁸ N. Brânzeu, *Biserica Română Unită și primatele Ungariei*, in *Cultura Creștină*, 1911, year I, no. 5, p. 129-134.

Patachi or the papal bull from 1721 received little attention in the anniversary years as well. *Cultura Creştină* did not make any reference to the bishop and his activity in 1921, nor in 1941. The same conclusion can be drawn for *Unirea*, the journal from Blaj, with a regular and frequent publication, with a focus on the contemporary events as well as on the past. *Unirea*'s readers were led through history focusing on a very large and diverse number of events and personalities from the past, especially on anniversary years or with symbolic value. The history of the Greek-Catholic Church was often analyzed, and personalities such as Inochentie Micu, Grigore Maior, or the events from 1848 were constantly approached, as expected. But nothing on Patachi, even in 1927, while commemorating 200 years from the death "of the second bishop" of the Uniate Church. In 1927, in the journal *Unirea*, there were articles remembering the 150 years jubilee of the bishopric of Oradea, the 300 years jubilee since the opening of the Urban College of Propaganda Fide¹⁹, 100 years since the death of Beethoven, or 100 years since the death of J. Pestalozzi, "the founder of the modern pedagogy".²⁰ Was Patachi neglected? Was he forgotten?

As already noted, Patachi was not completely missing though. The aforementioned series of articles signed by Gheorghe Mânzat made most of the references to Patachi. Maintaining the focus on Patachi's presence in Gherla, Gh. Mânzat mentioned the bull *Rationi congruit* from 1721, adding the fact that the imperial approval was obtained as early as 1715, which meant that the domain from Gherla could have been received before 1721. Mânzat argued that Patachi resided in Gherla in 1717 already. The debate offered the chance for a short portrait of Patachi: zealous for the Church of Christ, quality presumed by Mânzat who wrote that this assumption was correct "in 99 of 100 cases, when the discussion is about any bishop and especially about one such as Patachi, a totally rare man" ... "a rare man because of his culture and habits, as he was described by strangers such as Sigismund Kornis, as early as 1714."²¹

Therefore, a description based on the remarks of a "stranger" contemporary with Patachi, the rest being a "common sense" assumption applicable to any other "great Romanian hierarch". Mânzat felt the obligation to say positive things on the character and the activity of Patachi, who was treated "so maliciously and unworthy by some of our historians blinded by confessional jealousy and led by misconceptions"

¹⁹ *Unirea*, 1927, year XXXVII, no. 25.

²⁰ *Unirea*, 1927, year XXXVII, no. 9, no. 11.

²¹ *Unirea*, 1925, year XXXV, no. 46, p. 3.

– the footnote made reference to the Orthodox historian Silviu Dragomir and to his comments on Patachi made in his book, *Istoria Desrobirii religioase*.²² But his observation could fit very well if referring to Maior or Micu.

Another reference to Patachi reminded of his studies conducted in Rome – as he was the first in the line of the Greek-Catholic hierarchs who accomplished this. The aim of the author was to show the deep and constant links between the Greek-Catholic hierarchs and Rome, offering the opportunity to make additional mentions to the extraordinary hierarchical succession in the Greek-Catholic Church. An article written by Victor Macaveiu, entitled “Voices of a siren”, replied to a position expressed in the Orthodox press which argued that Petru Maior had anti-Union attitudes. Macaveiu built on the idea of this permanent link with Rome in order to fight statements like that. He listed the bishops who studied in Rome²³, writing: “we are thinking of the line of those who sat on the hierarchical See of the Uniate Church, most of which studied in Rome: of Ioan Patachi alias Giurgiu, who was a good and merciful parent to the Romanian nation (S. Clain in *Acte și fragm.* pag. 92) and who could rightfully say about himself: *caeterum ego paratus sum pro salute charae meae nationis valachicae sanguinem ... fundere* (Nilles, *Symb.* II. p. 408)”.²⁴ Then he mentioned Inochentie Micu, Petru Pavel Aron, Atanasie Rednic and Grigore Maior. Thus, Patachi was described as one of the great intellectuals of the Uniate Church. And the quote from N. Nilles’s work made the connection between Patachi and the words rephrased 150 years later by Alexandru Șterca Șulutiu, the first hierarch after the restoration of the Greek-Catholic metropolitan see, in 1853: “I am ready to bleed for the salvation of my nation!”. Thus, an important intellectual and a fighter dedicated to the nation!

And again, silence until 1937, the year when the Greek-Catholic Church could have commemorated 210 years since the death of bishop Patachi. He was brought back into the public attention by historian Zenovie Pâclișanu. He published in 1937, in *Cultura Creștină*²⁵, a series of documents issued by Patachi, two from 1715 and one from 1723, identified in the archives from Budapest. Pâclișanu said that few things were known about Patachi. He called him “the second hierarch of the

²² *Unirea*, 1925, year XXXV, no. 50, p. 3.

²³ The studies of Patachi in Rome were mentioned in the article of Gh. Mânzat as well – in *Unirea*, 1925, no. 42, p. 3.

²⁴ *Unirea*, 1921, year XXXI, no. 13, p. 1.

²⁵ *Cultura Creștină*, 1937, no. 2-3, p. 129-137.

Romanian Uniate Church". He mentioned Patachi's appointment by emperor Charles VI on the 13th of December 1715, but being able to sit on his See only in the summer of 1721, in Făgăraş, and not in the "old Bălgrad, where a Catholic bishop of Latin rite was residing at that time".

The documents chosen for publication can be included in the series of actions undertaken by Romanian Uniate hierarchs in support of the national interests. The second document addressed by Patachi to the emperor requested that the Romanian priests to be allowed not to give the emperor a tax on grains, arguing that the Romanian clergy had no benefits from the state. He showed that the imperial diploma granted by emperor Leopold gave the Romanian clergy the same rights as the ones held by the priests of the other officially acknowledged religions, but these rights had not been granted as promised, so that the priests were no different than the serf peasants. Therefore, they could not contribute to the needs of the empire in the same way as the clergy of the other official religions.

Pâclişanu also mentioned a letter of Patachi from the 20th of December 1713, addressed to the Primate Archbishop of Hungary, where he wrote that "for the salvation of his dear Romanian nation, he was ready to spell his blood and to sweat day and night". And continued: "Samuil Micu wrote that he was a good parent to the Romanian nation and indeed it seems that he fought a lot for the rights of the clergy and of the Romanian people". On this line, Pâclişanu mentioned five letters sent by Patachi in 1724 and 1725 to the Sachsen count Ioan Teutsch, pleading in favor of the rights of the Romanian priests from Sad, Săcădatele and Cârta.

With these, Ioan Patachi was placed amongst the fighters for the rights of the nation and also for the benefit of those persecuted and in need. Patachi is depicted as a worthy predecessor of Inochentie Micu and Grigore Maior.

The fact that the Greek-Catholic intellectual elite tried in 1937 to make an effort to bring Patachi back into attention is supported by another article published in the same year by father Augustin Pop from the monastery in Bixad²⁶, focused on the role played by the monks from Blaj to the development of the cultural life of the people. He wrote: "the first two bishops of the Uniate Romanians, metropolitan Atanasie Anghel and bishop Ioan Patachi had a preparatory role, one realized the Union, the other succeeded to set its juridical status through the establishment of the

²⁶ *Cultura Creştină*, 1937, no. 2-3, p. 108.

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bishopric of Făgăraș, and gave this bishopric a material basis through the receipt of the domains of Sâmbăta de Jos, near Făgăraș, and the one of Gherla". "The church and the Uniate people started to truly live only under the third Uniate bishop, the national martyr and the founder of Blaj, Ioan Inochentie Micu Clain. Of this bishop and of this Blaj, one can connect the strong beginning of the action conducted for the national awakening of the Romanians everywhere".

And these words of Augustin Pop best describe the place Ioan Patachi was meant to have in the Greek-Catholic discourse of identity: the image of a Founder, of predecessor of Inochentie Micu. He was considered the "second" bishop, creator of the Union alongside Atanasie Anghel. He received the papal recognition. He enriched the Church with two domains, ensuring the possibility for further development, exactly as Inochentie did after his move to Blaj. He fought for the rights of the nations, as Inochentie would do few years later. He struggled to defend the interests of the ones in need ... Aren't all these the acts of a great hierarch?

One can easily notice the transition from "the few things known" about Patachi, and from the rather negative comments of Samuil Micu and Petru Maior, to the elaboration of a framework of key – symbolic words and actions, who placed Patachi in the series of the important hierarchs of the Greek-Catholic Church. And if we are to choose the labels defined by this typology, then Patachi would be: one of the Founders of the Union and a fighter for the rights of the nation.

