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# Gender and Religiosity among the Orthodox Christians in Romania

## *Continuity and Change, 1945–1989*

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### ABSTRACT

This article questions the claim that in Romania, the post-1990 period was one of radically greater freedom in religious matters, as well as greater religiosity on the part of the population. Instead, it suggests that continuity better encapsulates the development of religiosity—religious beliefs and their embodiment in specific practices—among Orthodox Christians in Romania in the twentieth century. It also makes visible important imbalances, gaps, and faulty assumptions about the importance of institutions in the daily religious practices and beliefs of most Orthodox populations in the historiography on Orthodoxy in Romania. Scholars have failed to see continuities and have embraced analytical frameworks that stress change, especially around the communist takeover period (1945–1949) and the fall of communism (1989–1990). Central to re-evaluating this trajectory are two aspects of Orthodoxy in Romania: (1) most believers live in the countryside; and (2) women have remained central to the development and maintenance of religious practices in ways that cannot be accounted for through any institutional analysis of the Orthodox Church, because of its both implicit and explicit misogyny.

**KEYWORDS:** communism, gender, Orthodox Church, religiosity, Romania, women



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### Of Continuity and Change

Some of my oldest memories from childhood are linked to the dark tall cupolas, strong incense, and cold, drafty air of the churches where my grandmother, who had been raised as a deeply religious person in her small village near Oradea, would take me on Saturday mornings to have *colivă* blessed by the priest.<sup>1</sup> I knew close to nothing about Christianity, but I loved eating *colivă*, knew it was special and that I should say a prayer<sup>2</sup> and the name of our relative for whom it had been prepared when accepting



it. I also knew to be quiet and lower my head before the priest. Starting at age seven I often went into churches on my own, especially on the way home from school. My school was five minutes from the Patriarchy and from another old church in downtown Bucharest, Sf. Vineri [St Friday], located across the street from the Theological Institute.<sup>3</sup> Most of the time, these churches were practically empty. At most a few older women dressed in black would sit on the hard seats along the walls of the *pronaos*<sup>4</sup> (seldom anywhere close to the altar) or would be in the area where candles for the living and the dead would burn—praying, lighting a candle, or standing around crying. Had I not been introduced to religion by my grandmother and thus become comfortable with and curious about Orthodoxy, I probably would have never known or cared much about this aspect of life in Romania. My city-dwelling parents were both non-religious, and at most engaged in the once-a-year ritual of going to Easter midnight mass, an event more social and culinary (the mass would always be followed by a great feast) than spiritual in how they approached it.

The experience of religious life and institutions of the urban generations growing up under full-fledged Romanian communism (those born in the 1960s) was similarly mediated by either the presence of an older relative—most likely a grandmother who, being retired,<sup>5</sup> had the time to both see to religious rites and also take care of small children—or by the absence of such an important force, and thus more vaguely aware of religious customs and beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Religious rites and self-identification existed somewhere within the normal range of referents in one's life, an institution one could easily comprehend and accept in terms of important rites of passage and ritual. Yet for many children growing up in urban environments during this period, Orthodoxy was not powerfully present, nor clearly situated in relationship with other aspects of our life—playing, friendship, school, dreams for the future, vacations. Religiosity, however, was a different business. One learned (or not) to pray at home, and to identify principles of belief—faith in God, fear, respect, love—rather informally and through one's family circle. Sunday school, weekly church attendance, a programmatic relationship to the Church as an institution and to learning its theology and internalizing its principles was not something I experienced or saw evidence of among most of my urban cogenerationists who were officially Orthodox, meaning that they had actually been baptized in an Orthodox church (most often before the age of two).<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the growing presence of the Orthodox Church since 1990 in the daily lives of all citizens in Romania, from ritual and personal involvement in activities of the Church to compulsory religious education and a vast presence of the Church in mass media<sup>8</sup> seems like an important change in religion and religiosity in postcommunist Romania.<sup>9</sup> Many scholars, from theologians to political scientists and anthropologists, have viewed the end of communism as a break in the development of Orthodoxy in the former Soviet bloc. They identified the post-1990 period as one of radically greater freedom in religious matters, as well as greater religiosity on the part of the population.<sup>10</sup> This article questions this claim, made both explicitly and implicitly in some of the existent scholarship,<sup>11</sup> and instead suggests that continuity better encapsulates much of the development of religiosity—religious beliefs and their embodiment in specific practices—among Orthodox Christians in Romania in the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> Implicitly, my argument also suggests that secularization in this country has not been

tied as much to the relationship between the communist regime and the Orthodox Church as some have claimed.<sup>13</sup> I also make visible important imbalances, gaps, and faulty assumptions about the importance of institutions in the daily religious practices and beliefs of most Orthodox populations in the historiography on Orthodoxy in Romania. Because of inadequate focus on practices on the ground, scholars have failed to see continuities and have embraced analytical frameworks that stress change, especially around the communist takeover period (1945–1949) and the fall of communism (1989–1990). Central to re-evaluating this trajectory are two aspects of Orthodoxy in Romania: (1) most believers live in the countryside; and (2) women have remained central to the development and maintenance of religious practices in ways that cannot be accounted through any institutional analysis of the Orthodox Church, because of its both implicit and explicit misogyny.<sup>14</sup> My article suggests an agenda for further research on this topic.

### **The History and Historiography of Orthodoxy before 1945**

Continuity as a trope of understanding religiosity during the communist period can only be fully articulated by looking at a longer period of time preceding 1945. The history of the Romanian Orthodox Church identifies it as one of the oldest markings of “Romanianness” north of the Danube, starting in the seventh century A.D.<sup>15</sup> Much of the history of the Church during the middle ages and early modern period stresses the importance of continuity under duress of the institution and also of the practices linked to it. Evidence of such continuity is often linked to the presence of religious funerary symbols, to oral history and folklore, as well as rituals described in historical sources starting in the early modern period, focusing especially on birth, marriages, and death.<sup>16</sup> Such claims and evidentiary basis served the nationalists of the nineteenth and early twentieth century well. These intellectuals, many of whom were clergy or educated through religious institutions, wished to craft a sense of Romanian identity closely linked to the Orthodox Church, through a Janus-faced process of separating ethnic Romanians from other religious-linguistic groups living in the Romanian Principalities and Transylvania (such as Bulgarians, Jews, Russians, Roma, Germans, Protestants, Catholics, Ukrainians, and Hungarians), as well as unifying them around a common set of beliefs and practices.<sup>17</sup>

The claim of equating Romanianness with Orthodoxy could not be sustained through institutional-based links, as many Romanian populations, especially in Transylvania and the Banat, had lived for centuries outside of direct connection with the Orthodox Patriarchates of Ohrid, Constantinople, and Moscow.<sup>18</sup> Many of these populations had not been overseen by priests, did not have the privilege of worshiping in churches—unless they made pilgrimages to places where such churches existed, and were not in the direct care of a church bureaucracy as part of parishes and bishoprics.<sup>19</sup> Many Orthodox priests were regularly harassed in the Habsburg Empire and a majority had the barest education, while some remained illiterate and thus unable to function as active participants in an institution that relied almost exclusively on written documents for its official existence.<sup>20</sup>

In short, for a majority of Orthodox Christians, themselves overwhelmingly illiterate until the twentieth century, religious identity was linked primarily to traditional rituals learned locally from the older generation and passed down primarily by lay believers through food, clothing, and feasting, which women generally coordinated among rural communities.<sup>21</sup> The gendered aspect of religious acculturation and transmission of rituals from one generation to the next has not been the focus of much interest in Romania, though scholars of Orthodoxy elsewhere (especially anthropologists and folklorists) have drawn attention to the central role women played in everyday religiosity.<sup>22</sup> For Romania, a handful of studies have begun to draw attention to the ways in which women were central in both enacting and educating younger generations about rituals centered on religious holidays and rites of passage (birth/baptism, marriage, death), and blending pagan and dogmatic elements.<sup>23</sup> Food in particular, as a central component of both proper engagement with the liturgy and the cult of the dead, has continued to be women's domain. The priest played an important role in blessing food in order to endow it with its symbolic Christian meaning, but in most rural areas, until the twentieth century, the priest was not always there to perform this role. Yet ritualistic food, as suggested by ethnographic evidence from the turn of the twentieth century, was an integral part of how Orthodox Christians in Romania understood religious rituals and norms.<sup>24</sup>

Traditionally, other elements of the cult of the dead, such as wailing, preparing the body for funeral, and proper memorial rituals that continue for seven years after a person's death, were also overwhelmingly the responsibility of women, both customarily and normatively. In the most impressive analysis of rites of passages among populations living in Romania and Transylvania (and focusing almost exclusively on Orthodox Christians) published at the turn of the twentieth century, the author identified women's participation in death rituals as an art—something to be learned and perfected from one generation to the next—as well as something exclusively female.<sup>25</sup> For instance, wailers were to be only women, and if the deceased did not happen to have any immediate female kin, female neighbors and friends were to perform this role. Considering the fact that most of the people involved in the very complex rituals and incantations to be performed were illiterate, the continuity of such precise and normatively inscribed gender roles is striking. It points to the centrality of such issues in the everyday life of a rural community, and in particular in women's lives, who, as described by Romanian scholar Simion Florea Marian, seemed to have spent a great deal of their lives learning and performing such religious rituals, taught primarily by the older generation of women that surrounded them. If, in addition, one also remembers the importance of patrilocality among these women—they tended to follow their husbands after getting married, so would have to leave behind some learned rituals and traditions and learn new ones to pass them down to their own daughters and daughters-in-law—the life-long learning process of engaging with religious rituals and local traditions becomes an even more impressive feat.<sup>26</sup>

Scholars examining religiosity among Orthodox peasants, from current studies to those produced a century ago, go so far as to claim that there is such an entity as a Peasant Church.<sup>27</sup> In a recent study, Costin Nicolescu states that “the Ancient Law [capitalized in the original] of the Romanians has grown from the new law of love and

of grace professed by Christ, without actually identifying directly with it [the new law]. In addition, the Ancient Law comprises the whole ensemble of spiritual gestures that refer to the practice of living Christianity, with the proper specific details (national, regional, local, etc.), which enrich it in multiple ways, through force and authenticity, its forms of expression."<sup>28</sup> In this narrative "authenticity" and the "national" speak to the author's specific nationalist assumptions about religious practice and identity. Yet what emerges from this and other similar studies of theology is an awe and recognition of the importance of popular traditions and rural practices in giving specific shape to what Orthodoxy came to mean in the culture of much of the population that inhabited the Romanian Principalities and Transylvania.<sup>29</sup>

The fate of the Orthodox Church as an institution central to the politics of modern Romania was closely related to its own long-standing principle of *symphonia*—the harmonious coexistence of the Church as an institution of spiritual authority alongside the institution of the Byzantine emperor as representing state authority in the pre-Ottoman period (before 1453).<sup>30</sup> Under the Ottoman millet system the Orthodox Church continued to retain important elements of autonomy also by working with the sultan. In the Romanian Principalities (Wallachia and Moldova), which were never directly under Ottoman control, by the 1860s the Orthodox Church was the largest single landowner and greatly benefited from tax exemptions and other legal privileges. Rulers adamant about curbing the great power of this institution, especially Alexandru Ioan Cuza (r. 1859–1864), succeeded only in part in reducing the Orthodox Church's privileges. Cuza forced the Church to close down many monasteries and nationalized the lands they controlled, but he was soon ousted.<sup>31</sup> Subsequent rulers, including the first king of Romania, Charles I (r. 1864–1916), adopted a more respectful attitude of non-involvement in internal Church affairs together with paying homage to the Church as an important national institution.

It is unclear to what extent such institutional struggles over land and economic power/privilege resonated with Orthodox believers. Social elites (the boyar class) were interested in understanding the issue from their position of privileged landowners and with an eye toward possible land reforms that affected them.<sup>32</sup> Many of the populations who had been working on Orthodox-owned lands were relieved to have the harsh regime of the Church administrators removed, but it is not clear that the alternatives were significantly better.<sup>33</sup> By and large, the lessening of the Church's economic power meant that in the countryside priests and the parishes they oversaw had fewer goods flowing from the Church to the community and had to depend more heavily on the generosity of an overwhelmingly poor and uneducated population. Religiosity remained thus closely (and possibly even more so) connected to traditional practices of the community rather than to rituals and practices overseen directly by an educated clergy.<sup>34</sup> Away from the center of political and economic institutional struggles, religious life continued relatively unchanged. However, the image of popular religiosity in relationship to the institutional changes affecting the Church in the nineteenth century remains blurry and demands more sustained focus by scholars.

Romania's victory at the end of World War I enabled King Ferdinand (r. 1914–1927) and especially Queen Marie (r. 1914–1938), both converts to Orthodoxy, to position themselves as overseers and embodiments of Orthodoxy as national religion in Roma-

nia.<sup>35</sup> The Liberal and Peasant parties worked to include nods toward religious freedom/toleration in the postwar Constitution (1923), as both parties had sizeable non-Orthodox populations (especially Jews and respectively Greek Catholics) among their ranks.<sup>36</sup> The dynastic and war official commemorations of the interwar period marked the close connection between the Romanian state and Orthodoxy and reinforced it, cleverly incorporating many elements of popular religious practice, as a means to gain support among the population and sustain legitimacy through such cultural-religious alignments.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, even as the religious institutions of Greater Romania afforded the Orthodox Church a central privileged position, there is evidence that, especially in rural areas, religious customs of Orthodox believers continued unabated and at times in tension or even conflict with centrally mandated practices. For instance, in dictating the use of the modern (Julian) calendar, the central authorities came in conflict with the Gregorian calendar used in many rural areas in determining religious holidays.<sup>38</sup> The transformation of certain religious holidays—most prominently the Ascension, into national holidays—also brought about various reactions on the part of Orthodox believers. Although some participated compliantly in these commemorations, others paid only scant attention or ignored the Bucharest dictates regarding the specific types of ceremonies to be performed on that day.<sup>39</sup> Many saw the over-imposing of the Heroes Day onto the clearly demarcated holiday of the Ascension as simply an addition of names of those who fell in World War I to the commemoration of the local dead that was customary for Ascension. This minimized any significant change in ritual, religious practice, and signification of the holiday along any martial nationalist lines.<sup>40</sup> In other words, seeing the growing prominence of the Orthodox Church in state rituals is to some extent a misleading indicator of general changes in patterns of behavior among the population. There is more evidence of substantial impact among religious minorities, who were offended by this two-tiered relationship with the Romanian state and resented having to bow to the Orthodox Church through presumably secular rituals, such as Heroes Day. Catholics, Jews, and Protestants often resisted the Romanian state's mandates to treat what were Orthodox religious holidays as their own civic holidays, and often chose to simply ignore orders to participate in such rituals.<sup>41</sup>

Another equally important aspect of the relationship between the rising prominence of the Orthodox Church as a state-supported institution and religiosity among believers is church attendance. Before 1918, many Orthodox parishes in what would become Greater Romania did not have their own priests, especially in Transylvania, because the aggressive policy of Magyarization after 1867 made it difficult to sustain Orthodox churches and parishes, as they received no support (directly or through tax benefits) from the state, unlike all other religious denominations, including the Uniates.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, church attendance was somewhat of a mis-measure of religiosity, especially in areas where priests were not assigned to parishes. However, after 1918, the Romanian state spent a lot of money to begin building and restoring many churches and to train sufficient number of priests for the large Orthodox population in the country.<sup>43</sup> By 1940, even with over 10,000 churches and other places of worship in place, and with more than 8,500 priests and 10,500 cantors employed by the Church, church attendance among Orthodox believers was low. Only 10 percent of the flock attended church at least once a week.<sup>44</sup>

The meaning of this statistic is difficult to ascertain qualitatively (and even quantitatively) with any degree of nuance, as we are not privy to the methods employed to arrive at this number, nor the breakdown of the population along regional, gender, class, and rural/urban lines. However, based on my own research on the commemorative practices developed and continued during the interwar period, I posit that the rural population had a higher than 10 percent rate of attendance, for reasons that pertain to existing traditions, work patterns, and proximity of the place of worship. Women tended to attend church on Saturdays, for services dedicated to the memory of dead relatives, and for regular mass on Sunday. They also tended to participate in baptisms, weddings, and funerals, often for people who were not members of their own families. Men would more often attend Sunday mass and some of the rites of passage, but less often than women. Still, on average, male and female adults tended to go to church more than once a week. The proximity of places of worship to where most people lived also meant that the elderly could in fact attend church with less difficulty than in many urban settings.

In the meantime, urban dwellers, especially given their small percentage out of the total population (between 15 and 20 percent), had a significantly lower than 10 percent rate of attendance for reasons that have to deal with accessibility and comfort with specific settings. Many urban inhabitants were first generation and were more comfortable attending services that looked and felt like their rural homes. The Village Museum, inaugurated in Bucharest in the 1920s, served as an alternative for some newcomers to the metropolis. Young men and women could be seen on Sunday mornings making their way to the remote location of the museum, but this was not an option for those with small children and poor, as public transportation was for the relatively privileged in that era.<sup>45</sup> The urban rate can be gleaned anecdotally also from the scarce mention in newspapers and personal accounts of religious events.<sup>46</sup>

Another important difference in church attendance is along gender lines. It is difficult to assess precisely how much more often women attended church than men, but reports from religious war commemorations, pilgrimages, photos, as well as ongoing practices suggest that women attended church more often than men.<sup>47</sup> Women contributed actively (and essentially) to many commemorative rituals, especially regarding the cult of the dead, by preparing ritualistic meals and donations, as well as lists of the dead to be read in church by priests.<sup>48</sup> Considering the importance of the cult of the dead in Orthodoxy and the weekly Saturday liturgies dedicated to commemorating the dead, it is not far-fetched to claim that most active women Orthodox believers attended church at least twice a week—Sundays and often Saturdays, as well as on important holidays.<sup>49</sup> Based on these speculative calculations, I believe that by the end of the interwar period, the Orthodox population had become less religious in a differentiated manner, with urban populations and men in particular much further along the path toward secularization, while women, especially rural ones, continued religious practices much more in an unaltered fashion as they had done before 1918.

Historians of religion in Eastern Europe have generally been uninterested in the phenomenon of popular religion in terms of the gender dimensions of specific practices.<sup>50</sup> Evidence to consider this issue is sparse at best. Yet the issue of how particular traditions and the meanings ascribed to them became entrenched and continued to

be so over a long period of time into the twentieth century is one that needs to be addressed. We cannot assume that Orthodoxy existed as a living religion in the Romanian lands in the premodern periods simply because there was a Metropolitanate in Bucharest, Iasi, or Sibiu, and that a sizeable number of priests served in churches throughout the country. One has to look at the local level and in the area of material culture and ethnographic/folkloric evidence to understand this phenomenon of continuity.

### **The Orthodox Church under Communism (1945–1989)**

The communist takeover has to be seen within the larger narrative of the modern period, in terms of both institutional relations with the state and of the differentiated declining religiosity evident at the beginning of World War II. The narrative of the Orthodox Church under communism has varied greatly depending on who has crafted it and on whose behalf. Theologians and opponents of the communist regime in Romania as a brutal atheist state have focused on the aggressive curbing of religious freedom in Romania by looking at the imprisonment of large numbers of priests, monks, and nuns, as well as the infiltration of the clergy by the secret police and demolition of places of worship especially in the 1980s.<sup>51</sup> Critics of the Orthodox Church prefer to focus on the large degree of compliance on the part of priests through the Securitate. Other critical voices also focus on the takeover by the Orthodox Church of all Uniate assets after the latter was folded into the Orthodox Church in 1948.<sup>52</sup>

A more balanced view of the relationship between the Church hierarchy and the communist regime has begun to develop in recent years. In its 2006 Final Report, the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Crimes of Communism provides a narrative of religious oppression and compliance in communist Romania. The report highlights the early abuses of the Romanian Communist Party against priests and religious institutions and also makes visible the extent to which the Romanian Orthodox Church was able to achieve a more autonomous and stable position by the 1960s, in clear contrast to other religious denominations such as the Baptists or the Uniates.<sup>53</sup> More recently, Lucian Leuștean has offered an even-handed and well-documented analysis of how Orthodox Church leaders negotiated this position of autonomy.<sup>54</sup> Leuștean sees the techniques and results of the Orthodox Church in harmony and continuity with the tradition of *symphonia*, rather than as a break with the past.

### **Everyday Religiosity and Gender under Communism**

Missing from these accounts and from much of the scholarly framing of studies on the fate of the Orthodox Church under communism is the question of what happened to the religiosity of Orthodox believers in the institutional context of early violence against outspoken believers or later in the context of compliance and even active work with the secret police. The Presidential Commission is silent on this matter, preferring to focus only on the exceptional fate of well-known priests and religious dissidents.<sup>55</sup> Leuștean frames his questions in terms of institutional relations between the Church



and the communist regime. We are, therefore, left wondering what was happening on the ground.

Some evidence about religiosity among Orthodox Christians comes from anthropological research such as Gail Kligman's outstanding *Wedding of the Dead*. Her research shows a great degree of continuity (while acknowledging significant change) from before the communist period in terms of rural practices surrounding the cult of the dead among the Orthodox: "Although the state operates according to Marxist principles, village life continues according to traditional principles, among which religion is a guiding force."<sup>56</sup> Katherine Verdery's *Political Lives of Dead Bodies* also hints at continuities in religious practices.<sup>57</sup> The many Romanian ethnographers who wrote about "popular" traditions under the communist regime, as they could not write openly about popular Christianity, also attested to the continuity of such practices.<sup>58</sup> In addition, a growing oral history literature since 1990 has enriched the picture of localized religious practices.<sup>59</sup> The Museum of the Romanian Peasant, created in 1990, as well as the more traditional Village Museums in Bucharest, Sibiu, and Cluj are all products of the interwar period obsession with the "vitality" of peasant culture. They have focused significantly on religious rituals and practices in the countryside and have visually narrated these practices as continuously sustained—even during the communist period—through grassroots local traditions, rather than any specific institutional links with the Church or political regime.<sup>60</sup>

These studies and visual narratives suggest that the countryside remained somewhat removed from the struggles over authority and integrity that the Orthodox Church engaged in at the center of political power.<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that villagers were ignorant of or uncaring about, for instance, the imprisonment of priests or the infiltration of the clergy by the Securitate. In many informal conversations I have had over time with Orthodox believers, I heard strong opinions about the local priest, whom many suspected of being a collaborator of the Securitate, and thus avoided personally. But that seldom meant outright rejection of Orthodoxy.<sup>62</sup> Uniates who had been forced to go underground or, as an alternative, attend Orthodox Churches, were far more critical of the Church as an institution.<sup>63</sup> Yet they were not speaking on behalf of secularization, but rather on behalf of a different kind of religiosity. My own grandmother occasionally "shopped around" churches in Bucharest in search of priests who were less overtly compliant, but never quit attending church on the grounds of the priest's corruption by the communist regime.

In an oral history project conducted in 2009–2010, together with three other collaborators I interviewed over a hundred women from urban and rural backgrounds in the Hunedoara county. They ranged from in ages from mid-forties to mid-eighties and in educational/professional/economic backgrounds—from uneducated peasants to doctors, business entrepreneurs, and teachers. Of this cross-section of Romanian society, a majority not only self-identified religiously (overwhelmingly Orthodox), but they also expressed strong opinions about what the Church was and is or is not doing right. In other words, religiosity and the Orthodox Church were topics they wanted to engage with and they obviously thought about. Although these interviews took place twenty years after the end of communism, and it is obvious that these two decades have influenced the respondents' views on religiosity and the Orthodox Church in

particular, some of their references suggested a longer process of self-identification with the Church:

Back then [under communism] we weren't allowed but I made time, I made time to go [to church], my husband would take me, but somehow he wasn't really all that ... religious, but he liked to take me; if I said "you know, I would like to go to Easter mass somewhere," he would get in the car and drive me, so he respected my religious beliefs ... Back then we used to go in hiding ... When I had to join the Party, we were forbidden to go to church, but if I felt like it, I would still go who knows where and I didn't care, I would go more seldom, but still went.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to underscoring the difficulty and fear associated with church attendance in relation to Communist Party membership, the quote above also exemplifies gender differences in church attendance. An interesting aspect of this narrative, which is not a-typical of other personal reflections on ways in which the Party attempted to curb religiosity, is that the description reflects a remembrance of fear of retribution, even as documentary evidence from Party archives suggests that such retribution was not as common from the 1960s on as it had been before. Most of the people we spoke with were in fact of generations that had not lived through the 1940s and early 1950s.

Other respondents also suggested interesting cross-religious attendance and traditions. A couple who were Protestant (he) and Catholic (she), spoke of keeping two Easters (Catholic and Orthodox) and participating in funerals and baptisms in the local Orthodox Church because their neighbors were Orthodox.<sup>65</sup> By contrast, one respondent spoke about self-identifying as an Orthodox, but attending a specific Catholic church in Hunedoara "because many years ago I was searching, I think I was sixteen [that would have been in 1985] and I was searching for a path and I wanted to find answers to some questions, and this was the church that gave me the answers I needed at that time."<sup>66</sup>

Overall, those who self-identified as regular churchgoers spoke of difficulties in practicing religious traditions in public under communism and of greater church attendance since then, but they also identified religious holidays (of which there are at least one per week in the Orthodox calendar) as important times when they used to go to church, in addition to Sundays. In terms of gendered involvement in religious holidays, they also identified men as being far less involved than women in keeping traditions alive both at home and in any kind of public fashion.

These observations help us better understand an apparently surprising statistic. In 1990, after half a century of tough atheistic communist dictatorship, church attendance of at least once a week among the Orthodox in Romania was at 20 percent, up 10 percent from 1940.<sup>67</sup> It is not clear what methods were used to measure attendance, and how to disaggregate this number. But even if we allow for a wide margin of error and for differences between the methods employed in the 1940 statistics and the 1990 ones, church attendance went up, not down, under an aggressively atheist regime that placed thousands of priests in prison.

Other important numbers can enhance our understanding of religiosity under the communist regime, with a pronounced gendered quality:

**Table 1.** Orthodox Monasteries in Romania (1938–1957)

year	1938	1949	1957
monks	1638	1528	1773
nuns	2549	3807	4041
monasteries monks	119	122	113
monasteries nuns	35	56	77

Source: Leuștean, *Orthodoxy*, 204.

This table highlights some little known developments that no scholar, to my knowledge, has tried to analyze in terms of gender differences. To begin with, most evidently, the number of people embracing religious orders grew significantly in the two decades from 1938 to 1957. At the height of the purges in the communist bloc, the number of monks and nuns allowed to take religious vows was growing. It is hard to analyze this data in terms of motivation of the people joining monasteries. But it is clear that, despite outspoken atheism and purges among the clergy, the Orthodox Church had a great deal of autonomy in replenishing the numbers of its dedicated clergy.

Second, and least known and analyzed of all, the number of nuns in Romanian monasteries grew much faster and was far larger than the number of monks. In addition, one is struck by how this significant disparity (a ratio of more than 2:1 nuns to monks by 1957) is reflected negatively in the number of monasteries dedicated to nuns versus monks. The number of monks stayed relatively flat over the two decades, as did the number of monasteries where they resided, so that the occupancy ratio goes from 14:1 to 16:1 between 1938 and 1957. This ratio also indicates that monks lived in relatively small monasteries and were likely assisted by the local population. By contrast, the ratio of nuns to monasteries declines from 73:1 to 53:1 during the same time period. Even with this decline, it is clear that far more nuns crowded into individual monasteries than monks.

The disparity in occupancy rate is so huge that it begs for an explanation. The size of monasteries may be an explanation, though not all or even a majority of nuns' monasteries were larger in size than those inhabited by monks. On the contrary, some of the largest and best-known monasteries in Romania are occupied by monks. Another possible explanation would be the inability of the Orthodox Church to obtain approval for building more women's monasteries to keep up with the growing number of women taking the veil.<sup>68</sup>

I would venture to suggest a few other important elements, all pointing toward the masculinist privileges that have defined many institutional practices of the Orthodox Church over time. Privacy has been deemed essential to monks' ability to focus on their religious practices of meditation, praying, and writing; however, the same has not been the case with nuns.<sup>69</sup> They are more often asked to reside in shared lodgings (several nuns in a cell) and their religious practice is more directly identified with active, public, and communal activities. Nuns are expected to prepare food, work in

the fields, sew, and do artisanal work (especially textile and decorative arts, such as weaving, embroidery, and painting eggs, but rarely icon painting).<sup>70</sup> These may be important reasons why solitary living is not considered important for and by nuns, and why they tend to live in much larger communities than monks. Of course, the issue of personal safety, being protected from the threat of sexual assault, was also a prominent reason for nuns' placement in communal quarters.<sup>71</sup> However, a solid understanding of the reasons behind these gendered disparities demands more sustained ethnographic and sociological research.

The exponential growth of women taking the veil during the communist period may be viewed by some as a discontinuity. I choose to interpret it differently, and connect it to the existing religiosity among women especially in the countryside, in connection to some of the problems of adjustment of the rural population to the communist regime's economic and social policies. Obviously, a desire to serve the Church and live a religiously committed life was an important component. Yet other socio-economic elements with pronounced gendered aspects played a role as well. Educational and economic opportunities did indeed open up a great deal for women under communism, but these opportunities were not always accessible (or perceived as such) to rural inhabitants. In order to pursue a high school or vocational school, rural children had to be removed from their environment and live in cities where they had no relatives or friends. Schools often had campus housing, but conditions were not appealing.<sup>72</sup> Although this is a conjectural link, I believe that the difficulties of such paths of empowerment for women in the countryside pushed them and their families toward making different decisions, especially for those who were deeply religious. With collectivization taking away one's means for subsistence in the countryside,<sup>73</sup> families with more than one child, and especially more than one daughter had to consider ways in which they could secure a future for their offspring. Joining a monastery was an option that suggested the lessening of financial burdens for the parents (dowries were and remain an important expensive custom in the countryside), as well as security for the young woman becoming a nun. Therefore, this phenomenon of growing numbers of nuns during communist Romania seems likely to be connected to both an ongoing religiosity among women in the countryside, as well as drastic changes brought about by the communist regime in especially the economy and education.

## Conclusions

What do these numbers mean for our understanding of religion in Romania in the twentieth century? The most obvious observation to make initially is that the narrative of the institution of the Church (from underdog, to privileged state-supported religion, to censored and communist infiltrated institution) does not match the narrative of religiosity (from intense, to declining, to growing again under communism) among believers. On the contrary, one might surmise that in the modern period, when churches are not central political institutions able to closely control and regulate the lives of their members, religiosity is linked more to localized traditions and to socio-economic conditions than to the power and visibility of the Church. Socio-economic

adversity (both before 1918 and after 1945) seemed to have enhanced the desire or the need of many people to practice religious beliefs. Overall, it is clear that one cannot claim that communism destroyed or reduced religiosity among the Orthodox Christians in Romania. When speaking of “religion under communism” we need to pay greater attention to these important nuances, which suggest that continuity is the most important qualifier for describing religious practices, especially in the countryside.

A second and equally important conclusion is that gender norms and assumed identities have been crucial to how religiosity has developed among Orthodox populations in the modern period. Priests, as both representatives of the Church and embodiments of a particular ideal of masculine Christianity, have played a central gendered role in preserving certain dogmatic mandates of the institution and limits (for both women and men, yet in different ways) on performative aspects of religiosity, but women were also central to how religiosity developed during this period. Their role was far more informal, and thus it is less clearly evidenced in easy to understand traces. However, there is no doubt, based on both ethnographic evidence and also some of the statistics presented in this article, that women’s greater religiosity and adherence to specific practices and rituals were essential in rendering Orthodoxy in the shape it exists today in Romania. The full story of this barely traceable force remains to be fully recovered and I hope this article has brought about questions among researchers of life under communism in Romania and among gender scholars, as this vast area of inquiry demands a multi-disciplinary long-term effort, in order to fully understand phenomena I was able to sketch out in broad and partial ways.

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## ◆ Notes

1. *Coliva* is the Orthodox sweet dish cooked with boiled wheat, sugar, nuts, and spices, to embody and honor the links between the dearly departed and this world through a specifically Christian set of symbols—the wheat as resurrected life, the sweetness of the sugar as the sweetness of Christ's love. See Ofelia Văduva, *Steps towards the Sacred* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației culturale române, 1999).

2. The shortest traditional version was *Bodaproste*, a literal translation of *Bogda prosit* from Russian—Thanks be to God.

3. Sf. Vineri was torn down after the 1977 earthquake, which provided a convenient reason (structural instability) to do away with quite a few such places of worship. On these demolitions, see Lidia Anania et al., *Bisericile osândite de Ceaușescu, 1977–1989* (The churches convicted by Ceaușescu, 1977–1989) (Bucharest: Editura Anastasia, 1995); Comisia Prezidențială pentru Studiul Crimelor Comunismului (The Presidential Commission for the study of the crimes of communism), *Raport Final* (Final report) (Bucharest, 2006), 466–467.

4. Area of the church where women would be traditionally relegated to, its distance from the altar signifying the lowly status women had in the social order of Orthodox communities.

5. During the communist period women tended to retire ten years earlier than men. The retirement age for women was 50–55, and for men 60–65. This meant that in most cases, families in which both parents worked depended on either a kindergarten or grandmothers to tend to small children. Although available, daycare was often unreliable in terms of quality of staff, and parents preferred to leave small children with retired relatives (i.e., grandmothers or aunts). Therefore, it is safe to surmise that the impact of women of that generation, given their earlier retirement age, was significant in general for raising grandchildren. Since the generations I speak of are also those growing up in the interwar period (the grandmothers) and respectively in the 1970s (my generation), this further sheds light on the kind of information about religiosity that the older generation, rather than the children's parents, could pass on to their grandchildren.

6. This generalization is not based on the assumption of all people in Romania as Orthodox Christian, but rather on available statistics, which indicate that over 80 percent of Romania's population declared itself Orthodox during that period. This included most of those who had been part of the Greek Catholic Church that had been incorporated into the Orthodox Church in 1949, accounting for around 8 percent of the total population of the country. Currently, the proportion is at 87 percent. See Lucian Leuștean, *Orthodoxy and the Cold War* (London: Palgrave, 2009) and <http://www.recensamant.ro> (accessed 10 May 2010).

7. On the tradition of baptizing infants, see Vasile Răduca, *Ghidul creștinului ortodox de azi* (The guide for today's Orthodox Christian) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), 141.

8. The Orthodox Church has its own television channel and radio station, both of them operating most hours of the day.

9. On the position of the Orthodox Church in Romania after 1990, including its presence in education, see Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

10. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

11. For a larger perspective on the Orthodox Church under communism, see Sabrina Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

12. The question of how to characterize the development of religiosity among other significant denominations (Catholic, Lutheran, Unitarian, Calvinist, Jewish) falls outside the purview of this article, though it would be relevant in terms of the triangular relationship among religion, ethnicity, and political ideology/regime.

13. On secularization, see Comisia Prezidențială, *Raport*, 25; Paul Caravia, Virgiliu Constantinescu, and Flori Stănescu, *Biserica întemnițată, România, 1944–1989* (The imprisoned church, Romania, 1944–1989) (Bucharest: INST, 1998); Cristina Păiușan and Radu Ciuceanu, ed., *Biserica ortodoxă română sub regimul comunist, 1945–1958* (The Romanian Orthodox Church under the communist regime, 1945–1958), vol. 1 (Bucharest: INST, 2001).

14. In stating that the Orthodox Romanian Church is fundamentally misogynist I am not making any new claim. There has been an ongoing debate in the past decade over the dogmatic and consistent marginalization of women qua women from central ritualistic functions and from any discussion of opening priesthood to women. For more on this issue, see Mihaela Miroiu, “Fetzele patriarhatului” (The faces of patriarchy), *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, no. 3 (Winter 2002): 207–226, [http://www.jsri.ro/old/html%20version/index/no\\_3/mihaela\\_miroiu-articol.htm](http://www.jsri.ro/old/html%20version/index/no_3/mihaela_miroiu-articol.htm) (accessed 18 January 2010); Miruna Munteanu, “Editorial feminist, frigid și ateu” (Feminist, frigid, and atheist editorial), *Ziua*, (The day), no. 3452 (13 October 2005), <http://www.ziua.net/display.php?data=2005-10-13&id=186511> (accessed 18 January 2010); Mihaela Miroiu, “Gâlceava danciachirilor cu demnitatea spirituală a femeilor” (The quarrel of the Danciachirs [reference to the author Dan Chiachir] with women’s spiritual dignity), *Observator cultural* (The cultural observer), no. 35 (27 October–3 November 2005, <http://www.romaniaculturala.ro/articol.php?cod=8277> (accessed 18 January 2010).

15. Christian symbols dating back to the second century A.D. have been found on what is today the territory of Romania, but even ardent nationalist scholars place the beginnings of (proto) Romanian Christianity a few centuries later, in the seventh century A.D. However, the first canonical recognition of a Metropolitanate in Wallachia and Moldavia is dated much later (1359 and 1401, respectively). See Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii ortodoxe române* (The history of the Romanian Orthodox Church), vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Institutului biblic și de misiune al Bisericii ortodoxe române, 1992), 18.

16. See Păcurariu, *Istoria*; Elena Niculița-Voronca, *Datinele și credințele poporului român adunate și asezate în ordine mitologică* (The traditions and beliefs of the Romanian people gathered and arranged in mythological order) (Iași: Polirom, [1903] 1998); Simion Mehedinți, *Creștinismul românesc* (Romanian Christianity) (Bucharest: Fundația Anastasia, [1941] 1995); Simion Florea Marian, *Trilogia vieții: Nașterea la români; Nunta la români; Inmormântarea la români* (The trilogy of life: Birth among the Romanians; weddings among the Romanians; burials among the Romanians) (Bucharest: Editura “Grai și suflet—Cultural națională,” [1890–1902] 1995).

17. See Keith Hitchins, *Ortodoxie și naționalitate. Andrei Saguna și românii din Transilvania. 1846–1873* (Orthodoxy and nationality. Andrei Saguna and the Romanians in Transylvania. 1846–1873) (Bucharest: Univers enciclopedic, 1995); Keith Hitchins, *Conștiință națională și acțiune politică la românii din Transilvania (1700–1868)* (National consciousness and political action among Romanians in Transylvania [1700–1868]) (Cluj: Dacia, 1987); Păcurariu, *Istoria*.

18. In a recent essay on the Greek-Orthodox/Uniate Church in Transylvania, Mircea Păcurariu, one of the most prominent historians of the Orthodox Church in Romania, underscores the claim of equating orthodoxy and Romanianness in his approval of Dumitru Stăniloae’s article, “Rolul Ortodoxiei în formarea și păstrarea ființei poporului român și a unității naționale” (The role of Orthodoxy in creating and preserving the identity of the Romanian people and national unity), *Ortodoxia* (Orthodoxy) 30, no. 4 (1979): 599: “This synthesis of Latinity and Orthodoxy, itself a miracle and a unique type of originality, has enabled the Romanian people to maintain its identity, through their Latinity that cannot be mistaken for Slavdom, and through their Orthodoxy that cannot be mistaken for the Catholicism of their western neighbors.” Quoted in Mircea Păcurariu, “Pagini din istoria Bisericii românești. Considerații în legătură cu uniația în Transilvania” (Pages from the history of the Romanian church. Considerations regarding the Uniate [Church] in Transylvania), <http://www.sfantuldaniilsihastrul>

.ro/fisiere/uniatia.pdf (accessed 6 May 2010). Please note the title "Pages from the history of the Romanian church." There is in fact no such church. There are several denominations that also take on the "Romanian" adjective as part of their name, but do not claim to represent Romania or Romanianness in any official capacity (e.g., the Romanian Orthodox Church).

19. This is especially the case for the population in Transylvania and the Banat. Hitchins, *Ortodoxie*; idem, *Conștiință*.

20. Hitchins, *Ortodoxie*.

21. Marian, *Trilogia*; Stefania Cristescu-Golopenția, *Gospodăria în credințele și riturile magice ale femeilor din Drăguș (Făgăraș)* (Household activities in the beliefs and magic rituals of women from Drăguș [Făgăraș]) (Bucharest: Paideia, 2002); Stefan Dorondel, *Moartea și apa. Ritualuri funerare, simbolism acvatic și structura lumii de dincolo în imaginarul țărănesc* (Death and water. Funerary rituals, aquatic symbolism and the structure of the world beyond in the peasant imaginary) (Bucharest: Paideia, 2004); Văduva, *Steps*.

22. Anna Careveli-Chaves, "Bridge between Worlds: The Greek Women's Lament as Communicative Event," *Journal of American Folklore* 93, no. 368 (1980): 129–157; Loring Danforth, *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Bette Denich, "Sex and Power in the Balkans," in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 243–262.

23. Văduva, *Steps*; Gail Kligman, *Wedding of the Dead. Ritual, Poetics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Cristescu-Golopenția, *Gospodăria*.

24. Marian, *Trilogia*; Văduva, *Steps*.

25. Marian, *Inmormântarea*, 79, 201.

26. For more on the issue of the gendered aspects of the cult of the dead in Romania, see Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims. Remembering Romanian's World Wars in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), ch. 1.

27. Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor. Biserica țăranilor* (The wind vane. The peasants' church) (Bucharest: Ed. Roza vânturilor, 1990). Identifying Ionescu as a "scholar" is not an endorsement by this author, but rather an acknowledgement of the reputation the fascist ideologue enjoyed during the interwar period, as professor of philosophy at Bucharest University, as well as the revival in his reputation among some post-communist intellectual elites.

28. Costion Nicolescu, *Elemente de teologie țărănească* (Elements of peasant theology) (Bucharest: Editura vremea XXI, 2005), 10.

29. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Reflecții despre spiritualitatea poporului român* (Reflections on the spirituality of the Romanian people) (Bucharest: Editura Elion, 2001).

30. See Leuștean, *Orthodoxy*, 17; Stan and Turcescu, *Religion*, ch. 2.

31. Lucian Predescu, *Enciclopedia României. Cugetarea* (The encyclopedia of Romania. The thought) (Bucharest: Editura Saeculum, 1999), 511; Marin Mihalache, *Cuza Vodă* (Vojvode Cuza) (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1967). The process of transfer of these lands from the church to the state is generally referred to as "secularization" in Romanian. I prefer the term "nationalization," which more clearly identifies who had control over these lands after their confiscation from the church: the state.

32. This was reflected especially in the political alliance between the Conservative Party as a landholders' party and the Orthodox Church hierarchy.

33. On the subsequent woes of the rural population, see Phillip Eidelberg, *The Great Peasant Revolt of 1907* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

34. Marian, *Trilogia*.

35. Leuștean, *Orthodoxy*; Păcurariu, *Istoria*.

36. Institutul Social Român, *Constituția din 1923 în dezbaterile contemporanilor* (The 1923 Constitution in contemporary debates) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1990).



37. Bucur, *Heroes*.

38. *Ibid.*, 60.

39. *Ibid.*, especially ch. 2.

40. In common Orthodox parlance, the Ascension is more often called "Ispas" or the "Easter of the Dead," or "Day of the Dead," not to be confused with the Catholic 1 November "Day of the Dead." See Simion Florea Marian, *Sărbătorile la români* (Holidays among the Romanians) (Bucharest: Editura Fundației culturale române, 1994).

41. Bucur, *Heroes*, ch. 2.

42. Păcurariu, *Istoria*; Mircea Păcurariu, *Politica statului ungar față de Biserica românească din Transilvania în perioada dualismului, 1867–1918* (The politics of the Hungarian state towards the Romanian church in Transylvania during the period of dualism, 1867–1918) (Sibiu, 1986).

43. Dimitrie Gusti, ed., *Enciclopedia României* (The encyclopedia of Romania), vol. 2 (Bucharest: Fundația Regala Carol II, 1938–1940).

44. Leuștean, *Orthodoxy*, 47–48.

45. Adrian Majuru, *Bucureștii mahalalelor, sau periferia ca mod de existență* (Bucharest of the Mahalas, or perfidy as a mode of existence) (Bucharest: Compania, 2003); Ioana Pârvulescu, *Intoarcere în Bucureștiul interbelic* (Return to interwar Bucharest) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2003).

46. *Universul* (The universe), *Curentul* (The current), *Porunca Vremii* (The command of the times), and other major newspapers often made mention of official commemorations at religious sites (churches, synagogues, and cemeteries), but did not make mention of cultural and other religious events at specific churches on a weekly basis.

47. A good source on the war commemoration pilgrimages is Societatea Ortodoxă Națională a Femeilor Române (The National Orthodox Society of Romanian Women), whose entire archive, located in the National Central Archives in Bucharest, is replete with references to such events and the involvement of this organization in maintaining Orthodox traditions all over the country.

48. Bucur, *Heroes*, especially ch. 1.

49. On the multitude of religious holidays in the Orthodox Calendar, see <http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/calendar.asp> (accessed 21 January 2010); on Romanian practices, see Irina Nicolau, *Ghidul sărbătorilor românești* (The guide of Romanian holidays) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998).

50. Eve Levin's classic book *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900–1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) is a noteworthy exception.

51. See, for instance, Caravia, Constantinescu, and Stănescu, *Biserica*; Păiușan and Ciuceanu, ed., *Biserica ortodoxă*; Zosim Oancea, *Datoria de a mărturisi. Inchisorile unui preot ortodox* (The duty to confess. The prisons of an Orthodox priest) (Bucharest, Harisma, 1995); Nicolae Videnie, "Atitudinea anticomunistă, calvarul și martiriul preoților ortodocși reflectate în presa exilului românesc (1945–1989)" (The anticomunist attitude, the calvary and martyrdom of Orthodox priests as reflected in the press of the Romanian exile [1945–1989]), in *Rezistența anticomunistă. Cercetare științifică și valorificare muzeală* (Anticomunist resistance. Scientific research and museum valuation), ed. Cosmin Budeancă, Florentin Olteanu, and Iulia Pop, vol. 2 (Cluj: Argonaut, 2006), 32–51.

52. See Cristian Vasile, *Istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice sub regimul comunist, 1945–1989* (The history of the Greek-Catholic church under the communist regime, 1945–1989) (Iași: Polirom, 2003).

53. Comisia Prezidențială, *Raport*, 447–472.

54. Leuștean, *Orthodoxy*.

55. Comisia Prezidențială, *Raport*, 447–472.

56. Kligman, *Wedding of the Dead*, 268.

57. Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies. Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

58. Xenia Costa-Foru-Andreescu, *Cercetarea monografică a familiei: contribuție metodologică* (The monographic research of the family: Methodological contribution) (Bucharest: Institutul Social Român, 1945); T. Graur, "Predici rituale în structura și funcția ceremonialului de nuntă tradițională" (Ritualistic liturgies and the function of the traditional wedding ceremony), *Anuarul muzeului etnografic al Transilvaniei* (Yearbook of the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania) (1976): 283–294; Mihai Pop, *Obiceiuri tradiționale românești* (Traditional peasant customs) (Bucharest: Consiliul Culturii și Educației Socialiste, 1976).

59. See, for instance, Aurora Liiceanu, *Nici alb, nici negru. Radiografia unui sat românesc, 1948–1998* (Neither white, nor black. Radiography of a Romanian village, 1948–1998) (Bucharest: Nemira, 2000); Zoltan Rostas and Theodora-Eliza Văcărescu, eds., *Cealaltă jumătate a istoriei. Femei povestind* (The other half of history. Women narrating) (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2008).

60. On the Museum of the Romanian Peasant's central preoccupation with Orthodoxy, see <http://www.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/index.php?page=religioase> (accessed 21 January 2010).

61. Monica Heintz, "Romanian Orthodoxy between the Urban and the Rural," Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Paper 67, Halle, 2004.

62. Fieldwork in Sighet, Ineu, and Trezenea, April–May 2000.

63. Vasile, *Istoria Bisericii*; I heard similar statements from Uniate believers during fieldwork in Cluj, March–April, 2000.

64. Interview with Osiceanu Elena, Hunedoara, 4 August 2009.

65. Interview with Viorica Vegh, Sîncrai, 6 August 2009.

66. Interview with Livia Laura Giurca, Hunedoara, 8 August 2009.

67. [http://www.religioustolernace.org/rel\\_ratefor.htm](http://www.religioustolernace.org/rel_ratefor.htm) (accessed 10 May 2010).

68. I can only speculate on this matter, as the Orthodox Church archives are not open to non-religious scholars like me, especially given my feminist agenda. The important question in examining this possible explanation is the extent to which the Church cared about this disparity in ratio and tried to do anything about it, and to what extent it was frustrated by the communist regime in these efforts. It would be easy for Church authorities to claim to have tried and not succeeded, given the reputation of the communist regime, but it is hard to prove that this was not the case without access to the Church's archives.

69. For descriptions and images of monastic life in twentieth-century Romania, see Dragoș Lumpan, *Chipuri de viață monahală* (Faces of monastic life) (Editura LiterNet, 2006), <http://editura.liternet.ro/carte/218/Dragos-Lumpan/Chipuri-de-viata-monahala.html> (accessed 21 January 2010); Ignatie Monahul, *Viața monahală în texte alese* (Monastic life in selected texts) (Bucharest: Lucman, 2006); George Enache and Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Monahismul ortodox și puterea comunistă în România anilor '50* (Orthodox monasticism and communist power in Romania during the 1950s) (Bucharest: Partener, 2009). Much of the emphasis of the published materials is on monks' lives; it is difficult to find publications about nuns in wide circulation, although on occasion one can pick up self-published writings at women's monasteries.

70. Leuștean refers directly to these differential expectations of the Church along gender lines, by quoting a prelate who identified nuns as especially useful to the Church coffers through their artisanal work, which sold very well both locally and more broadly throughout the country and abroad. What is not clear at all from this book is whether these nuns see any direct returns on this type of arduous work, on a par with their greater contribution to the gross domestic product than that of priests and monks. See Leuștean, *Orthodoxy*, 135.

71. I thank one of the anonymous readers for pointing out this obvious oversight on my part.

72. Interview with E., Hunedoara, 8 August 2009.

73. Focus group Sîncrai, 5 August 2009.