

CONTROVERSIES REGARDING ȚICHINDEAL'S BIOGRAPHY

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Abstract: *In this article I would like to underline the importance of the school Preparandia from Arad for the pedagogical movement. From Tichideal the founder of the public teacher school up to nowaay. By establishment of Preparandia in Arad and by Tichideal's activity in the pedagogical domain in the first Roumanian pedagogical school, the concept pedagogy", „became a systematic concern for teachers who teach in primary school.*

Keywords : pedagogy, school, school hystory, forerunner

“Dimitrie Țichideal was born, according to all probabilities, in Becicherecu Mic around the year 1775”¹: “having said this let us try and decode the information contained by the name Dimitrie Țichideal and the name of his ancestor or ancestors because we do not know how far down in time it can be traced. It very well may be that his father, priest Zaharia, had this name until he got on the path to priesthood. According to data from June 11th 1767, Timișoara's diocese had three priests registered in Becicherecul Mic: Ilie Cărbăneanț, Vasile Popovici and Zaharia Zaharievici, all of them born in this county (DIMB, 305). In Timișoara's entire district, which included Becicherecu Mic, we cannot find another priest named Zaharia. Therefore, Zaharia Zaharievici is Dimitrie's father. The name reappears in the 1776 statistics (DIMB, 369) alongside the names of priests Marcu Ioanovici and Maxim Marcovici, the latter undoubtedly the former's son. The 1767 statistic fails to mention the priests place of birth; however, it included the number of houses in Becicherecul Mic (254) and the year of the priests' ordination: Zaharia Zaharievici in 01.04. 1768 (fact which in corroboration with the attestation from 1776 leads to the conclusion that Zaharias's last name was indeed Zaharevici even from the time he prepared for becoming a priest), Marcu Ioanevici on October 10th 1764 and Maxim Marcovici on November 15th 1772. According to the onomastic practice of the time, used by the Serbian hierarchy of the Orthodox Church, it can be concluded that Zaharias's father was also named Zaharia, from where the name of priest Zaharia Zaharevici.”²

There are many biographical facts known to be true and recognized as such, for example Țichideal's presence in the group of petitioners from Banat who plead with king Francisc I for the establishment of an independent school in Hungary, for the appointment of Uroș Nestorovici to research (“ we have found that most of the people

¹ Almost all literary critics and those who have researched Țichideal's life shared G. Calinescu's opinion on his birthplace and year . Also see Ioan D. Sucișu's *Literatura bănățeană de la început până la Unire (1582 - 1918)*, Editura RB Astra, Timișoara, 1940, p. 57

² According to Simion Dănilă, *Dimitrie Țichideal la Belinț*, in "*Coloana Infinitului*" (Timișoara), VIII (2005), vol II, nr. 53, p. 6-10

dwell in darkness and untruthfulness mostly because they lack good and proper education...”) and then propose a reformed educational plan organized around 23 provisions, amongst which the establishing of an educational training facility for public schools teachers. For this purpose a *Schooling Funds Department*³ is established based around illuminist ideals: forming educated citizens, loyal servants to the king, worthy inhabitants of the country, faithful Christians for the church and obedient sons to their parents (according to C.D. Loga’s⁴ phrasing)

For us, Țichindeal’s birthplace and date became temptations and the bet taken was for the present generation, now after two centuries of Romanian pedagogical teaching, to have a clear proof of the spatial and temporal origin of he who was named by Eminescu “golden mouth”. Regarding his birthplace there are several locations brought into discussion. Around Hârtibaciu valley near Sibiu there is a village named Țichindeal, name that either has a Transylvanian Saxon origin (*Zaxelnduel*) or comes from the German *Zickenthal*, both meaning “goats’ valley”. Relying on oral information, Professor Mircea Drăgan-Noiștețean⁵ considers that D. Țichindeal was born in the clearing of Țichindeal village in Sibiu County.

Supposedly he would have descended from the Dragoman family, which during Maria Teresa’s reign was colonized in the Banat area, taking over, according to the local practice, the name of the village, Țichindeal. The history of Becicherecul Mic starts with the colonizing, in 1748, of 24 Romanian families brought over from Transylvania. Hârtibaciuului locals also invoke a poem written by Țichindeal, found in an old tattered book (with missing covers), in which the fabulist apparently confesses that:

“I was born in Ink
And I journeyed to Banat
I was set
To get to the king

To bring back freedom once more
For the oppressed Romanians
In church and country alike
To be strong, to be united”⁶

“Ink” is a place in the northern part of the village, the old heart, and the land would have been donated by the family for raising the church in Țichindeal. More to the point, in the same place, Petru Aaron is said to have married Țichindeal’s sister.

³ *Deputăția Fondurilor Școlare* orig. The closest modern equivalent would be a regional board of education. (n. tr)

⁴ D. Mârza, *Imaginea învățatului bănățean reflectată în Circularele școlare*, <http://www.History-ches.ro>, p. 2. One can also follow, with more ground, V. Popeangă’s tome *Studii despre Preparatoria din Arad* (2012), a complex analysis of the Local Schooling Deputy.

⁵ Mircea Drăgan-Noiștețeanu, *O personalitate controversată a văii Hârtibaciuului – Dimitrie Țichindeal* (c. 1775 – 20 I 1818), in *Gazeta Hârtibaciuului*, nr. 37, June 2009, p. 2.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

Some facts can be interlinked in the general scheme of things. In 1748, amongst the 24 Romanian colonizing families that moved from Țichindeal to Becicherecul Mic, there could have been a Dragoman family as well. If Dimitrie would have been born in Țichindeal by the time they moved he would have reached the age for preschool, fact that “tips over” his entire literary biography. He was a proficient speaker of German and Serbian, a clue towards the fact that his schooling history (Elementary Serbian School and German Gymnasium) are credible. Under no circumstance would he have been able to learn Serbian in Țichindeal, therefore his birth before his family’s arrival in Becicherecul Mic in 1748 is impossible. Then he must have been born in Becicherecul Mic in a family that originated from Țichindeal⁷.

In an effort to claim D. Țichindeal through his birthplace, inhabitants of Țichindeal solicit a written document to attest his birth in Becicherecul Mic; however priest Petru Ilea (1976) says that “there (i.e. in Becicherecul Mic) is no such document regarding the birthplace of the writer”⁸

Then why did the family change its name from Dragoman to Țichindeal? This thing is not entirely uncommon, being customary for some of the colonists to take up a new name on account of nostalgia for their birthplace or to nicknamed –and later named- after the pattern: Țichindeleanu, Arădeanu, Moroșanu, Bucureșteanu or Tăgădăuanu.

The first conclusion excludes the birth of the author in Țichindeal before the family’s arrival in Banat. But is there enough proof that Dragoman from Țichindeal⁹

⁷ “It is no surprise that Zaharia’s father or a different ascendent of Dimitrie’s was from Ardeal, from Țichindeal more exactly, a village from Nochruc parish, Sibiu county. When Zaharia, son of Zaharia, joined priesthood, they gave him his name, Zaharia Zaharievici, according to the fashion of the times. However his sons, Dimitrie and Gheorghe, taking advantage of the imperial decree from 1776, and because there still was a strong conscience of their origin alive in the family, opted when given the chance for a last name synonymous with their ancestor’s place of origin, omitting the –eanu suffix (meaning a toponym in absolute antroponymic function) - Țichindeal - and not Zaharievici as expected. As for the regional descentance of the Tichindeal family there is a precedent in Becicherecul Mic (mentioned in 1758): “ Priest Constantin Popovici, born in Ardeal, 27 years old, studied in Arad with teacher Ion, married at 15, has a daughter, was ordained by Gheorghe Popovici on the 21st of November 1748, has five books” (DIMB, 239). It very well may be that Vasile Popovici, priest in Becicherecul Mic in 1767 and Gheorghe Popovici priest in Manastur at the same date, but also born in Becicherecul Mic (DIMB, 305-306) were the sons of Constantin Popovici” acknowledges Simion Dănilă in *Dimitrie Țichindeal la Belinț, "Coloana Infinitului"* (Timișoara), VIII (2005), vol II, nr. 53, p. 6-10

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ In 1350 there was an attested settlement named Chekendal; toponym originating from the Transylvanian Saxon “lalle siculorum” (Transylvanian Saxon’s valley) or the Germanic Zickental (“goats’ valley). The etymology of the Țichindeal anthroponym, as theorised by N. A. Constantinescu in his well known Romanian Onomastic Dictionary from 1963, p. 238, files the following under Cichinda: “2. Cichindel also spelled as Tichindel, poet, banat country”, as being derived from Cichinda or Chicinda (i.e. Chichinda/Kikinda from Serbia) must be refuted categorically as being in relation with Ciuchindel (Banat) because the spelling with *Ci-* or *Chi-* and the addition of *-del* is just a common stuttering for the transition period between the Cyrillic alphabet to the Latin one of our language and the scholar’s name is undoubtedly pronounced with Ți - and -deal the way he himself spelled it in Cyrillic and the way his contemporaries spelled it in the Latin alphabet (see second facsimiled manuscript in Virgil Vintilescu’s manuscript *Dimitrie Țichindeal*, Timișoara, 1965: Czikingyal) . For the etymology of the topographic name Țichindeal (as well as for Gherdeal and Merghindeal, all settlements in Sibiu county) and especially for the final component – deal, linguists acknowledge the transylvanian saxon –dal, i.e german Tal “valley”

was amongst the 24 colonized families? The family could have arrived later on, maybe around 1770, and the child Dimitrie Țichindeal could still have been born in 1775, as George Călinescu writes so confidently in his *History* (both parents are identified, priest Zaharia the father, and also the mother, Elena¹⁰). What was the source of this information Călinescu had that all researchers used without a properly verifying it? An uncertainty became a reference document.

The assertion that after 1815 D. Țichindeal would have returned to his native village and “posed” for a fresco in the church is the expression of local patriotism and the obsession of those from Valea Hârțibaciului to claim the writer-priest. There are firm dates, based on documents, according to which on April 15th 1815 priest Țichindeal retires to Becicherecul Mic. The letter, written in German, sent by the Țichindeal the priest to King Francisc I is dated October 1815 and it is signed by the vicar of Becicherecul Mic, Dimitrie Țichindeal. He takes over his father in law’s parish where he serves until August 19th 1817 when a sick Dimitrie Țichindeal will be admitted to the Philanthropic Hospital of the Misericordian Order from Timișoara where he dies on a Tuesday, January 20th 1818 aged 43. He was buried on the 22nd of January in the city’s cemetery and then –after a few years- his corpse moved to Becicherecul Mic, the location of his new grave remaining unknown.¹¹

How was it that Țichindeal ended up in a charity hospital ran by the Order of Misericordian monks is again a question that stirs opinions. In 1737 monks of the Misericordian order built their first hospital in Timișoara. The origins of this religious order, the role of which was from the very beginning taking to take care of the sick, poor travellers, wounded soldiers or of the mentally ill are to be found in late XVI century in Spain. The founder of the order was Juan Ciudad (8th March 1496-8th March 1550) a character whose very life and activity can be taken as an example for the typical late Middle Ages man.

The order’s main role was to provide medical assistance to social cases: the poor and the sick, without religious, national or social status discrimination, for free, without asking for any kind of material remuneration¹².

In Romania the order was disbanded by official decree in 1949 the same way other Roman Catholic orders or congregations were. Also, what kind of motivation can an orthodox priest from Becicherecul Mic have to accept treatment at a Roman Catholic charity institution meant to deal with the poor and mentally ill?!

although word formations with *-in* are characteristic to slavic languages (cf. Babindeal la Cornereva CS, apud V. Ioniță, *Nume de locuri din Banat*, Timișoara, 1982, p. 60). However the origin of these toponyms has no relevance in the present case. Cf. Simion Dănilă *Dimitrie Țichindeal la Belinț*, published in "*Coloana Infinitului*" (Timișoara), VIII (2005), vol II, nr. 53, p. 6-10.

¹⁰ Georgeta Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*, Editura Minerva, București, 1982, p.

¹¹ document taken from the official records of the deceased of the serbian church (in Serbian) Criterion number. 514. Year, month, day 20st january 1818, D. Țichindeal, greco-oriental rite, vicar of Becicherecul Mic, was buried by Iovan Vasci, vicar of Timișoara” (*Luminatorul*, VIII, 1887, nr. 68 (29/17 oct.), p. 2-3.

¹² Călin Claudiu, *Despre Ordinul călugărilor misericordieni*, in www.litere.uvt.ro/vechi/revista_arheologie/articole (accesed 28 oct. 2011)

Let us continue. There is no dispute over the year (1802) when Țichindeal was named “a national teacher” in Becicherecul Mic, same place where he married priest Nedeschi’s daughter¹³ and where he became a vicar. So says Emilian Micu in a letter to I. Ardelean (Kissoda – Chișoda – n.n. -, 25 ian. 1893): “ he was made a deacon in Timișoara (1801) and next year (1802) after a year of trial according to the practice, at a minimum age of 25-26 he was made a priest and served as a chaplain to Nedeschi, his father in law , and after Nedeschi passed he came to be a vicar (1804) until the year (1812) when he was a teacher in Arad.”¹⁴ Professor Vasile Popeangă author of the *Preparandia din Arad* (1964) monograph provides an oral piece of information related to one of Țichindeal’s sons named Teofil who appears in the registry of the Karlovitz College, as he discovered in the archives of this old gymnasium. Teofil is expelled in his second year of studies without a record of the cause. It was the year 1815.

Let us return to the argument. Priest Emanoil Micu, a good connoisseur of Țichindeal’s biography considers that Țichindeal becomes a priest at the minimum age of 25-26 fact that casts a new question on his birth year, which could be 1777, 1776, 1775 or maybe 1774 (“minimum”).

In order to identify his birth place (and the exact date) there is need for a rigorous archive research activity. Professor V. Popeangă suggests that the problem might be solved through researching the Karlovăț (Serbia) Metropolitan Archive, the parish’s archive (the theological archive and that of the Schooling Department) as well as Uroș Nestorovici’s Teacher training School archives. We have asked Lucian Marina the Serbian publicist of Romanian descendance, an exceptional man of culture and an enthusiastic supporter of preserving the Romanian identity in the Serbian Banat region, to research the enrolment registry and the gymnasium’s archive in Karlovitz. Also we have called upon the historian Gheorghe Rancu to research the metropolitan archive from Timișoara. Therefore we have considered that there is a need for a research team. Unfortunately, so far, results are underwhelming.

Tradition had it that the school senior position would usually be occupied by the oldest teacher. Historians confer two different birth dates onto Constantin Diaconovici-Loga: 1770 and 1779. I opt for the year 1779, because in 1830, when he is named Head of the Greco-Iliric border schools, he would have been 60, and it seems highly unlikely that someone would take on such a responsibility and hold that same position until he was 80, when he also died. At the same time professor Doru Bogdan reading the present manuscript says that based on a letter sent by Ioan Mihuț to Moise Nicoară, concluded that the eldest would still have been Ioan Mihuț, born in 1755, or, in my opinion, 1756 (I would like to apologize to the reader for derailing from the chronological presentation of facts in favour of some considerations about Țichindeal’s biography).

By establishment of *Preparandia in Arad* and by Tichindeal’s activity in the pedagogical domain in the first Roumanian pedagogical school, the concept pedagogy”, „became a systematic concern for teachers who teach in primary school.

¹³ A Pedagogic Institute graduate of the 15 month Course III from May 1815 named NADASCHI ATANASIU, being originally from Bechicherecu Mic. Is there maybe a relation between Țichindeal and the graduate with a similar name to that of his future father in law?

¹⁴ Mircea Popa, *Preotul bănățean Emanoil Micu și biblioteca sa*, www. nale. ro/reviste – recunoscute/ psihologica. Doc (accesat 27 oct. 2011)

The professors who belonged to Preparandia and taught pedagogical disciplines were the most honorable, starting with Ioan Mihuț, Alexandru Gavra, Petru Pipoș, Sabin Evuțian etc. And some more like Victor Țârcovnicu and Vasile Popeangă. The Preparandia institution became a national pedagogical school, built 200 years ago by Dimitrie Țichindeal, a nationalist teacher and priest¹⁵.

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¹⁵ Gabriela Kelemen, *Pedagogia învățământului primar și preșcolar*, Editura Universității Aurel Vlaicu Arad, Arad, 2012, p. 12.