



UNIVERSITATEA
LUCIAN BLAGA
— DIN SIBIU —



Școala doctorală de Filologie și Istorie

Domeniul de doctorat: ISTORIE

TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT

SPIRITUALITY, MYTHS AND HERITAGE IN THE LAND OF FĂGĂRAȘ

Doctorand:
Gheorghe FARAON

Conducător de doctorat:
Prof. univ. dr. Zeno Karl PINTER

General conclusions

The doctoral thesis includes a number of six chapters. In the first chapter we refer to the research history. In the second chapter we refer to the physical-geographical framework and history of the Fagaras County. The third chapter is dedicated to the beginnings of the spiritual life of the Romanians in the Land of Făgăraș and its evolution until the Protestant Reformation of 1517. The fourth chapter traces the spiritual life evolution of the people of Făgăraș, from the Reformation (1517) to the Joseph II's Edict of Tolerance (1791). The fifth chapter is dedicated to the construction of places of worship in the Land of Făgăraș. In the sixth chapter we presented a series of myths and legends collected from this area.

Key words: spirituality, myth, legend and heritage

Several names have been used over time in order to designate the area of Făgăraș from a geographical but also a historical point of view. The oldest name is „Terra Blahorum” (1222), a few years later the term used was „Terra Fogoras” (1231) and during the 15th century it appeared under the name of „Țara Oltului” (Land of Olt). The term „*land*” came from the Romanian environment, being taken after the name of Olt which was the main river that crosses this region. At the same time was also used the name of „Țara Făgărașului” (Land of Făgăraș), especially in Transylvanian documents.

Thus, in the modern period the term „Land of Făgăraș” is used in historical writings, while in geographical and ethnographic ones is being used the term „Land of Olt”.

The Land of Făgăraș can be included from a geographical point of view in the following limits: to the north - the Transylvanian Plateau, to the west - the Olt valley, to the south the alpine ridge of the Carpathians and to the east - the peaks of the Perșani Mountains.

From a historical point of view it was bordered to the southeast by Țara Bârsei (Land of Bârsa) which had its administrative center in Braşov, to the south over the ridges of the Carpathians by Cumania, as that territory was known (the future territory of Wallachia), to the west and north by the Saxon University, with the center in Sibiu and to the northeast by the Transylvanian Plateau with the Three Seats Szekler area, having the center at Târgul Secuiesc (Szekler Fair).

There have been circulated four variants related to the name of „Făgăraş” regarding its origin and also with possible explanations. It is certain that the most widespread and well-known forms used are those of „Fogaras” and „Făgăraş”.

In the area of Făgăraş we find a number of 64 localities arranged in alphabetical order, as well as some disappeared localities. One of them is Sălişte, attested in the 13th century and important one from our point of view.

From the geographical analysis of these villages we reached the following results: we can delimit this territory into three sub-areas. The upper part, the eastern one between Olt, the Perşani Mountains and Şinca Valley (Şercaia Valley) where we find alignments with two localities. The central part, between Olt, the Şinca Valley, the Făgăraş Mountains and the Sâmbăta Valley in the area where the extension between Olt and the mountain is at its maximum limit and where we find 4-5 towns lined up along the river courses. The lower part, the western one, between Olt, the Sâmbăta Valley, the Făgăraş Mountains and the Porumbacu Valley with alignments of two villages each. These were known in the area as the „Low” alignments - towards Olt and the „Upper” alignments - below the mountain.

We have noticed by continuing the analysis that some of these villages, 24 in number, are „paired” and designated by the phrase: „from below - from above”, Porumbacu on the western side, Arpaşul, Ucea, Viştea, Sâmbăta, on the central side and Veneţia and Comăna, on

the northeast side; the „*big – small*” attributes of Berivoi and Voievodeni; „*old – new*” Șinca, the last category consisting of villages derived with the diminutive suffixes „*-ița*” (Șercai with Șercăița) or „*- isoara*” (Cârța with Cârțisoara).

Another interesting thing specific to our area is the fact that some of the Făgăraș localities have plural names. At the top we find the locality Perșani, in the central area, Ileni, Hârseni, Mărgineni, Săvăstreni, Dejani, Săsciori, Iași, Voievodeni and Berivoi (i) (considering that the villagers call the two villages Berivoii Mari and Berivoii Mici) and Corbi at the bottom.

By studying the data related to the documents of the 14th and 15th centuries we can say that the borders of the villages were already established in these centuries. They all had the same composition: „*the village center, pastures, arable land, waters, forests and mountains*”. This pattern can be observed even earlier since the 13th century in the description that we find in the act of donation received by the Cistercian monks from Cârța in 1223: „*that land of the Romanians located between the waters of Arpaș and Cârța spread from Olt and to the mountain top*”. All these can be found in the composition of many of the localities to this day.

Another problem that arises is related to the sense in which this form of organization of the „*Down – Up*” villages was achieved. After all the research, we are also embracing the idea that the swarming was carried out most of the times from „*Down*” to „*Up*”, on the north-south axis with the exception of Vievodeni and Berivoi, localities where the exodus took place laterally.

The morphostructural and orometric ensemble of the Land of Făgăraș is differentiated from the point of view of the relief into three categories of units: mountains, depressions and hills. The hypsometric amplitude (level difference) is maximum 2544 m (Moldoveanu Peak) and minimum 400 m in the Olt valley downstream of Ucea de Jos.

The mountainous relief occupies about 35% of the area's surface while the depressed and hilly about 65%. The juxtaposition of the mountainous massif with the depressional plateau of Făgăraș creates altimetric and clinometric contrasts bringing this massif into relief and asserting it spectacularly in the landscape.

The territory of the Land of Făgăraș falls into the continental temperate climate with oceanic influences from the west and pedoclimatic in zone III, cool-humid. The average annual temperature is 6-9° C. The average temperature of the hottest month, July, is 18° C and of the coldest month, January, is -5° C. The average number of summer days is approximately 50 per year. The average number of winter days is about 50 per year.

Several floristic zones can be distinguished in the area of the Land of Făgăraș, conditioned by the geomorphological and pseudo-climatic diversity. The characteristic landforms such as mountains, depressions and plains accentuate the vegetation contrasts.

The fauna of the area is considered one of the most varied on the territory of our country. Here can be found all four major categories: animals, birds, fish and reptiles. A mention should be made regarding the fact that the animals are also specific to the characteristic landforms: the mountain, the depression and the plain.

Animal husbandry was one of the basic occupations of the inhabitants of the Făgăraș area, along with agriculture and hunting. They have raised animals since ancient times both to help them in various field works and for traction, such as oxen and horses, as well as for their own food. The most widespread animals raised had been sheep and goats from which they used wool, milk and meat, domestic pigs and rabbits from which meat and skin were used and last but not least cows and buffaloes from which were used milk, meat and skin.

Among the domestic birds raised in the area we list: hen, duck, goose and turkey, from which were used eggs, meat and feathers.

The area's water resources are overall considerable and can make a substantial contribution to meet the country's water needs, so from this point of view our area is doing quite well.

Due to its geographical location the Land of Făgăraș was caught in the important circulation route that crossed the south of Transylvania between the Mureș valley and the Brașov depression over a length of 80 Km.

After the Roman conquest of Dacia and its organization as a component province of the Roman Empire a series of access roads were built by the Romans that will cross the entire province. The main Roman road in the Făgăraș area was located on the right side along the river Olt, on the interference strip between the Făgăraș depression and the Hârtibaciu plateau.

The Roman road was reconstituted on the road sector between the Boița and Rucăr forts with a length of 48 km and two alignments: one oriented SE-NW, 18 km long, between Boița and Săcădate and the other oriented W-E, between Săcădate and Rucăr, with a length of 30 km. The Roman road followed further the route to the north of the river Olt through the localities Voila, Dridif, Făgăraș, Șona, Hălmeag, Ticușul Nou, Crihalma, Ungra. The road continues on the right side until next to this locality and here it crosses the Olt river on a wooden bridge to reach the great fort of Hoghiz on the left. The total length of this sector was 45 km. As in the previous sector we find two alignments along its length: from Voila to Hălmeag over a distance of 25 km it has a W-E orientation and from Hălmeag to Hoghiz it has a length of 20 Km and is oriented N-E. The length of the two sections of the Roman road from Boița to Hoghiz was therefore approximately 95 km.

It should be noted from the beginning that in the medieval period the roads or trade routes did not benefit from as much attention as in the Roman period.

From a legal point of view we can distinguish for this medieval period two such types of road networks in the area: country roads or large custom roads (in other words the official routes) and the rest of the access roads. The second category included: meadows, paths, forbidden roads or askew ones.

With the arrival of „hospites regni” (royal guests) in the area, namely the Saxon communities, it was possible to reconstruct the three routes by which it was assumed that they arrived in the Land of Bârsa. The last route directly concerns our area because it crosses the forest from Șercaia to Codlea. This route was known as the Sachsenweg because it had been used more often in the 13th century.

The road connecting the Land of Bârsa and the Land of Olt will be stabilized later on this route. The road will be known as the *Country Road, the Great Road* or the *Făgăraș Road* and had the following itinerary: from under the Sprengi hill from the Bran road, *the Făgăraș road* branches off to the west, for a long time this road sector being also called *the Ghimbav Road* as it appears in the year 1548. The route passed Ghimbav, crossing Ghimbășel on the stone bridge, then further on it crossed the Bârsa water at the place known as *bei der Furt / at Vad*. Here was the place of intersection with the borders of the following localities: Ghimbav, Codlea, Râșnov and Vulcan. From this point it passes Codlea and then heads towards Țânțari/Dumbrăvița Bârsei from where Vlădeni was further down. From Vlădeni it crosses the forests of the Muscelele Perșanilor area. This part of the road was built on the sector „*Spinarea Lungă (Long Back), beyond the watershed, which appears under the name grosse Gescheide, west of the Debran river, until near Perșani, from where it descends to Șercaia*”. This was the most important commercial road that connected with Land of Bârsa.

A series of paths passed from the Land of Făgăraș over the Carpathians leading to Wallachia. In medieval maps, the Făgăraș mountains sector appears under the name of Cârța

Mountains. Despite the fact that the weather conditions, the climate and the relief created difficult conditions, those were not an impediment for the inhabitants of this area. They constituted on the contrary a favor by preventing the effective control of these paths by the state authorities. There were no less than 15 paths that started from the Făgăraș area and crossed the mountain to Wallachia.

The toponymy of the area has an important place in our approach because one of the important demonstrations related to this thesis will be based on it.

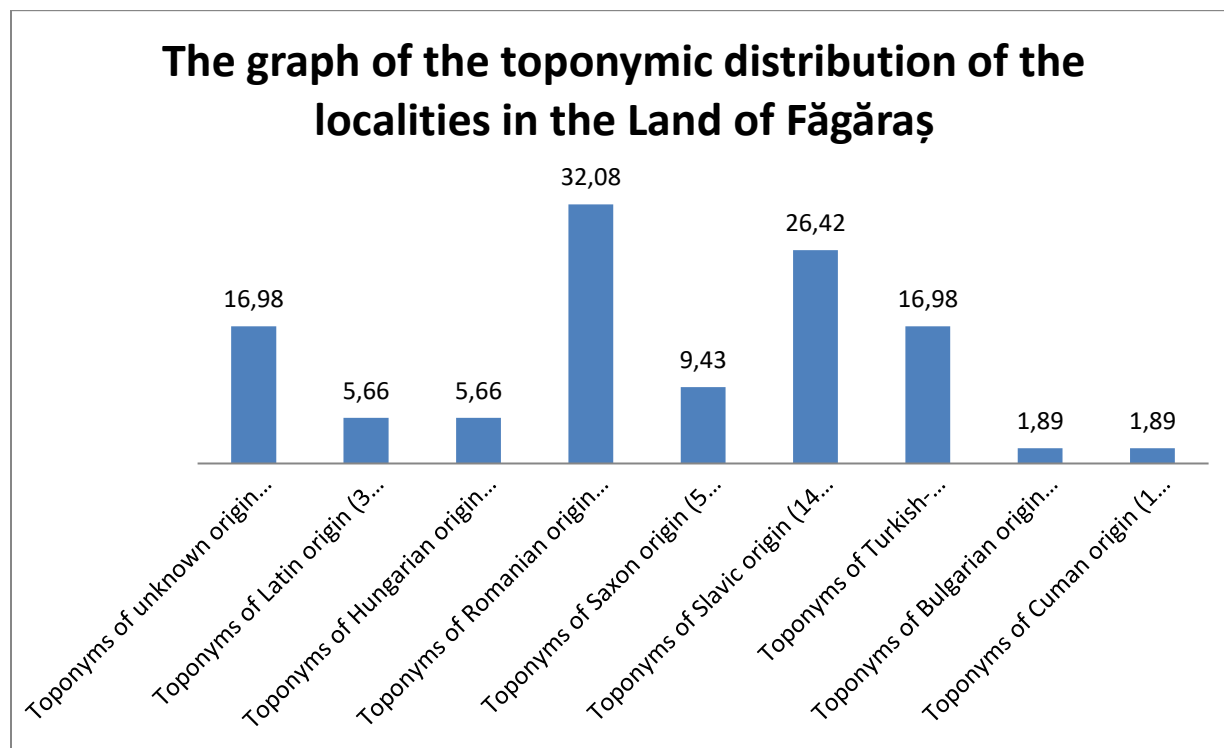
I tried therefore to identify the toponyms related to the names of the localities in the area of Făgăraș and classifying them according to their origins: toponyms of unknown origin, Latin, Hungarian, Petcheneg, Romanian, Saxon, Slavic, Bulgarian, Turkish and Cuman.

Toponyms of unknown origin (9 localities)	16.98
Toponyms of Latin origin (3 localities)	5.66
Toponyms of Hungarian origin (3 localities)	5.66
Toponyms of Romanian origin (17 localities)	32.08
Toponyms of Saxon origin (5 localities)	9.43
Toponyms of Slavic origin (14 localities)	26.42
Toponyms of Turkish origin (9 localities)	16.98
Toponyms of Bulgarian origin (1 locality)	1.89
Toponyms of Cuman origin (1 locality)	1.89

1	Cârța		13.20	13.20%
2	Părău			
3	Perșani			
4	Scorei			
5	Șinca			
6	Vad			

7	Veneția			
---	---------	--	--	--

About these seven localities it must be said that there are several variants related to the origin of the name and that is why they were written separately.



We can demonstrate the existence of two centers of Slavic power in our area when starting from the names and significance of certain localities

The first center was in the upper part of the Land of Făgăraș; Șinca, Ohaba and Săliște (disappeared locality), all three localities are being located on the Șinca Valley as follows: Săliște, with the meaning of „*political and religious social center*”; Ohaba, which means „*inalienable hereditary estate, exempt from taxes and other benefits*” and Șinca with the meaning of „*village owned by the people (sons) of the Khan (leader)*”. So they had all the attributes of a power center where the ruler, the administrative center, the estate and the religious center were not missing. There are also other localities with Slavic descent in their immediate

vicinity: in the east the locality Perșani (*Pêrșa*), in the north Pârâu (Debran ДѢВРЪ) and Veneția, as well as Mândra, (МАНДРЪ) in the north-west.

The second center was located from our point of view in the central area on the Breaza valley where we find the localities Voivodeni, Voila and Berivoi. These localities have in their composition the syllable „voi” which is related to the military leaders. At Voievodeni could even have been their center of leadership because in the toponymy of the village Voivodeni Mici there is a place called „*at the citadel*”. Although it is generally believed to have a direct connection with Negru Vodă, it is still possible that the place took its name from an older fortified center belonging to this Slavic center. In the immediate vicinity is the locality Berivoi, which in this context can have the meaning of „*the place where a battle took place*”. Near the three localities are Pojorta (which has the meaning of scorched place), Breaza, Lisa and Ludișor as well as Cîrța a little further down. By analyzing these names it can be concluded that we can deal with a center of power where the leader, the warriors, the domain or the estate, (obtained by *scorching* the land with fire) are not missing. We note that they had all the attributes of a possession or a center of power.

It is certain that all these villages have Slavic resonances and are located in the mountainous part of the Făgăraș area. According to the map (see above) the center of power of the Slavs in the Făgăraș area could be geographically placed between the localities Veneția in the north, coming eastwards under the Perșani Mountains to Șinca Valley and from here to the southwest passing through Breaza Valley and reaching Cârța.

This political entity of the Slavs could be the basis of the future Făgăraș voivodate in the following centuries.

We can say about the archaeological discoveries in the Land of Făgăraș that they have reached all historical eras. For any details there can be found references in the annex made by us and attached to the end of the work in the form of an archaeological repertoire.

In a brief history of our area, we will also refer to the geo-political situation during the migrations then moving on to the period of emergence in the 12th century of a Făgăraș voivodate. As we stated above, we believe that it was based on the old Slavic organization in this area. Its development was marked by the construction in the following centuries of the fortifications at Făgăraș (12th-13th centuries), from Comăna de Sus (13th century) and from Breaza (13th-14th centuries), being probably that this defensive system to be completed with the citadel from Avrig (13 th century).

With the written mention (1222) of the area is being certified that we are dealing here with an independent state organization which was reinforced in 1291 when the domain from Sâmbăta and Făgăraș were returned to Magister Ugrinus who was close to the Hungarian royalty, being part of the Csák family, a noble and influential family of the time. From this moment there is no longer any uncertainty regarding the existence of this domain.

The following stages regarding the history of the area are related to the stabilization of relations between the Wallachia (the new state that appeared in 1290) and the Hungarian royalty. This moment was realized during the voivode Vladislav Vlaicu (1364–approx. 1377) and the Hungarian king Ludovic the Great (1342 -1382).

For a period approximately between the years 1368 – 1462 it will come under the authority of the voivodes of Wallachia in the form of a „*feud*” received from the Hungarian royalty.

The domain of Făgăraș will be donated after this date as a royal possession and will change its owners quite often: the Saxon University (1469-1503), except for the period 1480-

1483 when it comes under the authority of the boyar Udriște, in 1502 it will be claimed by Voivode Radu the Great/Radu cel Mare (1475-1508), lord of Wallachia without receiving it and in 1504 it will come into the possession of the noble Ioan Bornemisa.

After the disaster at Mohács on 29th August 1526 and the creation of the Autonomous Voivodate of Transylvania under Ottoman suzerainty the Land of Făgăraș will come for a long period under the authority of the Transylvanian princes.

It received in 1529 from Ferdinand (1526-1564), the King of Hungary and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (1558-1564) the status of „*liber baronatus, Liberii Domini et Comitatus*”. This statute will bring great advantages. From a military point of view, the prince will benefit from an own battle flag, from a legal point of view he will have his own seat of judgment, his own laws and the right of using the sword and from an economic point of view all the income was collected by the owner of the domain and not the state.

Another particularity regarding the possession of the domain is related to the fact that due to the strategic importance the longevity of the walls of the citadel and the economic advantages mentioned above, the domain and the citadel will be given as dowries to the wives of the princes of Transylvania. The domain was owned intermittently at this stage by six princesses: *Ana Nadasdi* (1541 -1451), the wife of Ștefan Mailat; *Maria Cristierna* (1595-1599), wife of Sigismund Báthory; *Doamna Stanca* (1599-1601), wife of Mihai the Brave/Mihai Viteazul; *Catherine of Brandenburg* (1602-1644), wife of Gabriel Bethlen; *Zsuzanna Lorántffy* (1630-1660), wife of Gheorghe Rákoczy and *Anna Bornemisza* (1663-1688) wife of Mihail Apafi.

There is a whole specialized literature with pro and con opinions brought by both Romanian and foreign specialists about the beginnings of Christian life in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic area

We also agree after a brief review of the respective authors with the idea that for the period of the 1st-3rd centuries we cannot demonstrate with certainty the widespread of the new Christian dogma in these regions, but there are premises that could be taken into account in order to assume that in isolated cases there were also people who got to know or came into contact with Christians.

From the 4th century the situation changes radically if we take into account the linguistic factor (vulgar Latin) used by the romanized population on the territory of the former territories occupied by the romans. The large number of Latin terms used in Orthodox church terminology come in support of this idea. All this lead us to the idea that the Christian terminology of Latin origin in our language proves that the Daco-Roman population, if not the whole, a large part of it was Christianized towards the end of this century.

From the point of view of the religious life, we can talk in the next two centuries about an expansion of the influence in Europe of Christian Rome and the bishop of Rome who will become during this period „*Pontifex Maximus*”. Regarding the Christianity emanating from Rome we can say that it will become Latin from the moment when the Greek component was abandoned. We believe this happened somewhere in the 8th century when this Latin Christianity was adopted by most of western kingdoms.

Christianity gradually becomes individualized in the East with the help of the Greek Church, becoming hellenized and the territories north of the Danube will come directly under its influence and jurisdiction.

It will follow therefore an analysis of the archaeological discoveries regarding objects to which a Christian character has been attributed. They were discovered throughout the area of the former Roman Empire.

Arriving with them as far as the Făgăraș area, even if we cannot affirm with certainty the widespread of Christianity in the 1-2 centuries we can affirm without being wrong that isolated people knew or even practiced the new religion.

From the 4th century we find the first pieces with a Christian character in the Făgăraș area as well, this landscape being completed by monetary discoveries with a Byzantine character from Cincșor and Comăna de Sus. The burial of the treasure from Hoghiz-Ungra dated at the end of the 4th century also corresponds to the same period which must be connected with the migratory peoples who passed on the road that connected the Olt valley and the Târnave valley.

Another argument in support of this idea is related to the destruction of a house by arson in Ungra.

We can say, based on these discoveries, that this area came under the sphere of Byzantine influence. If we also take into account the establishment in the 5th century of the Episcopate of *Serdica (Sofia)*, then we can advance the idea that the area also received the same influence from an ecclesiastical point of view.

The 9th-11th centuries will bring a major change in Transylvania, namely the arrival of the Hungarians who in the 10th century will become Christians in the Catholic rite. With the consolidation of their power in Transylvania our area will come also under the influence of western Christianity.

Starting with the 11th century we can speak of a clear organization from the ecclesiastical point of view of Transylvania through the appearance of an episcopate of Transylvania based in Alba Iulia approximately in the year 1099 and after another hundred years the ecclesiastical organization of royal guests whose foundations were laid in 1191, being placed under the direct control of the Papal Curia. The territory located beyond Olt up to the Hârtibaciu valley comes also under its jurisdiction and in the vicinity of the Land of Făgăraș.

In the Comăna citadel were discovered two ceramic fragments where a Latin cross can be seen and on another a Greek one. They are considered potters marks but we believe that they can prove the Christian character of those who occupied this fortification.

Although we do not have any archaeological material at Breaza that can be classified as Christian pieces, a building with a religious purpose, *a chapel*, was discovered within the fortress. It was dated a little later than the fortress itself, towards the 14th century and here was preserved the toponym of *Ruga*.

Historically, the offensive of the Hungarian kingdom was taking place to the south of the Carpathians, combined with the policy of the papacy to extend its authority to the extra-Carpathian territories. The presence of knightly military orders in Transylvania in the 12th and 13th centuries, of the Ioannites in Severin County 1247 and of the Teutons in the Land of Bârsa 1211-1225, as well as of various missionary monastic orders, „premonstatensii” attested in 1234-1235 in Sibiu and Braşov, the Cistercians who established the monastery in Cârţa 1205-1206 and possibly in Braşov between 1202-1228, the Dominicans who established monasteries in Sibiu and Alba before the great Tatar invasion and also in Bistriţa, Sighişoara, Vinţu de Jos until 1303 and the Franciscans who established monasteries in 1268 in Bistriţa and in 1300 in Sibiu, must be seen as objectives achieved in the grand plan of the papacy to impose itself in these parts of the Hungarian kingdom.

The new royal border reached in the 13th century the line of the Carpathians and included the area of Făgăraş. From a religious point of view this new delimitation is known as the Cristianis border.

Coming back to the northwestern part of Făgăraş, the territory at the foot of the Perşani Mountains entered, as we saw above, into the composition of the territory received by the Teutons.

Thus, the localities from Hălmeag-Șercaia to Hoghiz belonged to the Land of Bârsa. There are mentioned in 1235 several Catholic priests: Herman and Gerlac from Serca/Șercaia, Bernard from Debran/Părău, Conrad from Venetiis/Veneția; Nicolae from Cormosbach/Kormosbach/Racoș and Gotfrid from Aqua Calida/Hogiz.

We believe therefore that during this period the Land of Făgăraș was mostly under the influence of the Byzantine civilization with the exception of the territories occupied by the Teutons and those occupied by the Cistercians from Cârța which were under the influence of the western Catholic civilization. The existence of conflicts between the two worlds is marked by the attacks of the schismatics on the Cârța monastery.

On the spiritual plane, with the appearance in the Făgăraș landscape of the monasteries from Cârța, from Hoghiz, Perșani-Vlădeni and the presumed monastery from Șercaia we can say that it also began the attested monasticism which was in this case of Catholic orientation.

The Romanian church life in the Land of Făgăraș has its roots most likely in the old center of the Slavic population which occupied our area starting from the 8th century.

Between 1366-1464 the Romanian church in the area of Făgăraș was practically under the influence of the Metropolis of Târgoviște and belonged to the bishopric of Râmnicu Vâlcea.

The following Orthodox monasteries are recorded in the 16th century: at Scorei, at Șinca Veche and probably the monastic complex at Comăna.

The 16th century will bring a new major change from a religious point of view. The Protestant Reformation, the new trend aimed at the Catholic Church, will develop starting with 1517 on an unsuspected scale on the European level.

Certain ethnic groups in Transylvania quickly embraced the new trend, the Saxons from Brașov being the first to make contact with the new trend as early as 1519. The dispute intensified in Transylvania also due to the political environment, where the conflict for the

occupation of the throne of the principality was ongoing between King Ioan Zăpolya, of Protestant orientation and Friederich de Habsburg, of Catholic one. The new Protestant doctrine would gain momentum in Transylvania.

Against the background of the increase in the number of Protestants in Transylvania, both within the Saxon and Hungarian population, the eyes then turned to the Romanians who were mostly Orthodox (schismatic), their state being the one of tolerated religion.

Thus, an attempt was made to attract them to a reform, the method used being one considered very attractive at the time, namely the translation of church books into Romanian. On a local level was attempted even the establishment of a school with teaching in the Romanian language in Făgăraș in the hope that the training of future leaders in the Protestant spirit will attract a massive shift of the Romanian population to this new religion. The results were not the expected ones but for the Romanians the translation of the Bible and the establishment of the school in Făgăraș represented a great advantage.

The supremacy of the Protestants came to an end after the extinction of the Zăpolya family. In the following period there had been a gradual restoration of the power of the Catholic Church in Transylvania. A syncope will appear in 1599 with the ascension to the throne of Transylvania by Michael the Brave/Mihai Viteazul when the Orthodox Church will re-enter the jurisdiction of the Metropolis of Târgoviște.

This moment is significant because now Orthodoxy will be recognized as an accepted religion even for a short time. On a local level, Mihai the Brave founded a church in Făgăraș for the Romanian Orthodox community, but in 1617 it no longer existed. It can be said about this place that it was the first attested Orthodox church in the city of Făgăraș.

Returning to the area of Făgăraș, in this period at the end of the 16th century the official and predominant religion was the reformed Calvinism under its jurisdiction being placed the other two religions, Lutheran and Orthodox.

The beginning of the 17th century will bring a new confrontation between the current of the counter-reformation supported especially during the leadership of General Basta and the Calvinist nobility, which is probed with the revolt of the latter and the defeat of the Catholics. This entire century had been thus dominated by the Calvinists.

The real situation of the people of Făgăraș must be clarified on the local level, because as can be seen above, theoretically (de jure) it belonged to the County of Alba, but factually (de facto) here was kept the old right obtained in 1541 by „Liber Baronatus”, invoked by the people of Făgăraș to keep their privileged position towards the county. Among the privileges granted by this right were both administrative and economic autonomy.

This situation will also be transposed on the church level. Thus, the situation of the churches in the area of Făgăraș was as follows: the Saxon (Lutheran) church belonged to the Consistory of the Lutheran Church of Transylvania based in Sibiu, the Orthodox church belonged to the Metropolis of Alba, while the Hungarians belonged to the Calvinist Consistory of Transylvania based in Cluj.

However, the situation was completely different on the local level: the Lutheran and Orthodox churches will be under the jurisdiction of the Calvinist one for most of the time, forming an autonomous Făgăraș church. This control over the Lutheran and Orthodox churches was manifested by the fact that the Calvinist bishop was the only authority that could make visits/canonical checks in these areas, with the mention that these churches were theoretically removed from the tutelage of the county, but they were under Calvinist episcopal control/visit.

The ecclesiastical space of Făgăraș was dominated during the 17th century by the Calvinist Reformed Church, an important contribution being made by the Calvinist princes of Transylvania who were also owners of the domain of Făgăraș. The Lutheran and Orthodox churches were considered only tax-paying annexes of the former.

Towards the end of the 17th century, a rehabilitation of the Catholic forces can be observed in the Principality, but also in the Land of Făgăraș. This can be noticed especially after 1686 with the entry of imperial troops into Transylvania.

The powerful religious offensive of the Catholics will take place in Transylvania at the end of the 17th century and during the following century which will succeed imposing the union with Rome on an important part of the Romanian population with the consistent contribution of the Habsburg state authorities. This new phenomenon will divide the Transylvanian Romanian environment in two for about 250 years.

Proceeding to the next chapter related to the construction of places of worship, we made a short retrospective of the stone-hewn places in our country reaching with them to the area of Făgăraș where are found two such monuments: the monastic complex at Comăna formed from many cells and the cave monastery from Șinca Veche dating from the 14th-15th centuries.

Reaching the construction of wooden churches, a description was made of the existing and attested ones in the villages of Făgăraș.

It should be noted from the beginning that in the Romanian environment of Transylvania the right to build stone churches was forbidden since 1297 by the Hungarian royalty. This is the reason why these wall churches are built so late compared to the churches of the other ethnic groups, such as the Saxons and Hungarians.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this sub-chapter is that most likely in all the localities of our area although they are not documented, the first places of worship were built of wood and only later those of brick and stone.

In this category we have also included a brief presentation of the monasteries in our area. Here is the time to say that we believe that these monasteries had a special influence on the Romanian Orthodox population. Their roots should be sought in the old Slavic center in our area.

Most of these monastic settlements were destroyed around 3rd June 1761 by order of General Adolf N. Bukow, the military commander of Transylvania due to the struggles to impose the union with Rome

Another point we want to reach is related to the fact that we consider that next to the Sâmbătă monastery the second center of importance was the Șinca area. The existence of the five monasteries on the territory of this locality is an important argument to consider in support of this idea.

Another argument is related to the fact that here is the cave monastery on Crețu, dated in the 14th-15th centuries and among the oldest in the area.

The next argument is related to the fact that at the monastery at the top of the boundary (the future Șinca Nouă) there was before 1761 a theological school where young people from all over Transylvania came for teaching and training.

This idea is also supported by the fact that the villagers in the area consulted with the monks regarding the acceptance of weapons to enter the border regiments created by the Austrian government in the Făgăraș area without renouncing Orthodoxy. However, those who refused the weapons and the union left the village of Șinca and wandered partly in Wallachia while another part of 4-5 families went upward to the mountain where they founded Șinca Noua after 1761.

The brick churches in the Făgăraș area have known several classifications. In a first phase we consider that we can divide them into four categories depending on their founders, churches founded by the village community, churches founded by priests, churches founded by local boyars and churches founded by those from Wallachia (voivodes, boyars and merchants).

The second criterion that must be taken into account is that of architecture, here resulting three categories: those prior to the Brâncoveanu era, those of Brâncoveanu and those of Brâncoveanu influence. Five places of worship belong to the period before the Brâncoveanu foundations, three churches belong to the Brâncoveanu foundations and 16 monuments belong to the last category.

The monuments prior to the Brâncoveanu foundations have local elements combined with classical, roman and gothic styles over which were superimposed certain south Carpathian influences.

We can speak of a school of local architecture that was strongly influenced by the Brâncoveanu foundations, which adapted to the new realities the construction of wall churches in the extra-Carpathian area.

The Brâncoveanu foundations are those from Făgăraș and Sâmbăta. A number of 16 churches belong to the last category where we find elements belonging to the Brâncoveanu style.

We will try in the first part of the chapter dedicated to the spirituality of the Făgăraș area to mark the moments in which occurs the syncretism between pagan and Christian holidays. This religious syncretism led to the overlapping of these traditions and customs in our area, the old ones belonging to the pre-Christian background merging with the new ones belonging to the new current.

We displayed afterwards the manner of the winter holidays in our area with the carols of the children, then those of the young and grown people.

Regarding the caroling of young unmarried people, this is the most spectacular because they gathered every year during the winter holidays between St. Nicholas (December 6) and St. John (January 7) in a society that bore different names depending on the locality: „obcină”, „olohidă”, „cătea”, „turcă” or „societate”, being documented in our area from 1765 in Comăna de Jos.

It seems that the Border Regiment of which most of the Făgăraș villages were a part left its mark on the functioning of these organizations which will carry out their activity based on a regulation inspired by the border statutes.

There are localities in our area where „ceata” (young unmarried boys ensemble) is called „Turcă”. This custom is considered by some authors even pre-Christian, namely the goat carol which was still known in the Făgăraș area under the names of „Turcă” and „Boriță”. This goat went caroling at the same time with the boys ensemble (ceată de feciori) or separately. The first description of this custom was made in 1714 by Dimitrie Cantemir in his famous work „Descriptio Moldaviae”.

The establishment of the „ceată” (ensemble) was generally done on 6th December (St. Nicholas) but there were also exceptions when it was established earlier: on 14th November (Recea) or on 1st December (Mărgineni).

Among the criteria that a „cetaș” (member of the ensemble) had to meet were: diligence, honor or kindness, appropriate behavior in the community or body beauty. They had to be „handsome” and last but not least, they had to know well the village customs in order to master the traditional dances and carols.

They proceeded afterwards electing the leaders of the „domni” (leaders). The method of election was differentiated from village to village: by acclamation, by vote, by auction (who offers the most money) or by raising on a beam, a custom which can be linked to the old

medieval tradition of raising knights on the shield after their investment. The meeting place of the boys (members) was also different: at the church, on the bridge in the center of the town, at the house of the future „vătaf mare” (leader) of the ensemble, at the town hall or in most cases at the tavern.

The main dignities or functions in the ensemble differed in number and name from village to village. The names encountered in the Făgăraș area are as follows: „vătaf mare” (the leader) also called „jude”, „mayor” or „birău” depending on the locality; „vătaf mic” (vice-leader) , the helper of the leader; „stegarul”, the one who carried the flag; „crășmarul”, „pivnițerul” or „chipărușul” took care of the drink; „sameșul” (cashier), the one who managed money, „colcerul” (cook), took care of the food received from the villagers; „colacarul”, the one who collected and accounted the „colaci” (knot-shaped bread) received as a gift; „jucatorul” (dancer), who had to dance „turca”; „armasi”, in number of two, the ones ringing the bells that accompany the carol and have the task of dancing with the unmarried girls at caroling; „fochistul”, the one assigned to light the fires in the boys rooms on during the time they stay at the host; „iapa” (mare) or „catârul” (the mule) - the one who carried the gifts in nature collected at the carol.

The ensemble had its own organization, with functions and tasks, sometimes also with its own statutes, carrying out common activities with a common goal, with a common awareness in union with the whole community.

All members of the ensemble are obliged to obey the leader. No one could leave the host without his permission and this could only be granted after it was brought to the notice of the whole group. The member was not allowed to be late, he was not allowed to enter the house wearing the hat on his head, nor to sit with their elbows on the table during the meal.

The ensemble will meet at the host to learn carols and will pay the set amount of money. The boys (members) will not get drunk, argue or fight with each other or with others. They will dance with all the girls whether beautiful or ugly, poor or rich and they will go to church on holidays. They will commit to eat and sleep at the host from Christmas to St. John's Day.

Those who violated these rules were punished. The punishments could consist of a fine in money, in kind (which was paid with drink), it could even go as far as exclusion from the ensemble, meaning that the punished person no longer had the right to wear „vâstră” (specific hat ornament worn by the boys), nor to participate in the celebrations organized by it, the latter being the most drastic. Those who *ran away* home or with any *mândruță* (unmarried girl) without the consent of the leader and were caught in the act (until they returned to the host), had to be doomed to an interesting punishment. They were tied to a sledge, accompanied by „muică” (old woman/woman) and carried through the scorn of the people through the village being forced to shout: whoever does like me, will endure like me. The punishment was carried out in other parts by hanging them on the gate post from where they shouted their guilt.

A series of customs are following related to the yearly holidays, focusing on another well-known custom in the Făgăraș area which was the Plowman. The custom is older than Christianity, as evidenced by the mythical and archaic gestures and images that accompany the ritual. Christianity introduced vague symbols and prayers to reinforce the magical effects of ancient practices.

The celebration was held in the past on St. George's day being well known that this saint defeated the dragon on the bank of a river, so the central theme is still the fight between good and evil. By falling in most years during the *Easter Lent*, the event was moved to the day after Easter.

The *Plowman`s (Plugarul)* acts came to reinforce the old beliefs according to which good, symbolized in our case by the plowman, is defeating evil which was symbolized by the forces of nature, darkness and cold, through the unconditional intercession of heat (the sun) and water, elements which are absolutely necessary for the rebirth of nature. The association of the Plowman with St. George is hence not accidental.

The custom still kept its original meaning until the beginning of the 20th century, although magic is gradually receding from the common conscience.

It gradually decays after 1900, being more simple and out of magic.

After the progress of agriculture and the acquiring of knowledge about nature and in accordance with them the material and spiritual evolution of the Făgăraș villages, the Plowman custom continued as a rustic celebration with the character of a popular party.

It comes next to a section dedicated to rites of passage: birth, wedding and funeral.

The birth is one of the main events of people's lives and the event was celebrated with the observance of old customs. Although part of the magical meaning of the ritual has diminished to the point of almost total elimination, certain reminiscences can still be observed at certain moments such as putting basil in the baptismal water or in the church`s mug.

The traditional wedding lasted in the Land of Făgăraș until the Second World War. The postwar social transformations with deep implications in the economic and cultural life of the area led to the disappearance of the old forms. The magical practices that reflected the old popular beliefs which carried the message of the ages were abandoned one by one.

The customs related to this last part of the rites of passage had and still have a special importance in the lives of those in our area.

It is certain that some of these rituals have a meaning that must be sought much deeper in the mist of time, going far beyond Christianity and we are referring here to the dead`s apple.

A series of moments and gestures that must be done in these rituals have lost their old meanings and are performed mechanically today, their exact meaning being not known.

The next chapter is dedicated to popular myths and legends from the Făgăraș area where all of them have been analysed.

We introduced in the first category legends related to the establishment of some localities in the Făgăraș area identifying 10 such legends.

The second category was dedicated to legends about springs, valleys (streams), wells, mounds (hills), ditches and clearings, here identifying 6 legends.

In the next category we have included legends related to the fantastic animal called dragon, which appears mainly in the German but also Hungarian environment, 4 legends being identified here including the one from Șercaia.

The next category is related to the plague, the disease that terrified humanity until the modern period. The main concern was the identification of a ritual, aimed at banishing the plague, practiced in Transylvania especially along the great trade routes. We have identified this ritual in our area in three localities.

From the legends related to the foundation of the localities we can also see the diversity of the way of choosing their names. We can even make a pattern because the names are coming from certain occupations of the inhabitants, for example the names of the localities Corbi and Sâmbăta.

Regarding the legends that appeared when the royal guests settled in these lands, we can say that they have a special meaning, actually representing the eternal fight between good and evil, the fight between the newcomers and the old ones, or in other words a fantastic fight in which it is not the physical strength that triumphs, but the sharpness of the mind. It is an example to follow, that regardless of the obstacle the man can win and reach his goal.

Related to the *Plague Shirt* custom, it appears with greater frequency especially in Transylvania in border areas, places where entered goods and foreigners (trade routes).

We can also see from the description of the legend of St. Haralambie how deeply these customs have been anchored in the daily life of the inhabitants of the villages of Făgăraș. He is particularly honored in the Land of Făgăraș because his attributes were even protective against this terrible disease which was the plague. His legend is recorded in 1848, in Lisa.

This legend will become later a source of inspiration for the iconic craftsmen who will be active in this period in the area.