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DOCTORAL THESIS

**THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE ROMANIANS
FROM THE PARISHES OF THE PREVAILING
ARCHDIOCESE OF SĂCELE**

- SUMMARY -

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Introduction

The present doctoral thesis aims to present a clear and objective image of the religious life of the Romanians in the Land of Bârsa from the first documentary attestations until the beginning of the 20th century.

The novelty of the work consists in the fact that it is the first attempt to analyze and compare statistical and demographic information, given that the historical era under discussion is quite a long one. The research undertaken so far exposes information for short periods of time. This work captures historical details starting with the first fiscal conscriptions (which also contain demographic data) from the 16th century until 1930, when the first census was carried on the territory of the whole Romania.

By their nature, the localities are cultural, public, social and religious spaces, so that the work is not only a source of information, but was conceived as a detailed study of social, cultural and religious activities, events. Therefore, it is necessary to fill in a few shortcomings encountered in the monographic studied works, such as the insufficient attention paid to religious structures, the limited critical apparatus and incomplete bibliographic references.

The present research is based on the multitude and diversity of information, that offers an integral vision of the communities in the Land of Bârsa, from the beginning of the conquest of Transylvania by the Hungarians until the present day.

The historical research of the religious life of the Romanians from the Săcele Area was born starting from three essential questions. What was the historical framework behind the formation of today's communities? How has ethnic and denominational structure evolved over time? What was the impact of ethnic and confessional evolution on religious life? In order to be able to answer these questions, various methods of research have been imposed, which have

brought a new perspective on the communities that are part of the Săcele Rank. Thus, the contextualized approach to this subject was taken into account by analyzing the historical circumstances that formed the basis of the formation of today's communities. The evolution of the ethnic and confessional structure was followed by presenting and interpreting the data of the conscriptions and censuses. In order to observe the religious development of the Romanian village, the correspondence of the parishes with the Sibiu Archdiocese (Arhiepiscopie), the parish archives and the monographic works were used in particular.

The first part of the research presents the Land of Bârsa from a topographical point of view, against the background of Transylvania's conquest by the Hungarians, an event marked by the first initiatives of colonization of some ethnic groups on the Land of Bârsa. In order to capture aspects of the Romanian religious life, the presentation of the administrative-territorial context was requisite.

The Daco-Roman and Romanian origin of Land of Bârsa is currently generally accepted on the basis of archaeological evidence, despite the lack of documentary attestation.

An important element in the characterization of Land of Bârsa from the point of view of the specificity of the Romanians' life here (from a religious, cultural, economic point of view, etc.) is given by their coexistence with the Saxons and the Székelys, colonized populations by the Hungarian kings.

The first information I have gathered about the Land of Bârsa indicates that it was inhabited by the Romanian native population. The presence of Romanians in the Land of Bârsa depression, before the Hungarian colonizations took place, is also demonstrated at a linguistic level – the etymology of the formally acquired names of Land of Bârsa localities (including the term *Bârsa*) is eminently Romanian-Slavonic. The organization form of the Romanian population in Land of Bârsa was that of village communities, which later, in the Middle Ages, evolved into what we know today as early medieval principalities and voivodeships. The need of the Hungarian regime to have control over the conquered Transylvanian territories, including the Land of Bârsa, was the basis of the actions of colonization of the Saxons and that of the Székelys. The Székelys were colonized to the east of the Eastern Carpathians by the Hungarian feudal Kingdom, for strategic purposes, being used as border guards. The Saxons were also colonized for politico-military and economic purposes. Gradually, the Romanians lost

more and more of their rights in favor of the colonial groups. The injustice of the Romanians culminated in their exclusion from the institutional structures of the state they lived in.

The Teutonic Knights were the first administrators of Land of Bârsa territories. After their departure, Land of Bârsa was administered by feudal commits, and by the castellans of the Bran fortresses, Piatra Craiului and Hălchiu. After 1377, Braşov became the residence of the entire territory of Land of Bârsa.

In the 16th century, under the Turkish suzerainty, the states of Transylvania decided that Land of Bârsa should remain in the administration of the Saxons, consecrating in this way an already existing reality. Following the occupation of Transylvania by the Habsburg Empire (1691), Braşov district was headed by a "*supreme captain*" with the role of defending the prince's interests in the territory.

During the XVIII-XIX centuries, the Braşov district was successively part of the Trei Scaune county, from the Saxon Country and for a limited period of time it was subordinated to the Sibiu district. The administrative-territorial reorganization of 1854 determined Braşov to become an independent prefecture.

The integration of Transylvania into the Kingdom of Hungary (1876) had several effects, including the transformation of Braşov into a county, but also the renunciation of the "county congregation", which shaped the beginning of the modern era. Braşov County was made up of three districts (Bârsa de Sus, Bârsa de Jos, Săcele), this administrative division continued to function until 1925 when Braşov County was established.

The second part of the study is dedicated to the ethnic and confessional structure expatiated by the statistical information provided by the fiscal conscriptions from the 16th - 19th centuries and by the censuses from the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The conscriptions and censuses carried out provide us with various information about the number, spread and structure of the population in the localities of the Land of Bârsa.

The first demographic information comes from the first half of the 16th century from the census lists drawn up at the command of the feudal lords. The realization of several fiscal conscriptions (1698, 1713, 1721, 1755-1757), confessional statistics (1760-1762, 1765) and demographics (1771, 1799) was determined by the establishment of the Habsburg domination, which wanted to improve the collection of taxes to the state budget. From the second half of the 18th century, a manuscript map from the archive of the Braşov County Museum of History is

part, its annexes containing demographic information regarding the number of those who lived in the localities from the Land of Bârsa.

The demographic structure in the first half of the 19th century was outlined by several conscripts and censuses (1814, 1828-1839, 1849), the dynamics of population development being marked by the improvement of living conditions, the development of the health system, but also by the influences of the epidemics of cholera (1831, 1848). The peasant uprisings of 1848-1849 and the military events of those years led to the need for a new census. The 1850 census aimed to supplement the armed forces of the Habsburg Empire. For the second half of the nineteenth century I have analyzed the demographic aspects offered by the statistics from the 1857 and 1880 censuses. This period was marked by three cholera epidemics (1855, 1866, 1872-1873) which led to an overall decline of the general population in the Bârsa Country.

The beginning of the twentieth century is marked by the census of 1900, it was preceded by the censuses of 1910 and 1930. This period was characterized by a particular population dynamics. In this sense, there was an important migration flow and at the same time an increase of the natural growth rate.

The third part offers a historical perspective on the two categories of parish communities: those that are part of the city of Săcele and the other parishes that make up the Deanery of Săcele. The presentation of the religious life of the communities was made from several points of view: administrative, cultural and social-philanthropic.

The Deanery of Săcele currently includes 29 parishes, being established in the meeting of the Diocesan Assembly in January 2006, at the proposal of the Metropolitan of Transylvania, His Eminence PhD Laurențiu Streza. In 2020, for pastoral-missionary and administrative reasons, the title of the Orthodox Deanery of Săcele was changed to the Orthodox Deanery of Prejmer-Săcele.

First of all for a better understanding and for clarity we set out to show the history of the transylvanian saxons communities we have underlined aspects related to different elements such as: the geographical location, the oldest archaeological research and the first documentary attestations.

The romanians from Săcele were known as „mocani”, a term whose etymology derives from their basic occupation - shepherding.

The religious dimension of the romanians from Săcele was defined by the fact that they were Orthodox (as confirmed by a document of the Hungarian king Ladislaus V). Their concern for religious life was emphasized by the construction of wooden churches, which were later replaced with new places of worship made of stone and brick, an approach achievable due to their diligence and the prosperous material situation they enjoyed.

The predilection of the romanians from Săcele for the religious element can be observed also through the numerous religious buildings they made outside their community.

Regarding the occupations of the inhabitants of Săcele, we showed that their basic occupation was shepherding. Through transhumance, an activity preceded by the invocation of God's help, in the church, the Mocans from Săcele kept alive the connection with the brothers from over the mountains. This connection was manifested by the adherence of the romanians from Săcele to various movements in a spirit of solidarity with the brethren over the mountains.

Next, we elaborated a detailed presentation of the dress of the women from Săcele and of the wedding customs, as well as of the secondary activities that the people of Săcele carried out.

The Romanian schools in Săcele suffered due to the political context of the time (Trefort Law 18/1879, Law 30/1883), the regime aiming at their Hungarianization. The special role of the school in this region was reflected in the personalities of the ten academics that the community of Săcele gave to the country.

Also regarding the cultural-educational dimension of Săcele, we mention the two magazines published here - *Viața Săceleană* and *Plaiuri Săcelene*.

The actual presentation of the parishes within the current Deanery of Săcele aimed to expose the aspects regarding the history of the settlement, such as the first documentary attestations, the name of the settlement throughout history and its origin. We also followed the history of the building, specifying the old wooden places of worship (where they existed), the founders, the restoration works that have been carried out over time and the priests under whose pastorate they were made.

Stepping forward, we presented the places of worship from an architectural point of view and we have mentioned the technique in which they were painted, as well as the painters. I also noticed the existence of particular elements within each parish, such as: holy vessels, old books of worship, old icons and other heritage objects.

By enumerating the minister priests of the parishes, we wanted to give back to posterity the special contribution that each minister of the altar had in the spiritual evolution of the respective community.

In the localities where there were confessional schools, we gathered the information regarding them, in order to restore their history and to highlight the influence they had within the community, with the permanent pursuit of the close connection between them and the Church.

In order to perform a complete radiography of the religious life of the parishes from the Săcele Deanery, there is a list of references - original documents found in the National Archives and in the Archive of the Metropolitan Library of Sibiu and four maps of Land of Bârsa – meant to highlight and sustain the arguments/ideas/issues underlined in the present study.