CLUJ-NAPOCA 'BABEŞ-BOLYAI' UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

Ph DEGREE THESIS

FAITH AND CULTURE IN THE CHIOAR (THE STONE-WALLED CITY) ROMANIAN ORTHODOX ARCHBISHOPATE, 1850-1906

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introductory notions and bibliographical elements. The geographical and	
historical framework	page 4
I.1. A necessary history and its documentary support	page 4
I.2. Chioar County: the geo-morphological space and its benefits	page 8
I.3. Issued linked to Chioar County	page 15
II. The Chioar (The Stone-Walled City) Romanian Orthodox Archbishopate	page 25
II.1. The Archbishopate's origin and structural evolution	page 25
II.2. The Archbishopate's ethnic and confessional structure	page 29
II.3. The Archbishopate's archpriests	page 31
II.4. The Archbishopate's parishes	page 33
4.a. The parishes' material condition	page 33
4.b. The priests' material condition	page 38
4.c. The archbishopate's parishes	page 41
4.c.1. Berchez	page 41
4.c.2. Berinţa	page 45
4.c.3. Bloaja	page 50
4.c.4. Bozinta Mare	page 52
4.c.5. Bozinta Mică	page 53
4.c.6. Cărbunari	page 54
4.c.7. Cărpiniş	page 59
4.c.8. Ciocotiș	page 63
4.c.9. Copalnic	page 66
4.c.11. Curtuiuşu Mic	page 70
4.c.11. Făurești	page 72
4.c.12. Fânațe	page 72
4.c.13. Finteuşu Mare	page 80
4.c.14. Lăschia	page 83
4.c.15. Plopiş	page 88
4.c.16. Săcătura	page 94
4.c.17. Sălnița	page 94
4.c.18. Trestia	page 100
4.c.19. Vălenii Şomcutei	page 100 page 103
4.c.20. Vima Mare	page 103
4.c.21. Vima Mică	page 107
II.5. Confessional confrontations. Passages from one faith to another	page 109
III. The confessional school	page 114
III.1. The legislative framework	page 124
III.2. Measures and actions	page 124
III.3. School constructions. Their condition and endowment	
III.4. The teachers' training	page 132 page 137
III.5. The teachers' selection	page 137
III.6. The teachers' payment	page 142 page 144
III.7. The courses organisation. Schooling	
111.7. The courses organisation, schooling	page 148

Annendices	page 232
References	page 223
Conclusions	page 212
IV. Cult and culture in Chioar's folk traditions	page 200
III.10.20. Vima Mică	page 197
III.10.19. Vima Mare	page 197
III.10.18. Vălenii Şomcutei	page 195
III.10.17. Trestia	page 193
III.10.16. Sălnița	page 191
III.10.15. Săcătura	page 190
III.10.14. Plopiş	page 188
III.10.13. Lăschia	page 186
III.10.12. Finteuşu Mare	page 183
III.10.11. Fânațe	page 181
III.10.10. Făurești	page 178
III.10.9. Curtuiuşu Mic	page 176
III.10.8. Copalnic	page 174
III.10.7. Ciocotiş	page 172
III.10.6. Cărpiniş	page 170
III.10.5. Cărbunari	page 167
III.10.4. Bozânta Mică	page 167
III.10.3. Bozânta Mare	page 167
III.10.2. Berinţa	page 163
III.10.1. Berchez	page 163
III.10. Parish confessional schools	page 167
III.9. School performances and failures	page 155 page 157
III.8. School handbooks and didactic materials	page 155

ABSTRACT

Key words: church, archbishopate, Orthodox, Chioar, Romanian

In the course of time, Chioar County has been a well individualised territory, both due to the authorities' administrative measures and in the inhabitants' mind. Its strategic position, its landscape characteristics, its geo-morphological and hydrographical elements, its demographical breakdown and its ethnic-confessional structure provided it with a 'unity in diversity' character, which has left its mark on its historical evolution. Unlike other Romanian counties, Chioar County is located in a hilly region, crossed over by numerous watercourses, so that its landscape is fragmented and the links between the human settlements, especially in the past centuries, had to take into account the forces of nature.

Seeing that the regions' soils have a mediocre agricultural potential, the inhabitants adapted themselves thereto, choosing such occupations as animal breeding, fruit-tree growing or forestry works. However, in the medieval and modern epochs, such occupations did not bring forth as large revenues as the agriculture-related ones; consequently Chioar County has remained a less rich region than other Transylvanian areas.

These geographical and natural realities have influenced Chioar County's history, including the history of Orthodoxy of this region so much that the very methodology of tackling with this topic and the thesis structure bear their print. The first chapter of the work is thus dedicated to a necessary presentation, meant to get the reader familiar with the historical roots and the geographical realities that have caused certain evolutions during the period of time under study, namely 1850-1906. The main axis of the thesis is composed of chapters II and III: the former one analyses how the Stone-Walled City's archbishopate functions both at the central level and at the parochial one; the subject-mater of the latter chapter is the Romanian Orthodox school of this archbishopate. A fourth chapter, more reduced in terms of size, completes the work by presenting a few ethnographical issues of Chioar: it is about those practices, customs, traditions, rituals that are linked to the church and that help us understand how popular faith integrates Christianity, while hiding old pagan practices whose initial meaning has been long forgotten.

Alongside with the conclusions and the references, the thesis is also accompanied by an important number of appendices, which synthesise in tables demographical and ethnic-confessional realities of the area, as well as documents on the church and the school, protocols of the schoolmasters' conferences, the schooling breakdown etc., whose goal is to provide the reader or the researcher with more data where the text has not enabled us to extend the explanations.

The main methodological feature of our approach is the appeal to the local monograph, as a unique way of fully perceiving, of 'taking the pulse' of Chioar's Orthodox Church and school life in the latter half of the 19th century. In fact, within the thesis we use a method that we could term the method of 'the monographs within a monograph', as we aim at two levels of analysis. At the upper level there is the archbishopate, with its religious and school dimension. At the lower level there is each and every community, regarded both as a parish and as a learning centre.

Both the chapter dedicated to the church and the one dedicated to school enjoy a general synthetic presentation of the evolution of these institutions. The archbishopate's history, its ethnic-confessional structure, the archpriests' series and certain data of their life are meant to shape the necessary overview, but it is their continuation, namely the monographic presentation of the Orthodoxy's evolution in each and every parish that brings along the very historical immersion. Only by analysing for each township its ethnic-confessional situation, its demographical evolution, the material condition of that township's church, the priests' succession and biographical reference points of their life, the presence and the circulation of the cult books can we realise what being an Orthodox Christian in Chioar between 1850 and 1906 meant and what the Orthodox church's condition in that area was.

Following the same logics, the chapter dedicated to school contains synthetic information on the epoch's legislative framework, on the teachers' selection process and payment, the schooling process, the school materials and tools (handbooks), on the performances and the failures at the level of the archbishopate. But these ones are followed by the analysis of the school evolution for each and every locality, with references about the condition of the school's enclosure, the teachers' series and biographical data thereabout, the breakdown and the analysis of school attendance between 1850 and 1906 etc. Only by this method of monographically

tackling with this topic can we provide whomever uses our work with an image as close as possible to the reality of that time.

While in the centralising reports that the archbishopate used to send the Archiebiscopate on a yearly basis we find a rigorous synthetic image of the archbishopate's evolution, in the multitude of reports, demands, minutes, requests etc. sent by the regional vicars to the archbishopate or Archiebiscopate seat we identify the multitude of daily problems that the archpriest, the vicars and the believers were facing and whose settlement was assigned to the only institution that was representing the Romanians by that time: the church. In order to even better understand the way in which the people were coping with the Christian belief and the means by which the Orthodox belief was mingling in their rituals with popular faith and with the pre-Christian meanings of certain holidays, in the last chapter of the thesis we talked about certain ethnographical elements of Chioar County.

Till the dawn of the 18th century the Romanians of Chioar County were all sons of the ancient Orthodox church, the exceptions – notably amongst the nobles who chose to preserve their title, denying their ethnical identity, language and confession – being few. But uniation strongly hit this area, both because of its large distance from the archiepiscopate centre and in the context of the more difficult material situation. The promise of opening broader social perspectives – at least for the descendants if not for oneself – proved to be a fruit whose sweetness attracted entire communities led by their priests and in an epoch where being Orthodox was synonymous to not existing from the social acknowledgement viewpoint.

Nevertheless Orthodoxy resisted and strengthened itself in the decades that followed the schism, one of Chioar's important organisational structures being represented by the Stone-Walled City's Archbishopate. Its origins can be traced back in the two Orthodox archbishopates organised in the area by bishop Dionisie Novacovici in 1762, which because of the authorities' vexations, in the course of time came to be ruled by one archpriest and in 1805 they were finally officially unified. That is how the very history shows us by this example that enmity and anti-Orthodox hatred but strengthened this faith, because one large archbishopate proved to be, in the following decades, the solution for the preservation of the believers' confessional and national identity.

The archbishopate's structure was modified in a lesser degree in the course of time. Till 1906 it was organised around 10 Orthodox communities: Berinţa, Cărbunari, Ciocotiş, Finteuşu

Mare, Lăschia, Poienița, Săcătura (Luminişu), Trestia, Vălenii Şomcutei and Vima Mică. Besides them, Sălnița, Curtuiuşu Mic, Berchez, Ciumeni, Poienița, Bozânta Mică, Bozânta Mare, Vima Mare also belonged to the archbishopate for longer or shorter periods of time. In 1906 Chioar's archbishopate was unified to Solnoc's, part of the localities being taken over by Dej's archbishopate.

Ethnic-confessionally speaking, most of the inhabitants from the townships belonging to the archbishopate were Romanians (more than 90 %) and out of them 70 %-80 % were Orthodox. Besides them, Hungarians, Jews, Germans, Gipsies and Slavic nationalities were populating the area. We therefore apparently deal with a strong Orthodox archbishopate; there are however a few aspects that need to be taken into account, in order not to give rise to a false image: first of all these mainly Orthodox localities were neighbouring and were even surrounded by dominantly Greek-catholic localities; then the Greek-Catholics had their hierarchical centre far nearer (at Gherla), so they had a larger freedom of movement and proselytism, sometimes more or less tacitly supported by the authorities, as well.

Consequently, the inter-confessional passages represented one of the chronic problems of Chioar's archbishopate. The passages, be they individual or mixed, seldom had really canonical reasons, as in most cases they were generated either by discontentments or by ambitions, so by the hope of creating or compensating something material, not spiritual. It was either about the Unites that wanted to pass to Orthodoxy for being received in the clergy group or about Orthodox priests trying to force the Archiebiscopate by dragging entire communities into the uniation with them, or about grooms and brides dissatisfied with the fact that the Orthodox priests were complying with the State's legislation, refusing to wed them before the completion of the military service, or about Unite archbishops or priests that were plotting for dividing the Orthodox communities, thus gaining credit in the eyes of their superiors – and the list of the cases' typology list could go on.

The majority of the inter-confessional passages were from Orthodoxism toward Gree-Catholicism, which was a fairly normal phenomenon, because the Orthodox communities were more numerous and thus more likely to be divided under the skilful pressures coming from their exterior or even from their own leaders. But generally speaking the inter-confessional passages did not essentially modify the confessional structure of the archbishopate and after 1870 they

became increasingly rare. But their main effect was the creation of incessant unrest at the level of the two local church administrations, which mitigated the effects of the common national fight.

The pillars of the Orthodox resistance were the archpriests. The four archpriests that came one after the other for ruling the Stone-Walled City during the period of time under study were: Grigore Ciocaş (1846/47-1869), Ioan Greblea – his son-in-law (1869-1874), Ioan Şovrea (1875-1895), Teodor Şovrea (1895-1906). One can easily notice that we deal with two families with priest traditions, the series of the former one being interrupted by the absence of the male descendants and by Ioan Greblea's premature death. All four archpriests attended school in Sibiu and their activity undoubtedly shows that beyond the family tradition, their training and personal merits in the service of Orthodoxy were the most important reasons for their election.

In their status of intermediaries amongst the vicars, the communities and the Archiebiscopate, most documents on which the drawing up of this thesis was based are written by their own hand or their addressees are themselves. The whole history of Chioar's archbishopate is written down by their ink pens. Priests elections and also decays, requests from the part of the communities, of the priests, warnings regarding the uniation's proselytism, the spreading of the metropolitan circular letters and pastoral letters, investigations on the church and school staff's morality, divorce trials, requests of exemptions for wedding purposes, reports on the parish fortunes management – these are the main categories of documents on which the elaboration of our work was based and all of them passed through the hand of the archpriests, who either wrote them, complied with them or answered them.

One of the major problems of the parishes of this region was represented by the pecuniary condition, more exactly by the fortune of the church community. The fact that certain townships, such as Lăschia, Trestia, Ciocotiş and so on came to buy lands for completing the parochial estate indicates the fact that at the beginning of the period of time under study this one was not very extended. Apart from the land that the priest was using for agricultural purposes, the parishes also owned granted on lease lands, whose revenues were to be used for the parish expenses, for repairs, constructions etc. The lands were agricultural ones, pastures, hayfields, forests and so on. Cărbunari parish even owned a mineral water well, which it could not however be used because of local noble Teleki's vexations and obstacles. Eventually the parish committee had to sell the well to the said nobleman, because this one had bough all the land around it, so the

well could not be exploited. In other cases, like in Trestia's, the townships tried to buy back their financial bonds certificates in order to use that money for erecting churches or schools.

Part of the church's fortune was obtained as a result of donations; there are several cases of major donations (a land for the school, the entire land of a family after the spouses' death etc.) that are recorded in the period of time studied. However, at the same time there are cases where, disconsidering the predecessors' last wishes, certain descendants sued the church for getting the lands. Retrospectively speaking, we may say that during the latter half of the 19th century there took place a process of material accumulation in favour of the Orthodox parishes, yet this process did not lead to a significant enhancement of the church's fortune, but rather to its getting our of poverty.

The church's and the school's buildings also belonged to the parishes' fixed asset fortune. As regards the church's buildings, need is to specify that all the region's parishes did not have a Lord's place, as either the belivers went to the neighbouring villages or the service was held in improvised premises. But during the period of time under study the communities made efforts, as documents show, to erect churches, to repair or to replace the old ones, proving to be really zealous in this respect. Things were even such that on the Archiebiscopate's permission, people of Chioar's villages made sacrifices by strolling Transylvania and Banat all over for collecting from believers donations meant to help the erection of the churches in their villages.

The Archiebiscopate supported the foundation, reconstruction or repair works, to the extent of its possibilities, by various moneys. It also supported the juridical efforts of the communities that wished to get money for the sacred things by buying back the State's financial bonds. Nowadays one of Chioar's old little churches are historical monuments, preserving themselves in the shadow of the new stone and brick religious houses built in the last century.

The category of the archbishopate's material values also includes the old church books. In that time, these books rather had a spiritual value than a material one, helping both the performance of the divine service and the believers' Christian education. Along the thesis we presented, for each parish, the old church books preserved, as well as the notes related thereto, which talk about the tradition of Orthodoxism in the parts of the Stone-Walled City, about the donors' sacrifice, about petty facts of the communities' daily life, all these testifying the continuity of our faith in the fatidic years of the 18th century, too.

As for Chioar's Orthodox priests, they were almost exclusively locals, educated at the Sibiu 'Andreian' Seminary and many of them carried their family's clerical tradition. The candidates to priesthood were often sent even by the community to complete their theological education, being subsequently received again as leaders of the soul. In some cases, it was still the community that would request wedding and ordaining exemption before the finalisation of the last examinations when no other priest was performing services in that township. But the Sibiu management organism preserved the canons and the legislation and did not allow such deviations.

For their great majority, the pries were the rightful leaders of their flock, giving advice to and guiding their believers through the world full of mistakes on the earth, toward the eternal life of Heaven. But the corn cockle made its way through this crop, too, in the person of such priests as Gheorghe Onofrie of Copalnic, who was a 'drunkard' inclined to uniation. These cases were finally solved by archbishopate investigations, by rulings made by the management organism and by the moving off of the guilty ones from the stole. There were also cases, more numerous, but less serious, where certain priests refused to obey the Archiebiscopate's or the management organism's orders transmitted by means of the archpriest, especially when it was about performing services in parishes located far from the one where they were living or in difficultly reachable areas. Even the archpriests would sometimes apologise to the metropolitan bishop because the health condition or the material difficulties were hindering them from strictly following the orders.

It is however obvious that during the period of time under study, the trend of the Archiebiscopate's and of the Sibiu management organism's deeds was oriented toward disciplining the local church structures, making the archpriests and the priests obey, in pursuance of the canons' spirit and of the State's legislation. Things could not be otherwise under the ruling of the great Şaguna and the organisation inferred by him to the Transylvanian Orthodoxy was strengthened by the hierarchs that came after him. One even notices, in the documents preserved in Sibiu's Archiebiscopate's archives, the strictness with which the decisions were made by the High Hierarch or by the management organism, as well as the persuasion with which he insisted that these ones should be put into practice. When they were not obeyed from the very beginning, his firm parental tone became harsher and harsher, till the final decision came from Sibiu, punishing the guilty ones.

On synthesising, the situation of Chioar's Orthodox church between 1850 and 1906 was not an easy one, but it had a positive evolution, because the Christian and hierarchical discipline strengthened, the passages to uniation diminished, the level of the priests' training increased, the church fortunes as well, all these being helped by the savings spirit of the parish committees and by the believers' donations, so the number of the religious places increased. The measures imposed by the Sibiu centre, especially by metropolitan bishop Şaguna, played an important part in this regard, but the Lord's servants' attitude was equally important, as they protected their believers from temptations and took care of the parishes that had been entrusted to them, increasing their material condition. There were problems, too, for the clergy, but they were put an end to by the ecclesiastical authorities' energetic interventions.

Alongside the church, the confessional school represented another capital institution for the Orthodox Romanians of the Stone-Walled City. The fortune of the confessional schools belonged to the parish's fortune, but most of the times it was reduced to the school's building, which was one- or two-roomed. Many parishes did not have even a building for learning, the educational process being carried out in rented houses. There are several school constructions recorded during the period of time studied and the communities made efforts for this purpose. There are even donations for schools recorded.

The condition of the school endowment was not OK either, as many times the education was performed only by means of handbooks and some other times the children did not all have books.

Unlike the priest group, the didactic one was 'specialised' but to a certain extent. Many times, in case of need, substitute choristers, sextons or other people with minimal training and capable of sharing knowledge to the pupils were received amongst the schoolmasters. The schoolmasters' exchangeability was very high, which proved the fact that their low remuneration was not extremely attractive. Nevertheless, enough schoolmasters educated at the Sibiu Institute lived and worked in Chioar's region, some of them even teaching for 20-30 years in the same place.

The quality of the schoolmasters' group was maintained and enhanced by means of the yearly conferences carried out in the presence of the archpriest (or of a schoolmaster-priest if the former one found it impossible to come). All schoolmasters did not attend these conferences, so that those who had no justified reasons were financially sanctioned. Globally speaking, however,

the minutes of the conferences that were preserved show the vivacity of the debates and the modern ideas expressed by the teaching staff.

These documents sometimes evidence the teacher's attachment to its (human and national) mission, to its duty to enlighten generations of pupils, hoping that some of them will become the nation's pillars or that at least they will follow his steps, continuing his work. The topics tackled with resorted to various school subjects: from mathematics to ethics and religion, the discussions being generally focussed on what we may now call 'the teaching-learning methodology'.

But the schools material condition, alongside with the teaching act in itself and the teaching staff represented but half the confessional school. The other half was constituted by the pupils, by the human matter that needed to be shaped and educated. And the main problem that the schoolmasters were facing at this point was school attendance.

The analysis of the statistics sent by the schoolmasters for more than half the years of the period of time under study shows two important characteristics of the relationship between the school population and the confessional school. Firstly, even though the number of the pupils forced to go to school constantly increased along the decades – which was an effect of the demographical enhancement -, the number of the school attendees was far lesser and in some localities it remained almost identical between 1857/58 and 1886/87.

Secondly, the age group that were attending school was 6-12 years, whereas the 13-15 year group appears in the reports as not showing up at classes. Additionally, the frequency was even higher in the former semester than in the latter one, because in spring many children were taken by the parents to work the land. One of the possible reasons why the number of the 'wandering' pupils had such a little growth can also be linked to the attendance of the State schools, if applicable.

Interestingly, the greatest school achievements (measured from the high attendance standpoint) were not always from the villages having the richest schools, but sometimes from localities that could not afford even the construction of a school building, which proves the fact that the material condition contributes to the educational process, but the teacher's spiritual contribution is equally important.

Between Budapest's government's Hungarian-oriented pressures on the one hand and the spectrum of the Greek-Catholic confessional schools on the other hand, between 1850 and 1906

Chioar's Orthodox confessional school managed to have a positive trend, but not so strong as the church's. The inhabitants' material condition and the teaching staff's instability also contributed to the mitigation of this trend. Popular mentality must not be forgotten either, according to which the household works were more important than education and the children were supposed to help their parents gain their daily bread rather than constantly attending school.

Remaining in the same field of the folk mentality, our work tried to also tackle a series of ethnographical issues related to Chioar County, in order to underline the coexistence in this region of the pre-Christian practices with the Christian tradition. Their symbiosis gave birth to countless rituals and customs, dedicated both to the moments of passing from the human life and to certain fixed data from the yearly calendar. Unfortunately, as the ethnographical specialists themselves highlighted in their books, this kind of researches in Chioar did not exhaust the entire repertoire of beliefs, traditions, customs and did not manage to always answer in the satisfying way to the questions raised in the presence of certain rituals.

Upon analysing in the fourth chapter Chioar County's ethnographical repertoire, we reached the conclusion that all major Christian holidays are present in the folk calendar, as well, which were associated pre-Christian rituals, which many times had fire in their centre, which is an element with a purifying role.

In the end, it is difficult to draw a conclusion that syntheses the whole history of the Stone-Walled City's archbishopate between 1850 and 1906. We must however point out the constant activity, at the church and school level, deployed by the clergy for enhancing the parishes' material and spiritual condition and the fact that on the long run their efforts were successful. Obviously, the archbishopate and archiebiscopate authority played an important part in their capacity of guiding and sometimes coercive factors and on the other hand the believers contributed to the fight for the preservation of the confessional and national identity. For their fight and sacrifice lives, Chioar's regions' priests will always be remembered in the Transylvanian Romanians' history and we hope that this work will become a reference point for knowing their life and efforts for furthering right faith.

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