

POWER AND RELIGION IN TRANSYLVANIA

Paganism and Christianity (567 - 1095 A.D.)

Habilitation Thesis

Ioan Marian ȚIPLIC, Ph.D.

Associate Professor

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

Burials are not mirrors of life: if anything, they are a "hall of mirrors of life" providing distorted reflections on the past. The greatest challenge for burial archeology is to identify in each case the degree of distortion, as well as to attempt to infer the reason for the distortion.

Heinrich Harke, in *Burial and Society*, p. 25.

Habilitation Thesis

**POWER AND RELIGION IN
TRANSYLVANIA:
Paganism and Christianity
(567-1095)**

Ioan Marian ȚIPLIC, PhD in History

Associate Professor
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu,

June, 2014

CONTENTS

Section 1. Abstract	4
Section 2. MAIN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES, PROJECTS AND PUBLICATIONS (1996-2013)	7
2.1. Selective Inventory and Overview of the Main Publications, Researches, Grants and Projects	7
2.1.1. Relevant Monographs, Synthesis and Volumes	7
2.1.2. Relevant Studies and Articles	22
2.1.3. Relevant Lectures and Conferences	33
2.1.4. Relevant Public and Private National and International Research Projects and Fellowships	35
2.2. Development and Prospects: Main Research Activities, Projects and Publications	36
2.2.1. The evolution development of the scientific career	36
2.2.2. Evolution and development of academic career	41
Section 3. POWER AND RELIGION IN TRANSYLVANIA: PAGANISM AND CHRISTIANITY (567 - 1095 A.D.)	43
3.1. Geographical and chronological limits	45
3.2. The transformation of funeral ritual between the 7th and 11th century	49
3.2.1. Medieval Christianity in central and south-eastern Europe	49
3.2.2. the <i>christening of death</i> – theoretical premises	51
3.3. From cremation to inhumation or the <i>re-birth of Christianity</i> within the northern Danubian and Transylvanian territories	71
3.3.1. Cremation burial grounds	72
3.3.2. Biritual burial grounds	75
3.3.3. Inhumation burial grounds	82
3.3.4. Cemeteries and churches	92
3.4. Conclusions	97
Section 4. BIBLIOGRAPHY	99

Section 1. Abstract

The thesis which is about to unfold in the following pages is structured within the frames of two main components: the administrative one, containing sections 1 and 2, and the scientific component, containing the 3rd section. The bibliography containing the titles that were used is added after the latter and is summarized within section number 4.

The administrative component is based upon a narrative divided into four categories, all of which include the results and the activity up to the present moment. These four categories are to be identified as follow: 2.1.1. Relevant Monographs, Synthesis and Volumes; 2.1.2. Relevant Articles and Studies; 2.1.3. Relevant Lectures and Conferences; 2.1.4. Relevant Public and Private National and International Research Projects and Fellowships. The results belonging to these categories were grouped into four interest areas. The latter were portrayed by means of published studies and research fellowships which are based upon the study fields of medieval fortifications' history, Medieval Transylvanian economical history, Medieval Transylvanian ecclesiastical history and the archaeology of the Transylvanian Early Middle Ages. All the above mentioned research directions were generically brought together under the title of *Power and Religion in Transylvania: Paganism and Christianity (567-1095)*¹. Its result aims towards bringing up a research hub, which is to be dedicated especially to the problems combining the political interest with the religious one, resulting therefore an emphasis of both aspects of the south-eastern Early Middle Ages.

The scientific component brings up a rather new topic within the Romanian secondary literature of the last two decades. The emergence and the spread of Christianity was a research field studied mostly by the archaeologists concerned by the post Roman period and by the some theologians as well. Medieval archaeologists didn't seem highly interested in this research area. How so? Perhaps the following question could bring up the answer: how is it that an administrative core belonging to the Christian church had emerged within the northern limits of the Danube only towards the 14th century? Our scientific exploit is not thought as an answer to the above question, but rather as a reshaping of the analysis related to the topic of Christian communities within the northern Danube's area, as well as within the Transylvanian Carpathian inner arch. This reshaping is the result of a re-christening phenomenon, which took place during the 19th century.

¹ Titlul a fost sugerat de lucrare lui Richard A. Fletcher, *The conversion of Europe. From Paganism to Christianity (371-1386 AD)*, London, 1997.

The archaeological research of the 1960's and 1980's was struggling to reveal instruments that were supposed to enable the archaeological object to uncover information concerning the ethnic identity of the person who produced or used it at a certain point in time. The archaeological object's ethnic character drew up the course of debate within the Anglo-Saxon, German and French historiography and was to make its appearance inside the Romanian one only after the 1990's². The archaeological object's ethnic coordinates led to a theory that was to become a postulate of Romanian history. It stated that the Romans and later on the Dacian-Romans are easily to be identified from an archaeological point of view due to their higher cultural level. Their superiority is to be stated in relation to the foreign populations. Furthermore, their higher cultural level is to be noticed as a result of maintaining a sort of "conservatism" in respect to their funeral rite. Following this path, one should also state the connection between their funerary rite and the massive Christian characteristics within their communities. Another postulate reveals a sort of "belief" regarding the *early christening*, as well as a later survival of folk Christianity in all areas north from the Danube and even within the Carpathian arch. All Transylvanian archaeological exploits regarding the Early Middle Ages were therefore coordinated in relation to this postulate. The result was a research direction striving to prove the presence of an autochthonous Christian population that was at the same time culturally superior to the foreign ones.

More recent, the Romanian historical discourse attempts to take distance from all words deriving from the term *national* when referring to the Early Middle Ages. It therefore struggles to coin a new term placed closer to the realities of medieval society: *identity*. The concept of identity brings up a wide area of perception, starting with a political meaning by showing the affiliation to a privileged class, moving on to a religious meaning and ending even with a social perspective of the term identity. The research of *identity* drawn from the stance of archaeological discoveries was the very object of debate in one section of the *3rd International Conference of Medieval and Later Archaeology "Medieval Europe"*, entitled *Identity and Demarcation*³. Stelian Brezeanu is one to examine this topic within Romanian historiography. His exploit is likely to be therefore the result of this new movement characteristic to the European historiography. He is consequently known for his discourse about *identities and solidarities* in the Romania⁴. The postulate regarding the emergence of apostolic Christianity within the northern Danube populations⁵ has gained its place in historiography next to, or even prior to the one related to Romanian medieval solidarities.

The discourse regarding the generally spread Christianity within the population settled in southern Transylvania has frequently made use of the same arguments: the existence of Christian discoveries prior to the 7th century and the documented reference concerning the

² see Florin Curta (ed.), *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis. Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, (Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 12). Turnhout: Brepols, 2005; Florin Curta, *Some remarks on ethnicity in medieval archaeology*, in: Florin Curta, *Text, Context, History, and Archaeology. Studies in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Victor Spinei ed., București-Brăila, 2009, pp.293-319.

³ G. Helmig, Barbara Scholkmann, M. Untermann eds., *Centre. Region. Periphery – Medieval Europe Basel 2002*, II, Hertingen, 2002, p. 287-432.

⁴ Stelian Brezeanu, *Identități și solidarități medievale. Controverse istorice*, București, 2002.

⁵ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române. Manual pentru Seminariile teologice*, Sibiu, 1978; Antonie Plămădeală, *Romanitate, continuitate, unitate*, Sibiu, 1988.

bishop Hierotheus – bishop of Tourkia. He had allegedly received on behalf of the Byzantine imperial curia the mission to christen the territories north of the Danube. While studying this possibility, Alexandru Madgearu reached the conclusion that it is an unlikely one and stated that Hierotheus' mission rather took place in the area between the Mures River, the Tisz River and the Danube⁶. Archaeology has yet to bring other arguments in order to solve this debate. The circumstances that have been already proven until this point have led to the conclusion that Christianity was not a generally spread religion between the 7th and 10th centuries within the borders of the Transylvanian area. These circumstances are proven by the following arguments:

- The almost complete lack of Christian object dating back to the late 7th century and up to the late 9th one.
- The lack of any known religious structures, namely churches, between the above mentioned time period. The first known religious structure in Transylvania is the rotunda chapel in Alba Iulia. Nonetheless, a debate regarding the rotunda's construction phase still marks the dialogue between Romanian historians. Radu R. Heitel one of the archaeologists who studied the structure and published a series of various construction phases, starting with the late 9th century and ending with the mid of the 10th one.
- The lack of all documented references leading more or less obvious to information regarding a religious administrative structure present north of the Danube between the 7th and 10th centuries.

One can state that the path towards Christian missionary works had known a revival after the fall of the Avar population's military power, namely by the end of the 8th century. This path led straight to the area of the Carpathian inner arch. The re-birth of Christian religion in the area between the eastern Middle Danube and the northern Lower Danube had met all its necessary conditions by the 9th century and was marked by the rise of a new military power in this region, namely the Bulgarian Empire. The latter was the main representative of Byzantine culture within the northern Balkan area and the Carpathian southern arch as well.

⁶ Alexandru Madgearu, *Misiunea episcopului Hierotheus. Contribuții la istoria Transilvaniei și Ungariei în secolul al X-lea*, in *Revista Istorică*, SN, 194, V, 1-2, 1994, p. 147-154; , see also Alexandru Madgearu, *Romanizare și creștinare la nordul Dunării*, în: *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A. D. Xenopol"*, Iași, 31, 1994, p. 479-502.