

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL „ISIDOR TODORAN”

**The National, Religious and Cultural Life of the
Orthodox Romanians from Bârgău Valley
(18th-20th Centuries)**

**-DOCTORAL THESIS-
ABSTRACT**

Doctorate Coordinator,

Pr. Prof. Univ. Dr. Alexandru MORARU

Candidate,

Alin Georgian Constantin Miheștian

Cluj-Napoca

2018

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 8 |
| 1. Motivation of the thesis | 8 |
| 2. Actuality of the theme..... | 9 |
| 3. Stage of research | 11 |
| 4. Methods of research and structure of the thesis..... | 12 |
| I. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION. NEIGHBORS. NATURAL SETTING. BÂRGĂU AND ITS INHABITANTS..... | 16 |
| I.1. Geographic location, limits and neighbors..... | 16 |
| I.1.a. Historical-geographical considerations on Bârgău Valley | 17 |
| I.1.b. Old limits of Bârgău Valley. | 22 |
| I.1.c. New limits of Bârgău Valley | 24 |
| I.2. Neighbors..... | 26 |
| I.2.a. Geographical neighbors | 26 |
| I.2.b. Hydrographical neighbors | 26 |
| I.2.c. Administrative neighbors..... | 26 |
| I.3. General frame | 27 |
| I.3.a. Landscape | 27 |
| I.3.b. Hydrography..... | 31 |
| I.3.c. Climate..... | 35 |
| I.3.d. Flora and fauna | 36 |
| I.3.e. Toponymy of Bârgău Valley | 40 |
| I.3.f. Population and human settlements..... | 53 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| II. NATIONAL LIFE – THE HISTORY OF BÂRGĂU VALLEY..... | 73 |
| II.1. “Land of Bârgău” from ancient times to its militarization in 1784. The first documentary certification. | 73 |
| II.1.a. Archaeological vestiges..... | 73 |
| II.1.b. Ancient and old epoch..... | 75 |
| II.2. Land of Bârgău during the time of military border (1784-1851)..... | 90 |
| II.2.a. The time of Border Regiment (1784-1851)..... | 92 |
| II.2.b. The events from 1848-1849 in the Land of Bârgău | 98 |
| II.2.c. Preservation of the national awareness in the time of military border. Achievements in this stage. | 102 |
| II.3. Bârgău Valley between 1851-1947 | 108 |
| II.3.a. Demilitarization of Bârgău Valley (1851). Consequences..... | 108 |
| II.3.b. Fight for emancipation of the inhabitants from the Land of Bârgău..... | 110 |
| II.4. The period between 1918 and 1940..... | 141 |
| II.4.a. Agrarian reform from 1921 in the Land of Bârgău | 141 |
| II.4.b. Antifascist and anti-revisionist manifestation in Prundu Bârgăului, 1935-1936 | 149 |
| II.5. The period between 1940 and 1947..... | 152 |
| II.5.a. The Land of Bârgău under the fascist-horthyst occupation..... | 152 |
| II.5.b. Consequences of World War II..... | 154 |
| III. THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE ORTHODOX ROMANIAN FROM BÂRGĂU VALLEY | 161 |
| III.1. Historical-religious considerations | 161 |
| III.2. Micro-monographies. Parishes from Bârgău Valley. | 170 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| III.2.a. Rusu Bârgăului Parish..... | 170 |
| III.2.b. Josenii Bârgăului Parish..... | 173 |
| III.2.c. Mijlocenii Bârgăului Parish | 175 |
| III.2.d. Susenii Bârgăului Parish..... | 176 |
| III.2.e. Prundu Bârgăului Parish. | 178 |
| III.2.f. Tiha Bârgăului Parish | 180 |
| III.2.g. Mureşenii Bârgăului Parish. | 182 |
| III.2.h. Bistriţa Bârgăului Parish..... | 186 |
| III.2.i. Tureac Parish | 188 |
| III.2.j. Piatra Fântânele Parish and Monastery..... | 189 |
| III.3. Relations between Orthodox and other ethnic groups and cults from Bârgău Valley... | 194 |
| IV. CULTURAL-SCIENTIFIC, PUBLISHING, LITERARY AND CULTURAL-ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES. ETHNOGRAPHY AND FOLKLORE..... | 202 |
| IV.1. Cultural-scientific, publishing and literary activities..... | 202 |
| IV.1.a. Cultural associations and societies | 204 |
| IV.1.b. Cultural, laic and ecclesial personalities from Bârgău Valley..... | 213 |
| IV.1.c. The situation of schools in Bârgău Valley. General considerations. | 237 |
| IV.2. Ethnography and folklore | 273 |
| IV.2.a. Traditions for birth..... | 274 |
| IV.2.b. Wedding and wedding traditions | 281 |
| IV.2.c. Death and burial traditions..... | 295 |
| V. CONCLUSIONS..... | 302 |
| VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 307 |
| VII. APPENDICES..... | 324 |

Key words: national life, religious life, cultural life, Orthodoxy, Bârgău Valley, 18th-20th centuries, Bistrița-Năsăud

The PhD thesis *The National, Religious and Cultural Life of the Orthodox Romanians from Bârgău Valley (18th-20th Centuries)* wishes to be a research of scientific and documentary church history that fills in an empty place in the professional literature.

The world of Bârgău is a compact and resistant block of Orthodoxy and Romanian culture, of the idea of unity and liberty, illustrated magisterially through the long and fruitful relationship with Moldavia, through the sacrifice of many monks that founded monasteries on Bârgău Valley and of many others.

Together with my doctorate coordinator, I decided that it is useful and important to focus our endeavour on this particular period of time, from its militarization in 1783 to the 30th of August 1940, when most of Transylvania was annexed to Horthy Hungary, thus dramatically changing the destinies of its inhabitants. Both the period before militarization, that between wars and that post-war represent fragments of our history characterized by intense efforts to consolidate and modernize the rounded Romania

This thesis tries to identify and gather in one place the old data and documents with a monographic character on the land of Bârgău, emphasizing the fact that the Romanians in this region remained Orthodox despite of the critical times they went through. It wishes to be a complete and complex research on a fairytale valley from Bistrița-Năsăud County, the beautiful Bârgău Valley, a legendary valley that was heavily put to trial by the troubles of history.

Hopefully, this thesis represents an actual monographic endeavour intern and interdisciplinary through which we wish to observe social-cultural and spiritual realities of this area, perceived in its historical evolution, based on documents from the library and archives.

Up until now, Bârgău Valley was not thoroughly researched to compile a synthesis or a complete monography.

Regarding the structure of the thesis, one may distinguish four chapters, with their respective subchapters, each having its own theme.

The first chapter, *Geographic location. Neighbors. Natural setting. Bârgău and its inhabitants*, is divided into three subchapters and focuses in general on the placement of Bârgău

Valley within Bistrița+Năsăud County, analyzing the geology of the formation of the valley, old and new borders, geographical, hydrographical and administrative neighbors of this area, analyzing therewith the historical-geographical considerations that preceded this land on the banks of Bistrița Ardeleană. Using the geographic, analytic and comparative methods, I tried a thorough analysis, observing periods from the history of this land, which belonged from a historical-administrative point of view at times to John called Henul, other times to the noble connected families Bethlen and Apaffi, then to Bistrița City and then again to the Bethlens until it was militarized in 1783. We tried an analysis, using the comparative method, regarding the toponymy of the words from the land of Bârgău, both through the research and comparison of the different hypotheses of several researchers, to identify the origin of the word “bârgău” and of other words used in these lands. In the last part of this chapter I used the chronological and descriptive method with a historical character to evaluate the data regarding the territory and the territorial-administrative evolution of the population and human settlements on Bârgău Valley, most of them bondmen, but also free rangers, after the foundation of the 2nd Regiment for border, in a long process of consolidation both of their destiny and of the communities, related to the evolutions of the Transylvanian Principality.

The second chapter is composed of six subchapter and analyzes the *National life – The history of Bârgău Valley*, from ancient times until the end of the 20th century, starting with the archaeological vestiges discovered on the territory of various villages from this valley, which prove an area that was inhabited from the Paleolithic, using the historical and chronological method to analyze events from the daily life, the fight for unity and emancipation of the inhabitants from Bârgău Valley, and then aspects of the manifestations through various memoranda, petitions and “complaints” addressed either to the Court of Vienna, or to other “masters” that dominated the area of Bârgău, all these for the aspiration to achieve the unity purpose of a rounded Romania. This chapter analyzes in general the bibliographical sources both unedited through the research of the national Archives, manuscripts and sources of oral history, and an impressive number of studies on this subject. The whole bibliography consulted allowed us to identify and put an emphasis on the problems that haven’t been approached until now or seemed uninteresting to the researchers.

The third chapter of the thesis speaks about *The religious life of the Orthodox Romanian from Bârgău Valley*, in which we wish to retrace the manner in which the Romanian

institutional structures of the Church, both Orthodox and United, helped modernize the Romanian society, adapting to the new realities, both following the centralizing decisions of the bishops from Sibiu and Blaj and as a consequence of the local requests, and last but not least of the relations between these structures and the national movement. This chapter aims to present a micro-monography for each of the parishes from Bârgău Valley, offering an image of the institutional church life through their short history and showing in the same time that their activity and the pastoral-missionary activity of the priests, although accomplished in troubled times, preserved the faith of most of the population, mainly Orthodox. An important contribution was given by the ecclesial structures, from indirect support to involving into the major actions of the national fight through the interposition of a passive tactics and memorandum action to the national movement of the Romanians from Transylvania.

The fourth chapter of the thesis, *Cultural-scientific, publishing, literary and cultural-artistic activities. Ethnography and folklore*, analyzes in the first subchapter the cultural activity motivated by the “permanent spiritual torment of a whole nation”. In order to achieve complete national and state unity, the cultural societies, gatherings, houses of lectures during the Austrian-Hungarian rule represented centres of education, spiritual fortresses for the Romanians of these lands, culminating with the unification on the 1st of December 1918, in Alba-Iulia, of all the Romanians. During the inter-war period, the Romanian society went through a complex endeavour of political, economical-social and cultural reformulation in the context offered by the unified state. The laws of education together with the adoption of the social modifications, of the Constitution from 1923, the agrarian reform and that of the universal vote encouraged the modernization of the society. Because of this situation, the spread of culture, including the rural area, becomes extremely important, being a premise for the evolution of the individual and community. The progress of the state through the spread of culture based on the knowledge of the social-economic and cultural realities proved to be a consistent preoccupation for the intellectuals of Bârgău, in order to be “a centre of light and a guide for those who want an improvement of the villages through the spread of culture”. The second subchapter speaks about the most important area of ritology: family traditions. The ethnographical descriptions are divided into three sections referring to birth, wedding and funeral practices, a special section being dedicated to the party traditions characteristic to Bârgău Valley.

The thesis, *The National, Religious and Cultural Life of the Orthodox Romanians from Bârgău Valley (18th-20th Centuries)*, represents our wish to prove in a concrete manner that in the area of Bârgău Romanians continued to live from ancient times until today, the thesis thus becoming a monography which speaks about the national, religious and cultural history of this valley from Bistrița-Năsăud county.

In the first part, with a geographical character, our thesis presented thoroughly this region, inhabited from the Paleolithic, proving that from the point of view of the placement, Bârgău Valley is a real “Terra Incognita”, with a fairytale landscape, of unique beauty, with mild slopes dominated by volcanic peaks, with natural glades and springs, broadleaf and coniferous forests, orchards and fields, flowers, meadows and good people who live in a series of villages: BÂRGAIE.

Any attempt to decipher the complex environment in which the inhabitants of Bârgău live is an approach that finds a place near the hearts of a community, that the inhabitants of this region are agile and hard-working, and also smart.

They are carved in the eternity of the mountains that guard them and know how to defend their interests, and in time, when a foreign master came upon them, they stood tall and did not obey cowardly.

Creators of beauty and culture oriented towards the world and eternity on this valley, always knew how to sing its beauty and everlastingness, and the builders of this eternity of wonderful accomplishments are the people of this region, they are brothers with the forest that they never betrayed, just like they didn't betray their love for their country or their passion for animal husbandry.

They love their origins, their lands and their traditions, they cherish their tradition and culture and they have the power to look into the eyes of those they talk to.

In conclusion, human settlements on Bârgău Valley knew the following evolution: at first there was a village community “Borgo” or “Bârgău” that was free and then – vassal community – which formed “Bârgăul de Jos”. Then, through land clearing and swarming to the East “Bârgăul de Sus” was formed and between them “Bârgăul de Mijloc”. So the old village community “Borgo” became a feudal territory during the reign of King Carol Robert, being possessed between 1308 and 1342 (the first mention in documents 1311) by the noble families Apaffi and Bethlen (of Romanian origin), then by John Henul with the support of the king we

mentioned, and then in 1386 it passed again into the possession of the Bethlen nobles, whose heirs sold the domain in 1506 to Bistrița City and buy it back in 1552, maintaining possession until 1784, when Bârgău Region is militarized into the 2nd Regiment for the border of Năsăud that lasted until 1851.

The history of Bârgău Region, for more than six decades (1784-1851) combines with the history of the 2nd Romanian Regiment for border no. 17, officially named at the beginning “Zweites walachen grenz-infanterie-regiment” and then “II walachen grenz-infanterie-regiment nr. 17”, and from 1849, following the petition of the rangers from Năsăud border to the Imperial Court and the gatherings from Năsăud from 10th of July and 13th-14th September 1848: “II Romanen Grenz-Infanterie-Regiment nr. 17”.

Militarization was considered by most of the inhabitants to be in favour of their situation, because of the promises made by the official representatives of the Imperial Court. That is why on 31st of January 1784, king Joseph 2nd issued a decree regarding the voluntary affiliation of the villages from the vicinity of the military border.

The 2nd Regiment was formed of the Romanians from 44 villages on the territory of Rodna Valley, Bârgău, Șieu and Mureș Valleys, and on its insignia it was written “Virtus Romana Rediviva” and the circumscription: Sigil II Legion Valache no. 17, both stating the origin of the rangers and dominating with authority for a long time the History of Năsăud and Bârgău Region.

After the militarization, the former bondmen became free people, and in exchange for this liberty they had to pay various taxes, as well as taxes for wood and meadows.

When the Revolution from 1848 was defeated, the land of Bârgău became a territory for military operations, which transformed the villagers from that region into a community which payed royal taxes for houses and land. In 1861 the “Romanian Autonomous District of Năsăud” was founded and the Romanian language was introduced in all the public institutions.

Between 1867 and 1876, following the unification with the District of Bistrița, the Bistrița-Năsăud County was founded. The villages from Bârgău became part of the Iad subdivision from an administrative point of view, with the headquarters in Prundu Bârgăului. The patrimony that passed to the former rangers helped them have access to culture and to contribute to its spread. Teachers, priest and villagers from this region were part of this fight of the “memorandum movement”, and they had an important contribution to the emancipation of the community.

After the Great Union from the 1st of December 1918 and the completion of the Romanian-national-unitary state, starting with November 10th 1918, the national councils and village guards were formed all along Bârgău Valley. But then came the year of the horrid Second Vienna Award, when this valley was annexed to the Horthy Hungary and the destinies of its inhabitants changed dramatically. All the changes that followed created among the local population real painful moments that culminated with the martyrdom of the 7 men under the sky of Heniu.

With good and bad, the development of the society from Bârgău Valley at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 20th century is broadly part of the general evolution of the society from Transylvania. The rural community, this closed world beneficiary of old traditions started to change both on the level of social relations and on the level of inter-human relations. The impact of the new realities after 1951 forced the community of rangers to a permanent dialogue, to slow but sure transformations and to the connection with the general tendencies of evolution. Integrated within the conditions from Transylvania, the area had an evolution with pronounced peculiarities, in which the dominant element was the connection to the spirit of the time.

Taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the means of communication with Bukovina – Joseph’s road – the communities from Bârgău Valley integrated into the general process of evolution of the area of former border regiment from Năsăud.

Even though they were militarized later on, they followed the same trajectory of evolution, in which the bi-univocal relation between “what they gave” and “what they received” defined the level of involvement into the gear of the military system, as well as the expectations – not all accomplished – to transfer its benefits upon the community.

After the disband of the border system and the administrative “homogenization” in 1876, the trajectory was that of the general evolution of the dualist system Austrian-Hungarian.

Important transformations took place when the territory returned to the historical matrix, Romania, in 1918.

Important mutations produced as a consequence of the two actions of redistribution of the land, after the agrarian reforms in 1921 and 1945.

In this picture, sketched broadly, we also find the villages from Bârgău Valley.

And the documents from the corpus of the thesis come to support, by mentioning some defining moments of this trajectory, the statements from the pages of this historical presentation according to the perennial formula *days go past and days come still*.

The structure of the Romanian society at the end of the 18th century and the last decades of the following century determined the Romanians' position in the political and social life of the multi-confessional, ethnical and cultural space of Transylvania.

At the end of the 19th century, statistics indicate a Romanian population of over 50%, increasing, and from this ration, more than 90% represented the rural area (bondmen or free villagers).

The Orthodox Church in its existence proved to be the strongest institution that stood against the troubles of times. It is deeply anchored in the life of the country and structurally linked to the life of the Romanian people that it helped and continues to help thus mixing with the community the ideals through its ministers, always maintaining alive the ancient faith, the love for God and for the neighbors.

Although dominated by tradition the religious background of the Orthodox Romanian from Ardeal, remained impenetrable to the cultural influences in this region, it will gradually superpose to a "ethno-linguistic and ethno-confessional diversity that will give a characteristic touch to this civilization", offering it a cosmopolite aspect. Hence, the end of the 18th century characterized by confessional bipolarity marks the two confessions, Orthodox and Greek-Catholic, uniting and separating them in the same time, while they both fought either separately or conjointly to preserve the national characteristics from Ardeal.

Thus, the collaboration between the two sister churches took various forms and constituted a proof of the fight for the organization of confessional education, for the retrieving of ranger funds, succeeding, despite the confessional disunion, to guide and support financially one of the oldest and most prestigious networks of Romanian education in Transylvania.

The intellectuality and the priests from Bârgău supported the memorandum movement not only in writing, but also with their presence in the political centre of the movement. In the two World Wars, the Romanians from Bârgău sacrificed over 600 lives to which we add the "martyrdom of the 7 men under the sky of Heniu".

The people from Bârgău knew how to burn for their great ideals that were fueled especially in the schools that gave beautiful and smart people.

This continuity of the land of Bârgău was also given by their will to preserve what they achieved, and this will is expressed by the specific traditions as a form of “social life” that rhymes and gives meaning “to the daily life and to feasts”, such as the important moments within a family.