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**The Administrative Activity of the Orthodox Bishopric of Arad
Reflected in Circulars (1780-1800)**

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Summary

Present research, *The administrative activity of the Orthodox Bishopric of Arad reflected in Circulars (1780-1800)*, aims to bring to light certain aspects that relate to local and national history and the interpretation of this topic is based on a series of works that points elements related to the history of Banat and Transylvania within the Habsburg Empire. Romanian historiography has published on this topic different works, but the unique character of this research is made by the archive found discovered and not fully exploited until now.

The Romanian historiography has begun to focus more and more on local history, all the elements that define these communities and the mechanism by which they functioned and coexisted in relation with others. Researching aspects related to private life or the history of collective mentalities that are based on unique sources and the possibility of completing it is based on existing historiography that can lead to the highlighting of a complete picture that captures an important period of national or universal history.

The age of Enlightenment arises some of the most important theories, the impulse of reason also influenced the mentality of the society at the end of the Eighteenth century, which under the pressure of some secular or religious institutions, received the message and applied it. The modernization gradually manifested itself, also depending on the area and the territories, the system of government or the openness of the communities to the principles promoted by its representatives.

The last two decades of The Eighteenth century represents for Romanian historiography, but also for the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church, a stage in which Romanians as a nation and as representatives of the Orthodox cult were noted in the Habsburg Empire. The

release of the Edict of tolerance by Emperor Joseph II was one of the most important reforms hitherto implemented by the Habsburg rule in favor of the Romanians. At the same time, other nations and religious cults benefited from this reform. The reference point for the beginning of asserting the national and religious identity it is the reign of Emperor Joseph II, and then, having the foundation prepared, the Romanians from the Banat area and from the other provinces under the Habsburg rule continue to fight for the recognition of full rights, chosen because it was known by the Vienna Court that "These poor Romanians, who are undoubtedly the oldest and most numerous inhabitants of Transylvania ...".¹

In order to be able to reconstruct the history of a restricted universe of a rural community under the jurisdiction of a bishop, in this case the Bishopric of Arad, it is necessary that in addition to sources also an attention from the receiver to the issuer, not just the reverse. The mentality of the rural world has been researched from several perspectives, but the analysis of the message of the circulars from the perspective of the collective mentalities, of the impact that their content has had in changing the life of the rural community for the better has been less addressed. A journey in this space opens up new opportunities for exploiting archival documents, especially since sometimes more factual and eventual findings have been made. All these elements in one place produce a unitary whole that creates a world full of life with good and evil.

The three parts of life that Arthur Schopenhauer called "Love, Life and Death" were also the core of the circulars issued by the Bishopric of Arad during the administration of the Serbian bishops under the coordination of the Metropolitan of Sremski Karlovci. The family, formed, even if rarely as a fruit of love, represents a first part of life, the life-giving one in its turn. All the matters related to these issues were included in the circulars issued between 1780 and 1800 in different forms but aimed at reinforcing the conception of the Romanian peasant towards family, children and the rest of the community. Life, which is much more complex in its sense of daily life than that of family, was the most visible part of the church documents. From the interaction with the priest and up to his role in the society and the way in which he had to make the message of the Church and the State understood, the circulars have somehow drawn the direction of the two entities on their way to modernization. The last

¹ Ileana Bozac, Teodor Pavel, *Călătoria împăratului Iosif al II-lea în Transilvania la 1773*, vol. I, Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, p. 747.

stage of life, death was not omitted from the content of the acts. Although there are few references to attitudes to the last mystery of life, where these references appear are profound and with a direct message to the community and, of course, to its central element, Man.

Structure

The present study has the role of building a fresco of the rural communities in the jurisdiction of the Bishopric of Arad based on unique archival documents, which transcribed and interpreted with the help of historiography have outlined an image of what the relationship between priest and Christians meant in certain parishes. The incursion through the documents of the Eighteenth century determined the realization of a most authentic picture of the Orthodox parishes in the Banat area. The combination of the church circulars and the specialized literature tried to draw a world that at the end of the century of light was always changing and which was beginning to enter the path of modernization.

The positioning of the subject approached in a historiographical scheme, both national and international, was the first step in the analysis on which the work is based. Without a clear delimitation of the existing historiography and an establishment of the sources approached in the exercise of the research, the study topic cannot be conceived as a unitary whole. For this reason, the first chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the analysis of the sources used but also to the historiography existing at the time of beginning the documentation. Another aspect to be dealt with in this first part of the research is its structure, the way the chapters are divided according to the subject and the theme treated by the circulars transcribed from the collection of documents of the ecclesiastical institutions from the National Archives - Satu Mare County. These documents deal with issues related to the establishment of a family, the birth of children, baptism, aspects that refer to the daily life and its development in the rural communities of the late eighteenth century, and not least regulations regarding, we could he says, organizing the end of life and the death ceremony in the same communities. All these key elements that compose the text of the circulars have a common element, namely the issuer, the Bishopric of Arad. Last but not least, the first chapter points to some questions related to the research methodology, the working method

but also about the synthesis of the most important information that the circulars contain in connection with the existing historiography related to the topic of the present research.

The contextualization of the research topic and its introduction into a temporary space was the first step in the analysis that underlies this work. The historical space under examination extends from 1780, the ascension of Emperor Joseph II to the throne and ends with 1800, still during the reign of Francis II, but at the beginning of the 19th century, one based on rationalist-scientific conceptions, different from the century of lights. The second chapter of the present paper addresses the issue of links and collaboration between the State and the Church in order to convey the desired message to the community. It is structured in three sub-chapters that address each reign of the successive emperors of the Habsburg Empire, Joseph II (1780-1790), Leopold II (1790-1792) and Francis II (1792-1815). Although the present research does not cover the entire period in which the last emperor of the Holy Roman-German Empire reigned, all this time interval of two decades focuses on the relationship between the State and the Church with all its defining elements. The presentation of the activity of each ruler of the Habsburg emperors in the epochs presented is based exactly on this collaboration between the two institutions, lay and sacred. It is about the one who norms, from the legislative point of view, and the one who transmits the message of the throne to the subjects. Given that the main sources of this research are circular issued by the Orthodox Bishopric of Arad, it is necessary to review the status of Orthodox Christians in the Habsburg Empire and how it evolved according to the policy they have implemented by the three emperors. The image that this chapter wants to convey is of a unitary whole formed of the State and the Church that issue norms and regulations in order to modernize the society of the late Eighteenth century.

The third chapter deals with a first common information that can be found in the text of the circulars from the beginning of the study period, namely from 1780 until 1800. One of the major themes to which these documents refer is the family and all the elements that they hold of its constitution. For example, there are regulations regarding the organization of the wedding, the route that future brides have to follow to hold the wedding ceremony, but also stipulations that sanction some deviations that the population made. Given these elements, the Episcopate sent in the parishes of its jurisdiction measures to address these problems and by applying them in the community to solve them. Other aspects of the family life, which the

circulars contain, are those which refer to the birth and baptism of children. Christianity of the newborns was very important for the institution of the Church, especially as these Orthodox communities were restricted, and the perpetuation of worship in existing families was necessary. The state transmitted through the sacred institution and its norms regarding matrimonial aspects. These were not different during the reign of the three emperors, Joseph II, Leopold II and Francis II. Some of the most circulars on this subject were issued during Joseph II, this being explained mainly by the system of reforms that he wanted to implement. Due to the short period of only two years, during Leopold's time, their number decreases, so that later, in the time of Emperor Francis, we find again a series of rules related to family life and its constitution. An issue dealt with during the period 1792-1800 was also that of the marriages of the soldiers, those regimented and who participated in the war with France. Matrimonial aspects were one of the important topics that the Bishopric of Arad wanted to point to during the time period 1780-1800.

The next part of the research focused on aspects related to daily life or, better said, everything related to the daily movements in rural society of the last two decades of the eighteenth century. The main subject of the analysis is made by the priest and the community, the connection between it and the population, but also its role in transmitting the moralizing and teaching message for Christians in the parish he serves. In the first sub-chapter dedicated to the reign of Emperor Joseph II, there are pointed out the aspects that somehow interweave the substrate of the emperor's illuminated reforms with the norms present in the text of the circulars issued by the bishops of Arad between 1780 and 1790. It is about the communion existing in the parish, the situation of education and the perspective offered by the education of minors, the degree of preparation of the priest from a cultural point of view or the role of the priest in combating the deviant way of life of some people in the locality. Interestingly, in all these regulations sent to the parishes, the priest represents the center or nucleus that sets in motion the daily life of the Orthodox society. The death of Emperor Joseph II and the renunciation of most of the reforms implemented by him made the taking of the throne by Leopold II at a key moment for the Orthodox in the Banat area who was under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Sremski Karlovci. It is about the Synod of Timisoara. The reign of the former Grand Duke of Tuscany was a short one of only two years in which the daily aspects were summarized at the mentioned synod or the war that the

Habsburg Empire carried on with the Ottoman Empire. Of course, there are some hypostases that take up the theme of the circulars issued until then by the Bishopric of Arad. The drawing of a vast picture of the late eighteenth century can be done for the reign of Emperor Francis II who rules the Habsburg Empire more than his father, Leopold. Even if the entire period is not covered, everyday aspects are complex at this time. From issues related to education to the problems related to the vices of rural communities, from the system of population registration and to the situation of recruitment and participation of men in the war with France, the circulars issued between 1792-1800 are based on real problems with that the rural area, and not only, faced. The relationship between the Church and the State regarding these pieces of daily life has established a balance in shaping the Romanian Orthodox society in the Banat area.

The last part of the present research concerns the end-of-life aspects, death. A series of circulars, even if in a much smaller number than the ones referring to daily life and family life, refer to rules and procedures that establish concrete measures regarding the preparation of the human for later life. Death, as part of life, for those who remain, is treated in the circulars issued by the Bishopric of Arad, especially from a technical perspective, we could tell. All the norms stipulated by the State and the Church refer to the burial process, the funeral rite and the measures to be taken after the uninhabited body leaves the house and is taken to the cemetery. These are issues ultimately related to the hygiene of the house and the conduct of the community at the time of death. In addition to these aspects which are strictly for death as the last mystery of life, there are references in the circulars that establish the procedure to be followed by the parishes in the case of the death of the Habsburg emperors. Two such events take place in the period under discussion, namely, the death of Joseph II and shortly after the death of Leopold II. In this context, other elements that are not related to the death and burial ceremony and to the feeling of fidelity that the subjects can nourish or with the equality that death offers by defying social ranks can be surprised. Considering the period in which Francis II reigned, it is necessary to mention the questions regarding the death of the soldiers, issues addressed even by the circulars issued during this period by Bishop Pavel Avacumovici. Although the references to the ritual of death are few compared to other chapters in which the information found in the circulation was stubborn, this chapter completes a final picture of the life that these documents are trying to paint.

The research ends with a part dedicated to the Annexes, the circulars having the most important role in structuring the present research. Their choice was made at random without being fully implemented. Parts of these annexes were either not used or were used very little in this work. The first part of the annex is represented by the facsimile circular, the archived document in the original photograph followed, of course, by its transcription, without much intervention in the language of the time.

Methodology

Considering the interpretative character of the research in its writing, a multidisciplinary approach is needed that offers a complex perspective on the period 1780-1800. Most of the content of the paper will be data interpretation, a comparative analysis of information found in archives as well as in bibliography. The interpretation of the document will be done according to the problems that the respective epoch is facing but also the political and cultural aspects characteristic of the light age. One of the main research methods addressed, as with most works in the historiography field, is the longitudinal type, more precisely an analysis of the facts and events in their evolution, in order to discover the territorial and temporal conjuncture of them and the communities involved. The history of mentalities is another branch approached, offering the possibility to use a broad set of tools to enter the psychology of the societies of the late eighteenth century, more precisely those of orthodox rite in the Banat area.

The information found in the sources must be analyzed from several perspectives, from cause to effect. For this reason, a transcript of the contents of the circulars is necessary for a more accurate and accurate analysis of them. With the beginning of the sixteenth century the writing of the Romanian language was done using the Cyrillic alphabet. This alphabet had 43 signs, which kept the Slavonic names and implicitly, were borrowed in Romanian writing. In writing the Romanian language, "Romanian graphemes are distinguished from similar graphemes in Slavonic language by a nuanced phonetic value, adapted to the specificity of the Romanian language". Some of the signs of the Romanian Cyrillic alphabet have no meaning, as some created more "confusion in the graphic

expression of the Romanian vowels”. In the case of sounds, two or three graphic signs have been identified, even if they do not "correspond to a differentiated value”, but there have also been ”special signs for compound signs”. Until the second half of the Nineteenth century these signs were used less and less, and were eliminated around 1859. As for the grammatical aspect of the text, it was tried to render the correct and current form to the detriment of the one used by the author, in the case of interpreting the documents within the chapters. For example, *dela* becomes *de la*. The manuscripts, since they are written from 1782, were difficult to decipher, plus some spelling or indecipherable words could be found in the original text. The form of the text has retained the original one even though the language is sometimes specific to the epoch, and the message was sometimes processed by the representatives of the Episcopate and stylized within the meaning of the subjects, often illiterate.