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**PhD. Thesis**

**– Abstract –**

**The Orthodox Church and Military Clergy of the Habsburg Monarchy  
between the Peace Treaty of Carlowitz and the Outbreak of the First World  
War (1699-1914)**

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## Table of contents

<b>Argumentation</b> .....	5
<b>I. Introduction</b> .....	8
<b>1.1. Theme relevance</b> .....	8
<b>1.2. Research goals</b> .....	11
<b>1.3. Historiography</b> .....	12
<b>1.3.1. The Orthodox Church of the Austrian Empire</b> .....	12
<b>1.3.2. The Orthodox Church of Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina</b> .....	17
<b>1.3.3. Religious assistance in the k.u.k. – Imperial-Royal army</b> .....	25
<b>1.3.4. Religious assistance in the Romanian Army</b> .....	28
<b>II. The Habsburg Monarchy between the Peace Treaty of Carlowitz and the First World War</b> .....	31
<b>2.1. The Habsburg Empire – a Danubian empire</b> .....	31
<b>2.2. Reformism and Josephinism in the name of enlightened absolutism</b> .....	34
<b>2.3. The Austrian Empire from Franz I to the 1848 Movement and neoabsolutism</b> .....	36
<b>2.4. The Danubian monarchy in the age of dualism (1867-1918)</b> .....	40
<b>2.4.1. The administration (1878) and annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908)</b> .....	44
<b>2.5. „Finis Austriae” (1918)</b> .....	47
<b>III. The Orthodox Church of the Habsburg Empire between 1690 and 1918</b> .....	49
<b>3.1. The Orthodox Church of the Habsburg and Austrian Empire</b> .....	51
<b>3.1.1. “The great Serbian immigration” of 1690 and the “Illyrian privileges”</b> .....	52
<b>3.1.2. The organisation and jurisdiction of the Metropolia of Carlowitz</b> .....	59

3.1.2.1. The Episcopate of Ardeal.....	68
3.1.2.2. The Episcopate of Bukovina.....	78
3.1.2.3. The Episcopate of Dalmatia.....	93
3.1.2.4. The parishes of the Greek-Walachian trade companies.....	105
3.1.3. The demographic aspect and the order of the diptych.....	110
3.2. The labels of the Orthodox: from “schismatics” and “united” to “Greek-Oriental”.....	123
3.3. Orthodoxy under the pressure of 19 <sup>th</sup> -century nationalism.....	138
3.3.1. The Serbian Metropolia of Carlowitz.....	143
3.3.2. The Metropolia of the Romanians of Transylvania and Hungary.....	150
3.3.3. The Metropolia of Bukovina and Dalmatia.....	156
3.3.4. The Metropolias of Bosnia and Herzegovina.....	165
IV. Religious assistance in the Imperial-Royal army from the 18 <sup>th</sup> to the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.....	173
4.1. The history of religious assistance in the Habsburg armies up until the 18 <sup>th</sup> century.....	173
4.2. “The superior chaplain” of the Habsburg army (1643-1773).....	178
4.3. “The Apostolic Vicariate of the Army” (1773-1914).....	187
4.3.1. The founding of the Apostolic Vicariate of the imperial army in 1773.....	187
4.3.2. The organisation and functioning of the Apostolic Vicariate of the Army..	190
4.3.3. “Vikarii apostolici Castrensis” – the apostolic vicars of the army.....	205
4.3.4. Military chaplains.....	209
4.3.4.1. Protestant military chaplains.....	220
4.3.4.2. Military rabbis and imams.....	224

4.4. The archives of the “Apostolic Vicariate of the Army” in Vienna.....	226
4.4.1. The history and organisational structure of the vicariate archives.....	227
4.4.2. The fund of documents of the vicariate archives .....	229
<b>V. The Orthodox military clergy between the reign of Maria Theresa and the First World War.....</b>	<b>235</b>
5.1. The beginnings of Orthodox ministry among border regiments.....	235
5.2. The first Orthodox military clerics in the imperial armies.....	239
5.3. Orthodox chaplains in the Napoleonic Wars.....	244
5.4. The developments of the last two decades of peace of the reign of Franz I.....	253
5.5. The institutionalisation of permanent Orthodox chaplains in the Austrian army..	261
5.5.1. The Orthodox chaplains of infantry regiments from 1834 to 1868.....	268
5.6. The transformations of the Austrian-Hungarian dualism era.....	280
5.7. Orthodox chaplains in active military service between 1869 and 1914.....	292
<b>VI. Concluding considerations.....</b>	<b>304</b>
<b>VII. Abstract.....</b>	<b>312</b>
<b>VIII. Appendices.....</b>	<b>317</b>
8.1. Cartographic appendices.....	317
8.2. Photographic appendices.....	322
8.3. Documentary appendices.....	329
<b>IX. Bibliography.....</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>374</b>

## **The Orthodox Church and Military Clergy of the Habsburg Monarchy between the Peace Treaty of Carlowitz and the Outbreak of the First World War (1699-1914)**

### **Keywords:**

Habsburg Empire, Austro-Hungary, military border, Romanian Orthodox Church, Serbian Orthodox Church, Apostolic Vicariate of the Army, Imperial-Royal army, military clergy, orthodox military priests, XVIIIth-XXth century.

### **Abstract:**

The history of the Christian Orthodox Church of Central and Eastern Europe has been deeply marked by the political regimes which have dominated the region along the centuries. Among them, the Habsburg Monarchy played a decisive role in the evolution of ecclesiastical life from the 17<sup>th</sup> through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Orthodox Church of Transylvania, Banat, Hungary, Bukovina, Vojvodina, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Galicia, Dalmatia, northern Serbia and north-eastern Italy bears deep traces of the political tutelage of the Habsburg dynasty. Due to the different legal and sociopolitical status of these provinces within the empire, the historical evolution of the Orthodox Church went through times of persecution and oppression, as was the case in Transylvania, as well as flourishing times under the direct and careful supervision of the state, which, through legislative measures, became involved in the organisation and administration of ecclesiastical life, the hierarchy, monastic life and the possessions of the Church, the manners of public religious manifestation, the education of the clergy and the structure of confessional education.

The reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II aimed for the administrative and legal centralisation and uniformisation of the empire and sought to subordinate all institutions, including the church, to state interests, which impacted the Orthodox Church as well. By means of imperial decrees, all the Orthodox episcopates in the empire became subordinate to the spiritual jurisdiction and canonical authority of the Metropolia of Carlowitz. The confessional tolerance decreed by Emperor Joseph II in 1781 and the 1791 decisions of Hungarian and

Transylvanian diets released the Orthodox Church of Hungary and Transylvania from the bonds of medieval legislation, while the legislative article XX of 1848 granted all recognised denominations in Hungary equal standing before the law and guaranteed the right of Orthodox people to freely manage their ecclesiastical and educational activities. The Romanian 1848 generation reasserted the firm desire for the ecclesiastical and political emancipation of the Romanians in the Austrian Empire, launching a petitionary campaign seeking to reinstate the Romanian Orthodox metropolia of Transylvania and have it include all the Orthodox Romanians in the empire. During the two decades that followed, their battle for the hierarchy's separation from the Serbians led to the founding of the Metropolia of Transylvania and Hungary and the Metropolia of Bukovina and Dalmatia. The Austrian-Hungarian Empire's taking of Bosnia and Herzegovina under its administration (1878), followed by annexation (1908), led to the creation of a fourth Orthodox metropolitan province, independent of the other three, with its seat in Sarajevo, which maintained its spiritual and canonical ties to the Ecumenical Patriarchate until the collapse of the monarchy, while enjoying broad autonomy, which had been obtained thanks to Viennese support.

The army played a central part in the history of the monarchy. Ever since the Middle Ages, imperial authorities granted special attention to the religious assistance provided to soldiers and officers deployed on the battlefield. In order to organise religious assistance, in 1643, Emperor Ferdinand III created a "Military Pastoral Service", led by a "superior military chaplain", whose task was to supervise the work of military priests, who were usually selected from among the members of the Jesuit order. The abolition of this order in 1773 made it necessary to reorganise religious assistance in the institutional form of the Apostolic Vicariate of the Army, founded by Maria Theresa, with the blessing of Pope Clement VIII. The Vicariate, which lasted from 1773 to 1918, had its seat in Vienna and was led by a Roman Catholic bishop mandated by the emperor and the pope to manage the spiritual life of active soldiers and officers both in times of peace and of war. The Apostolic Vicariate and its military chaplains functioned independently from civil church authority, conducting their administrative, sacramental and predicatory activities according to their own norms and regulations, established by the Vicariate in agreement with the military aulic authorities and sanctioned by the emperor. From the moment they came and officially joined the army, military priests were placed under the ecclesiastical authority of the Apostolic Vicariate of the Army and under the military authority of the Ministry of War. Military

clergy were counted with the officers and received their wages from the army budget, with chaplains being able to obtain military distinctions and ranks, wearing their own uniform and enjoying a decent pension once relieved of active duty. Military churches were set up for conducting religious ceremonies, all regiments being equipped with permanent or mobile military chapels, which came with the objects, books and vestments required for religious services and ceremonies. Military and imperial authorities granted special attention to the adequate organisation of religious assistance for the soldiers and officers deployed in all of the monarchy's military units, as historical experience showed that military priests exerted a positive influence on the morale of the troops during battles and on the moral behaviour of the men at arms, while also contributing to the strengthening of soldiers' sense of patriotism and loyalty to the sovereign and the Habsburg dynasty.

Upon the request of Metropolitan Pavel Nenadovic, Maria Theresa (1740-1780) and Josef II (1780-1790) employed the first Orthodox military priests, first for border regiments during military conflicts, then permanently for military units that comprised a significant number of Orthodox soldiers. Orthodox chaplains had the same pastoral-missionary and administrative-patriotic tasks and duties as their Catholic counterparts and, from a military standpoint, were subordinate to the army's central and regional authorities, while, ecclesiastically, they answered to the Apostolic Vicariate and the bishops of the dioceses they belonged to, who had recommended them for the position of military chaplain. The Orthodox chaplains were hired by the Aulic War Council, and, after 1848, by the Ministry of War, following a bureaucratic process that went through several well-configured stages. The first step was taken by the military authorities, who launched an appeal to Orthodox episcopates, who, in turn, notified their subordinate clergymen of the competition for the position of military chaplain, outlining the abilities, tasks and wages of a chaplain. The selected candidate was then recommended to the military authorities in Vienna. In 1858, the Ministry of War approved the increasing of the number of permanent Orthodox chaplains in times of peace by introducing an Orthodox military priest position in all the regiments made up of one thousand Orthodox soldiers. Consequently, the number of Orthodox military priests rose from the five that were hired in 1834 to seven in 1858 and then to nine in 1860. In 1834, for economic and military reasons, the aulic authorities tried to impose a rule according to which the priests to be employed as military chaplains had to be unmarried men, hieromonks, widowers or, if married, childless. In spite of repeated calls to

that effect, the Ministry of War was forced to make concessions and bypass this rule, for the simple reason that Orthodox hierarchs were unable to find enough candidates to fit that profile, as the number of monastic clergymen was extremely low, while celibacy among the secular clergy was alien to the Orthodox tradition.

Religious assistance in the Imperial-Royal army was reorganised in 1869, after the institution of Austrian-Hungarian dualism. The administration of the Apostolic Vicariate was simplified and the number of military clergymen reduced by abolishing the positions of regiment chaplain and creating garrison chaplain positions, who were in charge of the units in the 16 military districts. The 1869 regulations for military clergy provided for nine Orthodox chaplain positions for the entire common Imperial-Royal army, the other priests who had worked among the active troops of the army being relieved of active duty. The reduction of the number of army clerics was compensated for by the Ministry of War by resorting to the services of civil parish clergy, mandated by military and church authorities to meet the spiritual needs of all the active members of the army in the garrisons without a chaplain of their own, free of charge. Orthodox chaplains enjoyed the same rights and equal treatment before civil and martial law as the entire military clergy. In 1896, a superior Orthodox ecclesiastical authority was organised in the army by creating a position of military archpriest with the rank of major; thus, the Orthodox clergy were entirely removed from under the authority of the Apostolic Vicariate and placed in the charge and under the jurisdiction of the military archpriest. The first Orthodox military archpriest to be appointed was Romanian chaplain Sava Popovici of the Vienna garrison. Moreover, the number of military clergymen increased from nine to ten and, in 1898, an eleventh permanent position was created within the navy. In 1905, a new set of regulations for pastoral service was adopted, raising the number of Orthodox priests to 14, equally divided between Serbians and Romanians, while another military archpriest position was instituted and two positions were reserved for the military district of Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the Austrian-Hungarian dualism era, there were 32 Orthodox military priests active in the Imperial-Royal army, 30 of them in the army and two in the navy, 18 being Romanian and 14 Serbian. The Orthodox chaplain with the longest pastoral activity in active service in the army of the Habsburg Monarchy was Sava Popovici Săvoiu (1818-1906) of Transylvania, who served as a military priest for 46 years, from 1851 to 1897.



The thesis stands at the crossroads between military and ecclesiastical historiography, its aim being that of providing a new perspective on the historical evolution of the Orthodox Church and on the history of the military clergy in general and the Orthodox clergy in particular found in the Habsburg Monarchy between the Peace Treaty of Carlowitz and the First World War. More exactly, the following six issues are discussed systematically:

- 1) The presentation and assessment of the ecclesiastical and military historiography on the Orthodox Church in the Habsburg Monarchy in general, then on the one in Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina in particular, as well as on religious assistance in the Habsburg and the Romanian army from the 18<sup>th</sup> through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2) A short rendition of the history of the eastern half of the Habsburg Empire between the Peace Treaty of Carlowitz (1699) and the outbreak of the First World War (1914).
- 3) A synthesis of the evolution of the jurisdictional-canonical structures, legal status, administrative organisation, demographic dynamics and articulation of the theological identity of the Orthodox Church in the Habsburg Monarchy from the last two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century through to the collapse of the monarchy in 1918.
- 4) Illustrating the history of the institutionalised organisation of religious assistance in general and Orthodox assistance in particular within the Habsburg imperial army from the 18<sup>th</sup> century through to the outbreak of the First World War.
- 5) Identifying the Serbian and Romanian Orthodox military priests who were active among Habsburg line troops, in Habsburg border regiments, cadet schools and military academies from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century through to the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 6) Presenting the lives and pastoral, national and publishing work of Romanian Orthodox military chaplains who are representative, yet insufficiently known in Romanian secular and ecclesiastical historiography: Nicolae Stoica de Hațeg (1751-1833), Gheorghe Haines (1769-1812), Vasile Georgevici (1764-1826), Ignatie Carabeț (1776-1838), George Boitor (1804-1885), Sava Popovici Săvoiu (1818-1906), Pavel Boldea (1861-1920) and Dr. Virgil Ciobanu (1876-1965).