

THE IMPACT OF EMPEROR JOSEPH II'S REFORMS ON THE ROMANIANS FROM THE THREE SEATS

Tatiana SCURTU *

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Abstract: The last decade of the 18th century takes place under the auspices of the decisions of Emperor Joseph II. During the Joseph's reforms, aimed at improving the mechanism of local administration, the Szekler seats were abolished in 1784, the Principality of Transylvania being divided into counties. In essence, the reforming action of Joseph II greatly contributed to the dissolution of the system of political nations, thus offering the possibility of affirming the non-noble social strata.

The effects of Joseph II's reform persisted in every area of public and private life. The most tangible benefits for Transylvanian Romanians were the boost given to education and the official recognition granted to the Orthodox Church. The edict of tolerance had a decisive significance for the evolution of confessional relations in Transylvania. To the humanitarian-Christian meaning, utilitarian motivations of an economic nature were added, especially the intention to stop the emigration of Orthodox Romanians subject to confessional and administrative persecution, regarding the need to remove the restrictive confessional obstacles that prevented the building of a unitary administration. During the reign of Joseph II, the entire modern school network of the eastern half of the Austrian Empire was built, which was maintained until 1918. Only the network of primary schools, part of the normal schools that trained teachers and Episcopal seminaries remained under the care of the churches. In Transylvania, those who benefited fully from the positive effects of the reform of the school system were precisely the Romanians who received the most approvals for opening new schools.

Keywords: Emperor Joseph II, Transylvania, Orthodox Church, Szekler seats, reforms

Addressing the issue of the Romanian communities in the former Szekler seats in the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century requires an analysis of the organisation of the inhabitants in terms of

* "Gheorghe Șincai" Institute for Social Sciences and the Humanities, Târgu-Mureș, tatianascurtu9@gmail.com

territorial-administrative aspect in the seat cities, as well as the evolution of the seat institution, in the reference period. For almost five centuries, the seat institution constituted the local public authority, which played a complex role in the administration of the territories inhabited by the Székelys, territories inhabited by Romanians, Saxons, Jews, Roma, etc. The Seat of Three Seats, located in the Olt and Black River valley under the Carpathian Arc, was created in the mid-16th century, between 1562-1583, following the merger of the Székelys seats Sepsî, Chezdi and Orbai, and later the seat of Micloșoara was added. It was headed by a supreme captain and a vice-captain appointed by the Prince of Transylvania and, after 1691, by the Transylvanian Government.

The occupation of Transylvania by the Habsburgs at the end of the 17th century brought important changes in the structure and functions of the seat institution, both as a judicial and administrative authority. The sphere of activity and powers of the General Assembly of the Seat decreased in scope, being reduced mainly to dealing with the collection of taxes and the charging and supplying of the Austrian imperial army.¹ “The Emperor had to heed the rules imposed by the churches, natural law or traditional legal conventions.”² The representation of the state (in German space) as a huge mechanism, structured according to the very popular model of the 17th-18th centuries of the clock, was based on the conviction that any political system must be thought according to a series of precise and immutable laws. The creator and ruler of this mechanism could only be the monarch, his subjects being likened to component parts, destined to work for the prosperity of the whole. However, the integration of Transylvania among the countries ruled by the House of Habsburg created favourable conditions for the affirmation of the Romanian nation.³

On the death of Francis I., in August 1765, his son Joseph, already King of the Romans, had assumed at once the title of emperor. His mother had appointed him co-regent of the Austrian dominions. The position was beset with difficulties; but in spite of the clash of wills which at times resulted from the partnership, the young emperor exerted an influence always important, and sometimes preponderating, upon the course of public affairs.⁴ Soon after Joseph became Emperor he made his first essay in reform by proposing changes directly as head of the Empire, exercising for the good of his subjects

¹ Arhivele Naționale ale României, Serviciul Județean Covasna - National Archives of Romania, Covasna County Service (ANR, SJANC), *Îndrumător în Arhivele Statului. Județul Covasna*, 41.

² Victor Neumann, *Iluminismul transilvan: ecouri europene și aspirații intelectuale locale*, in „Analele Banatului”, *Arheologie – Istorie*, no. XXI (2013), 381.

³ Alexandru-Florin Platon, *„Corpul politic” în cultura europeană* (Iași: Polirom, 2017), 252.

⁴ James Franck Bright, *Joseph II.* (New York: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1897), 8.

what he deemed his absolute prerogative.⁵ Aware of the general crisis of feudalism, Joseph II became a fervent preacher of Enlightenment ideas. „He had put forward radical, almost revolutionary, proposals for change, involving drastic administrative reorganisation, a comprehensive restructuring of the relationship between lords and peasants, and fundamental Church reform, including religious toleration. His more radical proposals had not been adopted. But his influence had grown as Maria Theresa's vitality diminished, and by 1780 he had contributed to reforms in most areas of internal government, especially in Church matters, the legal system and the affairs of the Court.”⁶ In order to develop agriculture, a series of laws and ordinances were issued to regulate peasant payments to the nobility. Between 1767 and 1775, royal ordinances were issued establishing peasants' rights and duties.⁷

The new Josephine spirit had been manifesting itself in Transylvania since the last years of Maria Theresa's reign, but it was fully asserted when Joseph II came to the throne. Thus, on 15 April 1746, in Vienna, Empress Maria Theresa issued a Royal Decree on the freedom of all religions and respect for the rights of the Orthodox Romanians of Transylvania.⁸ “In recognition of the important steps taken by Transylvania on the road to its incorporation into the Empire, the golden seal of the diploma of 2 November 1765 changed the name and, implicitly, the legal status of the country to the Grand Principality of Transylvania.”⁹

In the decade preceding his reign, Joseph II, in his capacity as co-regent, began a series of trips to the Empire.

Perhaps none of the foreign observers captured as well as did Joseph II (1780-1790) the condition of the Romanian inhabitants in the empire he was about to rule. His first trip to Transylvania in 1773, in an attempt to get a true picture of the state of the provinces, gave him significant insights. According to him, the Romanians were “the oldest and most numerous inhabitants”, “tormented and burdened by injustice”. “The emperor's remark is a very important one, all the more so as it dates less than two decades before the most important moment of the Romanians' political-national struggle in the 18th century – the memorial *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* of 1791.” Transylvania had flagrant inequalities, overwhelming in the Romanian environment.¹⁰ In his

⁵ William George Waters, *Joseph II* (Oxford: Thos. Shrimpton & Son, 1873), 12.

⁶ Derek Beales, *Joseph II: Volume 2, Against the World, 1780-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 2.

⁷ S. K. Padover, *Joseph II, L'Empereur revolutionnaire, 1741-1790* (Paris: Payot, 1935).

⁸ SJANC, Scaunul Trei Scaune 1, file 973 (23), fol. 1.

⁹ Anton E. Dorner, "Statutul juridic al Transilvaniei", in *Istoria Transilvaniei*, Vol. III, edited by Ioan-Aurel Pop, Thomas Nagler, Magyari Andras (Deva: Episcopia Devei și Hunedoarei, 2016), 18.

¹⁰ Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Șerban Papacostea, Pompiliu Teodor, *Istoria României* (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1998), 297.

political program, we are witnessing for the first time the focus on the lower layers of society, on the unknown nations, maintained out of the political system but which, by their numerous consistency, could offer a solid base, a new type, to these centralized visions of the Emperor.¹¹ In Transylvania the reforms touched all aspects of society, as the emperor sought to control the political and social life of the principality. Here, too, he ruled by decree, ignoring the Diet and, in general, the institutions that ran counter to his centralisation policy.

Following the issued documents, in 1764, in Sibiu, by a Governmental Order, the Three Seats was asked to accompany and support the Greek-Eastern bishop Dionysius Novakovics, who was to make a series of visits to the churches of the Three Seats.¹² In the spirit of the provisions of the Edict of Tolerance, in 1779 in Sibiu, the Government Order was issued on the granting of land to each Orthodox priest.¹³

The Edict of Tolerance, promulgated by Joseph II on 8 November 1781, by which the sovereign sought “to transform Christianity, for all confessions which had hitherto been at enmity, into a religion of love”,¹⁴ was of decisive significance for the development of confessional relations in Transylvania. It forbade the oppression of citizens on grounds of faith and allowed any denomination, if it had 100 families, to build a church and to support a priest and a teacher. As a result of these provisions, the following Orthodox and Greek-Catholic parishes in the Three Seats, with more than 100 families of believers, built their own walled churches (Orthodox churches): Brețcu – 1783, Covasna-Voinești – 1794-1800, Dobârlău – 1795, Mărtănuș – 1796, Sfântu Gheorghe – 1790-1802, Târgu Secuiesc – 1783, Valea Mare – 1793, Zagon – 1810-1814, (Greek-Catholic churches): Lisnău – 1808.¹⁵ All these churches were built on the site of old wooden churches.

The publication of the Edict of Tolerance in Transylvania had a particular significance in relation to the constitution of the country, arousing the opposition of the political nations and the received religions. The provisions of the Circular of 1782 and the Patent of the same year, in August 1782, which defined toleration as the lifting of restrictions for non-Catholics, were associated with the Edict, adapted to the conditions of the province.¹⁶ Towards the end of the 18th century, particularly after the Edict of Religious Tolerance,

¹¹ Ioan Cristinel Roman-Negoi, *Politica reformismului iosefin și procesul emancipării românilor ardeleni (1765-1790)* (Alba Iulia: Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918”), 8.

¹² SJANC, Scaunul Trei Scaune 1, file 2610 (67), 12 fols.

¹³ SJANC, Primăria orașului Tg. Secuiesc 23, file 310, fol. 77-78.

¹⁴ Daniel Dumitran, *Un timp al reformelor. Biserica Greco-Catolică din Transilvania sub conducerea episcopului Ioan Bob (1782-1830)* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2007), 53.

¹⁵ Ioan Lăcătușu, Erich-Mihail Broanăr, *Repere identitare românești din județele Covasna și Harghita* (Sf. Gheorghe: Eurocarpatica, 2019), 647-649.

¹⁶ Bărbulescu et al., *Istoria*, 297.

the ideas of Orthodoxy made a spectacular comeback in the consciousness of large anonymous crowds, and during the great social liberalisation of 1784, the terms Romanian and Orthodox were synonymous, as opposed to noble, Protestant or Catholic.¹⁷

At the National Archives of Covasna, in the Greek-Catholic Poian Deanery Fund, we have identified the Decree of Emperor Joseph II, dated 7 August 1786, regarding the holidays of the two churches, Orthodox and Greek-Catholic, written in Hungarian: “Joseph II, by the will of God, Roman Emperor, Apostolic King of Germany, Czechia, Croatia, Slovakia, Grand Prince of Austria, Grand Prince of Ardeal and Apostolic King of Hungary, for the happiness of the serfs in the United Greek faith, Following the diminution of the religious holidays concerning the Non-United Greek Church, To Our Faithful Gubernium, the Governorate of Ardeal, on 7 August 1786, with our merciful benevolence, under number 8861, we have benevolently, according to our duty, in view of all these points, and as may be, both the United and the Uniate Church, deem it necessary as follows: That the feast days of the Uniate Church, already established by us, be kept also by the United Church, in addition to those feast days which the Uniate Church has appropriated as national holidays, such as Constantine and Helena, and, therefore, we ordain that the United Church also shall celebrate only the following feasts: 1 January – The Circumcision of the Savior; 6 January – Epiphany; 2 February – The Welcoming of the Lord in the Temple; 25 March – Annunciation.”¹⁸

The humanitarianist-Christian significance has been added to utilitarian motivations of an economic nature, in particular the intention to stop the emigration of Orthodox Romanians subject to confessional persecution, and administrative, on the need to remove restrictive confessional obstacles that prevented the building of a unitary administration.

The edict forbade collections and any contributions solicited from the faithful on the occasion of canonical visitations, at the convocation of synods, only with the consent of the emperor and after informing him in advance of the issues to be discussed. Through these regulations the state sought to impose the effective application of the principle of religious tolerance in the concrete aspects of the religious life of the various denominations in Transylvania, but it also intended to subordinate the churches by intervening in their internal life, as is shown in particular by the last provision, concerning the convening of synods, the elimination of abuses regarding the collections and contributions required from the believers only partially justifies this tendency. Point 10 conclusively depicts the essence of the toleration policy: no one was to be persecuted for his/her religious convictions, unless he/she violated civil laws,

¹⁷ Nicolae Bocșan, Ioan Limiperdean, Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Etnie și confesiune în Transilvania: Secolele XIII-XIX* (Oradea: Fundația "Cele Trei Crișuri", 1994), 78.

¹⁸ SJANC, Protopopiatul greco-catolic Poian, file1, fol. 1.

imperial decrees or disturbed the public peace, members of all denominations were to refrain from defaming verbally or through official acts and letters those of other denominations. The significance of the Edict of Toleration for Transylvania, though diminished by the distinction between general guiding principles and binding complementary provisions, was major, because it was a prerequisite for the application of the principle of equal citizenship.

The Gubernium Decree of 29 November based of course on the Emperor's recommendations, explains the spirit in which the provisions of the Edict of Tolerance were to be applied by members of the secular and regular clergy: Priests in particular were advised to show 'moderation' and 'true Christian tolerance', to avoid any occasion of 'animosity' and 'dissension', to refrain from invective against those who did not share the Catholic faith, to concern themselves to the highest degree with their pastoral duties.

According to the publication instructions, the decree had to be translated and printed "in all the languages that are in our countries". The involvement of the local public administration in solving some of the problems of the Orthodox parishes of Three Seats is reflected in the following documents in the National Archives of Covasna: in 1784 a table of all the Orthodox in the town of Sf. Gheorghe was requested by a Governmental Order.¹⁹ In 1784 in Tg. Secuiesc, the documents record the interrogation, the deposition of witnesses and the sentence adopted by the Superior Military Court, with headquarters in Tg. Secuiesc, in the trial of the border guards Fekete Iosif and Hegyesy Francisc, of the Szekler Border Regiment No. 2 infantry, for stealing animals (buffaloes) and physically mistreating by beating the Orthodox priest Popovici Valentin and his servant Banitcsa Ioan.²⁰ In 1790, in Sibiu, a Government Order was issued on the division of churches between Orthodox and Greek-Catholics, on the basis of the number of believers of each denomination.²¹

"Through his radical reforms, Joseph II overturned the entire Transylvanian constitutional system, including the text of the Leopoldine Diploma, radically amended the existing institutional framework, abolishing ancient, secular and ecclesiastical privileges, reorganised the territory administratively."²² The last decade of the 18th century unfolds under the auspices of Emperor Joseph II. The effects of Joseph II's reforms persisted in every area of public and private life. The most tangible benefits for the Romanians of Transylvania were the boost given to education and the official recognition given to the Orthodox Church.

¹⁹ SJANC, Scaunul Trei Scaune 2, file 739 (IV/5), 3 fols.

²⁰ SJANC, Regimentul secuiesc de graniță nr. 2 infanterie, file. VIII/10, 1784, fols. 1-15.

²¹ SJANC, Primăria orașului Tg. Secuiesc 23, file. 440, fols. 15-16.

²² Dorner, *Statutul*, 18.

In the European Middle Ages, elementary community schools were all the creation of religious communities, parishes or monastic orders, whether urban or rural, and the teachers were priests.

The further reform of the school system in the Empire was marked by the publication on 6 December 1774 of the *Allgemeine Schulordnung für die deutschen Normal, Haupt-, und Trivialschulen in der sämtlichen königlichen Erblanden* (General School Regulations for German Normal, Secondary and Trivial Schools in all the Royal Hereditary Lands). This fundamental legal document was the basis for all provincial private school regulations of the Normal Patent type.

In later times, especially during the reign of Joseph II, the entire modern school network of the eastern half of the Austrian Empire was built up and continued until 1918. Only the network of primary schools, part of the normal schools that trained teachers and the episcopal seminaries remained in the care of the churches.

Both the Protestant and the Romanian schools in the Transylvanian region managed to preserve a small degree of autonomy in educational matters and to evolve in parallel with the new school regulations of the Terezian-Jozefinian regime, in an atmosphere relaxed by the Edict of Tolerance. The reform of the educational system through the *Norma Regia*, with all the derogations from the *Ratio educationis*, also set a new framework in which local, Romanian initiatives were now manifested, with effects in the training of a new intellectual generation. The edict allowed Protestants and Orthodox to set up their own schools to educate their children, and if these schools could not be set up for lack of material means, their children could attend Catholic schools or schools of another denomination, in accordance with the custom in force until then. In Transylvania, it was the Romanians who benefited most from the positive effects of the school reform, and it was they who received the most approval to open new schools. In 1786, Joseph II signed an order ordering the establishment of schools in all large villages. According to the provisions of this decree, the following Orthodox and Greek-Catholic denominational schools (Orthodox denominational schools): Araci – 1818, Ariușd – 1847, Belin – 1772, Covasna – early 19th century, Dobârlău – 1831, Dobolii de Jos – 1820, Iarăș – 1847, Lisnău – first half of the 19th century, Mărcuș – 1847, Mărtănuș – 1829, Micfalău – mid-19th century, Păpăuți – 1849, Sfântu Gheorghe – 1799, Târgu Secuiesc – 1810, Vâlcele – 1847, Zagon – 1850, (Greek-Catholic denominational schools): Bodoc – 1768, Ghelînța – second half of the 18th century, Lisnău – first half of the 19th century.²³

²³ Sebastian Pârnu, *România din scaunele secuiești în Revoluția de la 1848-1849* (Sf. Gheorghe: Eurocarpatica, 2014), 372-378.

“A considerable collection of books in Brukenthal's collection indicates an interest in history. In addition to theological literature, which continued to be a reference, the Sibiu collection included books on geometry, geology, medicine, geography, astronomy, microtechnology and optics. This was made possible by the abolition of the Jesuit censorship, but also as a consequence of the policy of secularisation of state life instituted by Joseph II.”²⁴

In 1824, on 5 March, from Cluj, a Government Order was transmitted to the magistrate of the city of Sf. Gheorghe, which provides decrees and instructions on the obligation of parents to send their children aged 6-13 years to denominational schools.²⁵

The network of the Orthodox denominational schools in the Seat of Three Seats underwent an important development during the pastorate of St. Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna. Thus, in the second half of the 19th century, the documents of the time record the functioning of the following Orthodox and Greek-Catholic schools in the Seat of Three Seats (Orthodox): Băcel, Brețcu, Cernat, Chichiș, Hăghig, Întorsura Buzăului, Reci, Sita Buzăului, Valea Mare, Zăbala, (Greek Catholic): Arcuș, Baraolt, Boroșneu Mare, Ghidfalău, Ilieni, Lemnia, Poian, Turia and Valea Crișului.

During this period, in addition to these 19 Romanian denominational schools, there were also those established in the late 18th and first half of the 19th century. After the primary cycle in these schools, a significant number of pupils from the seat of the Three Seats attended the famous schools of Brasov, mainly the Andrei Șaguna High School.

During the Josephine reforms, aimed at improving the mechanism of local administration, the Székely seats were abolished in 1784, and the Principality of Transylvania was divided into counties. The territory of the subsidiary seats of Ciucul de Sus, Ciucul de Jos and Giurgeu was included in the county of Odorhei, and the territory of the subsidiary seat of Casin was annexed to the county of Trei Scaune (Three Seats). The former seats annexed to the county of Odorhei formed a constituency, which in turn was divided into six small rural districts, namely: Ditrău-Subcetate, Gheorgheni, Frumoasa, Miercurea-Ciuc, Ciucsângeorgiu and Tușnad. At the head of the constituency was a viscount, who was at the same time the deputy of the supreme count, and a head of the nobles.²⁶ Joseph II's administrative reform, which divided the principality into 10, then 11 counties, struck a blow at the autonomies of the privileged nations for reasons of state. The counties were reduced to mere administrative districts subordinate to the state. Joseph II separated administrative and judicial affairs, seeking to take justice out of the hands of the local courts, but above all to replace or control feudal justice. By abolishing

²⁴ Neumann, *Iluminismul*, 385.

²⁵ ANC, Primăria orașului Sf. Gheorghe 1, file. 153, fol. 1.

²⁶ Pârnu, *Români*, 56.

local autonomies through administrative reform and decreeing conviviality, the reforms opened up new opportunities for Romanians to assert themselves.

The effects for Transylvania meant, as the special order of 1783 would prove, the possibility of access to office for Orthodox Romanians, Romanians in general. By the Gubernatorial Decree of 30 January 1783, which transmitted the Aulic Decree of 8 January of the same year, it was stipulated that in the filling of positions, the candidates' denominational affiliation was no longer taken into account, but only their personal aptitudes and merits.²⁷ The edict uses the same term in both cases: 'tolerance', respectively 'suffering' in the handwritten Romanian translation.²⁸

Several examples of Romanian local or state officials have been identified in the Seat of the Three Seats: in 1794 Ioan and Mihail Borbat are mentioned as judges in Brăduț, in the period 1852-1854, Ioan Pipoș is a Romanian jurist and statesman, appointed as council secretary at the court of Sfântu Gheorghe, then transferred to the position of praetor of the Ciuc-Cozmeni district until 1861, in 1849, the burgomaster of the commune of Întorsura Buzăului was Todor Kersztia, in 1853, the named Sandi Paul was notary of the commune of Lemnia.

With the repeal of the Josephine reforms, in 1790 the old seat organisation was restored. The officials were elected by the general assembly of the seat and confirmed by the Transylvanian Gubernium. The old seat courts were also restored on the basis of the laws passed by the 1791-1792 Diet.

Josefinism, as an ideology and political practice, provided a broader framework for the affirmation of the underprivileged, a more direct contact with the effects of the Enlightenment. In relation to noble ideology and its political tendencies, Josephite reformism took a substantial step forward towards integration into the modern world. However, it primarily created a climate favourable to change, contributing to the structuring of a new mentality through the new semantic convoy.

In essence, Joseph II's reforming action contributed greatly to the dissolution of the system of political nations, thus providing an opportunity for the non-nobiliary social classes to assert themselves. This also led to resistance from the nobility and the privileged, who were hostile to innovation, convinced that the new reformist framework stimulated the claims of Romanians, Serbs and all the oppressed. The reforms were motivated by the interests of the Empire and led to social progress, bringing in new social forces against the feudalism that the Empire wanted to adapt to its new economic demands. The Habsburg regime was essentially based on the Empire's pact with the ruling

²⁷ Daniel Dumitran, "Reacții transilvănene la Edictul de toleranță iosefin", in *Annales Universitatis Apulensis*, Series Historica 89, no. 8 (2004), http://diam.uab.ro/istorie.uab.ro/publicatii/colectia_aush/annales_8/11%20dumitran.pdf.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

classes. The contradictions between the political nations and the Empire did not alter the consensus reflected in the Leopoldine Diploma on at least one of the cardinal issues, the non-recognition of Romanians as a political nation. The constant rejection of Romanian claims is proof of the functioning of the pact between nobility and Empire throughout the 18th century. The Josephine reforms cultivated in the peasantry the idea of the 'good emperor' as opposed to the nobility.²⁹

„Joseph was undoubtedly the most prominent figure in Europe, at a time when the political atmosphere was full of startling sounds and apparitions. While the first year of the French Revolution was shaking the state to its foundations, the extraordinary spectacle it presented attracted, it is true, the lively attention of foreign courts; yet the attention of European statesmen was directed towards Paris only in a minor degree. The Revolution in France was as yet internal: the policy of the rest of Europe revolved almost exclusively around another movement, almost equally violent, and in many respects analogous, but differing from it in this—that its originator was a crowned Emperor.”³⁰

The Josephine practice created a reforming intellectual generation in Transylvania, selected from all ethnicities, opposed to the aristocratic spirit, recruited from local government officials, teachers or liberal professions. During the reign of Joseph II, a Romanian elite emerged within the two Romanian churches, which adhered to the Jozefin program.

In the more prosperous localities, leading Romanian families distinguished themselves in public life. Some of them also held public offices or positions. One source of information with concrete examples is the *Conscriptiia urbarială* of 1820. This document records the names of the Romanians who held the offices of head and jury of the localities. In many such localities, the Romanian faithful were led by real 'dynasties' of priests, such as: in the parish of Buzăul Ardelean – the Neagovici-Negoescu family; in the parish of Sfântu Gheorghe – the Popovici family; in the parish of Araci – the Nistor family; in the parish of Poian – the Boer family. In the local and regional public space, intellectuals from the families: Colan, Cioflec, Nistor and Rafiroiu from Araci; Teacă (now Teculescu), Furtună, Munteanu from Covasna had shown up.

Bishop Veniamin Nistor, born on 10 February 1886 in Araci, with the baptismal name Virgil, went to primary school in his native locality and then in Brasov. In the fall of 1906, he enrolled at the Theological Institute in Sibiu, graduating in 1909. He continued his training for two years at the Faculties of Letters – Philosophy and Theology in Bucharest. After the Great Union of 1 December 1918, he served as head of service at the Resort of Cults of the Ruling Council (1919), then as secretary of the new diocese of Cluj (1920-1922).

²⁹ Bărbulescu et al., *Istoria*, 298.

³⁰ Waters, *Joseph II*, 23.

Generations of Boer priests led the churches and the people of this part of the country, many of which were later destroyed. We will recall, in the spirit of deeds, some of them. Demetriu Boer, a priest from Poian (Covasna), is associated with the founding of the wooden church of St. Archangels in 1760. Keeping this thought, a descendant of over a century, Iosif Boer made a foundation of 100 fl. At the end of the 18th century, Dimitrie Popovici Boer from Chepeț (Covasna) is known to have written manuscript books, with a wide circulation. In 1797 the marginal notes record Nicolae Boer from Ghelința (Covasna) as a book buyer, and two generations of Boer priests were recorded in the parish of Ghelința (Covasna), and in the first half of the 19th century. Historical notes show that the Odorhei diocese's protopope Ioan Boer and the parish priest Dimitrie Boer were concerned with the church books, but also with its iron drum, in 1818.³¹

Another family of priests is the Popovici family from Brețcu, with Toma Popescu (Popovici), mentioned in 1805, together with his son, Toma Popovici jr.³²

The Dimian family from Brețcu had the priests Spiridon Dimian – son of the first founder of the church – ordained by Vasile Moga (1836-1865), Spiridon Dimian (junior) – born in Brețcu, ordained on 15 October 1849 by Andrei Șaguna, priest between 1849-1866 and protopope of Three Seats between 1873-1885, Constantin Dimian – born in 1854 in Brețcu, son of the former protopope.³³

From the Neagovici-Negoescu family from Întorsura Buzăului were born the priests Gheorghe Neagovici (the elder), who founded a ‘dynasty’ of priests who served in Întorsura Buzăului, being one of the founders of the church he served between 1805-1841 (ordained as a priest in Arad). He traveled extensively to Paris, Rome, Milan, Milan, Vienna, Berlin and Jerusalem. Gheorghe Neagovici (the youngest) was the son of Gheorghe Neagovici senior, and he led the faithful between 1841-1867.³⁴

From the Șolnai family in Turia we identified the priests Ștefan Șolnai (1811-1819), Ioan Șolnai (1819-1864) and Andrei Șolnai (1864-1881).³⁵

The Bucșa family from Belin appears in documents with the priest Ioan Bucșa (1845-1854), ordained by Bishop Vasile Moga, and the well-known confessional teachers: Bucur Bucșa and Alexe Bucșa (1852).³⁶

³¹ Ioan Lăcătușu, Vasile Lechințan, Violeta Pătrunjel, *Românii din Covasna și Harghita. Istorie. Biserică. Școală. Cultură* (Sfântu Gheorghe: Eurocarpatica, 2009), 351.

³² *Ibidem*, 245.

³³ *Idem*.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 311.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 400.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 225.

The Cioflec family is one of the families with generations of Romanian priests and intellectuals in this part of the country, such as: the priests Iacob Cioflec, who pastors 70 families of Orthodox believers, between 1791-1805, George Cioflec (1825-1865) – ordained on October 26, 1825, by Bishop Vasile Moga, Alexandru Cioflec (1865-1880) – ordained by Andrei Șaguna, Dimitrie Cioflec (1829-1891) graduated from the Romanian preparatory (teachers) courses in the Border county (Năsăud) and from the pedagogical courses in Vienna. He was a teacher and professor in Brașov. He is the author of the collection of popular poems from Araci (1855) and the founder of the “Romanian Cultural House”, built with his own money in 1910 (today the Orthodox chapel). Members of this family are also Virgil Cioflec, who established himself as a writer, publicist, critic and art collector, and Constantin Cioflec, who was born in 1880, also in Araci. He graduated from the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy and the Faculty of Law of the University of Bucharest. Between 1912-1919 he was curator at the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest. From 1919 he worked as a teacher at the C. Diaconovici Loga High School in Timișoara. The writer Romulus Cioflec (1882-1955), born in Araci, began his activity as a teacher in the commune of Chiojdeanca (Prahova). He then taught at the Alecu Russo High School in Chisinau, Loga High School in Timișoara and Gheorghe Lazăr High School in Bucharest.³⁷

An example of a Romanian family in this part of the country is the Colan family. Historical and sociological research so far traces the family tree of this family back to 1810. From the documents researched so far, it emerges that generation after generation, the sons of this family were, first of all, good Romanian Orthodox Christians. After the Revolution of 1848-1849, they covered, through their activity, almost all professions in Romanian society: plowmen, teachers of Romanian thought and feeling, doctors, officers, university professors, priests, as well as three members of the Romanian Academy – Metropolitan Nicolae Colan, philologist Dumitru Macrea, Ph.D Prof. Eng. Horia Colan.³⁸

The research on the Romanian elites of the former seat of Three Seats, which now forms the current county of Covasna, in the 18th-19th centuries, was stimulated by the appearance of some reference works on this subject, including: “The history of the formation of the Romanian intelligentsia in Transylvania and Banat in the modern era”, by Cornel Sigmirean, Cluj University Press, 2000, “Ecclesiastical Intellectuality. Priests of Blaj (1806-1948)” by Cornel Sigmirean, Petru Maior University Publishing House, Târgu-Mureș, 2007, “Emanuil Gojdu bicentenary book, 1802 -2002”, published by the Gheorghe Șincai County Library of Oradea, in 2008. At the end of 2011, in Tg.

³⁷ Ibidem, 405.

³⁸ Ioan Lăcătușu, *Genealogia familiei Colan* (Sfântu Gheorghe: Eurocarpatica, 2012), 9.

Mureş the book “Romanian students from Transylvania at the universities of Europe in the 16th-20th centuries”, by the Hungarian historian from Budapest, Szogi Laszlo was launched. The book was published by Petru Maior University, edited and prefaced by the historian Cornel Sigmirean, with translation into Romanian by Simon Zsolt.

Despite all the difficulties in the schooling and professional training of the Romanian elites from the localities of the Székely seats, some important intellectuals asserted themselves in the public life of Transylvania during the 18th and the first half of the 19th century. Historian Szogi Laszlo's book lists the 1886 Romanian students who studied at European universities between 1592 and 1919. Among them, Alexander Arbutina, born on 10 February 1832, in Cernatul de Jos, was a student at the Military Academy in Vienna, enrolled in 1843 and left in 1852,³⁹ and Aron Boeriu (1834-1901), born in Ghidfalău, Odorhei county, attended secondary studies in Blaj, and theological studies in Blaj and Vienna. Returning to Blaj in 1857, he was appointed high school teacher of natural history and Hungarian language, a post he held until the school year 1871-1872. From that year until the end of his life he was parish priest and protopope of Aiud.⁴⁰ From the same Boeriu family was born in Ghidfalău, in 1837, Dionisie Boieriu, who graduated from secondary school and theological courses in Blaj, and in 1862 was ordained to the parish of Silvaşul român, being then transferred to Velţ, in 1882. The documents record that in 1842, the parish of Ghidfalău was self-sufficient and had Moise Boeriu as its priest, who was leading 40 souls. The united Greek diocese of Blaj appealed to him to participate in the National Assembly of 3/15 May 1848 in Blaj.⁴¹

Following research in the Hungarian archives, Cornel Sigmirean's volume records 7778 Romanian students from Transylvania, of which 7091 enrolled in higher education institutions in Hungary and 687 in universities in Austria, Germany, Italy, France and Belgium, between 1867-1918. Among these students, including scholarship holders of the “Emanuil Gojdu” Foundation, Romanian intellectuals born in the former Three Seats who attended different faculties in some European countries in the 18th-20th centuries until the Great Union of 1918 were identified. Thus, the following studied at the Royal Hungarian University of Budapest, Faculty of Law and Political Science: Demeter Stefan, Orthodox, from Covasna, student between 1882-1885, with a Vasile Moga scholarship.⁴²

³⁹ Szogi Laszlo, *Studenţi români din Transilvania la universităţile din Europa secolele XVI-XX* (Târgu-Mureş: Editura Universităţii "Petru Maior", 2011), 133.

⁴⁰ Lăcătuşu et al., *Românii*, 584.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 292.

⁴² Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualităţii româneşti din Transilvania şi Banat în epoca modernă* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), 360.

At the Royal Hungarian University of Budapest. Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy the following studied: Pompilius Nistor (1883-1961), born, in Araci, attended primary school in his native village and in Satulung, and secondary school at Andrei Șaguna High School in Brasov. He obtained his degree and PhD at the Faculty of Medicine in Budapest and was elected president of Petru Maior Society of Romanian students in the Hungarian capital. He was one of the organisers of the Corps of Transylvanian and Bukovinian volunteers militating for the Great Union and a highly esteemed leader of ASTRA.⁴³

At the Faculty of Medicine, one of the students was Sandor Sandor from Brețcu.⁴⁴ At the Faculty of Philosophy, Languages and History – Benjamin Popp from Baraolt, a royal official with a state scholarship between 1877-1884, and Nicolaus Bogdan from Hăghig, a farmer with an E. Gojdu scholarship between 1887-1891.⁴⁵ Aurel Dima, an Orthodox priest from Sita Buzăului, was enrolled in the Pharmacy course.⁴⁶

The Royal Hungarian Technical University of Budapest, General Engineering Department has enrolled the students Emil Dima, Orthodox, from Sita Buzăului; Miklos Trajan Russ, Janos Hortenzius Russu, from Buzăul Ardelean and Birț Demeter, from Poiana Sărată.⁴⁷

Gyorgy Olah from Buzăul Ardelean was a student at the Reformed Academy of Law in Debrecen, and Denes Nistor from Araci was a student at the Alma Tupsia University in Leipzig, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy.⁴⁸

At the University of Brussels, Faculty of Philosophy and Mathematics, we meet Ioan Bozocanu, professor, man of culture and activist for the rights of Romanians in Transylvania, born on 1 April 1846 in Vâlcele. He graduated from high school in Brașov and from universities in Paris and Brussels, graduating with PhDs in philosophy and mathematics. Returning to the country, he had taught for 23 years (1874-1897) at Andrei Șaguna High School in Brasov. Through his work both in the professoriate and in public life, PhD Ioan Bozocanu was a prominent figure in Brasov and a distinguished figure in Romanian society. For many years, he was secretary of the parish committee of the Church of Brasov-Cetate and a member of the board of several cultural, professional and sports associations, including Casina Română (the Romanian Casina), the Gymnastics and Singing Meeting, the Romanian Craftsmen's

⁴³ Lăcătușu et al., *România*, 408.

⁴⁴ Sigmirean, *Istoria*, 577.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 581-582.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 598.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 601-603.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 716.

Meeting, etc. He was a member of the board of ASTRA and of the Romanian National Party.⁴⁹

A number of Romanian personalities or of Romanian origin from the Intracarpathian Curvature have made a name for themselves in Hungarian culture. They include, among others: Mircea János, born in 1834 in Brateș, writer and historian of Romanian origin, whose descendants came from the “Wallachian Country”, a student at the Academy of Mining and Forestry Schemnitz (Banska-Stiavnica), Forestry Department, between 1884-1885; Czet János, alias Țețu, born in 1802 in Ghidfalău, a revolutionary general, close to Kossuth Lajos, son of Captain Țețu, originally from the Land of Făgăraș.⁵⁰

Carol Caracioni-Crăciun was also an important personality in the extractive industry. The Austrian mining engineer of Romanian origin, who studied at the Academy of Mines in Schemnitz, made a particular contribution to the development of salt extraction in Wallachia, revolutionising the field from a technical point of view, replacing the bell-type extraction system with the chamber-type, introduced a mechanical ventilation system for the salt mine galleries, the rocker and the narrow-gauge railway. No less important is the attention he paid to the people he worked with, the vast majority of whom were miners. Caracioni removed their chains, taught them to read, provided them with free medical care and paid them, transforming them from forced labourers into industrial workers. And last but not least, he set up a library and published in 1870, “The History of Romanian Salt Mines”, in which he describes the technical work he carried out, together with his collaborators, during the period 1852-1870.⁵¹

Among the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic protopopes from the Intracarpathian Arc we mention pr. Petru Pop from Brețcu (1835-1853), pr. Ioan Moga from Vâlcele, Deanery of Hăghig and Vâlcele (1847-1868), Ioan Boieriu (1812-1820).

At the National Archives of Covasna there are very old documents of other families and their members from the seat of the Three Seats, such as the Apor Family Fund from Turia de Jos, the Damakos Family Fund from Cernat, the Tompa Family Fund from Borosneul Mic, the Lazar Family Fund from Dalnic etc.

⁴⁹ Lăcătușu et al., *Românii*, 419.

⁵⁰ Arhiva Centrului Ecleziastic de Documentare "Mitropolit Nicolae Colan", Colecția de Documente, fol. 851.

⁵¹ "Inginerul Carol S. Caracioni-Crăciun, omagiat cu ocazia bicentenarului nașterii sale", *Univers Ingineresc*, no. 22 (452), nov. 16-30, 2009.