

**IGLESIA, CULTURA  
Y SOCIEDAD  
EN LOS SIGLOS XVI-XVII**

**EDS. REBECA LÁZARO NISO,  
CARLOS MATA INDURÁIN, MIGUEL RIERA FONT  
Y OANA ANDREIA SÂMBRIAN**



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(EDS.)

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## CHURCH, ORTHODOXY AND SOCIETY IN THE 16<sup>TH</sup>-17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TRANSYLVANIA

*Constantin Ittu*  
*Museo Brukenthal, Sibiu*

### RELIGION VERSUS SECULARIZATION

For a long period of time, it was suggested that religion and modernity exclude each other. Secularization was regarded as being necessary for the autonomy of the modern human being, who is able to reject the pressure or only the influence of the church in his own way of thinking and acting<sup>1</sup>. But there are also authors who emphasize that in the twenty-first century religion is viewed as a condition for the preservation of national identity. In this respect, studies on modernity discuss religion as an intrinsic element to the modernization process, and recognize especially the role of Protestantism in starting and sustaining the capitalist advance in the West<sup>2</sup>. The prediction according to which religion would cease to play an important role in any state was proven wrong; on the contrary, religion has a prominent presence in the public sphere. On the contrary, religious pluralism is considered a hallmark of modernity. In reflecting on Church and state, it is preferably to talk not about two kinds of institutions, but about one peculiar area of interest. The state defines the standards of legitimacy for religion in society. In

<sup>1</sup> Schifirneț, 2013, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Schifirneț, 2013, p. 174.

turn, the religious institutions adopt the principles of bureaucracy that characterize the modern state.

The debate about religion, modernity, and secularization is livelier than ever since the advent of the secularization theory. There are authors, like P. Berger, for example, who advocated secularism, and consider the decline of the churches in many Western European countries the exception rather than the rule, a thesis opposite to the idea about the marginalizing of Christianity in a pluralistic society:

Today you cannot plausibly maintain that modernity necessarily leads to secularization: it may —and it does in certain parts of the world among certain groups of people —, but not necessarily. On the other hand, I would argue that modernity very likely, but not inevitably, leads to pluralism, to a pluralization of worldviews, values, etc., including religion, and I think one can show why that is. It's not a mysterious process. It has to do with certain structural changes and their effects on human institutions and human consciousness<sup>3</sup>.

In his work, *Sacrul și Profanul* ('*The Sacred and the Profane*'), Mircea Eliade had argued that the non-religious human being is an atypical phenomenon even in the most desacralized of modern societies. Those who claimed to be non-religious, still have within themselves an entire hidden mythology, a huge number of degraded rituals. The sacred is regarded as being a natural element to consciousness, which denies the rationalist approach that considers the phenomenon of religion to be a prescientific stage of human evolution<sup>4</sup>.

As a matter of fact, even if the global society confronts with the secularization phenomenon, with the dialectics of the sacred and the profane, people cannot survive without religion. The entire history of religions, but also the mythical, symbolical and ritual behaviors of the individual, the acts of community celebration or the need to invest sacred meanings in personal elements reflect this need for religiousness. We have to admit that the idea of secularization is one of the most important cultural and ideological construct having a significant impact in the formation of modernity. Yet, even if secularization is an important characteristic of the modern world, the profound needs of the human being are still connected to a sphere of sacredness and

<sup>3</sup> Mathewes, 2006, pp. 152-153.

<sup>4</sup> Eliade, 1992, p. 108.

desire to exist in a world where values are invested with a certain kind of transcendent force. A significant argument in this regard is the fact that people identify religion as an essential need of their personal life, even if they accept the theories concerning the secularization of the modern world and of the essential components of a modern day human being. People exhibit their religious feelings by verbal and non-verbal language, as well as through worship objects and the matter used in the divine service<sup>5</sup>. For example, the holy water is the symbol of the divine grace, the baptisterium with eight corners represents the endless life and the chalice embodies the Christian unity, the ring, with its different representations is pictured as a sign of the Episcopal power and must be differentiated from the profane type of rings<sup>6</sup>.

A new concept, that of «multiple modernities»<sup>7</sup> was introduced in the study of religion, and according to it, there are a number of arguments against so-called increase in secularism in present-day society:

Multiple modernities disappoint those searching for one dominant narrative, such as the growth of secularism or the inescapability of civilizational clashes. They are expressed in a variety of cultural programs that reinvent themselves continuously in history. These programs adapt themselves to large-scale historical processes such as modernization, secularization, industrialization, and democratization<sup>8</sup>.

The religion can have cross-cutting implications for modernity's extension in different parts of the world, and besides that, it has the opportunity to challenge conventional notions of how the world has changed politically, socially, and economically<sup>9</sup>. Latest researches point out a revival of Christianity and an increase in the number of persons «believing without belonging», both of which occurs more often among young people. Besides that, the explanation for the revival of religious feeling within the context of modernity can be found in facts and events caused by risks derived from the evolution of contemporary society. As a matter of fact, the nowadays society passes from triumphant modernity to disillusioned, relativized modernity, not only unsure of

<sup>5</sup> Frnză, 2012, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> Abrudan, 2013, p. 242.

<sup>7</sup> Eisenstadt, 2003, pp. 679-701.

<sup>8</sup> Katzenstein, 2006, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Offutt, 2014, p. 393.

itself, but also devoid of collective hope (collapse of the ‘great narratives’, e. g. religion), threatened by economic insecurity, ecological dangers; such being the case, modernity is making a return —selectively— to traditions or even to customs<sup>10</sup>.

Not even one of the optimist discourses concerning the religious presence in the global world can ignore the fact that beyond the persistence of the traditional forms in which we are accustomed to perceive the presence of religiousness

we assist [...] to a double decomposition and reduction and implicitly secularisation of the religious: politic, nationalist or psychological individual, in other words to its dissolution in sentiments either collective, politically and economically instrumented, or private and focused egocentrically on individual happiness<sup>11</sup>.

Talking about Eastern Europe, in particular about Romania, religion occupies a dominant position in the traditions of the Romanian people, as a significant factor of national identity<sup>12</sup>. The fall of Communism in 1989 restored hope for an evolution, towards modernity that would improve the life conditions in the post-Communist countries. The subsequent evolution of these countries has not led to economic performance, but has strengthened the role of religion in asserting national identity. Orthodoxy continues to give voice to national identity in the countries where it is a dominant force. Consequently, Orthodoxy is part of the religious revival in society today. In this context, one can say that Orthodoxy has adapted itself to the social changes. As a matter of fact, Orthodoxy cannot be regarded as being a static and changeless system, as many Orthodox like to present it. On the contrary, it can very well endorse and promote various changes, despite internal criticism and reactions. Religious, cultural and national identity is associated with the ideals of independence and sovereignty both in the Church and in the state affairs. Any discussion about Romania and the Romanians has to take into account the specific nature of the Orthodoxy, which is to a large extent different from the Catholicism and Protestantism. Religious identity in South-Eastern Europe derived from a synthesis

<sup>10</sup> Schifirneț, 2013, p. 178.

<sup>11</sup> Popp, 2012, p. 204.

<sup>12</sup> Schifirneț, 1999, p. 72.

between Orthodoxy and nation, which led to a merger between local and national traditions, on the one hand, and Orthodoxy, on the other hand. This identity is part of the historical trajectory of a mostly Orthodox modernization of South-East European societies. It is a close relationship in many cases, between ethnic origin myths and religious belief.

In the Orthodox countries (Russia, Georgia, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece), the modern development and industrialization occurred two centuries later than in the West. Therefore, capitalism was never a dominant economic force in those countries. This explains why Orthodoxy was and remains culturally and theologically different from Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. For all these and other historical reasons Orthodoxy was and remains culturally and theologically different from both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. For the same reasons the relationship of Orthodoxy to modernity and to secularization is specific and ambivalent. Orthodoxy is premodern not only in a historical sense but also in the sense that it transcends Western rationalism and rationalization<sup>13</sup>. The communist period was one of restriction of religious manifestations, of secularization of the society and even persecution of churches, not only for Transylvania, but for the entire country. Many churches and monasteries were closed, nationalized or demolished; numerous members of the clergy were arrested or deported, more confessions were prohibited. The Transylvanian ecclesiastic heritage was less affected than that of other Romanian Provinces<sup>14</sup>.

#### HISTORY AND RELIGION-TRANSYLVANIAN REALITIES

Becoming acquainted with the historical and religious evolution of a region is essential for the comprehension of its past and present, as well as for the building of its future. Transylvania is a region that lives under the auspice of unity within diversity, a diversity of traditions and culture that we should take pride in and that must be preserved and consolidated in the future, not only by tolerance but rather by respect. On one hand, identity is the result of a complex of coordinates, like ethnicity, confessional or religious belonging. Our heritage, or in other

<sup>13</sup> Schifirneț, 2013, p. 181.

<sup>14</sup> Bolovan, Firea și Covaci, 2011, p. 42.

words our cultural assets, is defined by a rich thesaurus of material and immaterial values like language, customs, monuments etc. I would like to emphasize that the term *monument* comes from the Latin *memory*, but the memories are not always easy to decode<sup>15</sup>.

On the other hand, the Transylvanian ecclesiastic heritage is a thesaurus marked by ethnic and confessional differences. Usually, confessions can be correlated with ethnic groups. In Transylvania the Orthodox are mostly Romanians, the Evangelicals and the Lutherans are Saxons, the Catholics originate from Hungarians, Germans and Szeklers and the Reformed and the Unitarian are mainly Hungarian. Even if the «confessional identity of Churches was not always easily made and the polemics or even the open conflict have marked their becoming [...] Transylvania was not the scene of some religious bloody wars as in other parts of Europe»<sup>16</sup>.

From the historical point of view, the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century was marked by the collapse of the Hungarian kingdom and by Transylvania's transformation almost into an independent state —*autonomous* should be the right word— ruled by a prince. Under the given circumstances, the Catholic Church crumbled as a consequence of the reform movements that started as a protest against the general state of the Church, and of the ecclesiastic practices of the Catholic clergy. The Protestants laid the foundations of new confessions which did not acknowledge the papacy as a Church leader<sup>17</sup>.

The geographic boundaries of what was called Transylvania changed in the course of time: at first, the name referred to an ambiguously defined area, east of the Western Carpathians, along the Someș river and north of the Mureș river, ruled by the aforementioned Duke Gelou. From the year 1200 onwards, it came to designate the whole area surrounded by the Carpathians and which made up the Voivodate of Transylvania, with its seven noble counties and with the lands given to the Szeklers (*Terra Siculorum*) and the Saxons (*Terra Saxonum*, *Fundus Regius* or *Königsboden*). This was the meaning of the name Transylvania until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when medieval Hungary fell apart. The Principality of Transylvania came into being in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, expanding the previous territory with the addition of

<sup>15</sup> Bolovan, Firea și Covaci, 2011, pp. 13-14.

<sup>16</sup> Bolovan, Firea și Covaci, 2011, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Abrudan, 2013, p. 240.



the old Voivodate of Banat and of the «Hungarian Parts» (*Partium*), which Transylvanians also referred to as the «Western Parts» (Crişana, Sătmar, Maramureş, Middle Solnoc, Outer Solnoc, etc.). Practically, Transylvania doubled its territory, although a part of Banat was soon occupied by the Ottomans (1551–1552), and the same happened to Crişana (which had its capital at Oradea, or *Varadinum*, Groswardein, Nagyvárad) for approximately three decades, in the second half of the 17th century. Besides, the Habsburgs also exerted their temporary rule over some northern territories before completely taking over the country in 1688–1699 and putting an end to the Ottoman sovereignty. Thus, in the modern and contemporary eras, Transylvania is the generic name given to a vast area that includes several provinces: Transylvania proper, Banat, Crişana, Maramureş, etc.<sup>18</sup>. At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Transylvania used to be an officially Catholic principality—autonomous, but not independent from the Kingdom of Hungary, as I already mention—let by an elite who belonged to three different *nations*: the Hungarian nobles, the Transylvanian Saxons (of German origins), and the Szeklers. In that framework, the Orthodox Romanians, who represented the majority of the population, had no political rights. In a way, Transylvania was the country where the Latin West met the Byzantine world<sup>19</sup>.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this Transylvania, (*Siebenbürgen* in German, *Erdély* in Hungarian,) still bears the marks of a troubled past considerably different from anything experienced by other regions of Europe. At a first glance quite striking in both rural and urban areas is the close proximity of various churches, from the Byzantine and Neo-Byzantine cupolas of the Orthodox churches to the Gothic towers that pierce the urban skyline, from the round arches of the Romanesque churches to the Baroque façades of other places of worship. In some regions, in an area measuring barely a few hundred square meters, one can see Orthodox churches standing beside Roman-Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran or Unitarian ones, all not very far from a synagogue. Transylvania is the place in where Romanesque and Gothic monuments stand beside Renaissance, Byzantine, Baroque or even Secession (Modern Style, Jugendstil, Art Nouveau) ones. East of the Transylvanian border the Romanesque style is completely absent and the Gothic blends into

<sup>18</sup> Pop, 2013, p. 212.

<sup>19</sup> Pop, 2013, p. 209.

the Moldavian style devised in an old Romanian environment that spiritually fluctuated between Constantinople (the New Rome) and Moscow (the Third Rome), following the path of «Byzantium after Byzantium» (Nicolae Iorga) or, in other words, of the Byzantine Commonwealth<sup>20</sup>.

In a way, Transylvania should be regarded as being a Europe in miniature, including both the main ethnic groups (Latin, Germanic, Slavic, and also Finno-Ugrian) and the main religions and denominations. It is also important to emphasize that, during the Middle Ages, Transylvania brought together the models of Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Catholic) spiritual life, and, for longer or shorter periods of time, all of these models were endangered, competed with and fought one another, threatened one another's existence, but eventually coexisted and exercised mutual influences, shaping this unique Transylvanian world that, for this very reason, came to be known in some circles as a world of *tolerance*<sup>21</sup>.

Just like the other Romanians living south and east of the Carpathian Mountains, the Romanians living in Transylvania are Christians of Eastern or Byzantine Rite, gradually evangelized in the Latin language since the time of their Daco-Roman ancestors, but canonically organized from an ecclesiastical point of view only around the end of the first millennium, under the influence of the First Bulgarian Empire, which temporarily extended its rule north of the Danube and even north of the Carpathian Mountains. Thus, the Romanians are the only Romance people of Orthodox faith, with a Byzantine Church, and who used Slavonic as the language of religion, chancellery, and culture during the Middle Ages. Their western neighbours, regardless of their origin, were Catholic and used Latin in church and as the language of culture<sup>22</sup>.

The ethnic and religious diversity had been a permanent element of this historical region since its emergence as a distinct political-geographic entity, an element shared, from many points of view, with the whole of Hungary. For example, the humanist Nicolaus Olahus (1493-1568), archbishop and Primate of Strigonium and after that regent of Habsburg Hungary, spoke about the many nations (13 in all) living in

<sup>20</sup> Pop, 2008, pp. 29-42.

<sup>21</sup> Pop, 2013, p. 211.

<sup>22</sup> Pop, 2013, p. 213.

Hungary: «In this day and age, the Kingdom of Hungary is home to a variety of nations —Hungarians, Germans, Bohemians, Slavs, Croats, Saxons, Szeklers, Romanians, Serbs, Cumans, Iazyges, Ruthenians and, finally, Turks— that all speak different languages»<sup>23</sup>. In correlation to his native Transylvania, the same Olahus wrote that

It is home to four different nations: Hungarians, Szeklers, Saxons, Romanians [...].The Hungarians and the Szeklers speak the same language, but the Szeklers have some words of their own [...].The Saxons are said to be Saxon colonists from Germany [...]; the truth could be confirmed by the similarity between the languages spoken by these peoples. Tradition says that the Romanians were colonists of the Romans. Proof of this is the fact that they have many things in common with the language of the Romans, a people whose coins are found in quantities in these parts; undoubtedly, this is strong evidence of the old Roman presence in this area<sup>24</sup>.

Olahus, a humanist of Romanian extraction (as indicated by his name, which means «the Romanian»), speaks of nations in the modern Renaissance ethnolinguistic sense of the term, and not in the political sense still employed in Transylvania at that time. Significant to him are not only the political Nations—which held the power in the principality— but also the ethnic nations, organically created, which gave substance to his country and were defined by a common origin, faith, and traditions.

Later on, to be more precise, starting with the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the political and religious system of Transylvania was based on three recognized nations (the Hungarian nobles, the Saxons and the Szeklers) and four «official religions» (Calvinist, Lutheran, Unitarian, and Catholic). Of course, the acceptance of the new Protestant denominations stemmed from the development of the idea of freedom during the Late Middle Ages. However, this «acceptance» did not rule out a number of conflicts and a certain rivalry between the new faiths and the previously dominant Catholic Church, and especially among the new denominations themselves<sup>25</sup>.

The denominations established in the wake of the Reformation were not specific to certain nations and initially had little to do with

<sup>23</sup> Olahus, *Hungaria et Atila sive de originibus gentis regni Hungariae*, p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> Olahus, *Hungaria et Atila sive de originibus gentis regni Hungariae*, p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> Pall, 1962, pp. 7-34.

ethnic distinctions. On the contrary, they were open to all «languages». This was also the case in Transylvania, where Lutheranism spread initially among the Saxons, the Hungarians, and even the Szeklers, and Unitarianism was embraced by both Hungarians and Szeklers. However, the Lutheran–German inhabitants of Transylvania and came to be known as «the Saxon religion», while the Calvinist «religion» or the «religion of Cluj» was called by some «the Hungarian religion». For instance, the June 1654 Diet of Turda issued a document according to which the Calvinist faith was dubbed «Hungarian» and the Lutheran one «Saxon». In the same spirit, starting with the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the world «Wallachian» became synonymous to Orthodox. Thus, in the Transylvania of that time, ethnic identities gained sharper contour, as the old medieval elitist outlook acquired a modern dimension by incorporating the idea of a common origin, language, denomination, etc<sup>26</sup>.

In 1556, the old leading Catholic bishoprics of Alba-Iulia and Oradea were «secularized» —in other words, they were closed down and their assets expropriated— and the Catholic clergy became the target of persecution. The Catholic priests were banned from many towns and boroughs. Generally speaking, however, despite some serious tensions, in Transylvania the Reformation was adopted without the armed conflicts that ravaged other parts of Europe. This procedure, whereby the new denominations found it relatively easy to gain legal recognition and coexist, was later referred to as the «system of tolerance», became the basis of Transylvania's «constitutionalism» and was admired by some contemporaries and especially by some historians from the more recent times. The most prominent expression of this «tolerance» was the decision made by the Diet of Turda in 1568 (and confirmed in 1571), whereby each community was given the right to decide what faith it wanted to follow. Of course, in many cases this freedom of choice remained purely theoretical (for instance, after 1572, by princely ruling the Lutheran Church became mandatory in the Royal Land), but its mere presence in a legally binding document can be seen as a triumph of the modern spirit<sup>27</sup>.

Basically, what happened in Transylvania at the dawn of the modern era was that nearly all of the old Catholic masters, gathered into three estates later dubbed nations, embraced the Protestant denominations, which

<sup>26</sup> Pop, 2013, p. 223.

<sup>27</sup> Pop, 2013, pp. 223–224.

they themselves accepted and recognized. Any other development would have been strange and illogical, since we are talking about the very same people, who left the Catholic Church and accepted the Reformation. These people had ruled the country before the Reformation and they remained in power, with a few adjustments, in the period that followed. As a matter of fact, it would have been impossible to see at that time the kind of modern religious freedom enacted in the constitutions of the democratic states only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Precisely for these reasons we have to be realistic when it comes to the limits of the so-called «tolerance» system. As opposed to other parts of Europe, Transylvania did not experience major religious wars between the Catholics and the Protestants, but this happened because most of the local Catholics fairly quickly converted to Protestantism. Specific to Transylvania, however, were the serious disputes and the stiff competition between the new Protestant denominations, all eager to expand as much as possible, at the expense of the others, and even among the Romanians. It could be argued that the Reformation, although it managed to rapidly defeat Catholicism at nearly all levels, stabilized with considerable difficulty because of the disputes among the Protestant denominations and even among the various factions within the denominations in question<sup>28</sup>.

#### THE SITUATION OF THE ROMANIANS

A difficult issue was that of the Romanians and of their Byzantine faith, as these Romanians and their denomination, long excluded as a group from the «constitutional system» of the Voivodate of Transylvania, now saw themselves just as marginalized in the new political-religious context of the Principality (to be more precise, after 1545). The new statutes of the country, passed in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, only confirmed the exclusion of the Orthodox Romanians, at a time when the theoretical possibility of a renewal had presented itself. Some attempts were made to convert the Romanians to the Protestant faiths, especially to Calvinism, starting with the 16<sup>th</sup> century. While such actions did not lack in determination, they enjoyed only extremely limited success, for a variety of reasons. Essentially, the Reformation had been meant for the Catholics, and not of the Orthodox. The Romanians were mistrustful of any change and, they found it impossible to understand

<sup>28</sup> Pall, 1962, pp. 7-34.

the teachings of the Reformation, because the religious ideas were very strange to them. Furthermore, the estates themselves opposed the «reformation» of the Romanians, because such action was likely to radically modify the political balance in the country; once converted to Calvinism, the Romanians would have automatically seized the power. However, in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a temporary Calvinist hierarchy was set up for the Romanians, but it failed to gain a sizable following. From the very outset, Eastern Christianity was seen with relatively favourable eyes by the Protestants, also because some innovations of the Reformation were actually old Orthodox tenets. Secondly, starting with Luther, the Byzantine faith was ranked among the legitimate Christian denominations —alongside the others that did not recognize the primacy of the Holy See—, and not as a schism from Catholicism<sup>29</sup>. Finally, the first Saxon cities to embrace the Reformation —Braşov and Sibiu— were located in areas inhabited by many Orthodox Romanians, where the issue had nothing to do with the sympathy or dogmatic similarity between the Protestants and the Orthodox, but rather with the Protestant «mission» among the Eastern Christians. In an early attempt to spread the ideas of the Reformation among the Romanians, the Romanian translations of some catechisms and of other religious books were printed in Sibiu and Braşov. After the adoption of the Protestant legislation (1557), the reformation of the Romanians became the task of the central authorities, which set up a «missionary church» for the Romanians. The latter operated until 1582 and had four bishops. With a few exceptions, the great mass of the Romanians showed little penchant for the Reformation. As far as the Romanians were concerned, Orthodoxy was incompatible with the Protestant rationalization of the faith. On the other hand, the privileged estates (nations) refused to elevate the Romanians among the officially recognized groups. At any rate, the Protestant Reformation accelerated the transformation of Transylvania's nations-states into modern nations. Their ethnic, denominational and territorial components gradually gained in importance, starting from a number of typically medieval distinctive elements and completing them with others that foreshadowed the modern world. The Hungarians were Calvinists and lived in the counties the Saxons were Lutherans and lived almost exclusively on the «Royal Land», proud to be part of the community

<sup>29</sup> Pop, 2005, p. 247.

known as *Universitas Saxonum*. Less manifest in the beginning, these distinctions gradually made their way into the public conscience, in a somewhat schematic fashion that highlighted the ethnic differences. The Orthodox Romanians, found nearly everywhere in the country (*dispersi per totam provinciam*), were not officially recognized as a political nation, but were increasingly referred to as a «nation» in the ethnic sense of the term<sup>30</sup>.

Starting from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the inferior position of the Romanians is increasingly manifest in the (legally binding) decisions of the Transylvanian Diet made by the three nations. Some such decisions made between 1542 and 1555 are illustrating in this respect: a Hungarian (*Hungarus*) accused of robbery can be exonerated if the village mayor (*iudex*) and three honest men take an oath in his favour, but a Romanian (*Valachus*) needs the oath of the village knez, of four Romanians and of three Hungarian «Christians» (1542); a Romanian could not take a Hungarian or a Saxon to court, but a Hungarian or a Saxon could sue a Romanian (1552); three witnesses were not enough to indict a Hungarian peasant: seven trustworthy witnesses were required for a verdict, but a Romanian could be sentenced based on the testimony of only three trustworthy men (1554); a Christian (Catholic) peasant could be imprisoned based on the oath (testimony) of seven «Christians», but for a Romanian the oath of three «Christians» or of seven Romanians sufficed<sup>31</sup>. Thus, in Transylvania even the justice system resorted to discriminatory practices, based on political and ethnic-confessional criteria, depending on whether one did or did not belong to an official nation and denomination.

Some attempts were made to remedy the situation, as the Romanians accounted for much of Transylvania's population and could have become a factor of instability. Besides, the modern era brought with it certain ideas of freedom and saw a number of attempts at putting an end to medieval exclusivism. After the Reformation, a first attempt at creating some sort of balance was made by the Báthory princes (especially Stephen and Christopher Báthory) starting with the year 1571. Supporting the Counterreformation and willing to strike a blow against the Protestants, these Catholic princes recognized some traditional rights of the Romanian clergy and Church (which faced

<sup>30</sup> Schaser, 1989, p. 182.

<sup>31</sup> Lupaş, 1940, p. 395.

the threat of Calvinization)<sup>32</sup>. A second significant attempt was made by the Romanian prince Michael the Brave (who had taken control of Transylvania by force of arms, on behalf of Emperor Rudolph II) in 1599-1601, when for the first time public offices were offered to Romanians and when the country assembly of Transylvania was forced to grant some rights to the Romanian priests and to the Romanian villages. Besides, he asked the Habsburg emperor to include Orthodoxy among the «official religions» (alongside Catholicism and Lutheranism)<sup>33</sup>. Finally, a third attempt at «elevating» the Romanians (the last one before the initiatives of the Habsburgs) took place at the end of the reign of the Calvinist Prince Gabriel Bethlen (1613-1629), who consulted with Ecumenical Patriarch Kirillos Lukaris in connection to his desire to make the country more «homogeneous» and draw the Romanians to Calvinism. In 1629, the reasons likely to prevent the Romanians from becoming Calvinist were the «kinship and the emotional bond» they shared with the inhabitants of Wallachia and Moldavia and the fact that the princes of these neighbouring Romanian principalities «might intervene, if not with military force, then at least with covert exhortations»<sup>34</sup>. These attempts, sometimes completely lacking in realism, failed completely, but they did serve to highlight the issue of discrimination in a Transylvania that had proven «tolerant» from other points of view. In actual fact, for certain periods during the 16th and the 17<sup>th</sup> (Hungarian) were equally affected by discriminatory measures concerning their religious practices, hierarchy, ecclesiastical assets, access to the cities etc. The main difference was that the Orthodox/Romanians were excluded from power and denied citizenship by legally binding official decisions, while the Catholics were temporarily and *de facto* discriminated against, but from a legal point of view they remained an officially recognized group. This difference proved to be of major importance, however, because after the imposition of Austrian rule (1688-1699) the Catholics were also *de facto* restored to the privileged position they held *de jure*, while the Romanians remained in a subservient position<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> Andea, 1997, p. 546.

<sup>33</sup> Pop, 2013, p. 228.

<sup>34</sup> Pop, 2013, pp. 228-229.

<sup>35</sup> Pop, 2013, p. 228.



As the Romanian historian Ioan–Aurel Pop pointed out, towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Transylvanian estates (the ruling elite) had become largely Protestant (Calvinist, Lutheran, Unitarian), while the large Romanian population, denied official recognition (at the level of the other groups), remained Orthodox, like in the past<sup>36</sup>.

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# C o l e c c i ó n B a t i h o j a



El presente volumen recopila una serie de trabajos que, con enfoque multidisciplinar, abordan la relación entre Iglesia, cultura y sociedad en los siglos XVI y XVII. Los temas varían desde la perspectiva filológica e histórica hasta la teológica y filosófica, todas las cuales aplican su método específico de análisis a las obras del Siglo de Oro español (con extensión, en algunos casos, a la cultura rumana), destacando así la multitud de perspectivas desde las que dicho periodo se puede pensar y (re)interpretar.

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