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# Churches, Peoples, Places and Habbits from the Once upon a Time Banat Highland

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## Abstract

More than a hundred years ago, a young theologian from south of the Carpathians, Nicolae Popescu, undertook a short visit to the Banat, noted in an original travel diary, that contains precious descriptions of cities, villages and worker colonies he travelled through, with the customs and habits of their inhabitants, parts of an invaluable spiritual dowry, which is being undeservingly engulfed today by the dust of oblivion.

## Keywords

priest professor Nicolae M. Popescu, the review “Biserica Ortodoxă Română” [“The Romanian Orthodox Church”], Banat Highland, Caransebeș, travel diary

## I. Introduction

In 1909, a young theologian from Walachia undertook with the blessing of the Primate Metropolitan Conon Arămescu-Donici (1896-1919), a three weeks journey in Banat, recording customs and habits, describing sceneries and drawing individual or collective portraits. The recordings, written in an archaic language belong to “Nicolae M. Popescu, the deacon of the

Zamfira-Prahova monastery”. Through these travel notes, the present lines propose a slight incursion in the past of this land with its special spiritual wealth and its cultural and historical special dowry.

## **II. Niculae M. Popescu – a biographical sketch**

The famous professor of theology from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Niculae M. Popescu was born on February 10<sup>th</sup> 1881 in the village Dâmbovicioara from the present county Dâmbovița, in an ancient clerical family. He finished basic schooling in his village, the theological high school at the “Nifon” Seminary in Bucharest (1893-1901) – with difference exams and baccalaureate at the “St. Sava” College (1902) – and the university studies at the Theology and Letters-Philosophy Faculties (degree in 1908) of the Bucharest University, followed by a speciality scholarship in History and Byzantinology in Viena (1910-1913) with a PhD. in History in 1913. Deacon at the Zamfira Monastery (1908-1910), at the Romanian Orthodox Chapel in Viena (1910-1913) and at the church in Cotroceni (1913-1920) – as well as Director of the Metropolitan Chancellery (1919-1923) –, then priest at the “Mureșanu Hermitage” (1920-1926) and “Bradul Boteanu” (1926-1933) churches from Bucharest, respectively Director of the “Nifon” Seminary (1923-1924) and head of the Chair for “History of the Orthodox Romanian Church” at the Theology Faculty from Bucharest (1922-1946). For his merits he was elected corresponding member (1920-1923) and then full member (1923-1948) of the Romanian Academy (excluded in 1948, he was reinstated only in 1990), member of the Historic Monuments Commission (1923-1948) and General Secretary in the Ministry of Cults (1931-1939). Also, he took part in the “Byzantology Congresses” of Bucharest (1924), Belgrade (1927), Sophia (1934) and Rome (1936) and was president of the choral society “Carmen”, conducting concerts in Romania and abroad. As an editor he printed the following historic brochures and volumes: *Viața și activitatea dascălului de cântări Macarie ieromonahul* [The life and work of the singing teacher Macarius the hieromonk] (Bucharest, 1908, 92 p.), *Nifon II, patriarhul Constantinopolului* [Niphon II, Patriarch of Constantinople] (Bucharest, 1914, 68 p.), *Patriarhii Țarigradului prin țările românești. Veacul XVI* [The patriarchs of Tsarigrad through the Romanian

countries. 16<sup>th</sup> century] (Bucharest, 1914, 48 p.), *Catagrafia eparhiei Ungrovlahiei în anul 1810* [Catagraphy of the Diocese of Ungrovlahia in 1810] (Bucharest, 1914, 88 p.), *Dionisie, mitropolitul Ungrovlahiei: 24 iunie-24 decembrie 1672* [Dionysius, Metropolitan of Ungrovlahia: June 24-December 24, 1672] (Bucharest, 1914, 17 p.), *Viața și faptele domnului Țării Românești Constantin Vodă Brâncoveanu* [The life and deeds of the lord of Wallachia Constantin Voivod Brâncoveanu] (Bucharest, 1915, 82 p.), *Știri noi despre Macarie ieromonahul, dascălul de cântări și directorul tipografiei din mănăstirea Căldărușani* [New news about Macarius the hieromonk, the teacher of songs and the director of the Printing House from Căldărușani Monastery] (Bucharest, 1916), *Gheorghe David, mitropolitul Moldovei: † 1508 aprilie* [George David, Metropolitan of Moldavia: † April 1508] (Bucharest, 1936, 13 p.), *Preoți de mir adormiți în Domnul* [Myrrh priests asleep in the Lord] (Bucharest, 1942, 224 p.), *Pomenirea a trei sute de ani a Sinodului de la Iași* [The commemoration of the three hundredth anniversary of the Synod of Iași] (Bucharest, 1943, 19 p.), *Correspondența lui Iosif Gheorghian cu Vladimir Guettée* [Iosif Gheorghian's correspondence with Vladimir Guettée] (Bucharest, 1944, 55 p.), *Ciril Lucaris și Ortodoxia română ardeleană* [Kiril Lukaris and the Romanian Transylvanian Orthodoxy] (Bucharest, 1946, 22 p.) și *Exerciții de paleografie românească* [Romanian paleography exercises] (Bucharest, s.a., 36 p.); he translated, from Russian, the volume *Cuvântări bisericești* [Church speeches] of Nikolai Krutitzki, Metropolitan of Moscow, and edited the monumental work *Orthodoxos Omologhia. Mărturisirea Ortodoxă. Text grec inedit. Ms. Parisinus 1265. Text român ed. Buzău, 1691* [Orthodox Confession. Unpublished Greek text. Manuscripts Parisinus 1265. Romanian text edition Buzău, 1691] (Bucharest, 1942, LXVIII + 352 p.). To all these we may add numerous studies of church history, as history of the Romanian culture, remembrances of monks and priest (published in several theological and literal Romanian magazines: "Biserica Ortodoxă Română" ["The Romanian Orthodox Church"], "Amvonul" ["The Pulpit"], "Universul Literar" ["The Literary Universe"], "Apostolul" ["The Apostle"] and "Glasul Bisericii" ["The Voice of the Church"] from Bucharest, "Mitropolia Olteniei" ["The Metropolitan See of Oltenia"] from Craiova etc.), reports delivered to the Romanian Academy and conferences held at the People's University from Vălenii

de Munte. He passed into eternity on February 11<sup>th</sup> 1963, being interred in Bucharest<sup>1</sup>.

### III. Excerpts from a travel diary

The text entitled *Prin Banatul Timișorii* was published in 1911 in several successive numbers of the prestigious theological publication from Bucharest, “Biserica Ortodoxă Română” [“The Romanian Orthodox Church”], creating a live fresco of the communities from Banat, a century ago, with their accomplishments and joys but also with their sorrows and hardships. With slight correction and brief explanations, put in square brackets, we convey after a century, these travel impressions:

“At noon of July 30 [1910] arrived by train at the station **Caransebeș** [...], where a Romanian driver climbs me, more reluctantly, into the carriage of the top so short that we must stand with heads uncovered. On a dusty road, so after a while the town. Sat and halt the «Green Tree», the only hotel here, which is visible and because of that is expensive and poorly maintained. From my room across the street is discovered that one bishopric residence, a priest read «Lupta», and was a popular student in Bucharest at table writing. Caransebeș is located near the river Sebeș – people say and Sebeș – near

<sup>1</sup> Niculae ȘERBĂNESCU, “Preotul profesor Niculae M. Popescu”, in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Bucharest, LXXXI (1963) 1-2, pp. 72-82; Victor POPESCU, “Popa Nae de la biserica Boteanu”, in: *Glasul Bisericii*, Bucharest, XXIX (1970) 1-2, pp. 72-79; “Prof. Pr. Dr. Niculae M. Popescu”, in: *Studii Teologice*, Bucharest, XXXIV (1982) 1-2, pp. 45-46; Adrian GABOR, *Studia Ecclesiastica. Contribuții în domeniul Istoriei Bisericești ale profesorilor de la Facultatea de Teologie Ortodoxă din București (1881-1989)*, Editura Bizantină, Bucharest, 2003, pp. 52-68; Mircea PĂCURARIU, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, <sup>3</sup>2014, pp. 514-515; Mircea PĂCURARIU, “Preotul profesor acad. Niculae M. Popescu. La 50 de ani de la trecerea în veșnicie”, in: *Academica*, Bucharest, XXIV (2014) 1-2, pp. 65-66; Mircea PĂCURARIU, Dorina N. RUSU, *Teologi români și străini membri ai Academiei Române*, Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, 2016, pp. 144-146; Zaharia MATEI, “Preotul prof. acad. Niculae M. Popescu”, in: Ioan MOLDOVEANU (coord.), *Profesorii noștri, învățătorii noștri*, vol. I, Editura Basilica, București, 2020, pp. 73-98; Octavian NEGOIȚĂ, “Popescu Nicolae”, in: Victor SPINEI, Dorina N. RUSU (coord.), *Enciclopedia reprezentanților scrisului istoric românesc*, vol. IV, Editura „Karl A. Romstorfer”, Suceava, 2021, p. 249.

the mouth of the said name. A wide street takes you into town, passing by an on – public teak garden beside the golden statue which guards the Saviour. Also on this street is the Caransebeș bishopric residence, which houses belong across the street where there are «[Diocesan] Printing» and «Diocesan Bookstore», just as the «People's Bank», called: «The Priests Bank» [...]. Street gives the town square. If you get down the street here in the left – most part you turn to the two Romanian churches, the «St. George» Cathedral Diocese<sup>2</sup>, and above the head of the street to «Saint John» the church cemetery<sup>3</sup>. Monuments pious I say here rest in peace great men of Banat: [Constantine] Diaconovici-Loga<sup>4</sup>, [Traian] Doda<sup>5</sup>, [bishops John] Popasu<sup>6</sup> and [Nicolae]

<sup>2</sup> The church “The Holy Great Martyr George” from Caransebeș, built, according to the tradition, during the years 1444-1449, at the expense of several local Romanian nobles; enlarged and painted by Dimitrie Diaconovici from Vasiova in 1796, it was iconographically decorated in 1862-1863 by Dimitrie Turcu. From 1865 until 2010 it served as the cathedral of the Diocese of Caransebeș. Cf. † Lucian [MÎC], Mihaela VLĂSCĂANU, Petru BONA, *Catedrala episcopală “Sf. Mare Mucenic Gheorghe” din Caransebeș*, Editura Episcopiei Caransebeșului, Caransebeș, 2008, 145 p.

<sup>3</sup> The “Birth of Saint John the Baptist” church in the old cemetery in Caransebeș, built in 1780-1781, painted in 1808. Cf. † Lucian [MÎC], Mihaela VLĂSCĂANU, Petru BONA, *Biserica “Nașterea Sf. Ioan Botezătorul” din Caransebeș*, Editura Episcopiei Caransebeșului, Caransebeș, 2008, 102 p.

<sup>4</sup> Constantine Diaconovici-Loga (1780-1850), well-known scholar from Banat, one of the founders of the first Romanian pedagogical school: “Preparandia” from Arad. Cf. Ion. B. MUREȘIANU, “Constantin Diaconovici-Loga (1780-1850)”, in: *Mitropolia Banatului*, Timișoara, XXX (1980) 10-12, pp. 703-717.

<sup>5</sup> Traian Doda (1822-1895), Romanian general in the Austrian Army, participant in the Revolution of 1848-1849, member of the Budapest Diet, fighter for the rights of Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, founder (1879) and first president of the “Community of Wealth” from Caransebeș. Cf. Liviu GROZA, *Oamenii de seamă din Granița bănățeană – generalul Traian Doda*, Editura Dacia Europa Nova, Lugoj, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> John Popasu (1808-1889), priest and archpriest in Brașov (1837-1865), member of the Diet of Transylvania, deputy in the Imperial Senate in Vienna, the first bishop of the reactivated Romanian Episcopate of Caransebeș (1865-1889). Cf. Traian BADESCU, *Biografia primului episcop al reînființatei dieceze a Caransebeșului – Ioan Popasu*, Tipografia Diecezană, Caransebeș, 1899, 74 p.; Nicolae CORNEAN, *Ioan Popasu, episcopul Caransebeșului (1865-1889)*, Tipografia Diecezană, Caransebeș, 1934, 28 p.; Constantin BRĂTESCU, *Episcopul Ioan Popasu și cultura bănățeană*, Editura Mitropoliei Banatului, Timișoara, 1995, 195 p.; M. PĂCURARIU, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, pp. 505-506.

Popea<sup>7</sup>. Romanians in the city centre of their church. Here is the Romanian Episcopate Caransebeș, which take 11 deaneries<sup>8</sup>, everything here is the Institute of Theological and bishopric teacher as a primary school and religion. It is to remember that all boundary in Orșova and Caransebeș Banat we only have denominational schools. Proud of their trooper tradition, the Romanians in these parts have not suffered interference in their school and church for this cause have only public schools, supported by the state and communities, who do not do a good job. Also in Caransebeș, near the Public Garden, is the great palace of «Fortune Community of the Border Guards»<sup>9</sup> [...]. Is in the Caransebeș and «Severineana» [People's Bank], a large shop with all Romanian, Romanian to shareholders only, with the best name in all the surrounding [...]. Although many institutions are Caransebeș Romanian and many good, however life does not seem that there is Romanian living. Friendly links between the leaders do not appear out; hostilities and attacks many covet [...].

A competition for choosing a priest for help – chaplain, as they say over there – gives me the opportunity to visit the villages on the Bistra Valley, which leads from Caransebeș in the country of Hațeg. Accompanied by a priest Julius Musta<sup>10</sup> and [Peter]

<sup>7</sup> Nicolae Popea (1826-1908), professor at the Theological-Pedagogical Institute of Sibiu (1856-1870), counselor and then vicar of the Archdiocese of Sibiu (1870-1889), deputy in the Diet of Transylvania and member of the Imperial Senate of Vienna, chairman of the Committee Romanian National of Transylvania (1878-1881), bishop of Caransebeș (1889-1908), honorary member (1877) and then full member (1899) of the Romanian Academy, author of historical works. Cf. Ioan LUPAȘ, *Episcopul Nicolae Popea*, Cluj, 1933, 15 p.; Gheorghe NAGHI, “Episcopul Nicolae Popea împotriva dualismului austro-ungar”, in: *Mitropolia Banatului*, Timișoara, XXXVI (1986) 4, pp. 83-93; Mircea PĂCURARIU, *Cărturari sibieni de altădată*, Editura Andreiana, <sup>2</sup>2015, pp. 144-150.

<sup>8</sup> Biserica Albă, Bocșa Montană, Buziaș, Caransebeș, Ciacova, Făget, Lugoj, Mehadia, Panciova, Oravița și Vârșeț. Cf. Daniel ALIC, *Eparhia Caransebeșului în perioada păstoririi episcopului Miron Cristea (1910-1919). Biserică și societate*, Presa Universitară Clujeană / Editura Episcopiei Caransebeșului, Cluj-Napoca / Caransebeș, 2013, pp. 120-156.

<sup>9</sup> In extenso: Ovidiu Laurențiu ROȘU, *Comunitatea de Avere a fostului Regiment grăniceresc româno-bănățean nr. 13 din Caransebeș (1879-1948)*, Editura Cosmopolitan Art, Timișoara, 2010, 412 p.

<sup>10</sup> Julius Musta (1857-1932), priest in Glimboca (1882-1911; 1918-1932), member of the Romanian National Party and member of the management committee of the “Wealth



Barbu<sup>11</sup>, go on a train to the village **Glimboca**. The appearance of the village gives you believed that you are rather in a small town than a village. Imagine a long street and wide – wider than any boulevard in Bucharest – bordered on both sides of the line and built homes all located in the same way: some of the ground, cellar (built in stone), usually over three large brick rooms and large attic above the second prevents through smoke, because the curious thing, the houses here have no chimneys. The coating is the image of our storerooms, bevelled lower than in parts, to drain rain. All houses are covered with tiles, boards rarely, never with straw or reed. Large portions, built to completely hide the yard. This is the most striking is the appearance of a house Banat; while anyone looking to us to face the road to put the house and leave the yard through the fence to all rare here, on the contrary the house is turned back on the road and entering the yard through a gate is always closed, caught in the thick walls and tall. People, in their yard, are like a small fortress. We visit a house under construction: the man and woman give help bricklayers. They gathered the material time; they bought the place, to be the high road, and yet had spent 2,000 crowns, to give the house red. Also on the high street and the school was located, a large building, now finished, which cost 7,000 florins. Two teachers are paid by the State and common. Let us not forget that we are in the border and so it is not confessional school. Side streets leaving the big street, lined with houses just as strong and aligned. The house is just like any other priest. Library books to older literature contain church and many of the

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Community” from Caransebeș, refugee for a while in the Old Kingdom, in Chiroiu-Roșiori, Ialomița County (1911-1918). Cf. Horia MUSTA, *Neamul Mustonilor în Banat*, Editura Marineasa, Timișoara, 2009, pp. 104-105.

- <sup>11</sup> Peter Barbu (1864-1941), priest, professor of Theology at Caransebeș (1892-1908, 1919-1937), director of the Theological-Pedagogic Institute (1920-1927), then rector of the Theological Academy (1927-1937) from Caransebeș, journalist and author of textbooks. Cf. Nicolae CORNEAN, “În amintirea preotului Dr. Petru Barbu”, in: *Mitropolia Banatului*, Timișoara, XXIV (1974) 4-6, pp. 290-291; Sorin COSMA, “Preotul Profesor Dr. Petru Barbu (1864-1941)”, in: *Mitropolia Banatului*, Timișoara, XXXI (1981) 10-12, pp. 715-719; Vasile PETRICA, *Institutul Teologic Diecezan Ortodox Român Caransebeș (1865-1927). Contribuții istorice*, Editura Episcopiei Caransebeșului, Caransebeș, 2005, pp. 154-162; M. PĂCURARIU, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, pp. 39-41.

newer editions of Publishing House «Minerva». Village church<sup>12</sup> is big and built by local custom [...]. It is a workday. People are in the mountains or nearby factories. Women on the home toil. They all piled in the middle of the thick belts. Gateway carpets of long tassels of different colours [...].

Towards evening, we leave this beautiful village wealthy forward to **Ohaba-Bistra**, two kilometres away from. Forested hills country that wears the blue light of sunset. Trees guard the road well maintained. The village head give the gendarmerie barracks. The settlements resemble those of Glimboca householders, although not with the same good appearance. People are workers in iron foundry here. Its evening. From pubs to hear the voices of some drowsy drinkers. On the way down to workers on the shady front razor to announce the end of work. The church here<sup>13</sup> is the same as the one in Glimboca [...]. In the hotels garden as worthy of a city, can be explained by the requirements of the plant in place. The innkeeper is German<sup>14</sup>.

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, morning walk to start **Cireșa**, via Ferdinansberg<sup>15</sup>, village by the Germans, kept clean, the church and the pharmacy and imposing. The church from Cireșa<sup>16</sup> is small, ugly and old. The priest, a young, good mouth, good manager, records show the church's income. In Banat each church has its own wealth and income. All have ground out of the priest, at least one time 30 acres, and some are worth 100 [...].

<sup>12</sup> "Assumption" Church in Glimboca, built between 1790 and 1794, painted in 1985-1987 by Joseph M. Vasu from Bucharest. Cf. Daniel ALIC, *Protopopiatele și parohiile Episcopiei Caransebeșului. Micromonografii*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2017, pp. 82-83.

<sup>13</sup> The church "The Holy Great Martyr George" from Ohaba-Bistra, old nucleus of the current city Oțelu Roșu, built in 1840, painted in 1854 by Michael Velceleanu. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolae M. POPESCU, "Prin Banatul Timișorii" (I), in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Bucharest, XXXIV (1911) 11, pp. 1198-1202.

<sup>15</sup> Old nucleus – together with the Ohaba-Bistra – of the current city Oțelu Roșu.

<sup>16</sup> The church "The Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel" from Cireșa, today a district of the city of Roșu, built in two distinct stages (1821 and 1899), painted in 1867 and decorated iconographically in 1938 by Dumitru Velici from Băsești (Mehedinți County). Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, pp. 47-48.



The dean [Andrei] Ghidiu<sup>17</sup> then took me by carriage to travel to **Măru**, the last village on the Bistra. The village is situated on rocky hills, difficult to climb. The settlements are not as affluent as those seen so far. A flock of people passing with their heads bare to the cemetery to dig the hole a shower of living. It is recognized that the guards and followers, after their military salute. Dean clumps of people expect [...]. The church<sup>18</sup> is full of peasants. All sit in pulpits. A committee, with the president and secretary. The dean opens the session checker, read against the diocese and ask who wants to talk. On some rises all householders and say clearly that they want a second priest. All approving it, ending the minutes, which can open course. Now here come the candidates, they sing, they preach and, after a certain time, the priest will make their choice by vote, again sucking the participation of church authority. This process may also have drawbacks as someone claimed that the peasants often say they would deceive and could not quite appreciate the good candidates, but also has undoubtful usefulness that causes people to inquire more about the institution which find their salvation in all respects [...].

Returns do with **Crișma**<sup>19</sup>, a village situated on the rocky shore of Bistra. Women beat the laundry at the river, and the peasants sit in court and on the road, because its celebration is «Bear's Day».

The road takes us to the edge of the village of **Mal**, famous for its fruit. Many trees bordering the village gardens. Household good people of the field are seen fenced raised by picking fruit.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Ghidiu (1849-1937), priest, archpriest of Oravița (1883-1888) and of Caransebeș (1888-1937), professor at the Theological-Pedagogical Institute of Caransebeș (1880-1883, 1888-1903), member of the Senate Imperial of Vienna, president of the "ASTRA" division of Caransebeș, co-author of the *Monograph of the city of Caransebeș* (1909). Cf. V. PETRICA, *Institutul Teologic Diecezan*, pp. 194-200; Constantin BRĂTESCU, *Protopresbiterul Andrei Ghidiu (1849-1937). Între Biserică și neam*, Editura Episcopiei Caransebeșului, Caransebeș, 2006, 155 p.

<sup>18</sup> The old church "Pentecost" from Măru, built between 1792 and 1798, demolished – due to the degradation of the walls – in 1934; in its place was built, in the years 1934-1936, the current church, painted in 1937 by George and Cornelius Baba from Caransebeș. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>19</sup> Crâjma, today called Măgura.

Moving and by Ohaba, Glimboca, continuing to **Obreja** way through and the big church<sup>20</sup>, impose harmful, the priestly house, and once in the evening between Caransebeș, in addition to new tile factory. That is the Bistra Valley, villages full of strong, Romanian, who has been heard in churches and singing resounded from old books printed in the country with valour and open to people talk, they seemed to believe and traces of Legionnaires Emperor Trajan, who on the Dacian eagle nest here if passed.

My plan to leave the snow in Reșița is interrupted because of trivial and then is urged to get back on Timiș valley, to visit **Teregova**. Teregova is a great Romanian mountain village, situated on the Teregovița valley the slope that descends to the north of Gate East plateau, meant that good theatre for military operations and that the water line dividing north and south. The people of Teregova are wealthy, keep cattle in the mountains, where they abodes and part of a brave and determined priest whose voice they heed as if it were the voice of the Good Shepherd. Village church<sup>21</sup> is big, grand and all tailored to the Banat [...]. There are many religious books of the eighteenth century, especially from Râmnic. Church singer, an old border guard, tells of the past and beautiful, like a weaker man, is left home alone, when nations are up in the mountains map room. A peasant, carpenter unbeatable, no job to be learned somewhere, we walk inside his house with two floors spacious and with and studio shows. He is fined 120 crowns and 10 days in prison he made a stir at the elections. He does not care, it is decided and talk and act. We leave for Piatra Scrisă.

The carriage passes through the point were the hot valley of the Timiș meets the cold valley of the meeting Hideg and enter the wonderful Teregova keys. The road, beaten with milk-white stone, matte end of the left bank, apparently under the shadow cast by the rocky pale gives way covered with forests of trees

<sup>20</sup> The “Holy Apostles Peter and Paul” Church in Obreja, built in 1750, painted in 1837 by Tryphon Achimescu from Caransebeș and iconographically adorned by the painter John Băleanu from Caransebeș in 1936. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, p. 101.

<sup>21</sup> The “Holy Great Martyr Dimitrie” Church in Teregova, built between 1782 and 1784 (burned by the Turks in 1788), painted in 1841 by Dimitrie Popovici from Oravița. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, p. 138.

as a veil of bleached canvas and stretched on the left side of the Timis. We pass steep slopes, dry torrents, menacing slabs, iron baths, factories good book and enter the intoxicating smoke **Armeniș** village with fewer newer households than Teregova. The church<sup>22</sup> is smaller, with icons instead of paintings, old books without [...].

The weapons we descend to **Piatra Scrisă**. At a place called «Gorges of Armeniș», near the railway tunnel on the east, right, «Holy Trinity» icon is painted on a smooth stone slab, in a hollow of the rocky side of the road<sup>23</sup>. Do not even know who painted it or when she painted. The peasants kept legends about it, seems to be gravel in the early nineteenth century by a Christian who had escaped from a danger here of death. On «All Saints Sunday» to worship here believers from many distant villages, even Roman Catholics. Candle smoke rocks are black and wide valley fills this day by those who seek comfort in the strength of their faith motivation and heal body and soul. Mouth open and darkened railway tunnel, hanging woods and rocky and gorgy hills the road, loud waves of Timis passing sucked clean of the high iron bridge, requiring respect traveller, who stands with his eyes humbly to God blessing and the sacred Hosts, Who guards the path on the slab adored. Under of the holy gracious insertions cool back on the same path, accompanied by blackberry bush reeves and the whisper of the Timiș.

In **Teregova** all windows are lighted candles, highly resonant burning oil drums in the village square, for the next day, August 5 is the birthday of the prince<sup>24</sup>. Folk musicians sing the German anthem, and the world is illuminated by fireworks. Children run

<sup>22</sup> The “Ascension of the Christ” Church in Armeniș, built in 1821-1822, painted in 1994 by John Albulescu from Bucova. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>23</sup> In 1929, around the rock on which this unique icon of the “Holy Trinity” was painted on an unknown date, a small church was erected, now part of the “All Saints’ Sunday” hermitage (re-established in 1990). Cf. Victor VLĂDUCEANU, *Mănăstiri bănățene*, Timișoara, 1947, pp. 125-126; Ion B. MUREȘIANU, *Mănăstiri din Banat*, Editura Mitropoliei Banatului, Timișoara, 1976, pp. 139-141; Visarion JOANTĂ, *Ghidul așezămintelor monahale din Episcopia Caransebeșului*, Editura Marineasa, Timișoara, 2004, pp. 50-55; Constantin TIMIȘ, *Mănăstiri și schituri din Episcopia Caransebeșului*, Editura Episcopiei Caransebeșului, Caransebeș, 2011, pp. 19-25.

<sup>24</sup> Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria (1848-1916).

around on the road. They know you mean poems in Hungarian, but not to understand something of what I say. The Romanian did not know than religious poems and prayers of the priest, catechist. And they will die soon, because after new orders and will do everything in Hungarian even the religion classes. What torment for the poor children. They do not get anything out of school without any knowledge, some true parrots. What say you, great teachers of our time? Late at the pub sounded giddy czardas violin music.

And go to Caransebeș, resulting in the soul memory of people who struggle with life as the price to remain who they were, where all laws in the world where nobody would be allowed to affect their sense of their old and natural. But long tail gives axe and then woe to the forest edge, says the story!”<sup>25</sup>.

From August 6<sup>th</sup> to August 9<sup>th</sup> the historian from Walachia visited several hamlets from Timiș making stops in Lugoj, Hodoș, Boldur<sup>26</sup>, Buziaș, Silagiu, Vucova, Sârbova and Hitiaș<sup>27</sup>. Returning on August 10<sup>th</sup> 1910 on the territory of the present Caraș-Severin County, he continued his recordings:

“From Gătaia to Bocșa train caught east. Train checker, even up here, begins to wrinkle the earth Jidovin hills, some covered with forests. These hills are always increasing until, at Resita and onwards, changes in the stone mountains reach 1447 m. **Bocșa Montană** – before it is Bocșa Română – the stop is located, as Călnic and Reșița narrow valley of Bârzava. The town, since the factories moved to Reșița, goes back. The mayor, a decent Romanian, I started receiving the very back because – he says – so many crooks in Romania give the envoys stream nuisance to the authorities and make scandals, spending money and are asking people to be suspicious and trust them in their losses. Here is seat Deanery [...].

<sup>25</sup> N. M. POPESCU, “Prin Banatul Timișorii” (II), 12, pp. 1277-1281.

<sup>26</sup> N. M. POPESCU, “Prin Banatul Timișorii” (II), 12, pp. 1281-1287.

<sup>27</sup> N. M. POPESCU, “Prin Banatul Timișorii” (III), XXXV (1911) 1, pp. 93-94.

With an young man of Bucharest go to see «the Spring Monastery», an early monastic life that can not take root in Banat. Go through **Vasiova**, Romanian village linked Bocșa, and on the edge of a forest before a spring miracle worker, a small delis, a series of bins rises a serum that has willed founder of the image of Romania, but and he did not understand the architect created a German church. This is the monastery<sup>28</sup>. A monk Macarius Gușcă of Călnic, he toured the Romanian Country, Banat, Holy Mountain, miles for miles, faithfully gathered four years and retired here with the thought of setting up a group of monastery monks. So far, however, has not got any apprentice, but I saw another zealous Christian monk, more enthusiastic in talking and embittered by the lack of a deep religious feeling in the Romanian nation [The next day, August 11, go by train to Reșița Bârzava valley, apple gardens, and rocky hills, covered with forests. I stopped a few hours in **Călnic**, a rich Romanian village with an excellent housekeeper<sup>29</sup>. People dealing with fruit growing. Brandy and apples here are famous. Women wear skirts, and to celebrate aprons. People like loose cotton shirts sewn with us, so far not seen in more Bocșa [...].

We arrive in **Reșița**, famous for its iron foundries, the largest in the entire Austro-Hungary. For days you do not get to visit all the kilns and workshops. From iron train tunnels made by cast fiery furnaces remember what you hell fire of Christian books, until the wheel rail gun and nail to catch all the ovens and prepared in countless threads counselling ovens and workshops. Its great to see the furnaces as a shed fire, turning into clay, like huge hammers beat red-hot iron bars and how colossal drug is

<sup>28</sup> The “Saint Elijah from the Spring” Monastery, founded in 1905, on the initiative of the hieromonk Macarius Gușcă, around a chapel built by the descendants of the miner Alexe Perian, miraculously healed with the water of the spring here; closed by the communist authorities in 1959, it reopened in 1990. Cf. I. B. MUREȘIANU, *Mănăstiri din Banat*, pp. 129-132; Patricia CODĂU, “Mănăstirea «Sfântul Ilie de la Izvor» – Vasiova”, in: *Mitropolia Banatului*, XXXIV (1984), 7-8, pp. 465-472; V. Joantă, *Ghidul așezămintelor monahale*, pp. 28-33; C. TIMIȘ, *Mănăstiri și schituri*, pp. 13-18.

<sup>29</sup> These are either Joseph Ieremia (1868-1923) or Peter Ieremia (1893-1940), both priests, at that time, in the parish of Călnic, a locality today part of the municipality of Reșița. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, p. 182.

flattened and cut into sheets thinner than paper. Ten thousand people are working here. Bocșa, Reșița and other villages exhaust their powers in this factory. Romanians can not factory release. Women do luxury and debauchery, and drunkenness of the man remains. It is still too hard as these argue Romanian school and church with their money and find time to visit their «Casina»<sup>30</sup>, with Romanian library and reading room, how and in whose choral society rehearsal room located, between the beautiful memories and other painting, Choral Society «Carmen»; Romanians here in Reșița as 4,000, of whom 2,600 «bufens»<sup>31</sup>. The priest, a worthy representative of Banat clergy in these parts, tells me that what delude faster the Romanian are mixed marriages. The children of foreigners married to Romanian are lost to our nation. In November, the country [Romania], we know well and have confidence in our actions. In colour too dark to see the Romanian peasant and think this is general throughout the Banat. Romanian church is from 1830<sup>32</sup>. They have beautiful religious school.

The next day, August 12<sup>th</sup>, I go with train to Cacova. We follow the valley again Bârzava that after leaving Bocșa Română begins to widen, escaping from the rocky hills to a bottleneck. At **Jidovin**<sup>33</sup>, where it says that the ruins are from Roman times, I get on the train that goes to Oravița. Plain is slightly wavy hills with pastures dried by drought and cornfields, not as good as to Vucova. Frequent and bright villages seen from the train.

At **Doclin**, the hills are high and full of ravines; care train ride on the bank rapture. He is lying on the valley. Beautiful houses, green knolls strips forests, meadows and corn fields lay a checked pattern on the road. A peasant, embittered by the very soul of a woman who was deceived and then ran for another, singing the echo train of trouble.

<sup>30</sup> A Romanian Cultural Casino.

<sup>31</sup> Name given by the locals to the Romanians from the north of Oltenia (the mountainous part of the current counties of Mehedinți, Gorj and Vâlcea), who had emigrated aici după 1729, ca lucrători în domeniul minier. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, p. 389.

<sup>32</sup> The church “Saint Hierarch Joseph the New from Partoș” from Reșița, built between 1846 and 1866 (later extended in 1930), painted during the years 1983-1987 by Elvira Dăscălescu. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, p. 166.

<sup>33</sup> Today, named Berzovia.



Train submit **Brezon** addition, beautiful village, German, Romanian **Forotic** erratic addition, besides **Comorâște** and then introduced into a grassy valley, full of cattle, guarded by children in embroidered jackets and who defend the rain under large umbrellas.

We arrived in **Cacova**. This village is situated on the nasty name Caraș river valley. Caraș springs near Anina, mountain, climb up, bend over to make Carașova; it descends and flows into the Danube near Baziaș, more to the west of Nera. Cacova is a large village with wide streets and regular and strong households. From the hill of the cross, the village appears as a bright little town over which rules in the light of sunset, unsurpassed church-sanctified and ready. This church<sup>34</sup> is the most impressive religious monument is the only church still Banat and style tailored to the country [in Romania]. The inhabitants have failed to have a church that honours our nation [...]. An old pensioner, a former official at the «Romanian Railways», and put all my heart for the erection of this church. Otherwise the village is not far behind. Good school confessional and People's Bank «Ploughman»; 200,000 crowns its own capital and premises, «Stanca» Hotel, a «Casina» with Romanian newspapers, weekly cattle market, the endless river cabbage fields, held by them and not Bulgarian – who are gardeners and Banat – «Scale Society», all these show the degree of wealth and culture of the village. This very good port urges rejection of their dresses and blouses and the introduction of expensive and bad taste. Peasant Girl proudly shows their silk dresses her and I looked at the bottom stuffing the apron in the boxes. Men keep port: leaving his shoes in the knee-length black socks, black hats and white shirt over embroidered jackets.

In the morning, on August 13<sup>th</sup>, attend the auction in **Comorâște**. Ingoted the debt of a peasant drink to a landlord is selling the house and garden and in his state is many in this village, not far from approaching Cacova. In addition to the

<sup>34</sup> The church “Holy Great Martyr George” from Grădinari (current name of Cacova), built between 1906 and 1909, painted in 1935 by Nicolae Popovici from Ciacova. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, p. 242.

impoverished village landlord who are here and «sipahis», large owners. Moreover, the village has good religious school and church<sup>35</sup>, whose key can not be found and thus remain locked. I am here, and united with small church, torn down and books by Ioan Bob<sup>36</sup>. I am leaving this pathetic village ingoted in debt. Business accounting from «the Ploughman»; in the village Gornea give me power to cross the valley then Caraș. Road, and all such villages are located on the right bank of the river, although it is narrower than the left, which the green orchards. The explanation can only be great floods of the river; can not drown the right bank, far higher than the left.

We pass through **Ticvanu Mare**, a village unit as a whole and rich like no other in Banat. Male choir is known here, and the largest shareholders in «the Ploughman» [People's Bank] everything I am here. The inhabitants are people who do not know the authorities. I have known one of these super Oravița Română. Dressed in their characteristic wear black stockings to the knee, looking grand and it bluntly, the court warned them all clear and cold. In the elections<sup>37</sup>, masters voice Ticvanu Mare surroundings. In all the houses are written in large letters: «Long live G[eorge] Pop of Băsești!». On one wall read the name of which long dominated by horse Banat last word and the quickness of his mind, but now has gone on way unreturned «Coriolan Brediceanu».

The road splits to the guards Caraș, **Secaș**<sup>38</sup>, where the priests of both religions live in understanding, and rarely cam here. **Giurgiova** pass without stopping by, where the rocks reach over the walls of houses, and on a gravel road, climb in **Gornea**,

<sup>35</sup> The Church of the “Nativity of the Mother of God” in Comorâște, built between 1810 and 1820, painted in 1927 by Nicolae Mărășescu from Bocșa Montană (iconographic decoration currently covered). Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, p. 217.

<sup>36</sup> John Bob (1739-1830), archpriest in Târgu-Mureș (1779-1782), then bishop of Blaj (1784-1830). Cf. Octavian BÂRLEA, *Ex historia romena: Ioannes Bob Episcopus Fogarasiensis (1783-1830)*, vol. I-II, Freiburg, 1951; Daniel DUMITRAN, *Un timp al reformelor. Biserica greco-catolică din Transilvania sub conducerea episcopului Ioan Bob (1782-1830)*, Editura Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, 444 p.; M. PĂCURARIU, *Dicționarul teologilor*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>37</sup> Elections for Parliament from Budapest in 1906.

<sup>38</sup> Formerly Săcăș, now the town is called Secășeni.

where «the Ploughman» [People's Bank] has a subsidiary. The village is not wealthy so [...]. We turn on the cooler. The road is full of that which goes to plant. Our lord my carriage is known from the 1906 exhibition [from Bucharest]. He is Novăcescu, an unsurpassed tenor, whose vibrating voice echoes in the valleys<sup>39</sup>.

From Cacova train takes us through the valleys of tributaries Caraș, where villages appear like a panorama, to Oravița. Only orchards of fruit trees along the way. A stack of hay made by a smouldering fire sucked unmerciful. Bad people are everywhere. I leave Oravița and continue with the priest to **Călugăra Monastery**. Walk through the gypsy neighbourhood from Oravița, talked down the hills climb a path up the hill with dense shade, where you can see the valley stretching **Ciclova Montană** a village of miners from Anina. Beautiful homes clean, shining in the sun, the church renewed<sup>40</sup> village masters. A procession with flag before wailing sound goes a dead. Descend to the village, we pass by a brewery and, in addition to old abandoned facilities, start slow climb to the monastery. Wide wagon road chases groin sucking trees Monk's Valley, whose water appears and disappears among the rocks they rock shop rush of floods. From time to time one comes out in front of bare rock. Women, men with food and children accompany us on the way back. Two crosses – here called chapels – announces close. We go through a gate hidden in the foliage trees and here we are in front of the monastery<sup>41</sup>. Forests surrounded on all sides. In ancient times everything – so begins the legend – here was the home of a monk fled in the world. But no one knew where his solitude, until a few decades ago, a ranger heard an angel like song in a cliff, near a spring. Surprised, says that people in the valley. One

<sup>39</sup> N. M. POPESCU, "Prin Banatul Timișorii" (III), pp. 94-99.

<sup>40</sup> "Assumption" Church from Ciclova Montană, built in 1783, painted several times (last time by Nicolae Popovici from Ciacova, in 1937). Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, p. 389.

<sup>41</sup> The "Covering of the Mother of God" Monastery, founded in the years 1860-1861, on the initiative of the priest Alexie Nedici, near an old hermitage settlement from the XII-XIII centuries; closed in 1959, was reactivated in 1990. The church of the monastery was painted by Nicolae Popovici from Ciacova. Cf. V. VLĂDUCEANU, *Mănăstiri bănățene*, pp. 97-102; I. B. MUREȘIANU, *Mănăstiri din Banat*, pp. 120-124; V. JOANTĂ, *Ghidul așezămintelor monahale*, pp. 20-27; C. TIMIȘ, *Mănăstiri și schituri*, pp. 7-12.

night, not to catch the news of Ciclova Germans, who wanted to hand over the place with her put the Wonder for Romanians go up the mountain in the church procession, the priest in front, which arrived in the song and put a cross springing as a sign of power. They are an icon in rock and sucked water in a stone coffin, the white bones of the monk. The spring provides many healing helpless wonder news widens and the faithful began to stream flow at the monastery monks. The church stands their donations and the guest house. Monks are not here, but a village priest comes every holiday and do the job.

«Assumption» is now over nine villages and faithful gather here for prayer from the previous day. I was faithful to the arrival of **Văliug**, mountain village, with costumes as Oltenia, seated at the foot of Semenici. Among the trees you can hear the songs of the church. A troop of children, young girls, women, elderly headed, stick hill climbs supported in law and valleys filled with singing and soften their hearts tender [...]. At Vespers not a place in the church<sup>42</sup>. The singers are many and they sit orderly in the pulpit. Evening, those of the long table sits Văliug fir and piety, as in church, singing in chorus, for all those gathered are comforted by only religious songs. Nowhere ever have I heard more beautiful than here, the psalmist's poetry: «Slaves of God» [...]. I thought it strange to us, in the country [Romania], where children and young people do not know the answer than the church singing «God bless», followed by another full of mockery and nonsense lyrics. Late at night they fall all asleep around the church, as the guardians of the Holly Sepulchre in the resurrection night. In the morning of August 15<sup>th</sup> more are talking to an old man from Bozovici, happy to see «a Romanian from the country», who say their difficulties and separation from the authorities concluded pleading: «Tell Prince Carol<sup>43</sup> to talk to our Emperor so that he will not bring us Hungarian priests, because then it is very bad for us!».

I get off the **Oravița** long town, located on one street long as three hours. A wag once said that Oravița – Lugoj is like a sausage

<sup>42</sup> The Church of the “Nativity of the Mother of God” in Văliug, built in 1887, painted in 1926 by George Marișescu. Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, p. 273.

<sup>43</sup> King Carol I of Romania (1881-1914).

long term. The separation between the Oravița Română and [Oravița Montană] almost unknown. In Oravița Română there are also Romanians united [with the Church of Rome], with the church and with their choral society. In Oravița Montană there is intelligence, a good Romanian centre. Here the newspaper is Printing press «The Progress», led by former teacher G[eorge] Jianu, in whose house I spend a day. Also here is the old Library «Ion Țăran». I listen to the choir of peasants from Oravița Română singing, under the direction of the teacher, after a funeral procession and the evening, at a party in Oravița Montană, hear the choir here, less educated, but with strong voices. In Oravița Montană it is the patron saint of the church<sup>44</sup>. Cannon thunder announces that after prayer to start the game. German costumes, mottled, the dances stretch behind the church. Play music and have more similarity to those of us, because here are «Bufens» – Romanians in the country – the song and come with their game. Also in Oravița Montană attend the meeting Oravița fine year for the «Association Section Romanian Culture and Literature». For much of the Committee resigns excuse sucked too much work and activity, although the report does not see other work than a peasant party in one village and two committee sessions [...].

Day is cause for celebration than churches in the Banat. The service is nice, large stretches table, guests come from many villages, the dance never stops, and everyone rejoiced. This holiday is called «Prayed» or «Nedeea». How «Assumption», this year, fell on Saturday, then take the churches with this dedication «Nedeea» and Sunday. I took part on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> of August at the **Răcășdia** church consecration. Răcășdia is a large village, with a thousand numbers, seated next Oravița. The villagers are wealthier as it appears after their settlements. The main street is wide and shaded by large trees. Church<sup>45</sup> and

<sup>44</sup> The monumental “Assumption” church from Oravița Montană, built between 1781 and 1784 by the Aromanian merchant Hagi Constantine Dimitrie, painted in 1828 by Arsenie Popovici (iconographic decoration restored in 1936 by prof. Ioachim Miloia from Timișoara). Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, pp. 368-369.

<sup>45</sup> “Assumption” Church from Răcășdia, built between 1770 and 1778, painted in 1903 by Philip Matew from Bocșa-Vasiova (iconographic decoration restored in 1967 by John Minulescu from Bucharest). Cf. D. ALIC, *Protopopiatele*, pp. 425-426.

religious schools are spacious and beautiful, spacious courtyards and enclosed with iron fence, caught in the stone foundation. There are five priests and four teachers [...]. Legally church is reckoned to 200,000 crowns, because ground has over 85 jugera [...]. After lunch, the game in the schoolyard. There are musicians, but young peasants with thirteen brass instruments. These bands are spread throughout the nearby villages. **Vărădia** has three. The peasants are dressed in white shirts, jackets and vests embroidered with chenille – a couple who write in journals and the Romanian tricolour coat tissue, others have blended in stockings – women in outlandish costumes: silk blouses, money neck Expensive skirts, skirts of city materials, loaded with stitches after models in newspapers. There is no telling the poor from the rich apart. For this ruinous luxury and peasants complain [...]. Guests are invited, seating, because «it is fitting». Farmers are happy to chat, ask their brothers in the Kingdom, he praised the young priest are good in many things. Game at Sparta, fanfare starts singing «Deșteaptă-te, române!» and «Peste deal, la nana-n vale», so pathetically like I have not heard. Too bad that this village has nice addition to luxury women and other higher shortfall; its system has two children, but only one. The disease is widespread and surroundings. I am told that **Mercina**, near the village, there are no sons. People take the Răcășdia servants and then give their daughters after them. Anyway, I am happy in this village priest young, enthusiastic, and welcoming people, and smart.

On 17 August, train men and women are returning from the monastery monks. A school child is writing his name in my book with a strange spelling so that I can not read. My name is Dumitru Scânteie, but I have written here as we learn in school. What Romanian name! Too bad that in my notebook it remained written: «Szkintei Demeter»<sup>46</sup>.

The journey of the historian from over the Mountains continued in the Serbian Banat, where he visited and described the settlements of

<sup>46</sup> N. M. POPESCU, “Prin Banatul Timișorii” (IV), XXXV (1911) 2, pp. 204-209.



Vârșeț, Râtișor, Vlaicovăț, Satu Nou, Petrovasâla and Panciova. From Belgrade, on August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1909, the author of these descriptions boarded a river steamer and continued his journey towards Drobeta-Turnu Severin, returning home<sup>47</sup>. Instead of conclusions, the following were noted:

“The Romanians are the real masters of everything in Banat. Apart from the villages in the south, dotted with Serbs, which the Romanians surpass in the household, and apart from a few Swabian colonies, there, everywhere, on the hill, in the valleys and in the plains, you will find only Romanians. Only part of the authorities and the workers of the ditches, canals and roads – namely the workers of hard work – are Hungarian. As an economic life, Romanians are excellent; only spahii villages – owners – seem weaker. They all have land and are always looking to buy, even though it has become much more expensive lately. Their households are strong, their cattle are unsurpassed, their holdings are systematically worked, and their wealth, especially in the plains, is superfluous. The cultural state is not inferior again. Especially in music education, the people of Banat are really the «forehead». Nowhere in Romania will you find more beautiful doines, stronger voices, more frequent choral societies, more pronounced musical application.

The institution that has maintained and maintains them as a separate nation, the Church, is highly esteemed, although its representatives should be even more true apostles of the nation than they are. I confess that no one in Banat complains worse than the injustices of the authorities and the lack of duty of his priests. They are truly good shepherds, who lay down their souls for the sheep, but they are also strangers, who see the wolf and flee, rejoicing in the cheap lentils that fall, in exchange for desertion, from their duty; this is how the man from Banat summarizes his opinion about his priests.

Does the Banat brother, a servant of Christ, value congrua<sup>48</sup> more than the souls of your pastors? Find out that the priests in the

<sup>47</sup> N. M. POPESCU, “Prin Banatul Timișorii” (IV), pp. 209-214.

<sup>48</sup> State aid to the priesthood. Cf. Cosmin PANȚURU, *Patrimoniul bisericesc al satului românesc. Studiu de caz: Parohia Mintia – Filia Bejan*, Centrul de Studii Banatice / Editura Partoș, Vârșeț / Timișoara, 2020, p. 168.

country are not as good as a quarter of you, and find out that here the believer does not sacrifice as much of his sweat for his priest as the believer in Banat sacrifices for you. So keep it in faith, and remember the Savior's words: «Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?». There are also many debts incumbent on the Banat priest. The children leave school without any knowledge and, therefore, in the Church and at the priest is their hope of enlightenment. Nazarenism<sup>49</sup> and socialism, day by day, are beginning to be torn from the sons of the Church, and the whole priest will be able to give the necessary cure. The system of two children – in many cases only one – and the unwise and ruinous luxury of women are shortcomings that only the priest can correct. To duty with all our heart, for otherwise we are committing a great sin against men and against God!”<sup>50</sup>.

At the end, in the introduction of an «appendix», entitled *Old books in the churches of Banat*, the author stated that «from all the churches in Banat where I passed find out the book today»<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, next to each locality visited was a list of Romanian theological and cult books, taken from under the presses of church printing houses in Bucharest, Râmnic, Iași or Blaj before 1826, chronological limit taken as a landmark in demonstration of the seniority of the ecclesiastical book funds from the parishes of Banat<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> Neo-Protestant current, which appeared in Switzerland in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, spread in the following decades, including parts of Banat, Arad and Bihor. Cf. Petre I. DAVID, *Călăuză creștină pentru cunoașterea și apărarea dreptei credințe în fața prozelitismului sectant. Sectologie*, Editura Episcopiei Argeșului, Curtea de Argeș, 1994, pp. 54-59.

<sup>50</sup> N. M. POPESCU, “Prin Banatul Timișorii” (IV), 2, pp. 214-215.

<sup>51</sup> N. M. POPESCU, “Prin Banatul Timișorii” (V), XXXV (1911) 3, pp. 351-357.

<sup>52</sup> In the same direction, see: Valeriu LEU, *Cartea și lumea rurală în Banat (1700-1830)*, Editura Banatica, Reșița, 1996; Valeriu LEU, *Cartea veche românească din bisericile Eparhiei Caransebeșului*, Editura Banatica, Reșița, 1996; Valeriu LEU, *Însemnări manuscrise pe cărți vechi din bisericile Eparhiei Caransebeșului*, Editura Mirton, Timișoara, 2011.

#### IV. Conclusions

Taken back into the light of history, after one century, the present fragments prove to our world the attachment of our forefathers to their ancient beliefs, extracting from the dust of oblivion pieces from the rich spiritual and cultural dowry of old villages. The measure, in which the heritage of the past has been preserved in this post-modern age, is sadly visible...

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