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Reference points of the Transylvanian Christianity between the 2nd-13th centuries

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Abstract

Being a main element of the ethnic, linguistic and spiritual formation of the Romanian people, Christianity has represented a permanence within our spiritual space for almost two milleniums. Being the oldest christians in this part of Europe – the Bulgarians, the Serbians, the Russians and the Hungarians received the saving word of the Gospel much later – the Romanians adopted the religion of love from the very first stage of their formation as people, so that the process of christianizing was simultaneous and indissolubly linked to that of the Romanisation of the autochthonous population.

Keywords

Christianity, Roman Empire, ancient Dacia, Transylvania, Hunedoara.

Facilitated by Zalmoxis's guiding rules about the immortality of the soul¹ and the decay of the Greek-Roman society and spirituality², the new Chris-

¹ Emilian Vasilescu, *Problema religiei geto-dacilor în lumina noilor cercetări istorice și arheologice*, in „Ortodoxia”, București, vol. V, 1953, no. 4, p. 634-650; Ioan G. Co-man, *Aspecte ale credinței în nemurire la traco-geto-daci*, in „Mitropolia Banatului”, Timișoara, vol. XXVII, 1977, no. 4-6, p. 197-203; Ovidiu Popescu, *Credința geto-dacilor în nemurire – element de continuitate*, in „Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis”, Deva, vol. XVI-XVII, 1982-1983, p. 174-177.

² Nicolae Chifăr, *Istoria creștinismului*, vol. I, Iași, 1999, p. 9-10; Vasile V. Muntean, *Istoria creștinătății de la Hristos până la Reformă*, București, 2004, p. 31.

tian faith, a main element of the ethnic, linguistic and spiritual formation of the Romanian people³, despite the literary-historical and archeological penury (which characterizes the provincial period of Dacia)⁴, spread gradually within a complex and long lasting process on the whole Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic territory⁵. The fact that this was genuine christianity, well established in the conscience of those who had accepted it, is proved both by the discovered palaeo-christian objects (belonging to the autochthonous Romanised population and not to the migrators) and the lack of major doctrinarian confrontations like those which had disturbed the life of the South-Danubian Churches⁶.

In fact, as a political piece of information, given the interest which the Dacians were according to any uprising or instability shown up in the bosom of the Roman Imperial society, christianity could be met at Sarmizegetusa Regia ever since the second half of the 1st century⁷. However, we are on a realm where supposition replaces the literary-historical or archeological source; we encounter the same situation in the next two centuries, too, namely the period between 106-271/275. Nevertheless the attempt of outlining an image of entirety of the primary christian life is an extremely difficult task because at the level of the entire territory of Transylvania little is known about the spreading of the new doctrine⁸.

Thus, in the absence of some reliable sources, the historical logic suggests more ways of the spreading of the Christian religion in Dacia. In this respect a great contribution must have had the soldiers in the Roman military units, stationed both between the two Dacian wars (as in the case

³ Dumitru Protase, *Orizonturi daco-romane*, vol. II, Cluj-Napoca, 2005, p. 345.

⁴ Emilian Popescu, *Creștinismul timpuriu pe teritoriul României*, in vol. „Priveghind și lucrând pentru mântuire. Volum editat la 10 ani de arhipăstorire a Î. P. S. Daniel, mitropolitul Moldovei și Bucovinei”, Iași, 2000, p. 195.

⁵ Ioan Rămureanu, *Noi considerații privind pătrunderea creștinismului la traco-getodaci*, in „Ortodoxia”, București, an XXVI, 1974, no. 1, p. 164.

⁶ Teodor Bodogae, *Momente de seamă privind începuturile vieții religioase a românilor până la organizarea mitropoliilor din țara noastră*, in „Mitropolia Ardealului”, Sibiu, vol. XVII, 1972, no. 5-6, p. 389; Emilian Popescu, *Creștinismul pe teritoriul României până în secolul al VII-lea, în lumina noilor cercetări*, in „Mitropolia Banatului”, Timișoara, vol. XXXVII, 1987, no. 4, p. 35.

⁷ Ioan Marin Mălinaș, *La umbra Sarmizegetusei romane: basilica din Densuș. Reflexii istorice și literare inspirate de o carte tipărită la Viena în 1775*, Oradea, 1997, p. 36.

⁸ Mihai Bărbulescu, *Vechi urme creștine*, in vol. „Monumente istorice și de artă religioasă din Arhiepiscopia Vadului, Feleacului și Clujului”, Cluj-Napoca, 1982, p. 58-59.

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of some detachments in the *Legion III Flavia Felix*, quartered on the place of the future capital city Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa) as well as after the year 106 (for example in the big castrum from Micia-Vețel, stationed: *Ala I Hispanorum Campagonum*, *Cohors II Flavia Commagenorum* and *Numerus Maurorum Miciensium*)⁹, among whom, in all probability must have been christians, too¹⁰. Other agents of the spreading of the new religion were the colonists, the merchants and the slaves, coming according to the data offered by epigraphy, especially from the eastern provinces of the Empire, where the christian faith had been deeply rooted ever since the apostolic times¹¹. The same role must have had the reduced Jewish communities in the Dacian-Roman urban areas, settled on the provincial intra-Carpathian territory after the defeat of the uprising led by Simon Bar-Kochba (132-135); among these refugees there must have certainly been christians, too¹². However, all of them were the representatives of a

⁹ Dumitru Popa, *Istoria antică a României. Epoca romană în Dacia și Dobrogea (sec. I-III d. Hr.)*, Sibiu, 2004, p. 28-33.

¹⁰ Among the soldiers in *Cohors II Flavia Commagenorum equitata sagittariorum* there must have been Christians, too, given the proximity of the province of origin of this military unit – Comagena – with Osroene – evangelized, according to the tradition, ever since the 1st century A.D. (cf. Alexandru Nemoianu, *Trei obiecte paleocreștine descoperite la Vețel - județul Hunedoara*, in „Mitropolia Banatului”, Timișoara, an XXIX, 1979, no. 1-3, p. 131).

¹¹ *Istoria României. Transilvania* (coord. Anton Drăgoescu), vol. I, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, p. 207; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I, Iași, 2005³, p. 60-61.

¹² For example, at Sarmizegetusa, the Jewish community is certified archeologically through a series of epigraphic and numismatic discoveries: votive inscriptions dedicated to the “All Glorified God” (“DII/THEO YPSISTO”), the “everlastig God of Iunona and of the angels” (“DEO AETERNO ET IVNONI ET ANGELS”), a bronze coin (having represented on the observe a palm tree with seven branches and the Jewish name “SHIMON”) and a ring stone with the Jewish-Gnostic cryptogram “AGVLA” (cf. Nicolae Gudea, *Evreii în provinciile dacice. 106-275 p. Ch.*, in „Ephemeris Napocensis”, Cluj-Napoca, vol. IX-X, 1999-2000, p. 186-189, 194-195, 198-200). The medieval Jewish legends takes down the chronological boundary of their arrival in Dacia before the years 101-106: “(Decebalus) welcomed gladly the Jewish run-aways from Jerusalem who had escaped from titus Vespasianus’s persecution in the capital city of Judea and who had taken refuge to the barbarian populations” or “In Transylvania, where history does not mention us at all, we are ceaselessly seen as foreigners, although in the year 90 A.D., according to the Christian era, we have done epoch-marking deeds, being called by the king Decebalus of the Getae in order to defeat the Romans. Our ancestors came to help, they say in a great number, about 50,000 souls”

“spontaneous missionaryism”¹³, unofficial, from person to person, defining for what is called today the popular Romanian Christianity” of the first three centuries¹⁴.

As a means of spreading the christian doctrine there should not be omitted the Oriental cults – a special role had the Jewish-Gnosticism, a religious trend with great success with the Roman provincial intellectual milieu¹⁵ –, which, through their forms of manifestation, opened widely the way to Christianity, being considered self as a part of the train of the same spirituality¹⁶.

Spread in the urban area, much more receptive to religious changes¹⁷, the Christianity, although in competition with the other existing religious creeds and trends (especially the Oriental ones)¹⁸, seems to have had a great impact upon the contemporary society. This is proved by both the war-like attitude of some representatives of the Roman military-administrative officials – the inscription “Ego sum flagellum Iovis contra perver-sos Christianos”, on the turquoise of a gold ring discovered in the region of Lechința, suggests that the number of the christians in Dacia was big enough for generating worry among the supporters of the pagan cults¹⁹ – and the present Romanian language, in which has been preserved the whole main terminology of the Christian doctrine²⁰. This proves that in

(cf. N. Gudea, *op. cit.*, p. 202-203).

¹³ Nicolae Gudea, Ioan Ghiurco, *Din istoria creștinismului la români. Mărturii arheologice*, Oradea, 1988, p. 108.

¹⁴ Nelu Zugravu, *Geneza creștinismului popular al românilor*, București, 1997, p. 15.

¹⁵ Ion Barnea, *Arta creștină în România*, vol. I, București, 1979, p. 12; Mircea Rusu, *Paleocreștinismul din Dacia Romană*, in „Ephemeris Napocensis”, Cluj-Napoca, I, 1991, p. 93.

¹⁶ M. Rusu, *op. cit.*, 82-83; Doina Benea, *Dacia sud-vestică în secolele III-IV. Interferențe spirituale*, Timișoara, 1999, p. 45.

¹⁷ Etymologically the word “păgân” comes from the Latin word “paganus” (inhabitant of a “pagus” - village), which means that in the beginning stage of the formation of the Romanian language – corresponding to this very period – the rural population was, in its majority, unchristianized (cf. M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 70).

¹⁸ *Istoria României. Transilvania...*, I, p. 207-208.

¹⁹ M. Bărbulescu, *op. cit.*, p. 67; N. Gudea, I. Ghiurco, *op. cit.*, p. 105; M. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 83; N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

²⁰ Constantin C. Diculescu, *Vechimea creștinismului la români. Argumentul filologic*, București, 1910, p. 5-30; A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană*, vol. II, București, 1914², p. 121-130; Vasile Pârvan, *Contribuții epigrafice la istoria creștinismului daco-roman*, București, 1911, p. 86-143; Simion Reli, *Originea și vechimea*

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the 2nd and 3rd centuries the christian religion perfectly overlapped the process of Romanization of the autochthonous population, which continued and completed after the withdrawal of the official imperial administration at the south of the Danube²¹.

No missionaries are known in the period between the 2nd and the 3rd centuries²². The Gospel preached in Latin²³ spread from person to person and from community to community²⁴, first in the areas where the colonization – and the process of Romanisation, too – were more intense, namely in the intra-Carpathian towns and castrums²⁵; the countryside areas seem to have remained in a great measure outside the sphere of influence of Christianity until after the 4th century²⁶.

The Palaeo-christian objects discovered in different parts of Transylvania, belonging chronologically to the the period of provincial Dacia, do not offer details concerning either the number or the form of organization of the christian communities in this space. It must have certainly existed small nuclei, in an incipient form of organization²⁷. Anyway, the reduced number of the advocates and of the Palaeo-christian objects associated with their new way of living should not amaze because in other parts of the Empire – see the case of the neighbouring provinces Dalmatia, Panonia Superior and Inferior, Moesia Superior and Inferior – the situation was the same²⁸. If we take into consideration the “religio illicita” status of the Christianity, in a marginal province of the Empire, attentively monitorised by Rome, the situation becomes perfectly justified²⁹. In the next centu-

creștinismului la români, Cernăuți, 1937, p. 48-55; Ioan Ionescu, *Privire asupra cuvintelor cu sens religios din fondul principal lexical al limbii române*, in „Mitropolia Olteniei”, Craiova, vol. VIII, 1956, no. 6-7, p. 343-359; Idem, *Începuturile creștinismului românesc (sec. II-VII)*, Bârda, 2003², p. 28-65. M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 66-73 etc.

²¹ Al. Madgearu, *op. cit.*, p. 481.

²² M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 62.

²³ Al. Madgearu, *op. cit.*, p. 480.

²⁴ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁵ D. Protase, *op. cit.*, II, p. 348-349.

²⁶ Alexandru Madgearu, *Rolul creștinismului în formarea poporului român*, București, 2001, p. 31-32.

²⁷ Em. Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

²⁸ Al. Madgearu, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²⁹ Mihai Bărbulescu, *Păgâni și creștini în Dacia la mijlocul secolului al III-lea*, in „Tribuna”, Cluj-Napoca, vol. VII, 1995, no. 23, p. 7; *Istoria românilor II. Daco-romani*,

ries the increase of these archeological proofs can be understood only by admitting of the existence of some Christian communities ever since the provincial period of Dacia³⁰.

The withdrawal of the administration and of the Roman army to the south of the Danube gave a new impulse to the development of these christian nuclei. The population diminished but among those who chose to stay were firstly the christians, free to organize now their religious life. Moreover, in the pre-Constantinian period³¹ these communities must have become stronger by the numerous south- Danubian runaways – the cause of this exode being Diocletian's and Galeriu's persecution due to which many christians died martyrically³².

After the year 313, when by the Decree at Mediolanum the Christian religion was given freedom of manifestation, the situation of the North-Danubian christians improved. The regaining of some trans-Danubian territories under Constantine the Great (306-337) – remained in the possession of the Empire, with little interruptions, until the end of the 6th century – brought Transylvania again in the proximity and the direct sphere of influence of the Roman-Byzantine civilization³³. The coins, the discovered Palaeo-christian objects, as well as the mentioning of some localities in the well known *Tabula Peutingeriana* (late map of the Roman Empire, dated at the end of the 4th century or the beginning of the next one) indicate the perpetuation of the contacts with the South-Danubian imperial world³⁴.

Within the framework of these relations there must be searched the reinitiation of the Dacian-Roman Christianity in the 5th-6th centuries, whose basis had been put even from the previous centuries³⁵. The means by which this new infusion was carried out differ considerably from those through which the christian doctrine appeared initially in provincial Dacia. Thus, the role of the missionaries must not be neglected – laymen and clergymen³⁶ – sent by the hierarchs of the numerous south-Danubian episcopal

romanici, alogeni (coord. Dumitru Protase și Alexandru Suceveanu), București, 2001, p. 257.

³⁰ M. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

³¹ D. Protase, *op. cit.*, II, p. 348.

³² N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

³³ M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 81, 84.

³⁴ D. Benea, *op. cit.*, p. 138-142.

³⁵ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

³⁶ V. Pârvan, *op. cit.*, 91, p. 144.

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seats³⁷, to whom can be added the first monks³⁸ (for the intra-Carpathian space, the neighbouring Banat represented a gate of penetration of the monachism, as it was directly connected in its southern part to the Roman-Byzantine world)³⁹. The language in which the Gospel was preached was Latin, in which the whole fundamental christian doctrinary terminology was formulated and established⁴⁰. Thus, safe from the great theological disputes of the age⁴¹, the Christian doctrine could strike roots deeply in the conscience of the Romanized population.

It is also important to outline the fact that the discovered christian objects, in a relatively great number, were localized approximately in the same points in which they had been signaled in the previous centuries – Sarmizegetusa, Porolissum, Potaissa, Apulum, Micia etc. –, indicator of the continuity of the autochthonous population in the same settlements⁴². If before all the data had converged to indicate an urban Christianity, in the 4th-6th centuries, the Evangelic precepts entered gradually the countryside milieu, dominated by conservatism⁴³. This change took place especially in the second half of the 5th century when, because of the dissolution of Hunnish union, we assist at a genuine rustication of the whole ex-provincial Roman society⁴⁴. This rustication, understood both as the loss of the urban character of the old towns, as well as the migration of a great number of people to the neighbouring areas, safer from the repeated invasions, led to the disappearance of the cultural differences among the previous citadels and the rural settlements, inhabited by the free Dacians, or by the successors of the Roman colonists⁴⁵, differences which were obvious especially

³⁷ M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 105-106.

³⁸ Coriolan H. Opreanu, *Transilvania la sfârșitul antichității și în perioada migrațiilor. Schiță de istorie culturală*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 41.

³⁹ Ioanichie Bălan, *Vetre de sihăstrie românească. Secolele XIV-XX*, București, 1982, p. 14.

⁴⁰ N. Stoicescu, *op. cit.*, 149-150; Em. Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁴¹ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

⁴² N. Gudea, I. Ghiurco, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁴³ Alexandru Madgearu, *Expansiunea creștinismului în afara mediului post-urban din Dacia (secolele IV-VI)*, in vol. „Slujitor al Bisericii și al neamului, Părintele Prof. univ. dr. Mircea Păcurariu, membru corespondent al Academiei Române, la împlinirea vârstei de 70 ani”, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 192-200.

⁴⁴ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

⁴⁵ Al. Madgearu, *Romanizare și creștinare...*, p. 484.

concerning the funeral rite⁴⁶, as in town they were practising the interment and in the countryside the cremation⁴⁷.

Thus, the Christianity – main factor of Romanization, with a special role in surpassing the Dacian-Latin bilingualism – became established gradually in the whole rural area⁴⁸ until the 6th century, being intensified by the major influence of the south-Carpathian communities, as a result of including this space within the imperial Justinian boundaries⁴⁹. However, the pagan elements with which the Christianity came into contact in the 4th-6th centuries, fed by the ancestral beliefs of the migrators⁵⁰ – the christianizing of this population took place afterwards, after their passing through Transylvania⁵¹ –, has left until today deep traces in the spirituality of the Romanian people, which can be seen at the level of superstitions, traditions and popular customs⁵². Thus, by means of a mild “*conversio paganorum*”⁵³ – one can notice however at Ulpia Traiana the traces of some deliberate destructions of some pagan religious monuments⁵⁴ – the Christianity became general, covering in a rather uniform way the whole space of the ex- Dacian province⁵⁵.

In the absence of some conclusive proofs, the aspects concerning the organisation and the juridical sphere of these local christian communities are difficult to tackle. Was there an organised Church in the first six centuries? The answer is necessarily affirmative because the presence of the christian nuclei – certified locally through the archeological discoveries of

⁴⁶ Ioana Hica-Câmpeanu, *Riturile funerare în Transilvania, de la sfârșitul secolului al III-lea e.n. până în secolul al V-lea*, in „Acta Musei Napocensis”, Cluj-Napoca, vol. XVI, 1979, p. 158-166.

⁴⁷ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 425-427.

⁴⁸ Al. Madgearu, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

⁴⁹ C. H. Opreanu, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁵⁰ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

⁵¹ Augustin Bunea, *Încercare de istoria românilor până la 1382*, București, 1912, p. 72-73; Mihail Macrea, *Viața în Dacia romană*, București, 1969, p. 477-478; Coriolan H. Opreanu, *Creștinismul și neamurile germanice în secolele IV-V în Transilvania*, in „Ephemeris Napocensis”, Cluj-Napoca, vol. V, 1995, p. 237-238.

⁵² V. Pârvan, *op. cit.*, p. 143-144; Al. Madgearu, *op. cit.*, p. 49; N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 286, 429; *Istoria României. Transilvania...*, I, p. 216; M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 63.

⁵³ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

⁵⁴ Ligia Bârză, Stelian Brezeanu, *Originea și continuitatea românilor. Arheologie și tradiție istorică*, București, 1991, p. 170.

⁵⁵ Al. Madgearu, *Expansiunea creștinismului...*, p. 195.

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the 20th century – implies the existence of some cultic places, for liturgical rituals and especially of some officials of the Holy Mass, around which the Church comes into existence⁵⁶.

If true, the thesis stated in the year 1775 by the Austrian Officer Silvestru Iosif von Hohenhausen and raised again recently, then the old mausoleum built in memory of the “provisional governor” of Dacia between the two wars, Cnaeus Pompeius Longinus, might have served after his christianization – in the frame of that “interpretatio christiana”, well known to the entire Roman space after the year 313 – as a worshipping place for the christians around the ex-capital city⁵⁷. The grouped presence of more christian objects – an eucharistic goblet, earthen lamps etc. – can suggest that another basilica existed at Sarmizegetusa⁵⁸. All these and others which might have existed could not have functioned until the Aurelian withdrawal, when the label of “religio illicita” applied to Christianity disappeared; in all these supposed basilicas, the language of preaching the Gospel and of carrying out the church services – by a hierarchy, sanctioned by valuable ordainment – was the vulgar Latin of the people⁵⁹.

Because of the lack of explicit documentary sources, the structure, the status and the abilities of the Dacian-Roman Church hierarchy can only be inferred. There was certainly no superior ecclesiastic organisation like the current one⁶⁰. For the ordainments of priests they must have resorted either to itinerant hierarchs or to those in the south-Danubian castrums⁶¹. Besides, there should not be excluded the presence of some local bishops; another potential episcopal seat, whose holder could cumulate even administrative-juridical prerogatives, seems to have existed at Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, supposition to which leads the registration of the locality in *Tabula Peutingeriana*, with other political and clerical centres of the age⁶². Even that Zenovius, known from the inscription on the “donarium” at Biertan – probably identical to the one mentioned on the disc at Porolissum (Moigrad)⁶³ –, could have represented the provincial clerical high

⁵⁶ Mircea Păcurariu, *Începuturile Mitropoliei Transilvaniei*, București, 1980, p. 10.

⁵⁷ I. M. Mălinaș, *op. cit.*, p. 43-109.

⁵⁸ N. Gudea, I. Ghiurco, *op. cit.*, p. 119; N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁵⁹ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

⁶⁰ M. Macrea, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

⁶¹ M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, p. 29; N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

⁶² D. Benea, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁶³ M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii...*, I, p. 87-88.

hierarchy⁶⁴. However, most historians and researchers who dealt with this issue place the Dacian-Roman ex-provincial space within the sphere of jurisdiction of the episcopal south-Danubian seats: Singidunum (Belgrad), Horreum Margi (Ciupria), Margum (Dobrovica) and Viminacium (Kostolac) in Moesia Superior, respectively Ratiaria (Arcear), Castra Martis (near Kula), Aquae (Negotin Prahovo) and Oescus (Ghighen) in Dacia Ripensis⁶⁵. From these dioceses, with the help of village bishops and periodeuts, the old Dacian provinces could be led. The existence of these categories of itinerant hierarchs was necessary all the more as the synodic provisions (canon 2 of ecumenical Synod II, canon 6 of Synod of Serdica and canon 57 of Synod in Laodicea) forbade the ordainment of bishops for small towns and villages; or, after the Aurelian retreat the whole urban structure in Traian Dacia rusticated⁶⁶. The extension of the jurisdiction of Iustiniana Prima archiepiscopate over the episcopal north-Danubian castrums, according to the content of Novela XI in 14 april 535⁶⁷, and did not do anything else but to confirm juridically some factual circumstances which had existed before⁶⁸ and to statute the positioning of this space within the political – clerical sphere of influence of Constantinople⁶⁹.

Many of the stated considerations started from the analysis of the Palaeo-Christian objects discovered all over Transylvania. Among the most important ones there are: Apulum (Alba Iulia), Sarmizegetusa, Potaissa (Cluj-Napoca), Porolissum (Moigrad), Micia (Vețel), Biertan and Ampelum (Zlatna)⁷⁰. It is about pottery, metal pieces etc., preserved totally or

⁶⁴ In recent historiography they take into account more and more the identification of Zenovius either with a (local) permanent hierarch or an itinerant bishop (periodeut). See *Histoire de la Transilvanie* (coord. B. Köpeczi), Budapest, 1992, p. 79; N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

⁶⁵ Nelu Zugravu, *Cu privire la jurisdicția asupra creștinilor nord-dunăreni în secolele II-VII*, in „Pontica”, Constanța, vol. XVII-XXIX, 1995-1996, p. 171.

⁶⁶ M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 106-107.

⁶⁷ Emanoil Băbuș, *Justiniana Prima în lumina noilor cercetări*, in „Studii Teologice”, București, vol. XXXIX, 1987, no. 1, p. 84-92.

⁶⁸ V. Pârvan, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁶⁹ Milan Šesan, *Iliricul între Roma și Bizanț*, in „Mitropolia Ardealului”, Sibiu, vol. V, 1960, no. 3-4, p. 202-224; M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 122-124.

⁷⁰ As those who dealt with the research and the inventorying of these pieces (Nicolae Gudea and Ioan Ghiurco, Alexandru Madgearu, Ioan I. Rusu, Coriolan H. Opreanu, Nicolae Dănilă etc.) did not entirely agree either to their chronological classification – some think the provincial period, others the post-aurelian period – or to their be-

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by bits, belonging to the Romanized autochthonous population⁷¹, and not to migrators⁷².

Some could not be placed in a very tight chronologic period⁷³; in what concerns others there are doubts about their character (christian or pagan?)⁷⁴. There must be given some explanations for those which are christian for sure. If fewer Palaeo-christian objects come from from the provincial period, starting from the 4th century their number gradually increases, the pieces diversify and belong to more and more domains of use⁷⁵. Then, starting from the second half of the 5th century and up to the first decades of the next one, once the north-Danubian territory entered the Roman-Byzantine sphere of influence (occasioned by the dissolution of the Hunnish Union and by the reconquest of of some trans-Danubian positions during the reign of the Emperor Iustinian I), these increase considerably, becoming standardized from the point of view of the style⁷⁶.

Beside the local pieces (especially those belonging to the 6th century), most of them are import products⁷⁷, brought either by merchants, colonists or soldiers (in the 2nd-3rd centuries), or by missionaries, monks, pilgrims or traders (post 271/275)⁷⁸. Up to the great Hunnish invasion, the source centres of the Palaeo-christian objects had been Pannonia, Illyricum and North Italy; in the 5th-6th centuries these were brought from Syria and North Africa. In this case the directions of penetration of these pieces appear: Constantinople - Scythia Minor (for those Siro-Egyptian) and Dalmatia (or Northern Italy) - Dacia Ripensis and Moesia Prima (for those North-African)⁷⁹.

longing or not to the category of Palaeo-christian objects, I have omitted the classical inventorying.

⁷¹ Bogdan Filipescu, *Descoperiri din perioada secolelor III-V e.n. de la Micia*, in „Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie”, București, vol. XXXVIII, 1987, no. 1, p. 49; Nicolae Dănilă, *Daco-Romania Christiana. Florilegium studiorum*, București, 2001, p. 147.

⁷² *Istoria românilor...*, II, p. 594-596.

⁷³ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁷⁴ M. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 86; C. H. Opreanu, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁷⁵ D. Benea, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁷⁶ N. Gudea, I. Ghiurco, *op. cit.*, p. 124; D. Benea, *op. cit.*, p. 110; C. H. Opreanu, *op. cit.*, p. 29-30.

⁷⁷ N. Gudea, I. Ghiurco, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁷⁸ N. Gudea, I. Ghiurco, *op. cit.*, p. 108; C. H. Opreanu, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁷⁹ N. Gudea, I. Ghiurco, *op. cit.*, p. 124-128; D. Benea, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

The military events at Low Danube in the first decades of the 7th century, had dramatic consequences in all the spheres of the Romanic society. The big Avar-Slav migration caused the interruption of the political-economic and cultural-religious contacts of the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic territory with the Byzantium⁸⁰. This crisis was entirely felt in the intra-Carpathian space, too. Unfortunately, for more than three centuries, the written or archeological sources did not offer information regarding the clerical life of the Slav-Romanic intra-Carpathian population. Thus, the logic and the historical inference play an extremely important role.

The disappearance of the Danubian episcopal seats – genuine tie between the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic christianity and the Byzantine-Constantinople christianity – led to the clerical (and political) isolation of the christian Romanic communities in a sea of Avar-Slav heathendom. In spite of of the religious tolerance of the new political masters, Christianity stopped⁸¹. The quasitotal disappearance of the christian objects – only a few pieces were preserved at Bratei, Poian and Cristuru Secuiesc⁸² – would suggest, according to the recent historiography the dissolution of the Transylvanian Church⁸³. To the same conclusion would lead the results of the research in the intra-Carpathian necropoles, belonging to the cultural horizon “Mediaș” (7th-9th centuries) – Alba Iulia, Berghin, Bistrița, Bratei, Boarta, Dăbâca, Dorolțu, Ghirbom, Mediaș, Pișcolț, Porumbenii Mici, Ocna Sibiului, Sibiu-Gușterița, Sighișoara, Sopor de Câmpie, Șeica Mică, Târnavă, Toarcă, Turdaș and Uioara de Jos – as in most of the cases the tumular cremation graves replaced the interment graves⁸⁴.

Who resorted to this burial ritual eminently pagan, if we take into consideration the Slav-Romanic ethnic allegiance of this necropoles? The opinions differ. It was first suggested that the buried are the christian Romanics and the cremated are the pagan Slavs; where the position of the defuncts is crouching, oriented North-South, the graves were ascribed to the Bulgarians⁸⁵. According to another opinion, a more shaded one, the

⁸⁰ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 479.

⁸¹ Al. Madgearu, *Rolul creștinismului...*, p. 92; C. H. Opreanu, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁸² Al. Madgearu, *op. cit.*, p. 94-95; M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 179.

⁸³ Al. Madgearu, *op. cit.*, p. 92; C. H. Opreanu, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁸⁴ Ioan-Marian Țiplic, *Contribuții la istoria spațiului românesc în perioada migrațiilor și Evul Mediu timpuriu (secolele IV-XIII)*, Iași, 2005, p. 102-107.

⁸⁵ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 494; *Istoria românilor. III. Genezele românești* (coord. Ștefan Pascu, Răzvan Theodorescu), București, 2001, p. 85.

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cremation could have been practised by the Romanics, too – they started from the idea that the interment, being a symbol and not a condition for Ressurrection, would not oppose any clerical dogma which anyway lacking a superior organisation, would have permitted a certain freedom in practising the funeral customs – if they start from the premise that the process of christianizing the autochtonous did not finish in the 6th-7th centuries, but it continued up to the end of the first millennium⁸⁶.

A return en masse to paganism of the Romanic population is however difficult to envisage because the christianizing of the autochtonous was not compulsory, imposed by any superior political authority, but by a natural, gradual process, in which the spreading of the Evangelic doctrine was achieved from person to person and from community to community in a peaceful way⁸⁷. So, either the cremation necropoles of the Slavs were used after their abandonment, by the christian Romanics – in this way their bi-ritualism can be explained – or part of the autochtonous had still remained pagan, in which case their unchristian customs were even more intensified by the beliefs of the new political leaders of Transylvania⁸⁸. In this case among these pagan autochtonous could be mentioned: descendants of the free Dacians, the remained migratory elements (under way of Romanization-christianization) and some Romanic christians too, still loyal to some pagan practices like this ritual of cremation⁸⁹. The assumption does not seem far-fetched as long as even today, after almost two milleniums of north-Danubian christianity are still practiced – especially in the rural areas – all kinds of customs of pagan origin (the hen passed over the coffin, the fires lit around the solstices and equinoxes etc.)⁹⁰.

Starting from the 9th century, the political and spiritual context of south-east Europe changed radically, encouraging the revitalization of the north-Danubian Christianity. The Byzantine missions in the Balkan-Danubian and Pannonic regions (resulted in the christianization of the Bulgarians, the Moravs, the Serbians, the Russians and temporarily of the Hungarians) and the return of the Byzantium to Low Danube (in the year 971), accompanied by the reorganization of the episcopal system at the south of the Is-

⁸⁶ Al. Madgearu, *op. cit.*, p. 102, 105.

⁸⁷ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁸⁸ Al. Madgearu, *op. cit.*, p. 103-104.

⁸⁹ Anton Moisin, *Istoria Transilvaniei*, vol. I, s. I., 1997, p. 381.

⁹⁰ L. Bârzu, St. Brezeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

tru in Dobrogea, marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of the Slav-Romanian christianity, and finally of the present-day orthodox Romanian christianity⁹¹.

The gradual disappearance of the cremation tombs, as compared to those of interment – phenomenon which started after the year 700 and ended in the next two centuries –, proves the fact that the advocates of this burial ritual christianized⁹², which according to the recent secular historiography corresponds to “the second beginning of christianity” in the intra-Carpathian space⁹³. In other words, it is about the rechristianization of the early-medieval Transylvanian society, supervised by the political authority of the age, under the influence of the Slav christianity of Moravian type⁹⁴ (at least two of the disciples of Saints Chiril and Metodie – Zandov/Jandov and Moznopon – seem to have reached the Romanian space at the end of the 9th century and the beginning of the 10th century)⁹⁵. This stage corresponds to the introduction of the so-called “Byzantine-Slav rite” (the 10th century), namely to the liturgical Paloslavonic language in the Church life⁹⁶, both as a way of keeping the identity of the Romanian Christianity of Eastern type against the more and more obvious attempts of attracting it in the Latin-Occidental sphere of influence as well as a means of cultural-clerical way of progress at a time when the books for the church service translated in Romanian were missing, but whose interpretation in the language of the political leaders of Transylvania had already started through the christianizing saints of the Moravs and was in full progress through their disciples⁹⁷.

For example, in the Hunedoara sector of the Mureș valley the 10 interment graves at Orăștie (the point “Dealul Pemilor X8”), dated back to the second half of the 19th century-the 10th century, belonging to the group “Ci-umbrud” (Transylvanian aspect of the culture “Stare Mesto” in Moravia)⁹⁸,

⁹¹ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

⁹² I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁹³ C. H. Opreanu, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁹⁴ I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁹⁵ *Istoria României. Transilvania...*, I, p. 301-302; M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 174.

⁹⁶ P. P. Panaitescu, *Introducere la istoria culturii românești. Problemele istoriografiei române*, București, 2000², p. 186-187.

⁹⁷ M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 174-175.

⁹⁸ Zeno Karl Pinter, N. G. O. Boroffka, *Necropola de tip Ciumbrud de la Orăștie „Dealul Pemilor”*, punct X8, in „Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis”, Alba Iulia, vol. XXXVIII/1,

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by their specific inventory (the lack of weapons and among the jewellery there are the pendants with cross) and the positioning of the defuncts (on their back, positioned west-east, the hands on their chest or pelvis or raised) represents the first archeological proof of the presence of some christianized Slavs in this area⁹⁹. On the other hand, the 68 interment graves in the second necropole at Orăștie (the point “Dealul Pemilor X2”) are pagan (sepulchral inventory typical to a warlike population). They are dated back to 10th century-the first decades of the next century and are attributed to the Hungarians (the Petchneg and Slav-Romanian elements must not be excluded either)¹⁰⁰; the same those at Deva (the point “Micro 15”)¹⁰¹. Only the necropoles at Deva (the south limit of the town)¹⁰², Simeria Veche (the point “În vii”)¹⁰³, Hunedoara (the point “Dealul Comorilor”)¹⁰⁴ and Streisângeorgiu (the point “La biserică”)¹⁰⁵, belonging typologically to the

2001, p. 319-346; I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 114, 240; Aurel Dragotă, *Aspecte de multiculturalitate spirituală. Rit și ritual funerar în Transilvania și în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est (sec. IX-XI p. Ch.)*, Alba Iulia, 2006, p. 145.

⁹⁹ I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

¹⁰⁰ I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 120-125, 240; A. Dragotă, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

¹⁰¹ Radu R. Heitel, *Arheologia etapelor de pătrundere a maghiarilor în Transilvania intracarpatică*, in „Symposia Thracologica. Revistă a Institutului de Tracologie”, Miercurea-Ciuc, vol. V, 1987, p. 77-79; Radu Popa, *La începuturile Evului mediu românesc. Țara Hațegului*, București, 1988, p. 52; Aurel Dragotă, Ioan Marian Țiplic, *Scurt istoric al cercetărilor privind necropolele din Transilvania (sec. IX-XI)*, in „Corviniana. Acta Musei Corvinensis”, Hunedoara, vol. VI, 2000, p. 130-131; Ana-Maria Velter, *Transilvania în secolele V-XII. Interpretări istorico-politice și economice pe baza descoperirilor monetare din bazinul carpatic*, București, 2002, p. 400; I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 120, 124-125, 236; A. Dragotă, *op. cit.*, p. 142-143.

¹⁰² R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 59; A. M. Velter, *op. cit.*, p. 344, 354, 400; I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 127, 246; A. Dragotă, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁰³ D. Popescu, *Săpăturile arheologice din R. P. România în anul 1962*, in „Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche”, București, vol. XIV, 1963, no. 2, p. 455; Benjamin Basa, *Șantierul Simeria*, in „Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice”, București, vol. IX, 1970, p. 225-232; R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 59; Marius Muntean, *Studiul antropologic al scheletelor provenite din necropola medievală timpurie de la Simeria Veche (jud. Hunedoara)*, in „Analele Banatului”, Timișoara, vol. VI, 1998, p. 339-357; A. M. Velter, *op. cit.*, p. 466; A. Dragotă, I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 128; I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 242; A. Dragotă, *op. cit.*, p. 146-147.

¹⁰⁴ Kurt Horedt, *Contribuții la istoria Transilvaniei în secolele VI-XIII*, București, 1958, p. 116, 144; R. R. Heitel, *op. cit.*, p. 78; R. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 53; A. M. Velter, *op. cit.*, p. 416; I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 127, 238; A. Dragotă, *op. cit.*, p. 143-144.

¹⁰⁵ Călin Cosma, *Vestul și nord-vestul României în secolele VIII-X d.H.*, Cluj-Napoca,

local horizon Blandiana B - Alba Iulia (the point “Stația de Salvare II”) of the culture Bijelo-Brdo, and chronologically to the 11th-12th centuries (the late stage of this cultural group, called “Cîțfalău”, spread in the 13th century, too), suggest by their inventory, the absence of the food offering, of the harness objects and of other military accessories, the appearance of the coins given as offering etc. – but also by the generalization of the west-east positioning of the defuncts, the cultural homogenization of the Transylvanian communities and definitive establishing of the christianity in the intra-Carpathian space¹⁰⁶.

As for the clerical organization of the christian communities in the 7th-11th/12th centuries, as many as they might have existed, the archeological data do not offer any information. A hypothesis would be that the only institutionalized forms of the Church which could have survived in these confusing times, but unattested from an archeological and reference point of view, were the monasteries¹⁰⁷. Placed in rather isolated areas, these could have sheltered the Transylvanian hierarchs of those times. The very toponym „Râmeț” – term coming from the Slavs, from the Latin word “eremita” or the Greek word “ἐρημίτης”, in translation “lonely” – often met in Transylvania, suggests the presence of these prayer oases¹⁰⁸. Then, the existence of a local hierarchy must have certainly existed, given the necessity of carrying out the Holy Mass, without which there are neither churches nor christian communities. Or, the presence of some ordained priests comes as a necessity. Consequently, who used to sanction this cultic staff, if not a valid local hierarchy? It is difficult to suppose that these candidates at priesthood might have travelled to Dobrogea or farther, up to Tesalonic or Constantinople – a route which meant many dangers at that time –, in order to get the Ordainment Mystery¹⁰⁹.

What is certain is that in this area, all the conditions necessary for establishing a pre-statal Romanian formation – certified by documents only in the year 1247 –, had been early met, the Church must have had a com-

2002, p. 228; A. M. Velter, *op. cit.*, p. 468; I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 128, 242.

¹⁰⁶ I. M. Țiplic, *op. cit.*, p. 127-128.

¹⁰⁷ C. H. Opreanu, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹⁰⁸ Ion Ionescu, *Problema organizării cultului creștin ortodox și a ierarhiei bisericești pe teritoriul României până în secolele IX-X*, in „Studii Teologice”, București, vol. XLIII, 1991, no. 3, p. 121-124.

¹⁰⁹ M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 176-177.

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plex structure, from which the superior hierarchy could not miss. In other words, the presence of a bishop at Litovoi's and his predecessors' court was something natural and absolutely necessary¹¹⁰. But we think that a direct jurisdiction of an Archiepiscopate of Ohrida or of its suffragan in Dibiskos/ Tibisco¹¹¹ on Transylvania cannot be taken into account. Neither the Episcopate of "Tourkia", whose first-established Ierotei seems to have existed somewhere in the field of Tisa did not meet these conditions¹¹². So, we can speak about a clerical influence of these superior ecclesiastic centres in Transylvania – they certainly encouraged the spread of christianity among the allogeneous populations existing here –, but not about their effective canonical competences in the intra-Carpathian space.

Again, there are not known any details about the contents and carrying out of the religious acts. It seems the Holy Mass, of Byzantine rite, was initially carried out in the Vulgar Latin (7th century); only in the 8th-9th centuries some moments were probably carried out in old Romanian¹¹³. Starting from the 10th century, when the Byzantine-Slav rite appeared, the Slavonic language replaced the Romanian language (which was however kept in sermon, confession etc., namely in those cultic acts which imply intense pastorship); this unofficial religious "bilingualism" was nevertheless preserved in Transylvania until the 16th-17th centuries¹¹⁴.

Therefore, we can tell that at the end of the 12th century Christianity generalized among all the Transylvanian population, no matter the ethnic groups which were composing this society; the total disappearance of the pagan incineration ritual confirms this reality. The fact that it was

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 221.

¹¹¹ Nicolae V. Dură, *Relațiile canonice ale Bisericii românești nord-dunărene cu scaunele episcopale din sudul Dunării*, in „Mitropolia Banatului”, Timișoara, vol. XXXVI, 1986, no. 2, p. 42-43.

¹¹² Ioan Rămureanu, *Începuturile creștinării ungarilor în credința ortodoxă a Răsăritului*, in „Studii Teologice”, București, vol. IX, 1957, p. 35; Nicolae Dănilă, *Elemente bizantine în viața populației autohtone din Banat și Transilvania în secolele VII-XIII*, in „Mitropolia Banatului”, Timișoara, vol. XXXIV, 1984, no. 11-12, p. 720; Alexandru Madgearu, *Misiunea episcopului Hierotheos. Contribuții la istoria Transilvaniei și Ungariei în secolul al X-lea*, in „Revista de Istorie”, București, vol. V, 1994, no. 1-2, p. 147-153; Idem, *Românii în opera Notarului Anonim*, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, p. 132-133; Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Românii și maghiarii în secolele IX-XIV. Geneza statului medieval în Transilvania*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003², p. 187.

¹¹³ N. Zugravu, *op. cit.*, p. 503.

¹¹⁴ P. P. Panaitescu, *op. cit.*, p. 185-187; M. Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, I, p. 174-175.

a genuine, organized Christianity is proved by the number of churches in the 13th-15th centuries, churches which did not appear all of a sudden, accidentally, but implied a long founding knez tradition and an ecclesiastic complex previous structure, which had required the necessity of building these monuments.