

BOOK REVIEWS

Cosmin PANȚURU, *Patrimoniul bisericesc al satului românesc. Studiu de caz: Parohia Mintia - Filia Bejan*, Partoș Publishing House, Timișoara – Centru de Studii Banatice Vârșeț-Serbia, 2019, 314 pp.

Circumscribed within a certain geographical space, with a homogeneous community, the village should not be approached only spatially, because it would lack that specific glow, and therefore should be equally considered spiritually and culturally. Thus, Lucian Blaga asserted that “this is the only way to explain the vast horizons of popular creation in poetry, art, faith, that particular experience that participates in everything, the flawless safety of creation, the abundance of meanings and nuances, the implications of infinite resonance in that inexhaustible spontaneity”. Therefore, as Rev. Dan Sandu asserted, every villager “had the certainty that it is the environment where he comes in and leaves for eternity, which is why the «axis mundi» of the village is the church or ecclesial space, a kind of «column of infinity» that connects the earth to heaven and the main source of sacred human heritage”.

In the context in which the year 2019 was declared by the Holy Synod “the homage year of the Romanian village (of priests, teachers and mayors)”, Rev. Professor Panțuru approaches the topic scientifically while drawing attention to the need of being aware of the obligation to love, know, value / preserve / protect and reveal the ecclesiastical cultural patrimony in order to be able to pass it on to the next generations.

The reviewed volume includes Abbreviations, Foreword, Argument, nine chapters and bibliography. To begin with, Rev. Prof. Dr. Cosmin Panțuru exposes the historical and legislative aspects of Transylvania, the legal regime of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Statutes of organization and presents general information about Bejan and Mintia: geographical location, toponymy, archaeological and documentary attestation, administrative jurisdiction -territorial.

In the second chapter, entitled *Bejan and Mintia Orthodox Parish*, the author lists the administrative-ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the parish as well as the additional staff, namely: the clerical staff of Mintia Parish, the clerical staff of Bejan branch, the clerical and non-clerical staff of Bejan-Mint Parish.

In the third chapter, *The Orthodox Church Heritage*, the author makes a systematic analysis of church buildings, namely the wooden churches in Bejan dedicated to “St. Hierarch Nicholas” and Mintia dedicated to “St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel”, exposing their architecture and painting, while addressing the issue of the alienation of monumental-historical wooden churches. Subsequently, the author goes on to present the churches built in Bejan dedicated to “St. Hierarch Nicholas” and in Mintia – the church dedicated to “St. John the Baptist” presenting their architecture and painting. He also presents the other church buildings, namely the parish house, the Confessional School in Bejan, the cemeteries, the parish lands, as well as heritage objects such as worship books with Cyrillic and Latin characters, The Menaion or The Anthologion, The Menaion and Apostle, The Gospel, The Triodion, Apostle, Liturgies, The Holy Bible, the New Testament, the Psalter, etc., icons painted on wood and glass and other objects of worship with historical value such as Chalice, Disc, Spoon, Vestry Bell, etc.

The fourth chapter, *Church Activities in the Orthodox parish*, contains the catechetical activity, the pastoral activity, the pastoral gathering, the social activity carried out during the Second World War and the heroes of the nation while the next chapter, “Orthodox religious societies and associations” includes presentations of “Sfântul Gheorghe” Society, “Casa Culturală” Association, “Reunion of Orthodox Women” Association, “Anastasia Şaguna” Young Girls’ Association, “Oastea Domnului” Association.

In the subsequent chapter, *The Greek-Catholic Denomination of Mintia (1875-1948)* the author presents the establishment of the Greek-Catholic denomination, the disputes over funds and over the old wooden Orthodox church, the serving staff, the clerical and non-clerical staff, the church wardens and chanters. The author also records the church heritage, the provisional chapel, the wooden church dedicated to “St. John the Baptist”, the parish lands, the process of reunification of the Orthodox community in Mintia.

In the seventh chapter, *Aspects of Romanian Education*, the author reviews both the confessional schools, namely the Orthodox Confessional School and teachers, the Greek Catholic Confessional School and teachers, as well as the communal (or state) school, while in the eighth chapter, *Church units temporarily under the administration of the priests of Bejan - Mintia Orthodox Parish*, Căinelu de Jos Orthodox Parish and the Chișcădag Orthodox Parish are presented. The last chapter, entitled *Statistical data*, introduces the parish censuses, censuses conducted over time with statistical data on denominations.

The reviewed volume is a monograph, the author managing to combine the historical aspect, proving that, on the current territory of the civil settlements Bejan and Mintia, there was a local church organization, under the jurisdiction of the old Metropolitan Church of Transylvania, now the Diocese of Arad, and then, since 2009, of Deva and Hunedoara within the Metropolitan Church of Banat (p. 305) and the legislative one, dependent on the legislation from Transylvania, and from 1918 from Romania as a whole. Moreover, the author states that “the Church went through a difficult period along with its members (lay and clergy men) during the two world wars, but especially after 1948 and the establishment of the communist-atheist regime. Its goods, with the exception of churches (as places of worship) and cemeteries, were confiscated and passed on to state domain. Associations and foundations were outlawed, and religion (that used to be taught in school) was eliminated. The church concentrated its mission only within the limits of the liturgical space” (p. 306).

In conclusion, we congratulate the author for his hard work, for conceiving and writing this work, an aspect that highlights the formation of a researcher, accustomed to working scientifically. As Rev. Rus Constantin asserted, “this monograph acknowledges the holy and sanctifying endeavor, carried out in time, of the inhabitants of this Romanian space, born, raised and connected with the Church of Christ. The image of the life of the Transylvanian Romanians is here rendered on scale.” (p. 13).

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