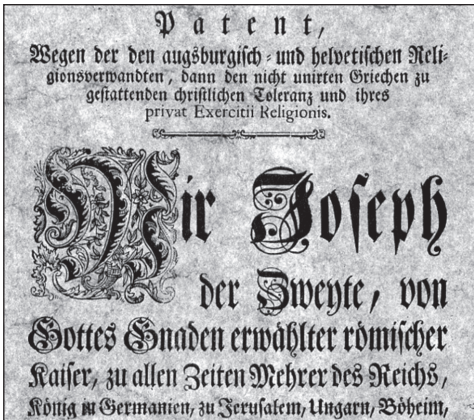


Under the Sway of Orthodoxy and the Reformation Romanian-Saxon Confessional Relations in Transylvania between 1688 and 1848

MIRCEA-GHEORGHE
ABRUDAN



The Patent of Toleration (1781)

Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan

Researcher at George Barițiu Institute of History, Romanian Academy. Author, among others, of the book **Ortodoxie și luteranism în Transilvania între Revoluția pașoptistă și Marea Unire: Evoluție istorică și relații confesionale** (Orthodoxy and Lutheranism in Transylvania between the Revolution of 1848 and the Great Union: Historical evolution and interdenominational relations) (2015).

Introduction

OVER THE centuries, several peoples lived alongside each other in Transylvania and, following the Reformation, the region became home to a number of Christian denominations. The tolerant coexistence of these different nations and denominations has been praised by many historians, while others took a more nuanced view or even denied it, in keeping with the spirit of their times, their ethnic origin, or their religious affiliation. However, the nations and denominations of Transylvania experienced this “tolerance” rather differently. For instance, until 1848, for the Romanians it meant exclusion from political life, marginalization, and religious persecution, despite the fact that they were the majority population in Transylvania.

The present study outlines the confessional relations between the Ortho-

dox Romanians and the Lutheran Saxons in Transylvania, from the end of the 17th century and until the Revolution of 1848. These ethno-confessional relations were influenced by a number of political factors and by the social, national, cultural and conceptual changes brought about by the Modern Era. Thus, the period can be divided into two: from the Habsburg conquest of Transylvania until the reforms introduced by Emperor Joseph II (1688–1781) and from Joseph II to the Revolution of 1848.

Inhabiting the same territory but enjoying different rights and living conditions, the Romanians and the Saxons had frequent contacts, but their intensity varied according to the spirit of the time. Thus, relations between the Romanian and the Saxon elites, secular or ecclesiastical, ranged between cordiality and disagreements, and conflicts sometimes broke out.¹ The Christian spirit of both nations, mutual respect, and especially their affiliation to two and respectively three different denominations played a decisive role in the history of the two ethno-confessional entities. When it comes to the religious evolution of the two nations in question, we notice the absence of aggressive proselytizing and of polemical exchanges, of the kind that occurred throughout the 17th century between the Orthodox Romanians and the Hungarian Calvinists,² or between the Hungarian Calvinists or Unitarians and the Catholic Szeklers.³ Both Saxon⁴ and Romanian⁵ theologians of the previous century were keen to highlight the “spirit of tolerance” defining the relations between the two nations and denominations, disregarding the conflicts between them and insisting on Transylvania’s ecumenism.⁶

From the Conquest of the Principality until the Reforms of Joseph II (1688–1781)

THE ANNEXATION of Transylvania by the Habsburg Empire led to significant religious changes, with the Court in Vienna an ardent supporter of the Counterreformation. However, in Transylvania Catholicism was the weakest of the four officially sanctioned denominations, and in Leopold’s Diploma the Habsburgs had pledged to respect the political and religious status quo in the principality. During the entire Habsburg rule, very few Protestants returned to the Catholic faith, as the Saxons remained faithful to their Augustan confession and most of the Hungarians kept their Helvetic one. In what the Romanians were concerned, the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church was established and the Orthodox one was suppressed until 1759, when Maria Theresa issued a Patent of toleration and accepted the appointment of an Orthodox “substitute bishop” of Transylvania, in the person of the Serbian Bishop of Buda, Dionisije

(Dionysius) Novaković, who took up residence at the Church of St. Nicholas in the Șchei district of Brașov on 4 September 1761. Consequently, between 1700 and 1761 in Transylvania the Orthodox faith was represented de jure only by the communities of Sibiu, Făgăraș, Brașov and the Land of Bârsa, recognized as such by the authorities in Vienna, while all the other Romanians were deemed to be Uniate, despite the clear evidence to the contrary.⁷ The episcopal activity of Dionysius Novaković (1761–1767) and of Sophronius Kirilović (1770–1774) was marred by uncertainty, as the institutional revival of the Orthodox Church was exclusively at the mercy of the Imperial Court. The latter had imposed upon the two bishops a number of 11 and 13 restrictions, respectively, strictly regulating their activity. Both were reminded that their appointment had been merely a gesture of “goodwill” and that, should their abuse their powers, they would be removed from their positions “without any successors,” “because in Transylvania, according to the constitution of the country, there are only four recognized religions . . . and the non-Uniate clergy is merely tolerated.”⁸ In the 18th century the concepts of “tolerated” and “tolerance” differed considerably from the current ones: as Emperor Joseph II explained in 1773, the word was to be understood as “abiding” (*Duldung*), in the sense of living on the fringes of society at the mercy of the dominant nations and through the goodwill of the imperial house.⁹ As such, the Romanians did find themselves on the fringes of society, most of them being either serfs, in the counties administered by the Hungarian aristocracy, or free peasants, in the area known as *Fundus Regius* (Royal Land) and inhabited by Saxons. This latter territory, established following King Andrew’s Diploma (1224), corresponded to the geographical area settled by the German colonists who had arrived in Transylvania in the 12th–13th centuries and was divided into 9 seats (Orăștie, Sebeș, Sighișoara, Cincu, Mediaș, Nocrich, Sibiu, Miercurea, and Rupea) and 2 districts (Brașov and Bistrița). The population consisted of Romanians, Saxons, and Szeklers, but only the Saxons—or indeed those of the Evangelical confession of faith—enjoyed citizenship rights. The area was under the legal jurisdiction of the Saxon University (*Universitas Saxonum*), located in the town of Sibiu, which operated as a political and administrative body and was led by the Saxon *comes*.¹⁰ Romanians and Saxons lived together on this territory from the Middle Ages until the contemporary era, when most Saxons departed following the retreat of the German army in 1944 and later the fall of the communist regime. As opposed to the rural environment, where they lived either in mixed villages or in separate settlements, in the urban environment those who did not belong to the Saxon nation—namely, the Romanians, the Hungarians, and the members of other ethnic groups—were not allowed to purchase real estate in keeping with a legal provision that remained in force until Joseph II issued the Rescript on concivility on 4 July 1781.

The final report of Emperor Joseph II concerning his visit in Transylvania provides valuable information on the situation of the Transylvanian Romanians in the second half of the 18th century and on their relations with the Hungarian aristocracy and the Saxons.¹¹ In the document in question, drawn up in Sibiu between 1 and 10 July 1773, the emperor indicated that many Romanian families had migrated to Moldavia or Wallachia, driven by famine, inflation, “the endless labor obligations,” “the appalling behavior of their aristocratic masters,” and sometimes by “religious fanaticism.” According to the co-regent, both the Hungarian nobles and the Saxon patricians “are seeking to maintain their privileges and revenues intact, and wish to be able to treat their subjects as they see fit.” In the opinion of Joseph II, the Romanians were exploited not so much by the Saxon commoners—“peasants or urban craftsmen,” described as “the most industrious and loyal subjects of the dynasty”—but rather by the 60 or 70 Saxon patrician families, “all magistrates and officials” whose appetite for wealth, privileges and benefits drives them to arbitrarily regulate and freely oppress the communities under their jurisdiction, from Saxon burgesses to Romanian peasants. From direct meetings with the peasants and from the complaints received from them, Joseph learned that they are the object of “widespread legalized brutality,” expressing outrage at the fact that “the manner in which the Saxons treat the Romanians who took up residence and live alongside them” was, in his opinion, simply “unbelievable,” because the Saxons “consider them local people and tolerate them only until a member of the magistracy or another Saxon begins to covet that land. Then they drive them away or cause them so much grief and trouble that they are forced to leave. These unfortunate Romanian subjects, who are undoubtedly the oldest and most numerous inhabitants of Transylvania, are so tormented and mistreated by both Saxons and Hungarians that their fate, if you begin to look into it, cannot but touch one deeply; nonetheless, it is surprising that so many of these people are still here and that not all of them have decided to emigrate.”¹² The notes and the observations of Joseph II give us a pretty clear picture of the status enjoyed by the Romanians and of the manner in which they were treated by the Hungarian nobles and by the Saxon patricians. The harsh treatment applied to the Romanians is also illustrated by other foreign and domestic sources, by the accounts of foreign travelers who visited Transylvania, and by the Saxon historiography of the 19th century.¹³

Despite all this, when it comes to the confessional situation of the Orthodox Romanians, in the *Fundus Regius* the Saxon domination had positive effects, because “the Saxons and the vast majority of the Hungarians who embraced the Reformation are always of one mind . . . , especially when it comes to opposing and preventing the spread of the Catholic faith,” as Count Lacy, the chairman of the Imperial War Council, reported to Maria Theresa on 12 September 1773.¹⁴

The following year, the Court in Vienna received a note from the Gubernium of Transylvania regarding the Catholics living in the Saxon seats, which made reference to the arbitrary treatment applied to them by the Saxon authorities and which asked the Court to demand denominational parity or equality in the administration and the civil service, once again revealing the firm opposition of the Saxons to the policies effected by Vienna.¹⁵ Of course, the anti-Catholic stance of the Saxons was doubly motivated. On the one hand, it had to do with the defense of their own Lutheran denomination and, on the other, it had a pragmatic, socio-political dimension, as it also opposed the political, social, and religious emancipation of the Romanians living in the *Fundus Regius*. It must be noted in this regard that, in keeping with the medieval Transylvanian legislation, all peasants living in the *Fundus Regius*, regardless of ethnicity or denomination, had to pay the tithe (*decima*) to the Lutheran Saxon parish priests for all revenues obtained from farming, beekeeping, and sheep breeding, a tax that was levied until the year 1848.¹⁶ Without any exceptions, this tithe was paid by the Orthodox Romanians living in the Saxon seats and districts to the Lutheran Saxon parish priests, from the Middle Ages until the Revolution of 1848, and sometimes even the Orthodox priests had to pay it. After the reforms introduced by Maria Theresa, the Catholics were exempt from the payment of this tithe, and their payment was instead transferred by the imperial fiscal authorities to the Roman-Catholic bishop of Alba Iulia. Consequently, the conversion to Catholicism of the Orthodox believers would have entailed a drastic reduction in the revenues collected by the Lutheran clergy and by the Evangelical Church in Transylvania. Hence their opposition to the conversions to Catholicism and implicitly the failure of the Uniate Church with the Romanians living in the *Fundus Regius*,¹⁷ where throughout the 18th–19th centuries the Orthodox Church managed to achieve the highest demographic density.¹⁸ Even so, the Romanians in the *Fundus Regius* who did embrace the Uniate confession were not automatically exempt from their medieval obligations. Their attempts to achieve social emancipation by means of religion led to some tragic incidents between Romanians and Saxons—for instance at Vermeș, Tonciu, Petriș, Sângeorzul Săsesc, Dumitrița, and in other villages in the region of Bistrița—on account of certain medieval obligations and restrictions imposed upon the Romanians in the *Fundus Regius*, who had to celebrate the Saxon feasts, were not allowed to erect churches, needed permission to freely practice their religion or to take up residence in certain communities, had fiscal obligations, required approval to set up cemeteries and erect parochial houses, and needed special exemptions for the Uniate priests. Quite illustrative of the Saxon attitude towards the Uniate Romanians and, by extension, towards the Orthodox are the bitter conflicts with the township of Bistrița and with the Saxons in the neighboring villages,

which lasted throughout the entire 18th century. Despite the imperial order of 1743, later reissued on several occasions, the Saxon authorities did not observe the rights of the Uniate priests to the canonical shares of the common lands, to parochial houses or churches, and did not allow them to receive the ecclesiastical contributions or church duties from their own parishioners.¹⁹

In what concerns the obligation of the Romanians to celebrate the Saxon religious feasts, it must be said that the Synod of the Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession of the year 1649 ruled that the Romanians were no longer obligated to take part in these Saxon religious feasts, as opposed to all the other inhabitants of the *Fundus Regius*, for fear that they might leave the territory and thus deprive the Saxon parish priests and parishioners of some of their revenue. In the year 1708 the synod once again turned to the issue and ruled that the participation of “Wallachians in Saxon feasts” was to be limited to those situations in which their failure to participate would have negatively impacted the feast. The observance of these feasts by the Romanians essentially meant the suspension of certain agricultural activities or household chores likely to disturb the peace in the village or disrupt the Evangelical religious service. However, the measure that utterly baffled the Romanians, because of its utter disregard for the popular Orthodox piety, was the decision taken in 1712 by the same Evangelical synod whereby “no crosses were to be erected in the *Fundus Regius*.”²⁰ We do not know to what extent the measure was actually enforced, but it was unlikely to have visible effects in Transylvania after the defeat of the Kurutz uprising and the reassertion of Catholic Habsburg domination. The decision of the Saxon synod to ban the Romanian roadside crosses, widespread throughout the whole of Transylvania, may however indicate a sharp increase in their presence, forcing the synod of the Evangelical Church to intervene and tone down the religious fervor of the Romanians, who were deeply attached to the cult of the Holy Cross.²¹ As to the towns, they remained closed to the Orthodox Romanians until the aforementioned decree of Joseph II. This is why the first Orthodox and Uniate places of worship began to be built within or in the immediate vicinity of the Saxon towns only after the Rescript on concivility was issued in 1781.

From Joseph II to the Revolution of 1848

AFTER THE death of Maria Theresa in 1780, Joseph II found himself completely in control of the Habsburg Empire. He quickly began to implement the reforms he had been envisaging for years, in an attempt to transform the empire in the spirit of the Enlightenment. The main directions were centralism, the unification and harmonization of the provinces, the re-

organization of the administration, the introduction of German as the official language in state administration, the improvement of social relations by way of clear regulations regarding the obligations of the serfs and by limiting the abuse of the aristocracy, a reduction in the power of the Catholic clergy, which had to be subordinated to the interests of the state, and not to the Pope, the dissolution of the contemplative monastic orders and the secularization of monastic assets, the transformation of the monastic clergy into an active priesthood which, according to him, had to be not just the religious and moral educator of the people, but also the civic one, as well as an active collaborator with the state.²² As to Transylvania, with its nations and denominations, the reforms of Joseph II were particularly felt in the context of the Rescript on concivility of 4 July 1781, of the Patent of toleration of 8 November 1781, of the patent that abolished personal dependence (serfdom) of 22 August 1785, and of the *Norma regia* which made education compulsory for all children between the ages of 7 and 13.²³

The emperor's Rescript on concivility gave to all of his Transylvanian subjects citizenship and ownership rights in the Saxon towns and villages, and henceforth the Romanians were allowed to purchase and own property in both the rural and the urban environments, putting an end to the Saxon monopoly on real estate and to the exclusively Saxon citizenship rights in the *Fundus Regius*. With this measure, Joseph II shook the very foundations of the Saxon administration, indicating clearly that all the inhabitants of this territory, without exception, were to be deemed free and enjoy equal rights. This paved the way for the future social and political emancipation of the Romanians, who could presently join a guild, attend the Saxon schools, work in the administration, and own real estate.

The second measure that contributed to the emancipation of the Orthodox believers was the Patent of toleration of 8 November 1781, which granted complete freedom to the Protestant denominations and to Orthodoxy throughout the whole empire, Transylvania included. The general principles of the edict gave the Orthodox and Protestant believers the right to freely practice their religion and to erect churches and parochial houses without the prior approval of the Court, in those places inhabited by at least one hundred families and where the necessary means were available. Furthermore, no one was obliged to convert to the Catholic faith, and no individual was to be fined or receive corporal punishment on account of their religion. However, any person had to refrain from insulting another denomination. Catholic priests were no longer allowed to unilaterally attend to the members of other denominations who were about to die or had been sentenced to death, the clergy belonging to the other denominations being allowed to take their place, and access to public office was no longer exclusively conditioned by one's Catholicism, but rather by merit and skill. In the case of mixed marriages, baby girls were to be christened and raised

in the faith of the mother, and baby boys in that of the father, except for the situation in which the father belonged to an officially recognized religion and the mother to the merely tolerated Orthodox one: in this case, the children, regardless of their gender, were to be raised in the religion of their father. This decree instituted a general tolerance throughout the empire, also affecting the Orthodox Church in Transylvania, which had enjoyed a rather precarious status and which was still not elevated to a position equal to that of the four officially recognized denominations. Published with some reticence by the Transylvanian authorities, the Patent of toleration came to weaken the local Catholic Church as, in the space of just 8 weeks, the Roman-Catholic bishop lost 168 followers and one parish, while the Greek-Catholic one saw a mass departure of believers from the Uniate Church. This phenomenon manifested itself in all corners of Transylvania, even in the region of the military border, where the Uniate officers and priests led the people away from the religious Union. These acts of “apostasy” compelled the emperor to intervene. On 22 May 1782 he issued a decree regulating departures from the Roman-Catholic and Uniate Churches. Thus, those who wished to forsake Catholicism had to receive instruction “in the spirit of Christian charity” for a period of six weeks under the supervision of a Catholic priest, with the individual in question being issued a certificate to that effect. In the absence of said certificate, no one could be received by another Church.²⁴

The two decrees issued by Joseph triggered an authentic social and ecclesiastical revival among the Romanians living in the *Fundus Regius*, as indicated by the hundreds of Orthodox churches built in stone—some of them genuine treasures of Romanian architecture and old art—and erected throughout Transylvania in the last two decades of the 18th century. They are particularly numerous in the areas of Mărginimea Sibiului, in the Lands of Făgăraș and Bârsa, and can even be found in the Saxons towns: the Holy Trinity Church of Brașov (1786–1787); the Church of the Annunciation of Sibiu (1788–1789); St. Luke’s Church in Maierii Sibiului (1791); the Orthodox chapel of the Transfiguration belonging to the Greek company of Sibiu (1790–1799), demolished in 1902 when the new cathedral was erected; the Holy Trinity Church of Cluj (1795–1796), etc.²⁵

In the years that followed Joseph II continued with his policies meant to elevate the status of the Orthodox Church. Thus, in 1781 he issued an imperial order to the civilian and ecclesiastical authorities in Transylvania, requesting that the designations “schismatic” and “schismatic Church”—employed by the authorities but deemed derogatory and demeaning by the Orthodox—be replaced by “non-unitus.”²⁶ Therefore, from that moment until the year 1864, the Orthodox Romanians were officially referred to as non-Uniate believers, and their church as the non-Uniate Church.²⁷ The next step towards the insti-

tutionalization of Orthodoxy was taken in 1783, when the emperor decided to restore, de jure and de facto, the Orthodox episcopal institution in Transylvania. He appointed Gideon Nikitić (1783–1788) as “full bishop” and placed the Bishopric of Transylvania under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan See of Karlowitz, a situation that lasted until the year 1864.²⁸ This was but one of the reforms introduced by Joseph II in an attempt to centralize state authority and secure increased control over the church, which had to serve the interests of the state. In what the Orthodox Church was concerned, his measures were aimed at the jurisdictional unification of all the eparchies within the Metropolitan See of Karlowitz, while a number of regulations governed its reorganization.²⁹ The same legislative provisions regulated the structure and the functioning of the Bishopric of Transylvania. Thus, in late 1786 it was structured into 31 arch-priesthoods and 981 parishes, with a total of 120,552 Orthodox families. The number of priests was set so that there would be one priest for communities of 130 families, two for 250 families, and three for more than 250. By way of a special decree issued on 3 September 1783, Joseph II also set the remuneration of the bishop at 4,000 florins, taken from the annual church tax known as the sidoxial tax, payable by each Orthodox family.³⁰ The town of Sibiu was designated as episcopal see at the time of Bishop Gideon Nikitić, who resided in rented premises. The position of Sibiu as the Orthodox episcopal center was reinforced in the year 1786, when the first Orthodox school for the training of Romanian Orthodox schoolteachers and priests was established in this town. Its first headmaster was the scholar Dimitrie Eustatievici of Braşov (1786–1796), succeeded by Radu Tempea (1796–1808).³¹

By paving the way to the ecclesiastical and social emancipation of the Orthodox Romanians, Joseph II entered the collective memory of his contemporaries and of the following generations as the “good emperor,” sung in poems and praised in verses composed by priests³² and even by common peasants. This created the enduring memory of a cherished figure and an authentic myth of the good emperor.³³ On the contrary, the Saxon contemporaries of Joseph II marked his death with “somber clothes, but not with somber faces.” The Saxon historiography presented him in a negative light and recorded the fact that upon his death “the nation experienced tremendous joy.”³⁴

Of all the reforms introduced by Joseph II, the two decrees remained in force even after his death, at a time when both the Court in Vienna and the political Estates of Transylvania were seeking to “dismantle Joseph’s regime,” as David Prodan comprehensively argued in his work devoted to the *Supplex*.³⁵ Essentially, the Transylvanian Estates sought to curb the emancipation of the Romanians, simply stating that “the powers, the liberties, the taxes imposed illegally and against the nature of our laws, for the sake of the so-called Romanian bishops,

priests, and religion, should be abolished and brought in line with our ancient laws. Because the schismatic Romanians, non-Uniate, the Armenians, the Gypsies and other lesser people cannot benefit from national rights, the Uniate Romanians should also be deprived of them, and people of this sort should be removed from any office in the state unless they prove themselves true nobles, lawful, and good patriots.”³⁶ In what the *Fundus Regius* was concerned, the Saxons sought a return to their privileged constitution, petitioning the Court to revoke the Rescript on concivility and doing their best to deprive the Romanians of the properties acquired during Joseph’s reign. In some places, the lands and the pastures of the Romanians were seized by force. Of course, the Romanians fought back and presented the Court with the famous *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, followed by other petitions and memoranda. Their two bishops, Ioan Bob and Gerasim Adamović, went to Vienna, while the peasants became restless and challenges were made against the legislation passed by the Diet in 1790–1791. The Romanian and Saxon elites initiated a polemical exchange that would last until 1848, on the issue of equal rights for all the inhabitants of the *Fundus Regius*. The Court did intervene in the matter of the legislation passed by the Diet, limiting the excesses of the Estates. As to the Orthodox Romanians, they managed to secure a confirmation of the right to practice their religion. The Court in Vienna also denied the Estates their request to supervise the number of priests and the erection of churches, and ruled that the Orthodox Romanians should be allowed to hold public office if they possessed the necessary skills.³⁷ The polemical exchanges between Romanians and Saxons in the period that followed the submission of the *Supplex* indicate that the atmosphere was rather tense, and especially that the Saxons were contemplating the future in a rather historicist manner, shaped by their medieval privileges. The Romanians, on the other hand, were considering the contemporaneous reality of the *Fundus Regius*, while also paying attention to the historical argumentation. According to the Romanians, the equality between them and the Saxons was legitimized by the provisions in King Andrew’s Diploma, as well as by their numerical superiority over the Saxons in five of the nine Saxon seats and in both districts, while the Saxons outnumbered the Romanians in only four seats.³⁸ Generally speaking, the Saxon elite had a rather uniform reaction to the introduction of concivility, with relatively minor nuances. Quite surprising was the solution devised by Michael Heydendorff and Andreas Schuster, magistrates of the town and seat of Mediaș, for the emancipation of the Romanians, a proposal that the Saxon elites would continue to circulate until 1848. They suggested that the Romanians should be allowed to buy land and houses on the *Fundus Regius*, but only to the extent in which such purchases were not detrimental to the Saxons. Citizenship was to be granted only after their attendance of Saxon schools, and on condition that,

after a long cohabitation with the Saxons, they managed to adopt the morals, customs, language, religion, way of life, and the garb of the Saxons—in other words, if they abandoned the “Romanian law” and embraced Lutheranism.³⁹

The Court and the Diet upheld the provisions in the Rescript on concivility, allowing the Orthodox Romanians to achieve a limited but steady progress, despite the obstructions and the opposition put up by the Saxons. In religious terms, the most significant progress achieved by the Orthodox Romanians was the continuing construction of churches and the transformation of Sibiu into a stable and enduring center of the Orthodox Bishopric, under Bishop Vasile Moga (1810–1845). From his Orthodox church in Cluj, Bishop Moga moved to Sibiu and sought to purchase a house suitable for conversion into an eparchial residence. This took him a decade, and he succeeded only after the Court asked the magistrate of Sibiu to approve the sales contract signed by the bishop and Governor George Bánffy in 1819. Thus, under Vasile Moga, in 1821 the Orthodox Bishopric came to own a building in the center of Sibiu, which hosted the bishop’s residence, the consistory, and the seminary.⁴⁰

The relations between Romanians and Saxons during Bishop Moga’s episcopate were rather tense. The Romanian elites, the Saxons patricians and the Hungarian aristocracy constantly argued over the Romanians’ desire for emancipation, a broader issue that also included the matter of the Romanians’ status in the *Fundus Regius*. The tensions had also been generated by the petitions sent by the Romanian bishops to the Transylvanian Diet and to the Imperial Court. After the publication of the *Supplex*, Bishop Moga sent memoranda to the authorities in 1835, 1836, 1837, and 1842. These requests essentially focused on the recognition of Romanians as a political nation and the extension of citizenship to all members of this ethnic group, with all the social, economic, political, and ecclesiastical benefits that it entailed. In keeping with their population numbers, the Romanians were to take part in the election of representatives in the Diet, in the meetings of the Saxon University and in devising its instructions, and in the appointment of officials—from the local administration, through the jurisdictional functionaries, to the highest magistrates. Furthermore, Romanian graduates were to be fully allowed to practice their chosen professions, Romanians were to be accepted as members in the guilds, while the allodial houses of the communities were to grant financial assistance to the Romanian students, teachers, and schools located in the *Fundus Regius*. In what concerns the ecclesiastical demands, these could be summed up as follows: tax exemption for the Romanian clergy and the exemption of the Romanians from the payment of the tithe to the Saxon clergy, said tithe being instead paid to their own priests; the elimination of abuse and of the interference of the civilian authorities in the administration of church revenues, in the issuance of marriage certificates and

in the appointment of church curators; the transfer to the Romanian parishes of publicly-owned plots of land; the elimination of the mandatory celebration of feasts belonging to other denominations and implicitly the recognition of the Orthodox Church as one of the official churches.⁴¹ The petition sent by Bishop Moga in 1837 triggered a heated debate within Transylvanian society, and the Saxon University officially expressed its position through the publication, in 1844, of two texts, signed by Johann Karl Schuller⁴² in Sibiu and Josef Trausch⁴³ in Braşov, which refuted the argumentation of the bishop and defended the status quo, challenging the validity of the arguments related to the historical presence, the number, and the tasks fulfilled by the “Wallachian” population. In fact, when it came to the reformist tendencies displayed either by the Court in Vienna, or by the Romanian elite, the tactics of rejection employed by the Saxons always relied on the recourse to the centuries-old privileges enjoyed by this community. Also, to quote Friedrich Teutsch, the Romanian requests “clearly ran counter to the secular and ecclesiastical Transylvanian legislation of that time, and satisfying these requests would have meant repealing it. No one was willing to do that in 1837. And the Saxons cannot be blamed for the reluctance to tear up their constitution in order to ensure a better life for the Romanians living on Saxon land, where they were already much better off than in the counties, enjoying personal freedom, the right to own real estate, to be represented in the administration of the exclusively Romanian villages, where they could also freely decide on the use of the common assets.” The same historian and bishop of the Evangelical Church explained the Saxon protectionist policy, indicating that “the problem could only be solved for the country as a whole, and could not be limited to asking the Saxons to improve the lot of this tolerated nation and religion at their own expense.”⁴⁴ Thus, the Transylvanian Diets merely took note of the Romanians’ requests and postponed sine die their discussion and resolution. A solution would only be provided by the Diet convened in the spring of 1848.

From a religious point of view, it is important to mention that while the Transylvanian social elites debated these issues, the local press in the Principality circulated the idea of granting the Romanians their requests, provided that the latter were willing to embrace the Lutheran faith. Jurist J. Söllner openly pleaded for the assimilation of the Romanians by the Saxons in terms of both language and religion.⁴⁵ This is a clear indication of the dominant paradigm in the thinking of that time, which saw political issues as inextricably related to ecclesiastical ones, and implicitly identified nation with denomination in the case of both Saxons and Romanians. However, considering the Romanian demographic presence in the *Fundus Regius*, constantly increasing at a time when the Saxon percentage was declining, Stephan Ludwig Roth and other Saxon leaders began to contemplate a consolidation of the Saxon position and a revival of the

Lutheran faith with the help of additional colonists coming from the German space and by restricting the sale of land to the Romanians.⁴⁶

Another dimension of the Romanian-Saxon confessional relations is represented by the contacts, at the level of the local communities, between the Romanian Orthodox priests and their Saxon Evangelical counterparts. Several sources indicate that some Saxon men and women availed themselves of the liturgical services provided by Orthodox priests, especially when it came to prayers for the sick, for the remembrance of the dead, and even to exorcisms, even if these were not allowed by the Orthodox canon law. Thus, in November 1800 the Orthodox vicar Ioan Popovici of Sibiu sent a pastoral letter to the archpriests located in the *Fundus Regius*, asking them to inform their subordinate priests that “under any circumstances they must not perform any kind of religious service for the sick belonging to another denomination.” According to him, the Orthodox Consistory in Sibiu had received “a complaint regarding the non-Uniate parish priest of Toprila, in the seat of Cincul Mare, who had said a prayer for a sick Saxon woman.”⁴⁷ For similar reasons, Bishop Vasile Moga was forced to scold a priest named Climente Popovici, who had performed exorcisms on some Saxons, thus incurring the wrath of the Lutheran clergy, who had reported him to the bishopric. Another case—much more serious but kept secret, and which occurred in the city of Braşov—is mentioned in a letter sent by George Bariţiu to Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu: “Between 1833 and 1842, the parish priest of Braşov was Vasile Greceanu, father-in-law to our great poet, Andrei Mureşianu. During the six years that I spent in his house, on many occasions I saw Saxon men but especially women, even from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, coming to him for healing through prayer, for themselves or for a family member, saying that no physician could help them as the disease was the work of the devil. The same Saxon men and women came to him for liturgies; some even wanted an unction performed by five or seven priests. Father Vasile did his best to send them away, but it was all in vain.”⁴⁸ Despite the canonical admonitions coming from the hierarchy and the secrecy surrounding them, the cases in question were far from isolated. Most likely, they could be encountered in all areas where Saxons and Romanians lived together. There are several explanations for this, one of them quite certain: the absence of sacramental rites with the Transylvanian Saxons, combined with the stress laid by the Lutheran clergy on catechizing the believers, made it so that in some extreme cases, in the absence of a medical or purely rational solution, the Saxons resorted to the services of some Romanian Orthodox priests reputed for the power of their prayers and for the positive effects of the religious services they performed.

Conclusions

THE COHABITATION of Orthodox Romanians and Lutheran Saxons in Transylvania under the Habsburg regime was defined by the different judicial status enjoyed by the two nations and denominations. Even if all inhabitants of the *Fundus Regius* were free de jure, their social, economic, political, and ecclesiastical situation differed, with the Orthodox Romanians being second-class citizens until the reforms introduced by Joseph II in 1781, when they were granted citizenship and ownership rights and began to enjoy freedom of religion, just like the Lutheran Saxons. The status of the Orthodox Church was rather precarious until Joseph's Patent of toleration of 1781, which allowed the Orthodox believers and clergymen to freely practice their religion and implicitly to erect churches without the supervision and special approval of the authorities. As opposed to the Saxon Lutheran clergy, which enjoyed a number of privileges, including the revenue from the tithe paid by all inhabitants of the *Fundus Regius*, regardless of denominations, the social, economic, educational, and social situation of the Romanian Orthodox clergy was a lot more precarious. Until 1861, they received no financial assistance from the authorities and therefore had to do additional work for a living, just like all the other Orthodox believers who, until 1848, were forced to pay the tithe to the Lutheran clergy. If on the *Fundus Regius* the Union with the Church of Rome was met with fierce opposition by the Saxon authorities and therefore made little progress, this had nothing to do with a hypothetical Saxon sympathy towards the Orthodox Church. Instead, it stemmed from a pragmatic need to forestall the social and political emancipation of the Romanians through ecclesiastical means, namely, through their conversion to the religion of the House of Habsburg. On the other hand, it also derived from the de plano anti-Catholic reflex of the Lutheran Saxons.



Notes

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Abstract

Under the Sway of Orthodoxy and the Reformation:
Romanian-Saxon Confessional Relations in Transylvania between 1688 and 1848

The anniversary of five centuries since the beginning of the Reformation in 1517 provides a good opportunity for some reflections on the history of the reformist movement and of its relations with the Orthodox Church in Central and Southeast Europe. In Transylvania, during the second half of the 16th century, we see the coexistence, in a spirit of tolerance, of five Christian churches and denominations: Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Unitarian (Anti-Trinitarian). The present study is devoted to the confessional relations between the Orthodox Romanians and the Lutheran Saxons in Transylvania, from the conquest of the principality by the Habsburg Empire until the Revolution of 1848. These ethnic and confessional relations were influenced by a number of political factors as well as by the social, national, cultural, and conceptual transformations brought about by the Modern Era. Therefore, the investigated period has been divided into two: from the conquest of Transylvania by the Habsburgs until the reforms of Emperor Joseph II (1688–1781), and from Joseph II to the Revolution of 1848.

Keywords

Transylvania, Habsburg regime, Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession, Orthodox Church, inter-confessional relations