

Kornél Nagy

The Church-Union of the Armenians in Transylvania (1685-1715)



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Kornél Nagy

**The Church-Union of the
Armenians in Transylvania
(1685–1715)**

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A Short Preface to the English Edition

The present volume is the English translation of the book entitled *Az Erdélyi ör-mények katolizációja (1685–1715)* (*The Catholicisation of the Armenians in Transyl-vania, 1685–1715*), that was published in Hungarian by the Institute of History of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in spring, 2012. As soon as the book came out in Hungarian, researchers from abroad requested the translation of this study regarding a relatively less well-known area in church-history as well as cultural-history. After a relatively long wait, now the time has come to do so. In its structure and conclusions, the present volume is similar to the one in Hungarian, the only change that was made concerned several footnotes which were completed or simplified, while a few new archival sources and bibliographical items have been added to the List of Sources of the present volume.

On October 31st, 2018, Budapest-Rome

Preface

The church-history of the Armenians in Transylvania has not been unknown to scholars in Hungary and abroad and has been considered as a most important part of international Armenology although it has never been in the focus for scholars of this discipline. Experts of Armenian studies both in Hungary and abroad have paid attention to the church-history of the Armenians in Transylvania although it has not been under serious and thorough scientific scrutiny. The main reason for this may be the fact that the documents written in several languages, especially the ones regarding the period when the church-union took place between 1685 and 1715, were not held at one place or even in one country. For this reason, the study of the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania was doomed to fail since it demanded broad and versatile archival skills and a command of languages on the part of the researcher. Understanding the church-history of the Armenians in Transylvania also required a general knowledge of Armenian studies since the issue of the conversion of Armenians to Roman Catholic faith was uncharted territory not only for Hungarian but also for international research in re-catholicisation or counter-reformation. To fully understand this, one had to go back in time and start with the troubled centuries of Armenian history. The church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania can be considered as the early modern period version of a problem encountered in early medieval church-history as well. Armenians were always faced with unification attempts made first by Constantinople (Byzantium), and later by Rome and these were often accompanied by secular tendencies. Therefore, the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania proved to be a complex research area very difficult to study methodologically as well. Furthermore, one also had to bear in mind the fact that the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania practically coincided with the integration of the Transylvanian Principality into the Habsburg Monarchy as well as the re-catholicisation attempts carried out among several ethnic groups of various Orthodox Christian denominations who were living in Hungary at the time.

The present study is a revised and further developed version of my PhD dissertation submitted on 16th of May in 2008, and defended a year later, on 4th of May in 2009. From taking the first notes as a student under the supervision of Ödön (Edmond) Schütz (1916–1999), Professor of Armenian Studies, to defending my dissertation, it took about 15 years. It was Professor Ödön Schütz who drew my attention to the fact that the relations between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Roman Catholic Church were hardly researched yet. In those days, I was more interested in the history of the most significant Armenian diaspora or community,

the one in Poland, and less in the Armenians of Transylvania which I then considered as a „peripheral” subsection from the point of view of the Polish-Armenian community. It was thanks to the support I received from Professor Ödön Schütz that I could visit Matenadaran (National Archives of Armenia) in Yerevan in 1999 and in 2000 after the death of Professor Ödön Schütz, to study the archival documents there. During these research trips I found some documents concerning the history of the Armenians in Transylvania that proved to be important later - although I did not realise their significance at the time.

In the mid-1990s when Professor György István Tóth (1956–2005), one of my mentors, was studying the documents in the archives of the Apostolic Holy See concerning the Hungarian and Transylvanian Catholic missions, recommended to me to focus on the issue of the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania. It was Professor György István Tóth who turned me towards the many invaluable sources written in several languages which had not been studied yet. The scholarship I received in 2004 to study in Rome gave the impetus to study the archival sources in Rome concerning the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania. It was then that I got to know thoroughly the church-union of the Transylvanian Armenians as well as the life of Oxendio Virziresco (1654–1715), lay clergyman and missionary, later Uniate bishop who carried out the church-union in Transylvania. The scholarship in 2004 was followed by subsequent visits and research carried out in Rome and in the Vatican City in 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2018. In the meanwhile, I did research in Transylvania in 2004 and 2007 and in Venice in 2005. These research activities were complemented by studying archival documents and public collections in Hungary concerning the above-mentioned topic. During these years, the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania and the details of the career of Oxendio Virziresco became increasingly clear to me.

I owe a lot of many people and many things. My study trips to Armenia in 1999 and 2000 were part of a study exchange program between the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Armenian Academy of Sciences. The archival research in Rome and in the Vatican City in 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2018 were made possible by the Klebelsberg Kunó Grant I received. Let me express my deeply felt gratitude for these generous support opportunities.

It is also my duty to say thanks to all those who followed my research with sincere interest. I would like to express my gratitude to my PhD supervisor, Professor János Kalmár for his selfless support even in the most critical moments. I could always rely on him in everything. János Kalmár always encouraged me to complete my dissertation. I can only feel grateful and indebted to my opponents, Professor István Baán and Professor István Fazekas, who helped the present study with their remarks and constructive critical comments. Furthermore, I feel grateful to church-historian Antal Molnár, former head of department and director of the Institute of History of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

who assisted me with advice concerning church-history and his example setting collegiality. He honoured me by keeping an eye on my research all along. I am also grateful to István Soós and László Bíró who spared no time and energy when they gave me well-intentioned critical feedback in reviewing and editing this manuscript.

Let me express my deeply felt gratitude to historians in Hungary and abroad, scholars in Armenian and Italian studies who supported and inspired me in my research and offered remarks and advice while writing this present study. Among others, I am indebted to Bernadett Bakáts, Stefano Bottoni, Dávid Csorba, László Dajbukát, András Fejérdy, Pál Fodor, Giovanni Foschi, András Hegedűs, Klára Hegyi, Ildikó Horn, Richárd Horváth, Gáspár Katkó, Bálint Kovács, Éva Kovács, Vilmos Béla Mihalik, István Monok, Teréz Oborni, Géza Pálffy, Eszter Papp, Katalin Péter (1937–2020), Ágnes R. Várkonyi (1928–2014), Balázs Sudár, Péter Szabó (1957–2013), Gergely Tóth, Péter Tusor, Giusto Traina, Ádám Vajk, János J. Varga, Kornélia Vargha, Tamás Véghseő, and last but not least, to Claude Mutafian as well as Lewon Boghos Zekiyán, the Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Istanbul.

I owe a great debt also to the Hungarian Academy in Rome. Let me thank here especially László Csorba and Péter E. Kovács, Former Directors and Director István Puskás, as well as all the employees of the Academy for their selfless assistance during my research in Rome and the Vatican City.

Special thanks are due to the leadership of the Institute of History of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences where I have been working, Ferenc Glatz, former chairman and member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, former minister of Education and Culture, General Director Pál Fodor and Deputy Director Attila Pók who made it possible for me to work unencumbered and complete my dissertation about the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania.

In publishing this book in English let me express my special thanks to Zsombor Tóth, faculty member of the Institute for Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and leader of the Lendület (Momentum) Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences called *Long Reformation in Eastern Europe (1500–1800)* who, from the very beginning, encouraged and supported the English edition of this book.

Finally, I would like to remember my professors and mentors who did not see the publication of this study. I met both Professor Ödön Schütz and Professor György István Tóth in 1992 while Vladimir Barxudarean¹ (1927–2017), professor of history, former vice-chairman of the National Academy of Armenia in 1995. They supported my studies and research in every possible way until their death in 1999, 2005

1 When transcribing Armenian names and concepts, we have followed the internally accepted standard defined by AIEA (= *Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes*). However, the names of a few Armenian church-leaders and high priests were transcribed according to the English standard and practice adding their original Armenian names in italics in brackets.

and 2017, respectively. They inspired me both personally and professionally. The conversations I had with them remain lasting intellectual and personal experiences I cherish. Therefore, I dedicate the present volume to their memory.

Introduction

Goals and Problems

The turn of the 17th and 18th centuries was one of the most exciting periods in the history of Hungary and Transylvania. The expulsion of the Ottoman Turks from these territories, the integration of the Transylvanian Principality into the Habsburg Empire after its almost one-and-a-half-century-long independence, the repopulation of huge areas that the Ottoman Turkish rule had left barren and deserted and the reorganisation of everyday life placed a huge strain on the Viennese court of the Habsburgs. The period between 1686 and 1711 represented immense challenges, opportunities and tasks for the Roman Catholic Church: Counter-Reformation gained momentum more than ever in the Northern and Eastern regions and the bishops of the dioceses deserted and destroyed during the 150 years of Ottoman-Turkish rule returned to their seats assisted by missionaries, lay clergy and monk priests sent by the Holy Apostolic See to re-organise the life of the congregation in Roman Catholic faith.

The efforts supported by Rome and made by the Hungarian Catholic Church towards Counter-Reformation were in harmony with the interests of the Viennese court. From the point of view of the Catholic Habsburgs, the endeavours made in the spirit of Counter Reformation were encouraged not only for reasons of the faith but also for economic, demographic and socio-political considerations. For which the Roman Catholic faith provided the appropriate ideological base.

According to the Viennese court a denominationally unified society allows the state to work most efficiently. It is easier to govern an, in terms of confessional faith, more homogeneous population or society which, in their turn, are readier to pay their due in the form of tax to the central treasury. Therefore, it was important for the state to have a population that was homogeneous – Roman Catholic, if possible – in their religious faith.

The state and the Roman Catholic Church were also keen on converting the Orthodox Eastern Christian communities that lived in the country to the Roman Catholic faith. In doing this, the Viennese court was led mainly by the reasons outlined above. At the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries as a result of former efforts, the Hungarian Catholic Church had managed to achieve several church-unions with the Eastern Christians.

Conversion to Roman Catholic faith among the Serbians in Southern Hungary (*Délvidék*), with strong support from the Habsburg court, started at the beginning of the 17th century. The Serbians in Slavonia (Croatia) accepted the church-union with

the Catholic Church at the beginning of the 17th century while the Serbians in Srjem/Srem (*Szerémség*) and in County Baranya at the end of the 17th century. Serbians who signed a church-union with Rome, however, were faced with some serious difficulties. On one hand, their bishoprics were not canonised by the Apostolic Holy See which brought damage and no advantage to the Uniate Serbians. On the other hand, thousands of Serbian refugees arrived in Hungary in 1690 taking with themselves their patriarch and changed the denominational proportions among the Serbian population that resulted in the Orthodox being the majority. Led by their Serbian patriarch, they successfully countered the catholicisation efforts made by the Roman Catholic Church and the Viennese court. Furthermore, they managed to launch successful missionary activities among their Uniate compatriots for their re-conversion.

After several failed attempts, the Ruthenians (Rusyns) of Subcarpathia (*Kárpátalja*) finally had their church-union in Užgorod in 1646 and took their confession of faith in the spirit of the Council of Ferrara-Florence and the church-union of Brest. In the period mentioned, the Ruthenians primarily had to deal with the practical implementation of the church-union, debates in Canon Law concerning the appointment of bishops and the establishment of an independent diocese.

The court and the Roman Catholic Church considered the Catholicisation of the Orthodox Romanians in Transylvania a very important question similarly to the Ruthenians. At the end of the 17th century a confessional balance was achieved between the Protestants and the Catholics in the many-denominational Transylvania. One of the key issues behind the re-catholicisation attempts was whether the numerous Orthodox Romanians of Transylvania remain Orthodox or convert to Roman Catholicism. The Viennese court believed that after the church-union of the Orthodox Romanians the confessional balance in Transylvania outlined above could be altered in favour of the Roman Catholic Church. Finally, as a result of the missionary work of the Jesuit priest, the Romanian church-union took place in Alba Iulia (*Gyulafehérvár*, Romania) in 1701.

The church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania should be viewed in light of this complex church-history context. The confessional issue of the Armenian refugees fleeing from Moldavia and Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between 1668 and 1672 has been an uncharted territory in Hungarian and international church-history for several reasons. The church-union of the Armenians can be linked to one person, to Bishop Oxendio Virziresco¹ and his missionary and church

1 Several versions of the bishop's name are known, e.g.: Auxendius Virzirescus, Oxendius Verzellescul, Auxentius Virziresky, Ossendio Vyrzyresco, Verzár Oxendius, Awksënt Vrcesgul, Ök'séntios Vrzarean, Oxendius Wyrzyreseb (Vyrzyreseb), etc. After long deliberation we have decided to use the Italian version Oxendio Virziresco since the bishop signed his reports written to the Apostolic Holy See (*Sancta Sedis Apostolica*) using this name.

organisational activities that took up about thirty years. This period coincided with the integration of the Transylvanian Principality into the Habsburg Monarchy. International and Hungarian historiography had few pieces of information available concerning their history. The following facts are known: Armenians settled down led by Bishop Minas Alëksanean-Zilifdarean T'oxat'ec'i (ca. 1610–1686). This bishop allegedly accepted the Roman Catholic faith in 1686 and the church-union with Rome took place around 1690. The city called Armenopolis was founded and the Armenian Uniate bishop was imprisoned in Mukačevo (*Munkács* in Ukraine) during the Francis (Ferenc) Rákóczi's War of Independence (1703–1711), and he died in Vienna in 1715.

One of the major problems in studying the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania was that most of the documents and sources concerning this period were held not in Hungary but in the archives of the Apostolic Holy See. The other major issue was that there were very few history books written either in Hungarian or in other languages about the church-union of the Armenians and they were of uneven quality. Apart from one or two exceptions, most of these were written in the second half of the 19th century or at the beginning of the 20th century.²

These studies and historical pieces often referred to one another and cited entire chapters word by word from one another while they did not grant special importance to the Armenian church-union. Their assessment of Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's activities was similar too, and they did not go into details concerning his missionary and church organisational activities in Transylvania. For future generations they painted a romantic picture of the bishop who defended the interests of the Armenians in Transylvania in all circumstances. They described the Uniate bishop as an Apostle- or a priest prince, as the head of the Armenian nation in Transylvania. One of the goals of our present study is to review this idealistic picture with reserve.

Beyond the problems that arose when studying the Armenians' church-union in Transylvania, there are many unanswered questions which were not resolved by these few older studies. For a long time, it was not known what role the re-catholicisation politics of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church and the Viennese court played in the Armenian church-union and if they were not major factors then what was the reason for that. Nothing was known about the role the Viennese court assigned to the Armenians in their demography and resettlement policy after the expulsion of the Ottoman Turks. In others words it was not known whether at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries the authorities of the Viennese court applied, in the case of the Armenians, the various plans they had designed for the repopulation and confessional unification of the country or not.

² For this see next subchapter.

The question comes up what former church-union methods, experiences and patterns the court meant to use to carry out the Armenian church-union. Could, therefore, the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania be compared to the missionary and re-catholicisation activities of the Ruthenians carried out in Subcarpathia, or the Serbians in Southern Hungary or the Romanians in Transylvania? Could one place these church-unions in parallel to one another or was the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania an entirely separate event? Was it a church-union that took place due to an outside influence independent from the activities of the Hungarian Catholic Church? Was the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania merely a self-serving event?

It has not been clarified what economic policies and considerations led to the church-union if there were any. Were the Armenian priests promised noble ranks or a tax-free status?

Since the sources had not been studied or analysed, it was unclear whether the church-union was motivated only by the re-establishment of a unified faith. It was not clarified either whether the Armenian church-union had any precedents in the Middle Ages or the early modern period. In this regard, one should examine thoroughly whether the formerly held councils and synods in the Armenian Motherland, in Cilicia, the Council of Ferrara-Florence, Brest and Lviv as well as the former church-unions had any impact on the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania. Last, did the church-union of the Armenians have any connections abroad?

It was unknown whether there had been any attempts at a church-union before Oxendio arrived in Transylvania. Based on the sources known it was impossible to decide whether Bishop Minas did in fact accept the Roman Catholic faith and by doing that prepared the way for the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania. It was unclear also when, how and in what circumstances the church-union took place among the Armenians in Transylvania. It has not satisfactorily been explored in what circumstances and on what terms the appointment of Oxendio Virziresco as a bishop happened. To what extent did the Apostolic Holy See, the Hungarian Catholic Church or the Viennese court play their part in this?

Former research has not clarified with sufficient care and precision whether the church-union of the Armenians happened in Transylvania without any conflicts or if it took place fraught with internal fights, and apostasies. The question what vision the Uniate Armenian priests had of the church-union requires a precise and satisfactory answer. After the church-union took place, were the Armenian church-traditions kept, or did absolute Latinisation of the Armenians in Transylvania gain the upper hand? Regarding this, it would be important to analyse what Bishop Oxendio thought of the church-union and its advantages. Did he insist on keeping the old Armenian (church) rites, or was he a firm believer of Latinisation? If he

insisted on Latinisation in the practical implementation of the church-union, what were his reasons?

In light of the studies available, little was known about Oxendio's pastoral mission, if he had supporters in Transylvania or not, how he was remunerated and to what extent financial considerations influenced his missionary activities in Transylvania. It is unclear whether Oxendio as a Uniate bishop was charged with the spiritual care of only the Armenians or if he was supposed to look after the Catholic Hungarians and the Seklers (the Székelys) as well. Research has not revealed whether Oxendio's missionary activities focused upon Transylvania only or if they extended to neighbouring regions. It would be important to find out what the court in Vienna, the Roman Catholic Church and the Armenians themselves thought of the church-union of the Armenians. Finally, the question should be answered whether the church-union of the Armenians in comparison with other church-unions can be called a success or a failure.

The questions listed above prove that one can only study the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania and Bishop Oxendio's pastoral activities with thoroughness and great care. In the present study, we shall attempt to answer the above-mentioned questions with precision, based on the small number of archival documents that have been worked with by researchers, the numerous archival documents in Hungary and abroad which have not been studied yet and the critically analysed results yielded by the few studies available. We do believe that with the present study we shall clarify these questions and dissolve obscurity that has surrounded and influenced the church-history of the Armenians in Transylvania between 1685 and 1715 until today.

Sources and Short Historiographical Overview

The backbone of the present study is the sources we have explored in the archives of the Apostolic Holy See. These sources provide detailed information about the activities of Bishop Oxendio in Transylvania between 1685 and 1715 as well as the Armenians in Transylvania. Especially the historical archives of the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide/ Sacra Congregatio pro gentium Evangelisatione seu de Propaganda Fide* (Sacred/ Holy Congregation for Propagation of Faith)³ and the Secret Archives of the Vatican (*Archivio Segreto Vaticano*) preserved a huge amount of documents.⁴ Among the Hungarian and international scholars István

3 This Institution will be referred to as Propaganda Fide.

4 AAV, ANVienna. Vol. 196.; VANYÓ, 1933. 113–118.; VANYÓ, 1986. 180–182.; These sources about the church of the Armenians in Transylvania were collected by Cardinal Giuseppe Garampi (1725–1792), former archivist, legate in Vienna, later bishop, in the last third of the 18th century. About his activity as

Baán, Kálmán Benda (1913–1994), István Fazekas, Ferenc Galla (1888–1977), Antal Hodinka (1864–1946), Raymond Haroutioun Kévorkian, Antal Molnár, Gregorio Petrowicz (1916–2004), János Sávai, Ödön Schütz, Paul Shore, György István Tóth, Tihamér Vanyó OSB (1905–2005), and Athanasius Welikyj highlighted the importance of the documents of the archives of the Apostolic Holy See concerning the Armenians in Transylvania.⁵

The Archives of the Jesuit Order in Rome (*Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*), especially the documents concerning the Austrian Province (*Fondo Austria*) hold invaluable sources of the re-catholicisation in Hungary and in Transylvania. Some of the most important sources can be found in the volumes containing the year books of the above-mentioned province which, year after year, reported in a well organised manner on the Jesuit missions in Hungary and in Transylvania. From the point of view of our topic, one paragraph written in contemporary Latin about the period in question deserves our attention in the year book of 1697 where important and additional information about the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania, their rites and church life can be found.⁶

Further data can be found about the Armenians in Transylvania in the Nation Archive of Austria (*Österreichische Staatsarchiv*) in Vienna. A small number of documents concern Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's stay in Vienna between 1712 and 1715 when he left Transylvania to apply for privileges for the city of Armenopolis.⁷

Unfortunately, no information has been found in the archives of the Mechitarist abbeys in Vienna and Venice regarding the early history of the Armenians in Transylvania that would help research the topic. There are a lot of documents about the Armenians in Transylvania but the topics of these ones focused upon the last third of the 18th century.

At Matenadaran, the National Archive of Armenia in Yerevan only a few manuscripts of Transylvanian, Polish or Moldavian origin survived from the above-mentioned period. The majority of these documents provide information about the exodus of the Armenians in Transylvania with special attention to the

an archivist see: DELL' ORTO, 1995.; VANYSACKER, 1995.; VANYSACKER, 1997. xi–xviii.; SQUICCIARINI, 1998. 182–185.; Important information can be found in the documents entitled Fondo Missioni of the Secret Archives of the Vatican about the Armenians in Transylvania. These documents provide valuable information about the church history of the Armenians of Transylvania from the period following the church-union. On this see.: AAV, FM. Vol. 106. (Unnumbered folio.)

5 VANYÓ, 1991. 332–337.; TUSOR, 2004.

6 ARSI, FA. Hist. Vol. 155. Fol. 81.

7 ÖSTA, AVFHA. SA. Rote Nr. 8. Konv.; ÖSTA, AVFHA HFÖ. rote Nr. 750.; ÖSTA, AVFHA. FAH. Kt.; ÖSTA, KA. HPE. Bd. 415. Fol. 714.; KÖLÖNTE, 1910. 138.; KOVÁCS, 2006. 55.; GARDA, 2007. 228.

religious situation of the Armenians of Transylvania and Moldavia and about the conversions to the Roman Catholic faith.⁸

Few documents are available about the church-union of the Armenians of Transylvania in the church archives of the Armenians in Transylvania. The documents concerning the Armenian congregation in Bistrița are held in the archives of the Apostolic Holy See.⁹ In the library of the Armenian Catholic main parish in Elisabéthopolis (*Dumbrăveni/Ebesfalva/Erzsébetváros*, Romania) the earliest document is from 1729 although the Uniate parish was founded by Bishop Oxendio Virziresco in 1708. In the library of the Armenian Catholic parish in Gheorgheni (*Gyergyószentmiklós*, Romania) only one fragmented manuscript written in Classical Armenian (*grabar*) survived from this period which details the history of the parish from its foundation in 1695 to 1719. The manuscript, however, provides only a few pieces of useful information about Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's activities.¹⁰

Armenopolis is a more difficult case. On one hand, archival sources of the church provide information about the Armenian Church mainly from the second half of the 18th century, and on the other hand, the first Armenian Church was consecrated only in 1722 while the first cathedral in 1794. A lot of documents of the church were scattered or destroyed during the many moves. On the other hand, we have good documentation of the Armenian local government and law court in Armenopolis which provide us insight into litigations, the legal, economic, and sometimes church affairs of the Armenians in Transylvania between 1714 and 1799. Five manuscripts survived from this period, which today are held in the Archives of the History Museum of Armenopolis. These documents inform us of the establishment of the local government of the Armenian town and the tax the Armenians paid.¹¹

The case regarding the documents about the other Armenian settlement, Frumoasa (*Csikszépvíz*, Romania), is more difficult to tackle. This was the oldest Armenian community in Transylvania. However, the Crimean Tartar invasion in 1694 destroyed this place almost completely. Around 1759 more Armenian refugees arrived from Moldavia and sixty Armenian families settled down in the village. The Armenian documents concerning Frumoasa were written after 1760 and were

8 For example: MA Ms, No. 3519 (Unnumbered folio.).

9 APF SOCG, Vol. 529., Vol. 531., Vol. 532., Vol. 533., Vol. 534.; APF SC, Fondo Armeni. Vol. 4.

10 The Uniate parish in Gheorgheni was established in 1695 by Bishop Oxendio Virziresco. Its first parish priest was Jakab Luszig Czifra (*Yakob Lusikean Jiffrayec'i*) who was ordained by the bishop. GYÖKPK, Plébánia Története [History of the Parish]. I. Könyv [Volume]. 1. Fejezet [Chapter] (1695–1719).

11 SZTMK, No. 28., No. 29., No. 30., No. 31., No. 32.

kept in the parish libraries of Elisabethopolis and after 1785 in the parish library of Frumoasa as well as in the Historical Archives of Propaganda Fide.¹²

The Archives of the Archdiocese in Alba Iulia provide a lot of documents for researchers concerning the history of the Armenians of Transylvania. The problem here is that the earliest one of most Canonical visitations is from 1731. We have not found data concerning the period when Oxendio was active and when the church-union took place since there was no permanent diocesan appointed to head the bishopric in Transylvania then. Although György Mártonffy (1663–1721), born in Cârța (*Csikkarcfalva*, Romania) in Transylvania, was appointed in 1713 but could take up this position and start to re-organise the Roman Catholic Diocese in Transylvania only in 1716, right after Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's death.¹³

Few but very important sources are held in Hungarian archives regarding Oxendio Virziresco, the Armenian bishop himself. In the Hungarian National Archives four important documents can be found regarding Oxendio Virziresco's activities in Transylvania. It is important to note that the documents of the Transylvania's Chancellery (*Cancellaria Aulica Transylvaniae, Siebenbürgische Hofkanzlei*) and Governorship of Transylvania (*Gubernium Transylvanicum*) dated from the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries were edited and compiled in an arbitrary fashion after the Rákóczi's War of Independence.¹⁴ Among the legal documents of the Governorship of Transylvania there is one dated from 1698 around the time Armenopolis was founded by Bishop Oxendio Virziresco, regarding the legal and financial litigation against Bailiff István Apor (1638–1704). Two more documents were found in the archive of Prince Francis Rákóczi II (1676–1735) which detail Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's incarceration by the Kuruc, the armed anti-Habsburg rebels.¹⁵ Finally a source from 1711 can be found in the Transylvania Fiscal Archives, a petition written in Latin by the Uniate bishop and submitted to the Governorship of Transylvania regarding Armenopolis.¹⁶ In the Hungarian National Archive about the above-mentioned period one can study only a few census lists and petitions concerning the Armenian community.¹⁷

The sources found in the Esztergom Primate's Archive (in Hungary) concern primarily the conflict in Elisabethopolis in 1692. These documents help paint a more

12 APF SC, FA. Vol. 16. Fol. 300., Fol. 324., Fol. 413.; APF SC, FA. Vol. 18. Fol. 330–331.; HORVÁTH – LUPTÁK – MONOK – NAGY, 2018. xlv–xvlix.

13 BERNÁD, 2006. 239. 243. 264.; SZÖGI, 2006.

14 MNL-OL, F 46. 1698. No. 238.

15 MNL-OL, G 16. I. 2. d. No. 520.; MNL-OL, G 19. II. 2 e/a.

16 MNL-OL, F 234. XII $\frac{1}{2}$. Fasc. Litt. A.; APF SOCG, Vol. 580. Fol. 560–565.

17 MNL-OL, F 46. 1698. No. 50.; MNL-OL, F 49. No. 5. 13. Fasc.

nanced picture of Bishop Oxendio, offer useful and important data to complement the documents of this topic in the Archives of the Apostolic Holy See.¹⁸

The Hevenesí, Kaprinay and Pray Collections (*Collectio Hevenesiana*, *Collectio Kaprinayana*, *Collectio Prayana*) of the University Library of the Eötvös Loránd State University (ELTE) in Budapest, Hungary, hold a lot of valuable documents concerning the history of Hungarian churches. Jesuit fathers, Gábor Hevenesí SJ (1654–1715), István Kaprinay SJ (1714–1785), and György Pray SJ (1723–1801) and their colleagues copied a remarkable number of documents in the 18th century in different secular and church archives, they wrote treatises about important topics most of which remained in manuscript form.¹⁹ A few of these are about the foundation of the Armenian settlement in Elisabethopolis and the Armenian conflict between 1691 and 1692. A document was written by Armenians in Transylvania in 1692 that described the faith and rites of the Uniate Armenians.²⁰ The another document called in Latin *Fidelis relatio* attributed to an unknown author, dated from 1693, can be considered the earliest source of the history of the Armenian Church in Transylvania.²¹

Among the documents held in the University Library of the Eötvös Loránd State University in Budapest the most important are the ones regarding Rudolf Bzensky (Bžensky) SJ (1651–1715), a Jesuit Father from Czech-Moravia, who was active in Transylvania. He prepared a 40-page report on his missionary activities in 1694 for Father Gábor Hevenesí SJ where he described the Transylvanian churches and ethnic groups in twelve chapters. Rudolf Bzensky painted a detailed picture of the religious lives of the Armenians, the Romanians, the Saxons, the Bulgarians, the Greeks, and the Hungarians. Father Bzensky detailed the confessional situation of the Transylvanian Armenians in four pages where he described their history from the time they settled down in Transylvania until Oxendio Virziresco was ordained as a bishop in 1691. He provided valid information about the Transylvanian Armenians and it is clear that the Moravian Jesuit priest may have received first-hand information from Oxendio himself.²²

18 PL AEV, SPSZ. No. 273/2., No. 274/1–4., No. 274/8.

19 MOLNÁR, 2006. 19.

20 ELTE EKK, CH. Vol. 21. Pag. 77–80.

21 ELTE EKK, CH. Vol. 21. Pag. 81–84.; NAGY, 2010. 379–394.

22 APF SC, FUT. Vol. 2. Fol. 377.; ARSI FA, CB. Vol. 126/I. Fol. 336.; ARSI FA, CB. Vol. 126/II. Fol. 369., Fol. 409., Fol. 492., Fol. 536., Fol. 566., Fol. 602., Fol. 646., Fol. 688.; ARSI FA, Hist. Vol. 151. Pag. 29., Pag. 63., Pag. 120.; ARSI FA, Hist. Vol. 152. Fol. 13., Fol. 18.; ELTE EKK, CH. Vol. 8. Pag. 57–61.; ELTE EKK, CH. Vol. 15. Pag. 248–252.; ELTE EKK, CH. Vol. 16. Pag. 5., 32–34.; ELTE EKK, CH. Vol. 23. (Without pagination); ELTE EKK, CH. Vol. 29. Pag. 346.; ELTE EKK, CH. Vol. 87. Pag. 273–302.; ELTE EKK, CK. A. Vol. 11. Pag. 112.; ELTE EKK, CK. A. Vol. 40. Pag. 162–176.; ELTE EKK, G. Vol. 522. Fol. 173., Fol. 170., Fol. 178.; ILIA, 1730.; BENDA-TÓTH, 1994. 20–25.; Rus, 1994a.

The corpora of sources about the Armenian Uniate Church in Transylvania provide few and fragmented data, for example the 2-volumed one published by the Jesuit Father, Nicolaus Nilles SJ (1828–1907) in Innsbruck in 1885. Let us mention here that the data provided by Nilles are from the University Library in Budapest.²³

The most reliable source on Transylvanian Armenian church-history has been the year book written by the Armenian Uniate Bishop Stefan Stefanowicz Roszka (1670–1739) of Poland. The chronicle written in classical Armenian described with great detail the relationship between the Armenian Church and the Roman Catholic Church from early medieval times until 1730. A special emphasis is laid on the history of the Armenian Church in Poland in the 17th and 18th centuries. Roszka succinctly described Armenians in Transylvania, especially with the activities of Minas Alêksanean-Zilifdarean T'oxat'ec'i and Oxendio Virziresco. He made very bold statements in his writing, especially concerning the high priest in the Motherland who, according to him, had willingly opted for the church-union with Rome. In spite of this, Roszka's book is invaluable since he provides reliable information about Poland and Transylvania. Roszka's manuscript was held for a long time in the archives of the Mechitarist Congregation in Vienna.²⁴

For our topic, the Csángó-Hungarian records published under the leadership of Professor Kálmán Benda, a Hungarian historian, as a result of the scholarly project has won acclaim from both Hungarian and international academics. Professor Benda published in that book the documents found in the archives of the Propaganda Fide containing the reports and correspondence written by the Roman Catholic missionaries on their activities among the Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia from the end of the 15th to the end of the 17th centuries. Although most of the documents are either related to Hungarian or Romanian history, the sources often refer directly to the Armenian communities and church in Moldavia at the time when they settled down there between 1668 and 1672. Furthermore, the sources mention a smaller move of Armenians from Moldavia to Transylvania earlier than the above-mentioned period and make comments on Franciscan monks of Armenian origin who had already converted to the Roman Catholic faith and lived in Șumuleu (*Csíkсомlyó*, Romania).²⁵

Very few useful pieces of literature are available concerning our topic, the Armenian church-union and Bishop Oxendio's activities. Let us mention here the book written in Latin and published in Vienna in 1859 by Kristóf Lukácsy (1804–1879), a former seminarist of the Collegium Pazmaneum in Vienna, and Armenian Uniate

205–270.; Rus, 1994b. 233–240.; Rus, 1996. 369–457.; Rus, 1997. 183–275.; Rus, 1998. 289–330.; SÁVAI, 1997a. 428–429.; TÓTH, 1998b. 350–353.

23 NILLES, 1885. 915–936.

24 APF SOCG, Vol. 571. Fol. 618–621.; ԹՕՏԿ'ԱՅ, 1964.

25 BENDA, 2003.

Dean in Armenopolis, who summarised the church-history of the Armenians in Transylvania until the middle of the 19th century.²⁶ Lukácsy cited many sources without unfortunately providing precise information where they could be found. In spite of this, his book has been considered as a corner stone in international Armenian studies.²⁷

The Transylvano-Armenian Mechitarist scholar, Lukács Bárány OMech. wrote a study in three parts about Bishop Oxendio Virziresco in 1888 in the journal called 'Arménia' of the Transylvanian Armenians.²⁸ This was the first scholarly treatise that attempted to summarise the bishop's activities in Transylvania. On the other hand, Bárány's study that relies heavily on Kristóf Lukácsy's above-mentioned book, provides many erroneous or misleading pieces of information.²⁹

Similarly to Bárány, Gergely Kovrig OMech. (by his Armenian name: *Grigor Govrikean*) was also born in Elisabethopolis, and was also a Mechitarist father. He published his monograph on the history of his hometown in Vienna in 1886. However, he provided few data about the church-union of the Armenians living there and the circumstances of their conversion to the Roman Catholic faith.³⁰

The book of János Temesváry (1857–1922), also published in 1896, describes the history and the coats-of-arms of the Armenian families who were granted a noble title is note-worthy. The outstanding historian of Transylvanian-Armenian origin included the Verzár family (the Hungarian version of the surname Virziresco) in Armenopolis among the ones who became noble. The Verzárs were related to Oxendio Virziresco. Temesváry proved that the nobility granted to this family by Queen Maria Theresa (1740–1780) in 1761 was partly due to Oxendio's mission but did not provide useful information about the bishop's missionary activities.³¹

The monograph written by Gábor Éble (1843–1923) about the Virziresco (Verzár) family in Armenopolis is somewhat similar to that of János Temesváry. Éble was assisted by Márton Katapán, Armenian Uniate (Catholic) parish-priest in Armenopolis in gathering data. Éble provided sufficient information on Bishop Oxendio Virziresco especially in connection with the foundation of Armenopolis. On the other hand, the author dedicated only a few paragraphs to the church-union of the Armenians in Transylvania and admitted to have borrowed these from the

26 BEKE, 1870. 155.; SZABÓ-SZÖGI, 1998. 304.

27 LUKÁCSY, 1859.

28 This journal was active for twenty years at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and was considered the headquarters for Hungarian Armenian studies. Its editor-in-chief was historian Kristóf Szongott and among its authors we can find the elite of Transylvanians Armenians such as Antal Jakab, Gábor Éble, Antal Molnár, Lukács Bárány, Félix Avedik, Gergely Moldován, and János Temesváry.

29 BÁRÁNY, 1888a. 65–71.; BÁRÁNY, 1888b. 101–106.; BÁRÁNY, 1888c. 137–142.

30 GOVRIKEAN, 1896.

31 TEMESVÁRY, 1896.

above-mentioned book written by Christopher Lukácsy. Éble concentrated on the nobility offered to the Verzárs in 1761 and to the different prestigious positions and ranks the members of the family held in Transylvania in the 19th century.³²

In the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century several monographs were published that concerned the history, the church and the culture of the Armenians in Transylvania. These books were not scholarly in general but informative and educational pieces and were in part published to draw attention to the culture and traditions of the by then completely assimilated Transylvanian Armenians.³³

Among the scholarly pieces written in the last decades it is worth noting the book of essays published in Yerevan in 1983 by the Institute of the History of the National Academy of Armenia and the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academies of Sciences. The authors of this book concentrate on the meeting points of Hungarian and Armenian history with a special attention paid to the legal, economic and social history of the community in Transylvania. Studies were contributed by Ödön Schütz, Zsolt Trócsányi (1926–1987), Emil Niederhauser (1923–2010), Antal Vörös (1926–1983), Gábor Bóna, Éva Bagi, Gayane Pingiryan, and Surēn K'olančian (1923–2006). Unfortunately, this volume has not been published in Hungary yet. Let us add here that no mention is made of the church-union of the Armenians in the studies.³⁴

One must mention here the scientific activities of the Armenian historian of Romanian birth, Surēn K'olančian, who studied in depth the history of the Armenians both in Moldavia and in Transylvania. His studies written about the Armenians in Transylvania were published in 1962 and 1967 in Yerevan and Paris, respectively. Unfortunately, he did not concentrate on the confessional status of the Armenians in Transylvania, their church-union or Bishop Oxendio Virziresco's activities.³⁵

The Polish-Armenian Uniate priest and scholar, Gregorio (*Gregorz*) Petrowicz's (1916–2004) book was published in Rome in Italian in 1988. The monograph primarily details the history of the Armenian Uniate Church in Poland from 1681 to 1947. Father Petrowicz's thorough book provides ample sources and literature. He dedicates a few subchapters to the history of the Armenian Uniate Church in Transylvania. In one of these he writes about Bishop Oxendio's activities in 26 pages and refers to several sources at the Apostolic Holy See. In this book Gregorio Petrowicz deals with the unresolved issues in the church-history of the Armenians in Poland. On the other hand, his book is incomplete from several points of view.

32 ÉBLE, 1915.

33 LUKÁCSY, 1867.; ÁVEDIK, 1904.; ÁVEDIK, 1896.; MERZA, 1902.; MERZA, 1913.; SZONGOTT, 1901.; SZONGOTT, 1903.

34 This volume was edited by Vladimir Barxudaryan and Antal Vörös.

35 K'OLANČIAN, 1962. 499–531.; K'OLANČIAN, 1967. 355–376.; K'OLANČIAN, 1983. 105–127.

The subchapters concerning the Armenians in Transylvania are, in general, sketchy and the sources at the Apostolic Holy See he refers to are not always provided with precision and accuracy. He also disregarded a significant part of the documents at the Apostolic Holy See such as the papers in the Vatican and the many important documents concerning Armenians in Transylvania held in the Historical Archives of the Propaganda Fide when writing his book.³⁶

In the 1990s Judit Pál from Transylvania worked on the economic activities of the Armenians in Transylvania during the 17th and 18th centuries. His studies were published in Romanian and Hungarian academic journals. Her research concerning the demography of the Armenians in Transylvania is especially note-worthy and is one of the most important studies written about the history of the Armenians in Transylvania.³⁷ From among the researchers of the newer generation Emese Pál and Bálint Kovács especially deserve mentioning who have excelled in uncovering and processing data found in the Armenian Church archives as well as presenting the artefacts of cultural memory of the Armenian Catholic Church in Transylvania. Bálint Kovács's promising research focuses on the religious education and culture of the Armenians in Transylvania as well as their inter-confessional relations and social integration during the 18th century.³⁸

36 PETROWICZ, 1988.

37 PÁL, 1997. 104–120.; PÁL, 2013a. 9–16.

38 KOVÁCS, 2006. 49–68.; KOVÁCS, 2007. 30–46.; KOVÁCS, 2010.; DROST-ABGARJAN – KOVÁCS – MÁRTI, 2011.; BERNÁD – KOVÁCS, 2011.; KOVÁCS, 2013. 53–63.; PÁL, 2013b. 73–83.; PÁL, 2015.