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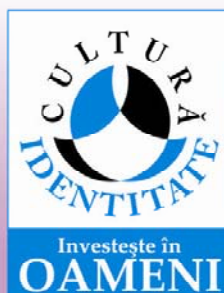


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O I P O S D R U



ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ



Bogdan ANDRIESCU

Viața privată din Transilvania (sec. XVII-XIX) **în însemnări pe cartea românească veche** (centre tipografice transilvănene)



Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române



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PE CARTEA ROMÂNEASCĂ VECHIE
(CENTRE TIPOGRAFICE TRANSILVĂNENE)**



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ÎN ÎNSEMĂNĂRI PE CARTEA ROMÂNEASCĂ VECHIE
(CENTRE TIPOGRAFICE TRANSILVĂNENE)**

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Colecția *AULA MAGNA*



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ADDENDA

Abstract

The Private Life in Transylvania (17th-19th centuries) in annotations on the old Romanian book (Transylvanian printing centers)

Retracing the private life in Transylvania between the 17th and the 19th century is not quite easy, due to the incomplete documentation and the historians' insufficient studies. Starting with the existing sources, the auxiliary bibliography to the subject, I have tried to outline a picture (that can certainly be improved) of the private life at that time. I will briefly conclude, pointing out those details that made possible the accomplishment of this study.

To capture the private life sequences as faithful as possible it was necessary to study many historical resources and to do interdisciplinary research. At the same time, it involved the research of the historical sources (documents, narrative-chronicles, memoirs, literary and epistolary sources) and of the auxiliary sources to history (anthropology, ethnography).

The Saxon, Hungarian and Romanian chronicles and diaries, contain a wealth of details about the private life. The memoirs or the epistolary writings are valuable documentary sources, contributing to a high degree to the disclosure of everyday life significant sequences. The guild statutes, the minutes of some court actions were also essential research tools in our approach. All these documentary sources helped us decode important issues regarding the private life in the urban areas.

The annotations on the old Romanian books provided us with valuable data about the private life of the Romanian rural areas (many book owners belonged to the Romanian Orthodox communities). Analyzing the texts I had in view the authors' diversity annotations and the dimension of their interests, due to their majors, occupations or daily habits.

The annotations on the old Romanian books can provide valuable data on issues of private life. They are themselves vivid images of the will of decoding and communicating.

Secondly, we have to stop over the books' owners' decisions to make notes on some events or memorable data with a universal character.

Thirdly, we can talk about the book itself as if it was a vehicle of knowledge. The people that added the annotations on the basis of the information gathered connected them to the present, sometimes with certain corrections and more details according to their own views and opinions. The notes left to their heirs, though subjective, were extremely relevant.

In the fourth place, the notes are perfect means of self-recognition and self control. Those who wrote asked themselves questions, they were suspicions, astonished, they rejected, exclaimed, fought... It's a complete subjective action, but not at all at random.

And finally, those who study such notes have the opportunity to discover not only involuntary reflections of the epoch in the opinions of the authors, but also methods of imposing the idea of progress, of human community and common future, that had to keep up with time, with inevitable nostalgia, errors and rejections coming from non adaptability, lack of confidence, conservatism.

In all, the annotations mean life, moving images of the past, evidence that need to be constantly rediscovered, passionately and carefully researched, in order to become useful. They contain fresh marks, coming from a past that is required to be understood in all its complexity.

Thoroughly studied, they are able to give a view as a whole, which is so necessary. Subordinate to the noble purpose of enlightening and decoding the past, the research based on the notes written on the old Romanian books is an unfailing way to the truth.

In the process of elaborating my research paper, I consulted catalogs and directories which introduced collections of old Romanian books belonging to some museums, churches, monasteries, libraries, both in the country and in Hungary. The collections of old Romanian books belonging

to cultural institutions that haven't developed such working tools represented needful documentary sources to accomplish my research. Finally, we mention the studies and the articles devoted to the topic.

The information and the considerations regarding the baptism, wedding and marriage, carnal sins (fornication), sins and sinners (violence, murder, theft), Divine punishment (extreme weather, fires, earthquakes, astronomical phenomena, locusts, diseases and epidemics, strange, supernatural stories, dreams and nightmares), death, burial and Judgment, books and reading, leisure, food, clothing, details that are often mentioned in the notes on the old Romanian books, are of a priceless value to the researchers.

The birth of a child was an opportunity for the owner of a Romanian book to record the event, making notes on a book page. In the Romanian rural areas, the high mortality rate, the fear that the baby will die before being baptized, frequently made the family celebrate the child's baptism on the same day or soon after the day of birth, the number of godparents being limited to two people. The high birth rate of the time, followed by high infant mortality, reveals first of all the attitude of that one who, resigned, accepts the child's death, believing that everything happened because of the Divine will. The sadness caused by the death of a child was usually illuminated by the birth of another child, as a sign of the divine benevolence.

The notes on the old Romanian books give us some details on the age at which marriages were performed, which is in agreement with the religious principles that were stipulated by the printing "*Indreptarea legii*" (Targoviste 1652). The notes contain valuable data on the structure and size of the family, on the small area where the future grooms came from, who were from the same village or from the neighborhood. The purchase of a book with the aim of donating it to a church was accompanied by a diptych, the priest having to commit himself to mention the donor's souls in the daily liturgies or in the special ones. Sometimes the diptyches were written even by the priest at the request of the donors (who, most of the times were unaware of reading and writing) and contain valuable data on the structure and the family size. Giving a book as a dowry to the daughter

who was to be married (rarely to the future bridegroom) is mentioned by several annotations. The high financial value of the books (partly as a result of their reduced circulation and rarity) and the appreciation they enjoyed in the Romanian communities (most of them being in a precarious economic and educational situation) gave a special significance to the fact of offering them as gifts.

Acts of violence and crime are only rarely mentioned in the notes on the old Romanian books. Generally, they occurred when giving a book was a way of reconciliation between two fighting families, the guilty person or his family giving a book to the victim's family. We also learn about different crimes from the notes that mention a book's donation to the church made by a family who wanted forgiveness for the sins of a murdered relative. We also mention the donation of a book to the church made by someone who committed murder in his own family, hoping for forgiveness.

Unlike the Hungarian and the Saxon chronicles that offered vivid descriptions of the extreme weather and astronomical phenomena, referring to the fear and hysteria caused by them and spread on a large scale, there are very few references to such events on the notes on the old Romanian books, their occurrence being only rarely considered as a divine sign.

Diseases were sent by the Deity to punish human sins. Within these, plague was the one that caused the greatest loss of lives, the people's fear at the outburst of such an epidemic reaching the highest levels.

If the natural disasters usually caused resignation in the medieval human mind, urging people to prayer, the invasions of locusts were different making people find practical solutions to combat them, either by destruction or by heading them towards other areas (similarities between the Romanian and Saxon communities).

Death used to frighten people not by the idea of passing into the afterlife, but mainly by what was at the end of the road: Heaven or Hell. The death of a loved one was an opportunity for the owner of a book to record the event on a book page. Although references are usually very brief, we note the accuracy of the death recording. Unlike the urban areas, in the

Romanian rural world the body of the deceased was usually buried three days later; there were some exceptions to the rule, when the burial took place the same day the death occurred, probably due to the danger of a possible epidemic spreading.

A number of issues as borrowing or sharing books, literacy, small private libraries, frequent changes of books binding, manuscripts and copyists, show the increase of those who started to discover a good way of spending spare time in the constant daily reading. If the Hungarian and Saxon chronicles and diaries or other various historical documents give us valuable information regarding reading in the urban areas, the notes on the old Romanian books are valuable for the rural areas.

Regarding the diet, the annotations on the old Romanian books give us important data on the rural population meat consumption. Frequently, at the purchase of a book they offered in addition to money different kinds of meat. These transactions highly reveal the population food preferences, who used to eat mutton and beef on a large scale. References to other kinds of meat are sporadic. The report of extreme weather phenomena, of adverse repercussions on crops and thus on the animals food reserves are all indicators of the meat consumption at that time.

As a rule, cereal crops remained fundamental in the diet. Along with wheat, barley, rye, oats, at the middle of the seventeenth century the corn crops started to be cultivated. The notes on the old Romanian books often mentioned the flocks of sheep and the herds of cattle, the dairy consumption being also important.

We note that the legislation drawn up by the central authority (Dieta) and the one developed by the local authorities (magistrate, guild statutes) contain strict regulations on the planting of grape vines and on the excessive consumption of wine (reflected in the chronicles, diaries, notes on old Romanian books) - the main concern being the limitation of the wine consumption as it was confirmed in all the social strata. The humanists, the chroniclers, the foreign travelers remarked the vineyards near the Transylvanian cities, most of them appreciating but also criticizing the quality of the various kinds of wine. Starting with the seventeenth century we notice how the concerns (release of the first cookery books, instructions

given by Princes / Princesses) regarding the ways of making wine, the compliance with the hygiene regulations of containers, the use of some special ingredients in order to improve quality and refinement began to play an increasingly important role. The frequent documentary records, the multitude of annotations on the old Romanian books shows that in cities, towns and rural communities the wine consumption had become a daily practice within a significant part of the population of Transylvania. Though brandy was consumed in smaller quantities, it was mentioned on the notes on the old Romanian book.

I didn't ignore an important result of the research, presenting in a final chapter the scientific description of some old Romanian books (identified in libraries from Romania and Hungary), that are unknown sources to the Romanian literature, having thus a modest contribution to the completion of the Old Romanian Bibliography (1508-1830), which is fundamental for the Romanian culture, placing us among the nations aware of the values they hold.

The issues raised in each of the ten chapters cover a large part of the private life of the time. In this context, the study intended to emphasize the basic coordinates that define the private life, while the real dimension of the topic, the historical sources falling within, made us restrict the research to the above topics.

Bogdan Andriescu,
Biblioteca Județeană Astra Sibiu

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