The temptation of a better life: Customs, rules, and abuses in the Uniate Diocese of Făgăraș in the eitghteenth century

Abstract:

This study examines the involvement of political and confessional decisionmakers in enacting legislation governing the fees collected by the Uniate clergy in the Diocese of Făgăraș (primarily stole fees), as well as the interests the clergy pursued and their motivations. It also attempts to capture the actual situation in the parishes, which is depicted, albeit somewhat scantily, in various documents, most particularly in the records of canonical visitations and trial cases. The Uniate clergy advocated for maintaining the custom for economic reasons (their otherwise modest incomes) and out of the desire to preserve the rights they had enjoyed before the Union with the Church of Rome. The issue of these revenues was therefore also one of status, as illustrated by their repeatedly expressed desire to benefit from the same stole fees as the Roman Catholic priests. The Vienna Court and the Estates of Transylvania insisted on the replacement of customs with rules and norms. Desiring the removal of abuses committed by the local clergy, the Viennese Court approached this issue through the prism of the need to discipline and reform this body of priests. The Estates of Transylvania, reluctant to accept the rise of a privileged category, addressed the matter from an economic standpoint, expressing discontent that the rights and privileges acquired by the Uniate clergy might affect their revenues.

Keywords: *Transylvania, Uniate clergy, stole fee, abuse, social discipline.*