

DIGITAL DATA AND PROSOPOGRAPHY:
PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE *DaT18* DATABASE

RADU NEDICI*

The reestablishment of church history as a legitimate field of research in post-socialist Romania was accompanied by an increased appetite for the study and editing of archival sources, which targeted especially the recovery of those topics that had been ignored earlier due to their political implications. On the list of such topics, the confessional confrontation between Orthodox and Greek Catholics in eighteenth century Transylvania figured highly, both because it alluded to a church organization that was officially disbanded in 1948 and it ostensibly cast doubt over the unity of the Romanian people, a thesis at the very centre of the historiographic canon of the age. Hence, over the last thirty years the religious troubles of the 1740s-1760s have been the object of close scrutiny from historians interested mainly in the way the conflict impacted the establishment of the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church and everyday relations within the parish communities.¹ Noticeably less attention has been paid to the manner in which the Orthodox Church fashioned for itself a public presence and its own parochial network, which paralleled that of the Greek Catholic diocese. The implicit institutional development that spanned more than two decades was equally disregarded by older and more recent approaches in favour of an emphasis on the popular resistance to Catholicism and the confessional policy of the Habsburgs.² Nevertheless, Orthodox activism was not just directed against

* PhD, Assistant Professor, Faculty of History, University of Bucharest, Romania; e-mail: radu.nedici@unibuc.ro.

¹ Ovidiu Ghitta, *Nașterea unei Biserici. Biserica greco-catolică din Sătmar în primul ei secol de existență (1667-1761)* [The Birth of a Church. The Greek Catholic Church in Sătmar in Its First Century of Existence (1667-1761)] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001); Greta-Monica Miron, *Biserica Greco-Catolică din comitatul Cluj în secolul al XVIII-lea* [The Greek Catholic Church in Cluj County in the 18th Century] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2007); Greta-Monica Miron, *Viață parohială și diversitate confesională în Transilvania secolului al XVIII-lea. Studiu de caz: Uniți și ortodocși din comitatul Dăbâca* [Parish Life and Confessional Diversity in Eighteenth-Century Transylvania. Case Study: Uniate and Orthodox from Dăbâca County] (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2015); Radu Nedici, *Formarea identității confesionale greco-catolice în Transilvania veacului al XVIII-lea: Biserică și comunitate* [The Formation of the Greek-Catholic Confessional Identity in Eighteenth-Century Transylvania: Church and Community] (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2013).

² Silviu Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei religioase a românilor din Ardeal în secolul XVIII* [The History of the Religious Emancipation of the Romanians from Transylvania in the 18th Century], 2 vols. (Sibiu: Editura și Tiparul Tipografiei Arhiepiscopale, 1920-1930); Mircea Păcurariu, *Legăturile Bisericii Ortodoxe din Transilvania cu Țara Românească și Moldova în secolele XVI-XVIII* [The Connections of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church with Wallachia and Moldavia in the 16th-18th Centuries] (Sibiu: s.n., 1968); Silviu Anuichi, *Relațiile bisericești româno-sârbe în secolele al XVII-Annales Universitatis Apulensis Series Historica* 25, I (2021): 105-121; <https://doi.org/10.29302/auash.2021.25.1.6>.

church's union with Rome, but also argued for the restoration of the full Byzantine tradition. Consequently, the events of those years speak not only of how the protesters brought the Greek Catholic Church to the brink of collapse, but also of how they set about bringing back to life the religious institution that self-identified with reference to Eastern Orthodoxy, which had ceased to exist around 1700.

From the initial moments of religious dissent in 1744, the village communities that banned the Uniate clergymen from officiating in their churches appointed new parish priests who had received the holy orders in Orthodox centres abroad.³ At the other end of the period, between 1759 and 1761, Sofronie from Cioara, self-proclaimed vicar of the Serbian metropolitan in Sremski Karlovci, was mindful of providing centralized leadership for the dissent. As a result, he not only confirmed the existing Orthodox priests, but also created the first archdeacons to act as his agents throughout the province.⁴ Finally, the nomination and investiture of Bishop Dionisije Novaković in the autumn of 1761 gave this reconstruction process the required legitimacy and brought it the support of the state. Vienna had realized it could use toleration to discipline and control a community that had until then offered plentiful evidence of its subversive potential.⁵

As the Habsburg authorities began the census that was to determine the membership of each of the two competing denominations, they were in for a shock. The rise of the Orthodox Church happened at an impressive pace, challenging the official narrative of the success of church union with Rome. Between 1761 and 1762 more than half a million people openly identified themselves as Greek Orthodox, taking advantage of the full effects of toleration and leaving behind their former underground existence. More important to the ends of the present research, they were dominant in 1,353 villages out of a total

lea și al XVIII-lea [Romanian-Serbian Church Relations in the 17th and 18th Centuries] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1980); Keith Hitchins, *The Idea of Nation: The Romanians of Transylvania, 1691-1849* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1985); Mihai Săsăujan, *Politica bisericească a Curții din Viena în Transilvania (1740-1761)* [The Church Policy of the Court of Vienna in Transylvania (1740-1761)] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002); Johann Marte et al., ed., *Die Union der Rumänen Siebenbürgens mit der Kirche von Rom / Unirea românilor transilvăneni cu Biserica Romei*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2015).

³ Greta-Monica Miron, "Acțiune ortodoxă – acțiune catolică. Efectele mișcării lui Visarion Sarai în Hunedoara, Hațeg, Zarand și Alba" [Orthodox Action - Catholic Action. The Effects of Visarion Sarai's Movement in Hunedoara, Hațeg, Zarand and Alba], *Studia* hi. 50, 2 (2005): 1-36.

⁴ Miron, *Biserica din comitatul Cluj*, 78; Miron, *Viață parohială și diversitate confesională*, 90-92.

⁵ See the conditions imposed upon the bishop in 1762, Augustin Bunea, *Episcopii Petru Paul Aron și Dionisiu Novacovici sau istoria românilor transilvăneni de la 1751 până la 1764* [Bishops Petru Paul Aron and Dionisiu Novacovici or the History of the Transylvanian Romanians from 1751 to 1764] (Blaj: Tipografia Seminarului Archidieceșan, 1902), 244, footnote 1. For the debates on his appointment, see Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei*, 2: 73-83; Săsăujan, *Politica bisericească*, 209-211.

of 1,818 and were headed by no fewer than 1,380 priests, a huge increase from the few hundreds noted in earlier estimates.⁶ While convincing explanations have already been given in the recent literature for why this religious choice proved so successful, questions connected to the creation of a rural clerical elite in only a matter of years have yet to be answered.

Reconstructing the collective biography of this social group was the main objective of a research project titled “Dissent and toleration in Habsburg Transylvania: A socio-political history of the Orthodox protests (1740s-1760s)”. It resulted in the creation of the *DaT18* relational database, which consists primarily of a catalogue of all the Greek Orthodox priests active in the principality from 1761 to 1767, made available online on the project’s website.⁷ The staff registers of the diocese compiled during Bishop Novaković’s term in office provided the bulk of the information used to help recover information on their clerical careers. Further developments will consider the various lists of names and signatures on petitions directed to the court, the life details of those questioned for their involvement in the protests, and the social and economic status of subjects inferred from the fiscal documents. The significant amount of serial data, together with the fragmentary elements of biography they contain, prompted my choice to follow a prosopographical approach. Piecing together the scattered evidence, while linking complementary and, at times, overlapping facts, offered a way to overcome the gaps in knowledge inherent to the sources.⁸ As I intend to show over the following pages, statistical analysis can be profitably used against this data sample to gain better insights into the emergence of the Orthodox leadership in the mid-eighteenth century. My investigation is focused around two main questions: (i) to what extent was the rise of the Orthodox clergy the result of religious conflict? and (ii) how did this new elite make the transition from the age of contention to the free exercise of religious belief in view of the institutional changes of the early 1760s?

First though, a word of caution about the numbers themselves. At the current stage, the *DaT18* database holds information from the two registers of appointments produced in the chancery of Dionisije Novaković, covering the years 1761-1763 and 1762-1767, respectively, and from the official census carried out by the bishop in 1767. In total, they include 2,489 records, which, after normalization and record-linkage, led to the ascertainment of 1,619 individuals; however, further fine tuning reduced this figure to a more realistic 1,400-1,500 priests active during the whole period. The uncertainty owes to the similarity of names and the fact that there is not always enough context to discern between

⁶ Virgil Ciobanu, “Statistica românilor ardeleni din anii 1760-1762” [The Statistics of Transylvanian Romanians from 1760-1762], *AIIN* 3 (1924-1925): 699.

⁷ “*DaT18* Database”, last accessed 10.08.2021, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

⁸ Radu Nedici, “*DaT18* Database: A Prosopographical Approach to the Study of the Social Structures of Religious Dissent in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Transylvania,” *Studia dig.* 65, 1 (2020): 53-69.

their bearers.⁹ Hesitations in the manuscripts also account for the small variations in the calculated totals, since it is not uncommon for the registers to enter the same person twice, each statement contributing with its own conflicting information.¹⁰ Timeframes are likewise approximate and the intervals overlap one another frequently, as the secretaries were not always scrupulous in keeping track of dates, which had to be inferred with some margin. Lastly, the analysis is often based on a reduced working sample, given the disparities in the information provided by the three sources. For instance, only two of the datasets include a reference to the birthplace of the clergymen, while the details of their ordination are regularly present only in the staff lists. Nevertheless, this still leaves us with large enough sample sizes of between 500 and over 1,000 individuals for each of the major queries below to retain statistical significance.

One of the first things that becomes apparent once we aggregate the data passed into the DaT18 database is the unbalanced ratio between the Orthodox priests already serving in Transylvania before toleration was officially proclaimed and those ordained after the appointment of Dionisije Novaković in 1761. The two staff registers make this distinction obvious, as they inscribed whether the priests had asked for confirmation from the new bishop and submitted evidence of their earlier consecration, or had only just received their holy orders by the imposition of his hands. Chart 1 gives a visual representation of this reality, showing that almost three-quarters of the total number of clergymen for which such details exist were in fact “inherited” by Bishop Novaković from the time of the troubles. Eight-hundred of the priests in the diocese had started their career at some earlier point in time, while only 243 had been nominated to parishes by the legitimate holder of canonical authority. If we add to the table the 44 confirmed archdeacons versus just two appointed by Novaković himself, the discrepancy increases even further.

Years of conflict and neglect had led to a situation where Orthodox parishes had organized underground or in plain sight of the administration without any formal subordination to a sanctioned religious leader. Several initiatives in 1758-1759 by Russian envoys promising support to the dissenters willing to accept the eastern power’s patronage highlighted the problem and made the Monarchy wary of the risks it ran if it continued to ignore the reality in the field.¹¹ By installing a bishop to head the Transylvanian Orthodox movement, the Habsburgs hoped to reclaim the lost ascendancy and thus bring the hundreds of illegitimate priests back under their control. The most pressing matter after 1761 was to make the already serving clergymen yield to the rules introduced with toleration, since no quick changes could be reasonably expected.

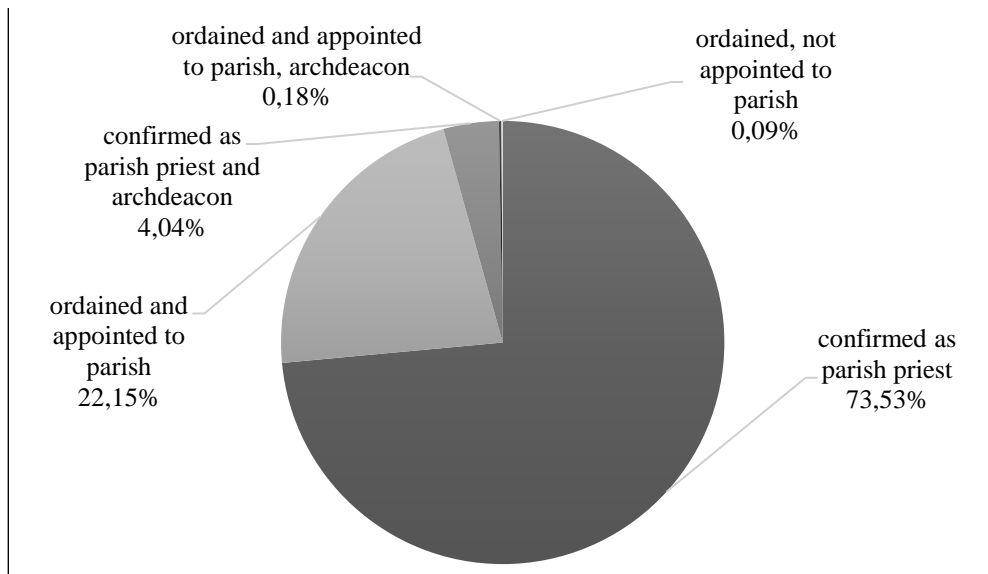
⁹ Ibid., 61-64.

¹⁰ See, e.g., “DaT18 Database,” DaT18ID 973, 1014.

¹¹ Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirei*, 2, 110-115.

The practice of confirmation was a bureaucratic solution to suit the above end, as Bishop Novaković was urged repeatedly to inquire as to the credentials of all those under his jurisdiction and not admit any priests consecrated outside the borders of the Monarchy beyond the date of 30 March 1761.¹² At the same time, by offering them certain tax exemptions,¹³ the state signalled to the priests that they would benefit from such privileges only by taking the necessary steps to receive recognition from their hierarchy.

Chart 1: Old vs new priests, 1761-1767 (sample size: 1,088 individuals).



Source: “DaT18 Database”, version 3.1, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

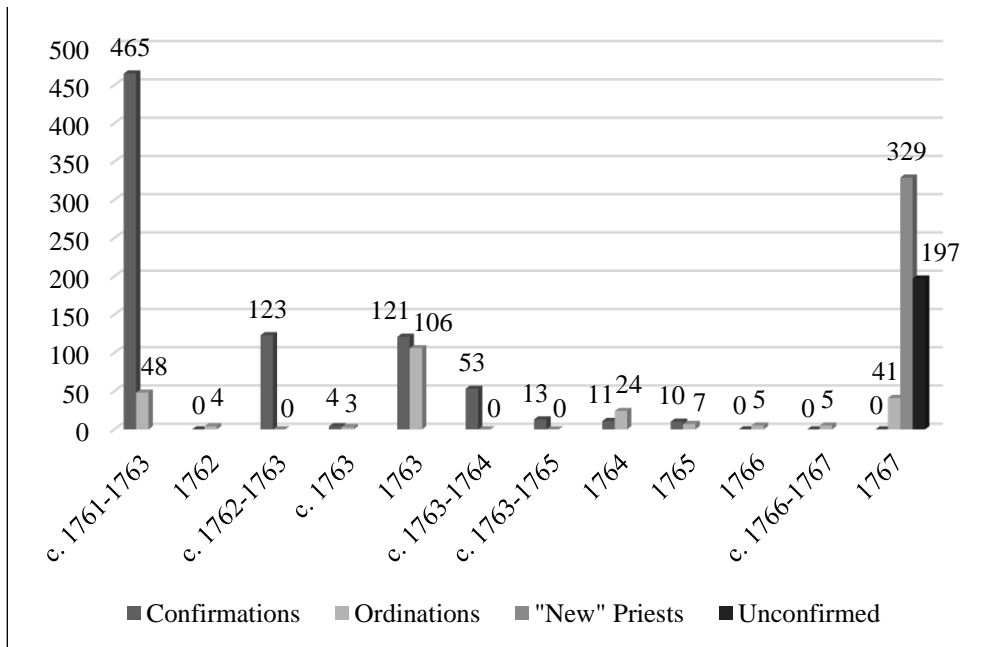
Equally importantly, Novaković had a vested interest in the process: the authorities turned a blind eye to him charging money for either confirmation or ordainment. Various sources corroborate to support the claim that he levied a fee

¹² General Buccow to Bishop Novaković, 2 October 1761, Erdélyi országos kormányhatósági levéltárak, Erdélyi kincstári levéltár, Erdélyi fiscalis levéltár, case XX, fasc. 1, fol. 34r, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltára (hereafter: OL, F234); General Buccow to Bishop Novaković, 13 November 1761, OL, F234, case XX, fasc. 1, fol. 33r; General Hadik to Bishop Novaković, 19 April 1765, OL, F234, case XX, fasc. 6, fol. 6r-v.

¹³ The release of the Orthodox priests from paying the poll tax already figured among the topics agreed upon by General Buccow and Sofronie from Cioara in a meeting in late April or early May 1761, Nicolae Iorga, *Sate și preoți din Ardeal* [Villages and Priests from Transylvania] (Bucharest: Carol Göbl, 1902), 259; see the original, OL, F234, case XX, fasc. 9, fol. 21r-v. The provision was included in the investiture decree of November 1762, Bunea, *Episcopii Aron și Novacovici*, 246, in the footnote.

of between 30 and 40 Hungarian florins on the candidates, in addition to the annual tax that was fixed at 1 gulden.¹⁴ While this behaviour might raise suspicions of simony, and certainly led to less attention being paid to the worthiness of those appointed to the parishes, it did, nevertheless, deliver in terms of bringing the clergy under legitimate control. The bishop, thereby, acted in line with the requirements of the executive, submitting himself to the hardships of a long canonical visitation that took him across Transylvania from June to November 1762,¹⁵ to later settle in the village of Rășinari, where he might be reached by those in need of his blessing. The jottings in the books of appointments do not always allow for a precise chronology, but they provide enough data to suggest the trends of this activity.

Chart 2: The Orthodox clergy, 1761-1767 (sample size: 1,568 individuals).



Source: "DaT18 Database", version 3.1, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

The two spikes at either end of Chart 2 correspond to the enthusiasm of the early years, characteristic above all for those priests who were keen to secure their position through confirmation, and Dionisije Novaković's own concern for

¹⁴ Bunea, *Episcopii Aron și Novacovici*, 242-243; MNL OL, F234, case XX, fasc. 18, fol. 44r-v.

¹⁵ The itinerary planned by the authorities, OL, F234, case XX, fasc. 10, bundle 2, unnumbered leaf. An incomplete account on the route and calendar of the visitation, OL, F234, case XX, fasc. 18, fols. 21r-22r.

financial gains in the months leading to his exit from Transylvania, respectively.¹⁶ The 329 clerics that were mentioned for the first time in the census of 1767 stress the last-minute effort by the hierarch to add as many new names as possible to the list of those in office. Admittedly, the figure is not definitive and more accurate identifications could place it slightly lower, but the upward course is undisputable, particularly if we also count the 41 priests ordained by Novaković in his last year in the principality. In between, the number of ordinations fluctuated, almost reaching the level of confirmations by mid-decade as the latter decreased to single digits, only to be surpassed once more at the end of Novaković's term as bishop.

Looking at when the priests of the diocese took the holy orders further enhances and deepens the preceding findings. The commissioning of an Orthodox bishop in Transylvania marked a conspicuous jump in the number of annual ordinations. Once again, towering high above the rest in Chart 3 are the columns that correspond to the first two-and-a-half to three years of Dionisije Novaković's tenure in the principality, along with a shorter one right at the end of his incumbency. However, paying closer attention reveals that this trend had in fact started in the early 1750s and accelerated toward the end of the decade, despite all attempts by the authorities to prevent the candidates from reaching Orthodox centres outside Transylvania. Over the six-year period prior to the installation of Novaković, almost as many priests travelled to be ordained in neighbouring territories – 154 to be exact – as were to receive the orders from his hands during the first years of his rule over the diocese – 162 between 1761 and 1763. This is a clear sign of the social pressure that drove many of the aspiring clergymen to take risks and try to get themselves into priesthood well before toleration in order to serve the communities which had drifted away from church union. On the other hand, we can also probe the huge losses suffered by the Orthodox Church as a result of the hard clampdown on religious dissent in the late 1740s,¹⁷ with less than 20 priests surviving from that era and into the age of toleration to be included in the staff registers. Since the contention had not been less violent over those years compared to the next decade and there is plenty of proof of people already crossing the border to receive ordination,¹⁸ the exceptionally low number is a direct consequence of the repression. The total for the period 1746–1750 sits at almost half the value of the previous five years,

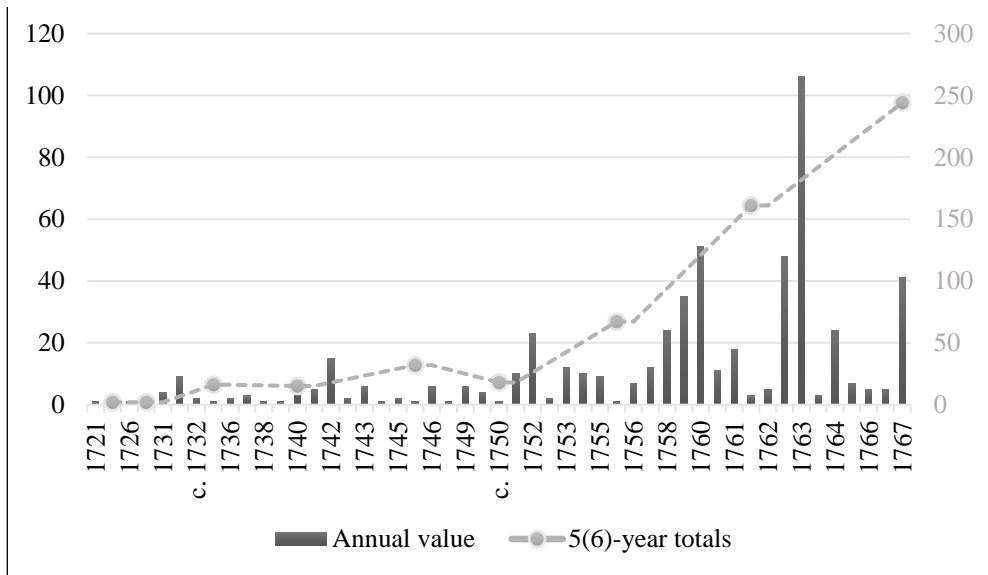
¹⁶ A largescale investigation to uncover the money left after the bishop's death produced significant evidence on how he made his fortune in Transylvania. The testimonies collected by the fiscal authorities during the hearing of 24 witnesses in 1768 in Sibiu and Rășinari also provide plenty of details about the interactions with his Romanian subjects. Their publication will follow soon.

¹⁷ For an overview of these measures, see Daniel Dumitran, "Forme ale definirii identitare în Transilvania veacului al XVIII-lea. Introducere la critica imaginii istoriografice a românilor neuniți (II)" [Forms of Defining Identity in Eighteenth-Century Transylvania. Introduction to the Critique of the Historiographical Image of Non-Uniate Romanians (II)], *Apulum* 50, 1 (2013): 185-190.

¹⁸ Miron, "Acțiune ortodoxă – acțiune catolică," 8-11, 18.

hinting at some irregular cause for the decline. Equally relevant, the underlying data show that the exodus stopped once there was a bishop in place in Transylvania. This testifies both to how the Habsburg officials faultlessly sensed the problem and figured out an appropriate solution to it, as well as to the fact that Novaković acted within the limits of his mandate and refused his sanction to anyone ordained in foreign lands after his investiture in 1761.

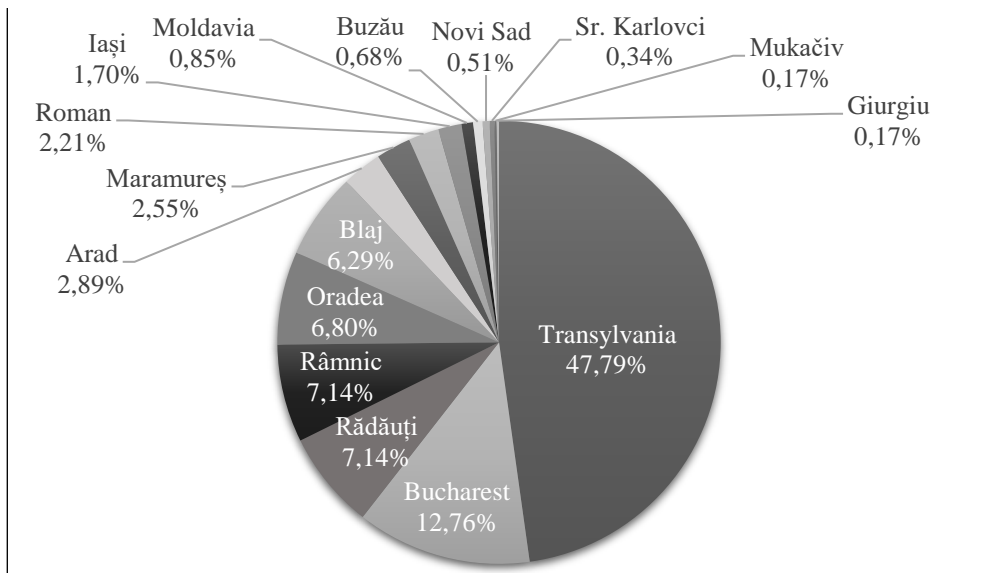
Chart 3: Clerical ordinations by year, 1721-1767 (sample size: 557 individuals).



Source: “DaT18 Database”, version 3.1, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

Nonetheless, Bishop Novaković was called to manage an eparchy where only a minority of the parish priests had been consecrated through a legitimate local superior. It is unfortunate that the documents only mention the time and place of ordination and the consecrating bishop for roughly just a third of the active clergymen. With such a reduced sample, Transylvania – namely Rășinari, where Dionisije Novaković eventually settled, but probably also elsewhere in the province that he toured extensively – accounts for nearly half of the total locations. The ordinations inscribed under his name amount to between 41% and 48%, a blatant overrepresentation in relation to the preceding figures. The gap owes to the conflicting information in the original papers, which indicate priests allegedly confirmed and ordained at the same time by the Transylvanian bishop. At this point I prioritized the data on the place of ordination, so my option for Chart 4 below was to leave the matter unsettled, hence the greater margin assigned to him.

Chart 4: Clerical ordinations by place, 1721-1767 (sample size: 588 individuals).



Source: “DaT18 Database”, version 3.1, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

If, however, we focus on the half of the pie chart that tags places not related to Novaković, it is immediately obvious that those looking to enter the clergy had no favourite destination for taking the holy orders. Blaj, Oradea and Mukačiv, the three Greek Catholic Sees in or around Transylvania, make up more than a quarter of the remainder, signalling that transgressions had been common enough during the confessional troubles. Every other Orthodox diocese nearby is also rendered on the chart. The surprise comes from the small percentage contributed to by the metropolitan in Sremski Karlovci and the rest of the Serbian bishops, in spite of the frequent calls for help directed to them by the Transylvanian Orthodox in the 1740s and 1750s. Presumably, the candidates preferred destinations closer to home, right across the mountains into Wallachia and Moldavia, which avoided the risk of their running into representatives of Habsburg administration along the route. The shared language and the survival of memories of past links to the hierarchs in the Romanian Principalities, along with the likely lower taxes for ordainment also played a part, although their precise impact is difficult to assess.

Among the Orthodox centres south and east of Transylvania, Bucharest is a distant first due to the ascendancy it enjoyed before church union, which it consolidated afterwards through the submission of the Orthodox communities in Brașov and Făgăraș.¹⁹ But the metropolitans of Wallachia also benefited from the

¹⁹ Daniel Dumitran, “Rezistența ortodoxă împotriva unirii religioase în Brașov și Țara Bârsei” [The

symbolic capital afforded to them by book printing. To a world in crisis that had lost its marks after the revelations by Visarion Sarai in 1744, the liturgical books were a considerable source for recovering the customs of the true faith. Their imprint, often exhibiting the name of the archbishop in the Wallachian capital, presented the candidates to priesthood with a direction of travel.²⁰ Similar considerations might explain the spot on the podium shared by Râmnic and Rădăuți, the first with strong institutional as well as personal ties to the villages in southern Transylvania from the days when Oltenia was still part of the Monarchy, the second much closer to the northern border of the province and home to an equally relevant printshop.²¹ The chronology points to the fact that the latter of the two bishoprics became a destination in the 1740s, replacing Maramureș, which had served the same purpose through the previous decades. Geographical distance, too, was a circumstance of considerable concern, as proven by the much smaller number of priests who made the effort to reach the metropolitan in Iași. The fortuitous character is further underlined by the mentioning of various consecrating bishops in Moldavia, identified in relation to the political commonwealth they inhabited, rather than any specific diocese. Provided it is not a plain spelling error, the registration of the hierarch who officiated the ordination service in Giurgiu, in Ottoman territory, also matches the above condition.

The same can also be argued by examining more closely the list of bishops whose names have been copied from the certificates issued on ordainment day and passed into the registers compiled in Novaković's time. The random nature of the ceremony appears more prominent in these records, since many of those who had conferred the holy orders upon Transylvanian applicants were not the

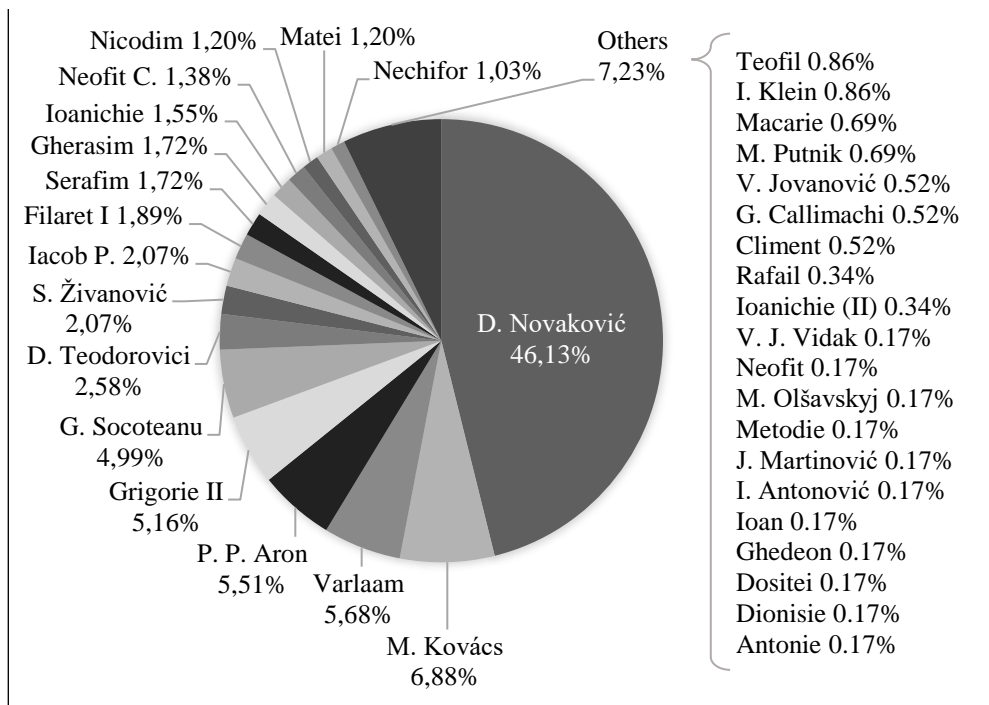
Orthodox Resistance Against Religious Union in Brașov and Burzenland], *AUA hist.* 9, 2 (2005): 57.

²⁰ For books printed in Bucharest, see Daniela Lupu, *Tiparul și cartea din Țara Românească în epoca domniilor fanariote* [The Printing Press and the Book from Wallachia in the Time of the Phanariot Rulers] (Bucharest: Muzeul Municipiului București, 2014), 100-107; Ioana Cristache Panait, *Circulația cărții vechi bucureștene în Transilvania* [The Circulation of the Old Bucharest Book in Transylvania] (Bucharest: Editura Biblioteca București, 1998).

²¹ Mihai Săsăujan, "Der Übergang Olteniens unter die Österreichische Herrschaft und der Kirchlichen Jurisdiktion des Bistums Râmnic unter die 'Nicht-Unierten' (d.h. Orthodoxen) aus Südsiebenbürgen in der Zeit der Österreichischen Herrschaft 1718-1739," in Marte et al., ed., *Die Union der Rumänen Siebenbürgens*, 2, 649-651. Bishop Grigore Socoteanu of Râmnic had been a refugee in Rășinari and kept contacts with the families that had housed him, Nicolae Iorga, ed., *Studii și documente cu privire la istoria Românilor*, vol. 4, *Legăturile Principatelor Române cu Ardealul* [Studies and Documents on the History of the Romanians, vol. 4, The Connections of the Romanian Principalities with Transylvania] (Bucharest: Socec, 1902), 89. On book printing, see Aurelian Sacerdoțeanu, "Tipografia episcopiei Râmnicului (1705-1825)" [The Printing House of the Diocese of Râmnic (1705-1825)], *MO* 12, 5-6 (1960): 291-349; Mihai Mîrza, "Tipografia Mitropoliei Moldovei la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea: ipoteze, îndreptări, considerații" [The Typography of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia in the Middle of the 18th Century: Hypotheses, Corrections, Considerations], *AP* 10, 2 (2014): 49-72.

actual holders of the diocese where the event happened. Misreadings on the part of the secretaries entering the information or the traveling habits of the hierarchs themselves can at times be blamed for such incongruities.²² Often though, the names do not have any parallel to the then incumbent bishops, suggesting the ritual had been performed in all likelihood by a prelate who wandered north of the Danube and away from his titular see in the Ottoman Empire.²³ To casual meetings might also attributed the many instances when a bishop imposed his hands upon just one priest from Transylvania – 11 out of the 37 bishops remembered were only cited once.

Chart 5: Consecrating bishops, 1721-1767 (sample size: 581 individuals).



Source: “DaT18 Database”, version 3.1, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

At the other end of the scale, a few names occur frequently, as Chart 5 amply conveys. Again, Dionisije Novaković is responsible for almost half of the ordinations, but the aforementioned caveat of dealing with an unbalanced sample still applies. Setting aside the share that originated after 1761 leaves us with 313 clergymen whose career beginnings can be used to validate the earlier findings.

²² E.g., “DaT18 Database,” PersonID 10, 41, 90, 100, 198, 281, 434.

²³ E.g., “DaT18 Database,” PersonID 11, 71, 208, 228, 277, 303.

While this dataset is too small to enable straightforward extrapolations, it is nevertheless a respectable 25% of the remaining total. The top places corroborate the rankings based on location, as Meletie Kovács (Oradea), Varlaam (Rădăuți), Petru Pavel Aron (Blaj), Grigorie II (Bucharest) and Grigore Socoteanu (Râmnic) lead the peloton, each credited with at least 30 ordinations to his name. Out of this lot, the Uniate bishops make for a combined total of about a quarter of those who gave their blessing to future Orthodox clerics in Transylvania. The high percentage of former Greek Catholics who had changed sides during the confrontations speaks of the perception of a dim border separating the two denominations and encouraging transgressions. At the same time, it is a reminder of how little Bishop Novaković could do in the way of filtering who got to be a parson, as these converts were not submitted to any special scrutiny before receiving confirmation.

This is probably a good starting point from which to begin searching for an explanation of the high turnover rates within the clerical profession. The imperial commission charged with separating the Greek Catholics from their dissenting brethren in the early 1760s concluded that there were 1,380 Orthodox priests in office by the time toleration was introduced. The figure seems incomplete, as no clergymen were mentioned from the territories of southern Transylvania, where the opposition had been voiced initially and most vigorously. Judging by the later evidence, we must assume the presence of approximately 150 extra parish priests in the Saxon seats, which would bring the total to more than 1,500 individuals.²⁴ Of these, Dionisije Novaković was to count a little over 1,000 in his census of 1767, 800 or so confirmed and upwards of 200 consecrated in the meanwhile. The tally does not include the hundreds of ordained persons who were denied an official acknowledgement of their status, given they were no longer active members of the clergy. We are thus talking of between 500 and 700 priests who had not only failed to retain their place in the parishes, but were for the most part dropped all together from the internal records of the diocese. A loss of 30% to 45% of the Orthodox priesthood in little over half a decade is an extraordinary turnover. Previous arguments have looked at state repression as the main reason for this decline.²⁵ The 197 unconfirmed priests who appear in the statistic would have been the likely victims of such punitive measures, yet there is no factual evidence to support the idea of a scenario similar in scale to that in the 1740s parallel to toleration. While certain abuses cannot be overruled entirely, other causes might also be put forward to elucidate their failure to get a firm hold on any parish, for instance, ordainments

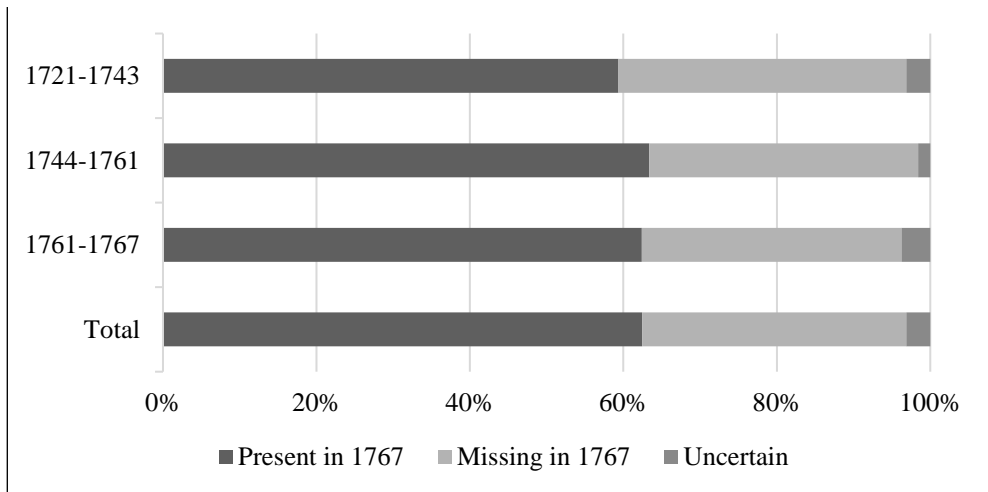
²⁴ Keith Hitchins, Ioan N. Beju, "Conscriptia clerului ortodox transilvan din 1767" [The Census of the Transylvanian Orthodox Clergy from 1767], *MA* 29, 7-8 (1984): 540.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

outside Transylvania beyond 1761 or competition with the already serving parsons.²⁶

Rather than running side-by-side comparisons of single snapshots of statistical evidence, the database allows the use of combined biographical information on clerical careers. Of the clergymen registered as confirmed or ordained by Bishop Novaković during the first few years of his tenure, fewer than two thirds made it to 1767 and were recorded in the census, while over 30% were lost in the space of three to five years, as laid out in Chart 6. Even taking into account the equivocal data and the very plausible errors that translate into failed identifications during record-linkage, the ratio would change by no more than 3%-5% on either side, staying well within the margin referenced above.

Chart 6: Clergy turnover rates, 1767 (sample size: 1,092 individuals).



Source: “DaT18 Database”, version 3.1, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

Equally significant, the proportions stay quite unchanged whether we filter the material to only consider the elder members of the clergy, those consecrated in adverse conditions throughout the age of dissent or, finally, those who had received the holy orders from Novaković himself. Accordingly, the high turnover rate can not be blamed on natural departures alone, nor does it automatically follow from any injunction of the authorities. The chances are that the described outcome was simply the result of the volatile religious choice of the parish priests themselves. Many of those missing from the census in 1767 had presumably fled back to church union in the interval between their first mention

²⁶ The condition of supernumerary priests can be more easily retrieved from the sources; see, e.g., “DaT18 Database,” DaT18ID 1162, 1163, 2381, 2382.

and the subsequent general survey of the clergy. In fact, the 1760s and 1770s were a time of successful recovery for the Greek Catholic denomination in Transylvania. Bishops Athanasie Rednic and Grigore Maior bragged about hundreds of won-back villages in their correspondence, and later statistics confirm the increased following of the Uniate Church.²⁷ As communities made the switch, it is not unthinkable that their parsons followed suit. The Orthodox churchmen ordained by Greek Catholic bishops are the proof it had happened before the other way round, highlighting the degree to which the traditional manner of recruitment was problematic in terms of the fidelity and the vocation of the clerics. On the flip side, these defections created an opportunity for Novaković to start renewing the priesthood of the diocese with ecclesiastics of his choice, although the extent of checks in place before appointment to parish is yet to be determined.

One final aspect on which the DaT18 database may provide more consistent details than previous research due to its larger collection of priestly biographies regards the mapping of employment migration within this elite group. It has already been suggested that the majority of Orthodox priests settled and took up a position in the village of their birth or not too far away from it.²⁸ The two manuscripts that contain a record of both the birthplace and the then current place of residence of parsons substantiate this claim, with between 50% and 60% of the clergymen serving in their native parishes. At this point, all data should be taken with a grain of salt, for two main reasons. The first and quite obvious one has to do with the fact that every assertion we might be able to make relies on the rigorousness of the information available to the bishop. Unfortunately, its accuracy leaves a lot to be desired, as there are instances of contradictory indications either between one source and another or within the same document, when the surname includes a settlement designation different than the origin officially ascribed to its bearer.²⁹ Secondly, there are notable regional variations from county to county, which make the calculated average less fitting overall. Chart 7 only considers information on the parsons active within the most densely populated counties and districts in Transylvania, since these add to a relevant sample. Not only is there a huge gap between extremes – 65% in the case of Alba versus just 20% in Middle Solnoc and 30% in Dăbâca for those who had landed a job in the same spot they were born in – but in over half

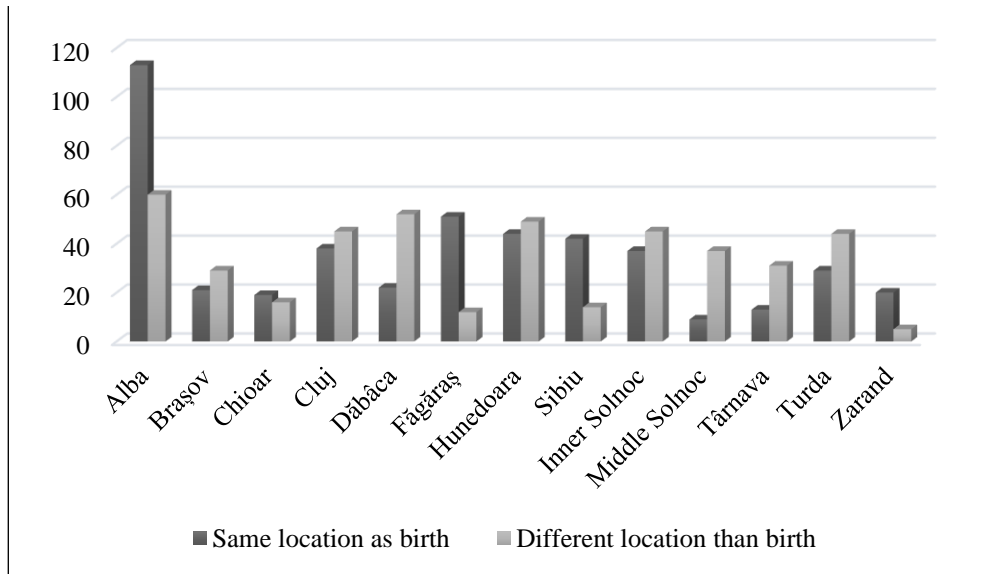
²⁷ Nedici, *Formarea identității confesionale*, 312-322. See the religious census data from 1779 and 1786 in Ambrus Miskolczy and Árpád E. Varga, eds., *Jozefinizmus Tündérországbán: Erdély történeti demográfijának forrásai a XVIII. század második felében* [Josephinismus in Fairyland: Sources of the Historical Demography of Transylvania in the second half of 18th Century] (Budapest: Tarsoly Kiadó, 2013), DVD, pt. 2, Felekezeti összeírások 1750-1850, 1779_görög_katolikus_összegzés and 1786_görög_katolikus_összegzés.

²⁸ Hitchins, Beju, "Conscriptia clerului," 540.

²⁹ Nedici, "DaT18 Database," 63.

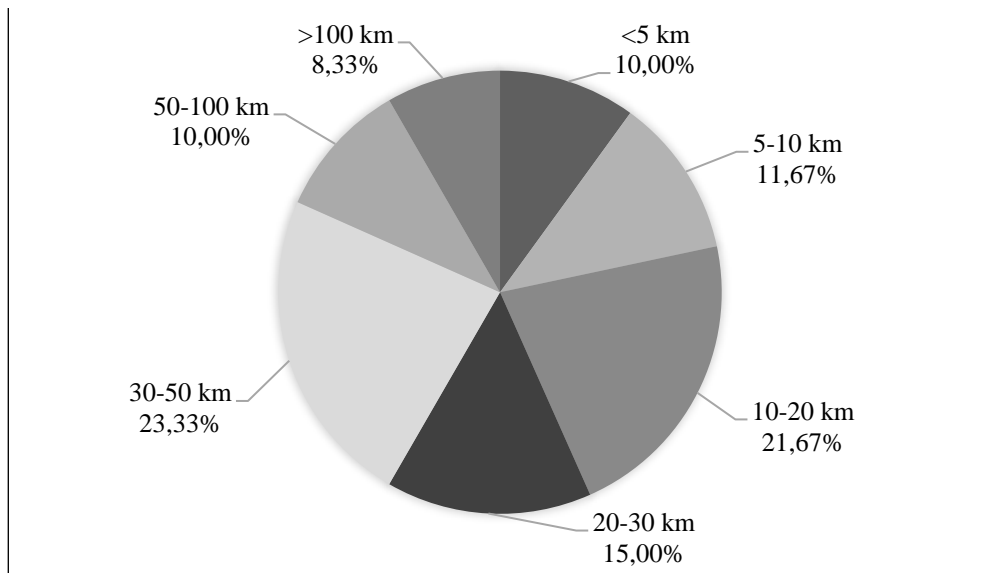
of the administrative units under consideration the number of priests migrating for work was greater than the number of those staying at home.

Chart 7: Employment of parsons, 1767 (sample size: 897 individuals).



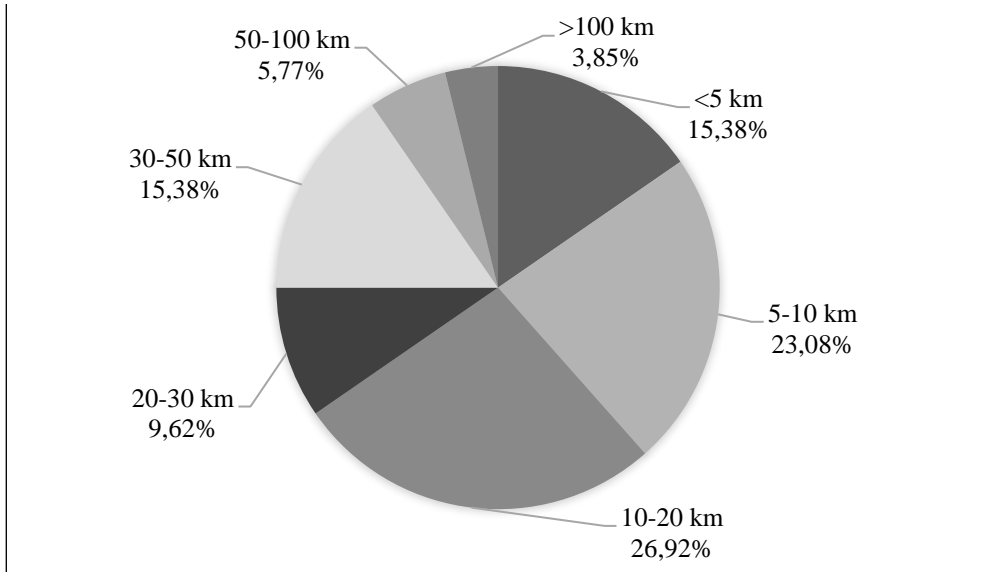
Source: “DaT18 Database”, version 3.1, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

Chart 8: Distance travelled by parsons of Alba (sample size: 60 individuals).



Source: “DaT18 Database”, version 3.1, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

Chart 9: Distance travelled by parsons of Dăbâca (sample size: 52 individuals).



Source: "DaT18 Database", version 3.1, <https://www.dat18.ro/en/database>.

The case studies of Alba and Dăbâca, two counties which exhibit opposing migration patterns, afford further insights. The distances plotted in Charts 8 and 9 were calculated in a straight line and they present a vastly different picture, category for category. However, taking a step back makes it possible to see that between three-fifths and three-quarters of those leaving their homes in search of a parish did not have to travel further away than a day's walk, or around 30 kilometres, which places them in familiar surroundings. Additionally, most individuals who came from further than 100 kilometres away were immigrants from Wallachia and Moldavia who might have been induced to travel by reasons other than the pursuit of a clerical career.

Another factor that impacted this behaviour is not to be overlooked. Although disparate annotations in the surviving registers might hint at the infrequent character of this practice, the establishment of filial churches was widespread during the 1760s, their presence dictated by the declining number of active clergymen. Many parsons were thus entrusted with the spiritual guidance of neighbouring Orthodox communities, which created alternatives when it came to where to settle. At least some of the priests that changed their residence in the timeframe between records moved to nearby villages.³⁰ In such circumstances, migration was less the result of difficulties in finding employment locally and more the effect of a vulnerable parish network.

³⁰ See, e.g., "DaT18 Database," DaT18ID 21, 2101 and 587, 1473.

To sum things up and draw some preliminary conclusions on what has emerged from this reading of the information available through the DaT18 database, the first point of note is the successful transition of most clergymen active in the 1760s from subversive leaders of dissent to mainstream rural elites. The remarkably high percentage of those only confirmed by Bishop Novaković after September 1761 to a post they already occupied validates the initial speculation that many Orthodox priests began their careers during the religious confrontations and managed to stay in place despite the institutional changes brought about by toleration. The details of their activity in the service of the same community they belonged to by birth or in nearby villages conveys the importance of personal ties and reputation. Generally, they lacked any sort of formal training, but had been mandated by the village elders or any person with local authority to go and get ordained before taking up the role of parson.

The consequences of this overly permissive environment are also easy to measure. Dionisije Novaković had neither the power nor the will to impose strict rules for the confirmation of already active clerics. This is readily apparent in the conspicuous share of priests ordained by Greek Catholic prelates among those acknowledged from 1761 to 1767. The fact that a third of the total number went missing from the records in less than half a decade speaks of the vulnerabilities of the admission procedures for clerical office. The reasons behind this unusual turnover and the fate of those deserting Orthodoxy still need a more thorough investigation before arriving at any conclusions. Also, a question I did not dare ask, but which is obviously of utmost importance in the context, regards the social standing and economic status of the Orthodox priesthood, both before and after receiving the holy orders. Future developments of the DaT18 database, including the addition of fiscal census evidence from the mid-eighteenth century, will hopefully allow for a deeper prosopographical analysis of this group along the above lines.