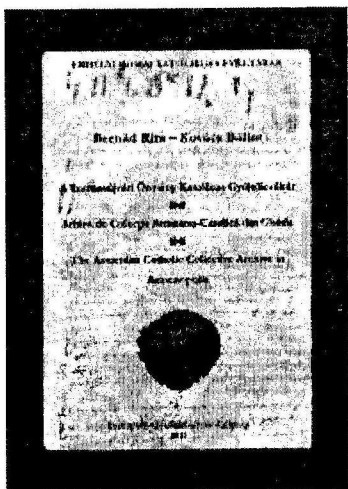


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**RITA BERNÁD – BÁLINT KOVÁCS: THE ARMENIAN CATHOLIC  
COLLECTIVE ARCHIVE IN ARMENOPOLIS. REPERTORY.  
BUDAPEST-GYULAFEHÉRVÁR-LEIPZIG, 2011, 2000 p.**



Transylvania, as a part of the mediaeval Hungarian Kingdom, the relatively independent Transylvanian Principality (16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries), Habsburg Empire the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and finally, Romania, has been a subject of the political gambles in Europe. The Transylvanian Principality, a redundancy governed by native Hungarian princes, provided for nearly 150 years in which Hungarian, the German-speaking Saxon, and Romanian historiography in the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw a vindication of their respective national continuity.

In this context, the research of the Armenians' history in Transylvania (now in Romania) has been burdened by many difficulties for long time. One of the greatest problems is that the majority of manuscript documents are being kept in foreign archives and not in Hungary. Additionally, until now, the secondary literature concerning history of the Armenians in Transylvania, published in any other languages is, more or less, few. Further on, the research has become quite difficult since the majority of these, aside from some very seldom exceptions happened in the last two decades, proved to be very anachronistic, that is to say, these have been already published at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, these monographs very often referred to each other. Thus, they adopted entire chapters word by word from each other. In this respect, there was a huge gap to publish any monographs at a high level at the field of the Armenian studies. Moreover, this assertion is especially obvious from a church-historical point of view.

Historically, the Armenians, because of their active involvement in revolts against the policy of Gheorghe Duca, Prince of Moldavia, were obliged to escape from Moldavia (now in Romania) to Transylvania at the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. According the historical sources, the Armenians led by Minas T'oxat'ec'i, Armenian Apostolic Bishop of Moldavia, settled down in several places and formed colonies or settlements (*galt'avayr*) in Transylvania. In these settlements, the Armenian Apostolic Church, as an organisation holding together the communities, was in the focus of interest in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, in this period, Transylvania was functioned as a multi-religious (Protestant, Orthodox, and Armenian Apostolic) state. Therefore, Holy See in Rome regarded Transylvania as a missionary target. Consequently, the process

called Counter-Reformation was increasingly getting underway in Transylvania. The main aim of these missions was evident: to reconvert many souls to the Catholicism. Furthermore, the Holy See in Rome and the Armenian Uniate Archiepiscopacy in Lemberg,<sup>1</sup> Poland (now Lviv in Ukraine), initiated Catholic missions among the Armenians in the 1680's creating a church-union. Therefore, the Holy See in agreement with Armenian Uniate Archbishopric, delegated Oxendio Virziresco, an Armenian Uniate priest born in Moldavia and educated in Rome, to lead a mission among the Armenians in Transylvania. His task seemed to be very evident for the Holy See's authorities. His most important duty was to bring about a church-union and organise the Armenian Uniate (Catholic) Church in Transylvania. Owing to his efforts, the Armenians in Transylvania declared effectively the church-union in Lemberg on February of 1689 when they made a confession of faith with Rome in the Armenian Uniate Archbishop, Vardan Hunanean's presence. It is not easy to decide the exact date of the union. But since the general session of the Holy Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*), the Holy See's missionary institution in Rome, discussed the Armenians' church union on 8<sup>th</sup> of April, 1689, it is highly advisable to accept this date. Due to his successful mission, the Holy See appointed and consecrated Oxendio Virziresco as a Uniate Bishop of the Armenians in Transylvania in 1690. At the same time, Bishop Oxendio, because of his hard-liner church-policy, only managed to consolidate the church-union in Transylvania after harsh debates with the local Armenians by the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

As a result of the process called church-union, it should be known that, by the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, four Armenian Catholic (Uniate) parishes established in Transylvania with significant archives subordinated to the Holy See in Rome, such as Armenopolis (Gherla, Szamosújvár), Csikszépvíz (Frumoasa), Elisabethopolis (Dumbraveni, Erzsébetváros) and Gyegýószentmiklós (Gheorgheni). Then, at the behest of the Holy See in Rome, they were subjected to the Roman Catholic diocese in Transylvania with a centre of Alba Iulia in 1930. In this manner, the Armenian Uniate (Catholic) parishes directly subordinated to the Roman Catholic Episcopacy (from the year of 1991 Archiepiscopacy) in Transylvania. They officially called them as the Ordinariate of Roman Catholic Armenians from that year (1930)

In light of this, it has kept the scholarship waiting a task for a long time to systematise the rich, partly undiscovered, manuscript documents upon the history of the Armenians in Transylvania. That is the reason why the authors'

<sup>1</sup> Due to the activity of the missionaries delegated from Rome and Poland, Nikol (Mikolay) Torosowicz, Armenian Apostolic Archbishop in Lemberg converted to Roman Catholic faith in 1626. After his conversion, he initiate a strict church-union policy against the whole Armenian community in Poland. His opposite forcedly persecuted with the aid of the secular and ecclesiastical authorities in Poland. As a result of his hard church policy, the whole Armenian community became almost Uniate (Catholic) by the 1680's.

scholarly venture is with full of hopes at the first sight as well. About a decade ago, a young Hungarian scholar, Bálint Kovács began to research very profoundly the history of the Armenian settlements in Transylvania. Due to his steadfast persistence, despite his initial difficulties in entering the Armenian Catholic Parish archives in Transylvania, at the field of his scholarly carrier, he had managed to get in the archives of Armenian Catholic parishes in Armenopolis and Elisbethopolis, which had been practically closed for the scholarship since the end of the World War II, and started researching the undiscovered manuscripts, written in different languages, concerning the history of the Armenians in Transylvania. In other words, he had the lion's share to discover/or to re-discover these manuscripts for the science itself. At the same time, Bálint Kovács found also a scholarly partner in the person of Rita Bernád, working as a talented archivist at the Roman Catholic Archbishopric Archive in Alba Iulia (Gyulaféhérvár, Alba Carolina), Romania, who had been largely instrumental in methodising the Roman Catholic Parish Archive for the past ten years. These two persons' fruitful co-operation has resulted in publishing this monograph. Evidently, the main aim of the authors primarily focused upon methodising in the most details the manuscripts at ecclesiastical archives in this monograph. However, we cannot forget about the most important value of the authors' work (besides innumerable values). Namely, they had composed a very thorough introductory chapters, written in three languages (Hungarian, Romanian and English), upon the-more-than-300-year-old-history of the Armenian past in Transylvania from the very beginning to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in a very scholarly manner. Therefore, by this monograph, due to the trilingual introductory chapters, the scholarship in both Hungary and foreign countries has the ability itself to give a deeper insight into the whole history of the Armenian settlements in Transylvania.

To sum up very simply, it should be highly recommended for the scholarship.

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