

The Armenian Communities in the 18th Century Transylvania

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Transylvania, eastern periphery of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Middle Age and separate Principality after the dismemberment of the kingdom caused by the Ottoman advance to Central Europe in the 16th century, has been a crossroad of population migrations from the Antiquity, given the geographical situation as border area between the eastern and the western christianities and gate area to the Eurasian steppe through neighboring Moldavia. The turn of the 17th and the 18th centuries were one of the most dynamic immigration ages, including the change of the meaning of settlement against the backdrop of the suzerainty shift over the Principality from Ottoman to Habsburgs. While the struggles and peaces between two empires stimulated cross-border commercial activities, the shift of religious situation, from protestant-friendly constitution to catholicizing regime, reversed the attractiveness of Transylvania for the various religious minorities of the area. In the 17th century protestant sects, like anabaptists, sought refuge among Calvinist Hungarians, Lutheran Germans and Orthodox Romanians, in the 18th century catholic minorities, like Bulgarian Catholics, arrived there. The Armenian families who immigrated to Transylvania in the 1670s took on both characters: commercial activities and catholicization. In this presentation, we discuss the integration process of the Armenian communities to the Transylvanian multi-religious, multi-linguistic and orderly organized society in the eighteenth century. We focus among the four Armenian communities in Transylvania on a free royal town, Gherla, and a privileged Szeklers village, Frumoasa.