

The Beginnings of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Oradea in the Eighteenth Century. The Beiuș Estate Conscription of 1778

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Abstract: The Beiuș estate conscription of 1778 holds valuable information regarding the fiscal state of the local population. The Greek-Catholic Diocese had just been created and it needed a source of income to sustain itself and at the same time to grow. This estate was one of the richest in the whole county, formed from 72 villages with Beiuș at its center. From buildings such as mills, inns and taverns, to farms and homes, they are all presented inside the document. Moise Dragoși, the first Greek-catholic bishop of Oradea struggled to get this estate and it took four years. The conscription in this case represents not just an official piece of paper, but a *window* into the life of an eighteenth-century peasant.

Keywords: conscription, Beiuș, estate, Greek-catholic, Oradea, income, tax.

Rezumat: Conscripția moșiei Beiuș din 1778 deține informații prețioase privind starea fiscală a populației locale. Episcopia Greco-Catolică tocmai fusese creată și avea nevoie de o sursă de venit pentru a se susține și în același timp să se dezvolte. Această moșie a fost una dintre cele mai bogate din întreg județul, formată din 72 de sate cu Beiușul în centru. De la clădiri precum mori, hanuri și taverne, până la ferme și case, toate sunt prezentate în document. Moise Dragoși, primul episcop greco-catolic de Oradea, s-a chinuit să obțină această moșie și a durat patru ani. Conscripția în acest caz reprezintă nu doar o bucată de hârtie oficială, ci o *fereastră* către viața unui țăran din secolul al XVIII-lea.

Cuvinte cheie: Conscripție, Beiuș, moșie, greco-catolic, Oradea, venit, impozit.

The conscription of 1778 is a document that illustrates realities of the Beiuș estate and presents important information regarding the structure of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Oradea. The founding of the bishopric of Oradea

was a key moment in the history of the Greek-Catholic community of Bihor County. Their aspirations of institutional individuality came only after the death in 1775 of the auxiliary-bishop (or *vicar-bishop*) Meletie Kovacs. On the 16th of June 1777, through the papal bulla *In deffesum*, and with the support of Empress Maria Tereza,¹ Moise Dragoși was named bishop of the newly formed Greek-Catholic Diocese of Oradea. At that moment it was decided that this institution would be placed under the authority of the Archdiocese of Strigoniu (*Esztergom*) and the sovereign of Vienna, as supreme patron, would have the right of naming and recommending to the pope the future bishops.²

Thus, a new chapter began for this ecclesiastical institution. In these first years, one of the main concerns of bishop Dragoși was to secure proper financial means to organize the bishopric. Up until then, the Greek-Catholic community of Oradea and Bihor County were under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Diocese. With this new *status quo*, Dragoși was searching for separate forms of revenue. He sent multiple letters to Empress Maria Tereza, asking that he and his community be granted an estate. The first one was dated October the 30th 1776, even before the papal bulla was emitted. The supplicant was underlining the necessity of having real estate for the future institution: he gave examples of other places such as Făgăraș that received the estate of Blaj, or of Muncaci which was awarded revenue from certain abbeys. In short, Dragoși was asking that Oradea would be granted one of the estates of Beiuș, Vascău or Beliu, or a part of the fiscal estate of Aleșd.³ He even made a few estimations regarding the total funds needed for his community: 6.000 florins per year for the bishop's salary, 500 florins per year, maintenance funds for the cathedral, 2.800 florins for the five consistorial clerics (handpicked priests that helped the bishop run the diocese), and 1.200 florins for the priests in Oradea. The total sum was rounded to 10.500 florins per year.⁴

These would start properly moving only after the decree of July the 2nd 1780. The document stipulated that the Beiuș estate be taken from the Catholic Diocese and given to the Greek-Catholic bishopric. Pope Pius VI would confirm the decision through his own papal bulla entitled *Ingeniosa* on the 10th of August of the same year.⁵ The last step was made on February 10th

¹ Ioan Ardeleanu, *Istoria Diecesei Greco-Catolice a Orădiei Mari* [The History of the Greek-catholic Diocese of Great-Oradea] (2 vols, Oradea: 1883-1888), vol. 1, Oradea, 1888, p.39.

² Iudita Călușer, *Episcopia Greco-catolică de Oradea* [The Greek-catholic Diocese of Oradea] (Oradea: Logos'94,2000), p. 52.

³ Iacob Radu, *Istoria diecezei Române-Unite a Orăzii Mari 1777-1927* [The History of the Greek-catholic Diocese of Great-Oradea 1777-1927] (Oradea: Chiriașii Tipografiei Românești, 1932), p. 51.

⁴ Ardeleanu, *Istoria Diecesei*, pp.48-49.

⁵ Raimond Rudolf Salanschi, *Din istoria Eparhiei Greco-catolice de Oradea. Geneză, integrare și devenire* [History of the Greek-Catholic Bishopric of Oradea. Genesis, Integration and Becoming] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Academiei Române, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2014), p. 163.

1781, when Emperor Joseph II underlined the previous documents and regulated the way which the new funds deriving from Beiuș would be used.⁶ The Greek-Catholic Diocese would proclaim its authority over the estate only after June 26th 1781, when Moise Dragoși started to write letters notifying people of the new reality. The estate generated per year somewhere around 22.000 florins. From this sum, 2.800 florins represented payments for the consistorial clerics, 1.200 florins for young priests that were studying in seminars, 500 florins for the cathedral, 300 florins for the bishop's house, 50 florins for the lawyer, 150 for the notary and 8.500 florins for the diocese fund. Another 2.500 florins were used for the *propagation of the Union* and 6.000 florins for the bishop himself.⁷ To put things in perspective, the Roman-Catholic Church at that time had roughly annual revenue of 100.000 florins without the Beiuș estate.

To better understand the document which I am about to analyze, certain aspects need to be first illustrated. In essence, conscriptions were official documents that provided statistical information (fiscal, demographical, ecclesiastical) of a specific geographical area of interest. They were demanded especially by state authorities; during the eighteenth Century they underlined the types of reform that the empire introduced, reforms that sought to improve the system of governance.⁸ In the case of Bihor county, these documents were solicited by the central authority through what was called *Consilio Regio Locumtenentiali Hungarico* (a special council designated to administer what was once the Kingdom of Hungary within the Habsburg Empire) that had its headquarters in Bratislava and later Buda.

The conscription which I am about to present was finalized on the 30th of June 1778 by order of the Royal Chamber of Hungary. The people that made it were Ioannes Kovats (inspector sent by the state) and Iosephus Kimrajth (conscriptor of the Royal Chamber). Alexius Bimbo, a cleric of the Roman-Catholic diocese of Oradea was also present.⁹ Today, the document (entitled *The Conscription of the Beiuș estate of the Greek-Catholic diocese of Oradea*) is kept at the Bihor County Branch of the National Archives in Oradea, archival fund nr. 3 file nr. 2. It is actually a legalized copy from 1821 after the original that was kept in Buda, made by the vice-archivist Michael Czigler of the Royal Chamber.

⁶ Ana Ilea - Iudita Călușer, *Conscrierea domeniului Beiuș din anul 1778* [Conscription of the Beiuș estate of 1778] (Oradea: Muzeul Țării Crișurilor, 1995), p. 179; Radu, *Istoria diecezei*, p. 58; Ardeleanu, *Istoria Diecezei*, p. 54.

⁷ Radu, *Istoria diecezei*, p. 58.

⁸ Derek Beales, *Joseph II In the shadows of Maria Theresa 1741-1780*, (2 vols Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987-1990), vol. 1, p. 439.

⁹ Oradea, Serviciul Județean Bihor al Arhivelor Naționale [Bihor County Service of the National Archives], fond *Domeniul episcopesc român unit-Beiuș* no.3, dosar no.2, pp. 137-138.

The document was first brought to light by historians Ana Ilea and Iudita Călușer. Together they revealed it in an article entitled *Conscrierea domeniului Beiuș anul 1778*, published in 1995. The focus of the article is directed primarily towards the town of Beiuș, correlating data from the document and other conscriptions. The authors stated in the end that they didn't capitalize on the minute detail of the document.¹⁰ It is better said that they opened new roads for future historians and researchers to discover more information from this conscription (that was transcribed in the second part of the article). I wish to continue to explore this document and present more detailed information regarding revenue (using florins and kreutzers as standard). I will be focusing mainly on the production and distribution of alcoholic beverages, and of the production of boards and planks of wood. Besides Beiuș, I will be directing my analysis towards other villages and places that are also of key importance.

There are 72 villages inscribed in the conscription, each with its own particularities. The center was at Beiuș; from an infrastructure and annual revenue point of view, it was the most evolved. The entire estate spread across 136.000 yokes of arable land, forests, orchards and vineyards.¹¹ In the beginning, the *yoke* as a method of measuring was the surface of land which two oxen were able to plough in one day. Under Austrian rule the German yoke (Joch) was introduced and had approximately 16.000 square fathoms, the equivalent of today's 0.575 hectares.¹² Reading through the document and making certain calculations we reach the conclusion that on the estate there were 735 families of serfs, 3.700 of *jeleri* (peasants with a small plot of land or none but that enjoyed more rights than serfs) and 287 families of merchants (those living mainly in Beiuș).¹³ The total number of the population was somewhere around 22.000.

The estate's total infrastructure value was around 26.903 florins and 42 kreutzers. The conscription takes into account buildings that belonged to the Church or had a certain financial importance. Of the total sum, just the buildings around Beiuș were valued at around 25.251 florins. The bishop's house was worth 11.029 florins.¹⁴ It included a bakery, a small prison, a garden, a stable that could hold 36 horses, a barn, the house of the notary (built out of clay and wood and had three rooms), the butcher's house and a cellar.

¹⁰ Ilea - Călușer, *Conscrierea domeniului*, p.190.

¹¹ Călușer, *Episcopia Greco-catolică*, p. 55.

¹² Nicolae Stoicescu, *Cum măsurau strămoșii: metrologia medievală pe teritoriul României* [How did the Ancestors Measure: Medieval Metrology in Romania] (București: Editura Științifică, 1971), pp. 126-128.

¹³ Călușer, *Episcopia Greco-catolică*, p. 56.

¹⁴ Oradea, Serviciul Județean Bihor al Arhivelor Naționale [Bihar County Service of the National Archives], fond *Domeniul episcopesc român unit-Beiuș* no.3, dosar no.2, p. 2.

In Beiuș there was also a brewery. According to the conscription the building was valued at around 3.043 florins and 35 kreutzers. It was built out of strong materials including wooden planks and boards, having multiple rooms for the production of beer and plum brandy: a cold room, a room for preparing malt, a room for preparing brandy, etc.¹⁵ The brewery had a large copper cauldron with a capacity of 34 urns and also a kitchen. There were two types of beer produced here; white and black. A close estimation presented by the document, indicates that on a yearly basis, the brewery produced up to 72 urns of white beer and 166 of black beer.¹⁶ The total revenue from the sales was 834 florins (4 florins for each white beer urn sold and 3 florins and 30 kreutzers for each black one). There was a special building for housing the urns (*domus dominalis clavigeralis*), with a basement large enough to hold up to 50 urns at once. The hop plant necessary for the production of beer was cultivated here. In total, there were 3 yokes of land assigned just for this purpose. The tavern was right across the road. It was built during the time of Bishop Adam Patachich. The building itself was worth 1.189 florins and its yearly profit was around 443 florins,¹⁷ selling during this course 397 urns of wine and 92 urns of beer. One of the estate's inns was also situated in Beiuș (*diversorium dominale internum*). It played a significant financial role. The first bricks were laid by bishop Forgacs in the year 1750 and it had a guest room, two chambers, a kitchen, a room for the innkeeper and a cellar that could hold 60 urns.¹⁸ The stables could hold up to 12 horses and a barn for four carriages. The inn was evaluated at 5.299 florins and 26 kreutzers, with a yearly profit of around 668 florins.¹⁹ On the banks of the Criș River there was also a mill with three wheels that was used in the production of flour.

Most of the villages that were significantly smaller did not have, besides the church (some of them not even that, people having to travel to neighboring places to attend Mass) other proprieties that were considered valuable. Among the settlements that produced a certain stream of monetary profit there was the village of Pociovești. There we have a mill that produced planks and boards.²⁰ The building was made out of wood, with an estimated worth of 45 florins. Annually, the produced different type of goods: 15 thick oak planks, 20 kreutzers each, 46 oak planks of normal thickness (10 kreutzers each), 649 pine planks (7 kreutzers each) and last but not least, 1.719 pine

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 7-9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 7.

¹⁷ Ilea - Călușer, *Conscrierea domeniului*, p. 202.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.181.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Oradea, Serviciul Județean Bihor al Arhivelor Naționale [Bihor County Service of the National Archives], fond *Domeniul episcopesc român unit-Beiuș* no.3, dosar no.2, p. 18.

beams costing just 2 kreutzers each. The total annual revenue was around 169 florins.²¹ There was another mill similar to this one at Cărbunari. It was worth less (24 florins and 30 kreutzers) and built also out of wood.²² It produced in the same period 72 oak planks of normal thickness, 926 pine planks, 12 oak beams and 889 pine beams. The profit was estimated at around 150 florins and 28 kreutzers. Another mill was at Budureasa village, the building was worth even less than the previous two, only 15 florins and 21 kreutzers. It managed to make 1.052 pine planks and 959 pine beams, with a profit of 154 florins and 42 kreutzers.²³ The last wood mill was at Gurani.²⁴ It was valued at around 21 florins and 13 kreutzers and it made 60 oak planks, 1.284 pine planks, 1.553 pine beams, with a total income of 211 florins and 34 kreutzers.²⁵ It should be mentioned that the wood that was used in the production came from the neighboring forests, the largest and most important one the "Prince's Forest".²⁶ The total income from the plank, board and beam production of the mills was 684 florins and 105 kreutzers.

In Târcaia village there was a tavern with a value of 41 florins and 25 kreutzers.²⁷ It had two chambers, a kitchen and a cellar in poor condition. The proceeds were determined on a five-year period. The document confirms that the tavern sold 134 urns of wine (1 florin each) and 20 urns of beer (30 kreutzer). The sum total was 144 florins and 30 kreutzers.

In Vintere-Rogoz there was a house belonging to the local lord, but it was rarely used.²⁸ The document underlines that it was at that point vacant and empty. Its value was around 460 florins. Built from pine wood planks, it had 3 rooms and a kitchen. There was a place here that could produce wine (*domus torcularia*), also built from wood with a value of 200 florins.²⁹ A small inn was situated here (*diversorum*) and a bridge over the Holod River. The inn was built from wood and clay, it had four rooms and a kitchen; the total value of this building was 342 florins and 30 kreutzers. The building was surrounded by a wall and had two gates. It also had a stable big enough to receive carriages. Its cellar could hold up to 100 urns.³⁰ The inn sold approximately 169 urns of wine, 520 smaller urns of plum brandy and 31 urns

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Ilea - Călușer, *Conscrierea domeniului*, p.188.

²⁷ Oradea, Serviciul Județean Bihor al Arhivelor Naționale [Bihor County Service of the National Archives], fond *Domeniul episcopesc român unit-Beiuș* no.3, dosar no.2, p. 84.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

of beer. The total income was around 215 florins and 35 kreutzers. There was a toll for crossing the bridge but it only brought 49 florins and 54 kreutzers. Even though this was an important trading route, a lot of people living in the neighboring area were exempt from certain obligations and taxes. The total value of the buildings in Vintere-Rogoz was 1.002 florins and 35 kreutzers.

There was another tavern in Urvişul de Beliu.³¹ It's described as mostly unused and empty (*sede vacante*), built from wood and had a straw roof. It had two rooms, a kitchen and a cellar, all of this surrounded by a fence made from straw and wood. Still the tavern managed to sell 73 urns of wine, 222 small urns of plum brandy and 13 urns of beer, bringing a profit of 92 florins and 49 kreutzers.³² The last tavern was located in Remetea, and was appraised at 202 florins.³³ It had 3 rooms, a kitchen, a cellar and a small stable. The people working here sold around 213 urns of wine, 95 urns of brandy and 21 of beer worth 229 florins and 55 kreutzers.³⁴ The total revenue from these places was 680 florins and 169 kreutzers.

The entire estate produced yearly about 30.500 florins. The village of Beiuş had the most, contributing with 3.376 florins and 34 kreutzers. The rest of the communities didn't exceed 1.000 florins, the average was between 300 and 500 florins. The village with the largest share (besides Beiuş and all other mentioned) was Finiş. It brought yearly 1.056 florins and 55 kreutzers.³⁵ Tax collections mounted up to 157 florins, tax on making other goods such as pots and baskets 92 florins. The village had two mills that belonged to the community (10 florins and 12 kreutzers) and a private mill (2 florins) all of which were used to make flour. The villagers also produced alcoholic beverages around 22 urns of wine, 150 urns of plum brandy and 10 urns of beer. There was also a tax on selling these kinds of homemade beverages and it brought in a profit of 35 florins and 45 kreutzers.

Labour corvee (*robotă*) was another way of calculating profit. There are several types of labours locals made: the long freightage (*longa ventura*) and fathom of wood (*lignatione*). Some were made using animals (when it implied traveling) others by hand. Each family had to work a certain number of days based on the size of the land that it had.³⁶ Here the serfs had to work a combined total of 308 days with animals and 2440 days of manual labour. The clerks tried to give a monetary value to these days so that they could calculate the revenue. They estimated that a day of work with animals was work 20

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁶ Ilea - Căluşer, *Conscrierea domeniului*, p. 184.

kreutzers and a manual one was 10 kreutzers. So, the total income was 513 florins and 15 kreutzers. It's important to underline that the sums presented here were just indicative, in other words not real money. There was the possibility that a serf could buy his days of work so he wouldn't have to go but that didn't happen very often. There were also other obligations that the locals had to manage, these were the nature obligations (*culinarian*). They had to give a certain amount in goods that they produced such as eggs, butter or livestock. In the case of Finiş, they had to give in total 5 measurements of butter (15 kreutzers each), 11 roosters (9 kreutzers each), 71 eggs (3 kreutzers each) and a veal (17 kreutzers). The total sum was 4 florins and 36 kreutzers each year. There was also the *nona* (ninth part of all of their goods) valued at 42 florins and 37 kreutzers and *Regia decima* (the tenth part) estimated at 87 florins and 54 kreutzers. These sums are again indicative because they were mostly paid in goods thus the price always fluctuated.

Last but not least Finiş had a very rich forest in the vicinity. The size of the forests in the conscriptions is expressed in hours (*horarum*) therefore an exact number is unknown. This is referring to the time it takes for a person on foot to walk around the forest one time. Here there was a *five-hour forest* full of oak, pine and other kinds of trees. The wood sold on a five year period amounted to 111 florins and 2 kreutzers. In the last part of the text there is mention of black marble found here that could have been used to carve plaques but there are no statistics given.³⁷

The village with least amount of profit was Kakacsény with an annual sum of only 95 florins and 3 kreutzers.³⁸ Revenue from taxes mounted up to just 15 florins, those for producing baskets and other goods 4 florins. The villagers needed to work 18 days per year with animals and 234 days manual. Expressed in money, that was just 46 florins and 17 kreutzers. The nature obligations were insignificant, a quarter of a measurement of butter, a rooster, a chicken and 3 eggs all worth 11 kreutzers. The *nona* and *decima* were just 21 florins and 51 kreutzers and the *one hour forest* nearby made a profit of just 7 florins and 42 kreutzers.

In conclusion, the conscription of the Beiuş estate was made by order of the Royal Chamber of Hungary in the context of the creation of the Greek-Catholic diocese of Oradea. By giving it to the newly formed bishopric, a major problem that Moise Dragoşi was having in the beginning was solved. The ecclesiastical institution needed a source of income. Without it, the diocese could not have continued its activity. The financial benefits of the estate

³⁷ Oradea, Serviciul Judeţean Bihor al Arhivelor Naţionale [Bihor County Service of the National Archives], fond *Domeniul episcopesc român unit-Beiuş* no.3, dosar no.2, p. 87.

³⁸ Ilea - Căluşer, *Conscrierea domeniului*, p.72.

helped the Church to stand on its own two feet and to properly organize itself. The details presented in the conscription reveal the economic potential of the estate, its features, land and people. At the same time, it illustrates the obligations that they had and the mechanisms that were used to collect revenue. These details also offer a clear image of the traditional and picturesque framework of Bihor. This estate ensured the evolution of the Greek-Catholic diocese of Oradea in accordance with the great institutional, pastoral and cultural objectives of Catholic reformism.

