

## **Cenaloș, a Romanian village of church history and of a good interconfessional cohabitation**

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### **Summary:**

The village of Cenaloș is located on the left bank of Barcău river and its name comes from the plant called "nettle", which in the Middle Ages was abundant in these places. Cenaloș (Hu. "Biharcsanalos" or "Csalanos") translates as "Urzicenie de Bihor". Throughout the history, there have been many toponyms used to name the locality: in 1342 Chalanus and Ochalanus, 1395 Chalanus, 1461 Chalanos, 1692 Szilanos, 1828 and 1851 Csalanos.

Cenaloș, Ciuhoi and Sfârnaș are part of Sâniob commune, a village located on the right bank of Barcău river, in the north-western part of Bihor county. Situated at a distance of 35 km from Oradea and 22 km from Marghita, Cenalos is in an area with smooth hills. The antiquity and the existence of the village is mentioned around the middle of the 13th century in the notes of the Abbey of Sâniob, a Benedictine monastery which had 25 villages under administration, all mentioned in the registers of papal tithes. The main occupation of the inhabitants of the area was agriculture and livestock farming. It is a village with mixed population (Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks and Jews) which had a good coexistence during the history. From a numerical point of view, the village has had and still has few inhabitants; at the last census in 2011 there were 256 inhabitants- Romanian and Hungarian.

### **Keywords:**

Romanian village, church history, confessional school, interconfessional cohabitation.

From a geographical point of view Cenaloș is situated in the Western Plain of Romania, the northern sector that represents the subunit of Barcăului Plain; from an

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administrative point of view, the village of Cenaloș has been part of the Sâniob commune since 2012. It is located 1 km away from Sârsig village on the eastern side, 1 km away from Sâniob Forest on the northern side and 2 km away from Ciuhoi village on the southern side. Cenaloș is situated at a distance of 35 km from Oradea, the capital city of Bihor County and at a distance of 25 km from Marghita city.

### **1. The history of the village**

As for the name of the village, Cenaloș, we will take into account the linguist's Iorgu Iordan statement which says that "the toponymy may be considered a people's unwritten history, a true archive that keeps the memory of great events, stories and more or less important old facts that have occurred over time and have had an impact over the folk's soul"<sup>2</sup>. It seems that the name Cenaloș comes from the Hungarian word "csalános" which means "nettle" or "nettle-like" to be more precise. This village has grown close to Sâniob ("Szent Jóbb" Hu.) which is the first mentioned town in the documents of that time- the 1167 donation document to be more precise<sup>3</sup>, when Sâniob monastery received 25 villages from king Geza as a gift, which later on were to belong to St. Benedek Order Abbey; in time, other series of properties from the area have been added<sup>4</sup> to the order until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the serfdom was abolished. The rulers of the domain had their own shepherds and their own workers who settled down on the edge of the domain. The former inhabitants were cast away to the left side of Barcău river. Some of them settled on the border perimeter marked by the owners with "csuhay" that means landmarks in Hungarian- where they named the town Ciuhoi<sup>5</sup>, while some of them settled to the east, where a lot of nettles used to grow, so they named the village Cenaloș<sup>6</sup>.

Cenaloș village has been mentioned for the first time in a document from 1342, a trial between Toma, the Voivode of Transylvania and the former Palatine Doja's sons. The inhabitants of Sfârnaș and Ciuhoi stood as witnesses for the latter. The trial has started on May 31<sup>st</sup> 1342 as follows: "The Clergical Council (the catholic clergy college from Oradea Cathedral n. n.) from Agria reports to King Carol Robert ( who died on July 16th 1342) that it has sent 2 people to testify according to the assignment received through a letter from the Pavel Committee, the Royal Court Judge: one for Toma, Transilvania's Voievode and the other one for Jacob and Pavel, palatine Doja's

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<sup>2</sup> Iorgu Iordan *Romanian Toponymy*, Bucharest, 1978, p. 20

<sup>3</sup> Ștefan Pascu, *Transylvania's Voivodeship*, First Volume, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj, 1972, p.156.

<sup>4</sup> Jakó Zsigmond, *Bihor County before the Turkish destruction*, Sylvester Niomda RT, Budapest, 1940, p. 228.

<sup>5</sup> The archive of Ciuhoi Cityhall, *Ciuhoi Cityhall Fund*, typed text, copy.

<sup>6</sup> Ioan Kleszken, *The History of my native place Csanaloș*, fragment from "Kleszken family tree" article published in Wikipedia in April 16th 2012, 02.31 a.m.

sons, the two sides that had disagreements over Chalanus estate. On May 26th, these men of testimony, along with two royal delegates – one for each side of the dispute-according to the decision of Pavel committee, had to take the statements of the witnesses brought by each side in order to clarify the reason of the research; whether in the region there was only one estate- Ochalanus, if there was another one named Chalanus and to whom it or they belonged to<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the document mentions many other witnesses that testified for Doja's sons and the villages where they came from, out of which we mention Blasiu, the son of Nicolae from Sfârnaş, Lorand, the son of Sebastian from Sântimreu, Toma, the son of Ladislau from Fegernic, Gall of Ciuhoiu, Stefan the son of Oenic from Ciuhoi and others.

There has been one more town with the name "Csalános" at 40-45 km north-west from Cenaloş village (nowadays in Hungary, near Bagamér), documented in the year 1330<sup>8</sup>, but it was destroyed during the Turkish invasion.

Throughout the history, Cenaloş has had many names, as we have discovered in several works: in 1342 it was called Chalanus or Ochalanus, in 1395 Chalanus, in 1461 Chalanos, in 1598 Chyalanos, in 1692 Szinalos, in 1828 and 1851 Csanálos<sup>9</sup>. It was also recognised under the name Urziceniei Vechi or later on as Urziceniei de Bihor<sup>10</sup>.

In 1395, Cenaloş village received a recognition diploma and appeared as part of Sâniob Abbey, together with a 12 portion Romanian serf unity; a part of the estate belonged to Putnóki domain. During this year there is also a mentioning of the Romanian serfs from Cenalos (Chalanus) because they stole 12 oxen from Sâniob Abbey property<sup>11</sup>. The Tatars raid in 1241 in Bihor county caused damages in Ciuhoi commune as well. The damage caused to Sâniob monastery is one of them. After this desolation, the villages have recovered rapidly and the monastery got back its seal and rights in 1472<sup>12</sup>.

After the King Matei Corvin interrupted the war with the czechs and arrived to Buda, he ordered the Clergical Council from Oradea to register Páli László into Urziceniei Albi estate (Fejér-Csanálos hu.); this estate was donated by his father

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<sup>7</sup> Ioan Ionaşcu, L. Lăzărescu - Ionescu, *Documents on the Romanian History, 14th century, C. Transilvania*, vol. IV (1341-1350), Bucharest, 1955, p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> Mezösi Károly, *Bihor County at the time of the end of Turkish rule (1692)*, Hungarian Institute of History, Budapest, 1943, p. 138.

<sup>9</sup> Coriolan Suciuc, *Historical dictionary of the cities in Transylvania*, 1st volume A-N, Bucharest, 1967, p. 131.

<sup>10</sup> Rác Anita, *Historical-etymological dictionary of settlement names of the old Bihor county*, Debrecen, 2007, p. 68, col. 2

<sup>11</sup> Jakó Zsigmond, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 240.

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himself, Hunyadi János and confirmed later on by his mother Elisabeta on June 25th, 1461<sup>13</sup>.

After the Hunyadi reign, the village of Cenaloș passed into Pályi's family property and in 1520 we would find out that the landlord of this village was Chyre family from Almosd. Cenaloș became a customs point (the taxes were collected here) and it was administered by Sâniob Abbey<sup>14</sup>.

After the conquest of Oradea fortress in August 27th, 1660 by the Turks, they spread their dominion over the towns from the northern part of the county, spreading their Ottoman reign over the main cities and fortresses of the region, including Sâniob. The new conquered territory was organized into pashalic and subdivided in 5 parts: Biharea, Șinteu, Sâniob, Pomezău and Beiuș.<sup>15</sup> An event to be mentioned is that during this time the last captain of Oradea Fortress, Rhédei László, wrote to his superior, Acațiu Barcskai, that the peasants from Sâniob region have surrendered to the Turks willingly, "but the current situation and the heavier yoke pleases the poor very much"<sup>16</sup>. This statement indirectly defines the peak of the suffering and humiliation endured by the Romanian peasants under the Hungarian domination, preferring to surrender to the Turks because they were more tolerant than the occidental Christians.

The Turks failed attempt to conquer Vienna in 1683 marked the beginning of a series of defeats. The first contact of Bihor with the new conquerors took place during the winter and spring campaign within 1685-1686, when Sâniob was the first fortress conquered from the Turks in February 1686 by the Austrian general Caraffa with an army of 4000 Germans and 3000 Hungarians; they defeated the Turks and forced them to surrender the fortress and the surrounding territories.<sup>17</sup> After several years, in June 1692, the Austrian armies banish the Turks from Oradea fortress and Transylvania got under Austrian Empire dominance, replacing the Turkish "wooden yoke" with the Austrian "iron yoke" as the Hungarian chronicler stated<sup>18</sup>. Unfortunately for the Romanians, the new dominion brought along not only a new order but also a new exploitation system, with abuse of authority and unimaginable

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<sup>13</sup> Gróf Teleki József, *Hunyadiak Kora Magyarországon*, Harmadik Kötet, Pestek, 1853, p. 243.

<sup>14</sup> *Counties and cities of Hungary (monography of Hungary), Bihor County and Oradea*, "Apollo" Literary Society, Budapest, 1901, p. 61.

<sup>15</sup> Fényes Elek, *Geographical dictionary of Hungary*, Pesten, vol. I, 1851, p. 223.

<sup>16</sup> Liviu Borcea, *Ioan Szalardi's Mourning Chronicle. Critical study*, Arca Publishing House, 2007, p. 64.

<sup>17</sup> Fényes Elek, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>18</sup> Pr. prof. dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Uniation in Transylvania in the past and nowadays*, Nicolae Popovici Publishing House, Oradea, 2006, p. 14.

pressure and deceit on behalf of the Greenpeace-Catholic Church, on one hand, along with Calvinistic virulent acts against the Orthodox Christians, on the other hand.

After being released from the Turks, Bihor has been spared from all obligations towards the state and landlords for 1-3 years in order to rebuild the villages and the fortress of Oradea. But later on, the serfs' duties have grown year by year leading to the disobedience and resistance of the inhabitants. Thereby, on August 10th, 1698 the nobles' judge and a jury of the committee have done a research at the request of "Lunca românească" district, regarding the giving wheat tithe and other products. 27 witnesses from Ghepiş Valley testified, some of which also from Ciuhoi. All witnesses confessed that in Lunca district there has never been a wine tithe or a wheat tithe and that they were giving the landlords a pig and bees tithe.<sup>19</sup>

Following the conclusion of the urbariums, many other towns have been surveyed, out of which we mention Ciuhoi and Cenaloş as well. In February 1776 the inhabitants of **Celos** village complained in a statement that the landlord Mihail Namiro incorporated into his forest a field of briars that the inhabitants had received 16 years ago from their then landlord, Andrei Kovadzi, used for grazing animals.<sup>20</sup> There is no written data on how the villagers' complaint has been resolved. Later on the village of Cenaloş would pass from under Sîniob's Abbey property to the Fráter and Püspöky families property; in 1815 it was the property of Ravozdi family and in 1901 we would have Lukács Géza family and the heirs of Vikol Simon with their estates.<sup>21</sup>

#### **a. Demographical data of Cenaloş village**

There is no written data regarding the origin of the inhabitants. Generally speaking the lack of the civil status documents for long periods of time makes the demographic matter of Cenaloş to be better handled only beginning with the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1552 there are 5 mentioned households in the village of Cenaloş. If we presume that each household used to have at least 5 members, we could conclude that in the village there were about 25-35 inhabitants. This record is especially about those belonging to Sîniob Abbey domain; there were for sure many more inhabitants in the villages. Another explanation would be that during the Ottoman domination, the population got scarcer, running from the Turks<sup>22</sup>. After the Turkish withdrawal during Francisc Rákóczy II's rebellion, the population would sparse again (1703-1711)<sup>23</sup>. The record from 1730-1732 states that there were 18 families in Cenaloş and their members were serfs with free relocation. Regarding their religious affiliation, they

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<sup>19</sup> State Archive Fund., Oradea, *File no. 162*, pages 194.

<sup>20</sup> The Fund of Bihor County Prefecture, *File no. 161*, pages 303.

<sup>21</sup> *Counties and cities of Hungary (monograph of Hungary)...*, p. 62.

<sup>22</sup> Mezösi Károly, *op. cit.* p. 123.

<sup>23</sup> Bihor County Prefecture, *Oradea Census of the year 1712, no. 107*, p. 17.

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shared 5 different confessions. We can see from the 1842-1896 schematics<sup>24</sup> and from the 1930's census that in Cenaloș there were the following confessions:

Schematics for years:	1842	1851	1879	1880	1895	1896	1930 <sup>25</sup>
Orthodox:	340	38	15	16	4	14	29
Greek- Catholic :	12	360	288	289	294	296	345
Roman-Catholics:	160	152	164	165	136	134	99
Reformed:	8	17	21	15	16	39	23
Evangelical :	3	7	20	22	8	14	12

From this written testimony we notice that until 1842, the villagers from Cenaloș were mostly Orthodox, that is 340 souls, while Greek-Catholics only 12 souls, living together with Hungarians and sharing the 3 western common religions. 9 years later, after the “Uniate” in 1842, there were still 38 Orthodox and 360 declared Greek-Catholics. The logical conclusion is that the village of Cenaloș has been an orthodox village since the beginning of its existence, facing the converting actions of Transylvania to Catholicism for 143 years (1699-1842); then, during some speculative and deceitful circumstances, they have passed to a new religion hoping there would be a better future.

The main work of the villagers is land farming. In 1730 we find that there were 18 families, all of them serfs with free relocation, they had along 4 children, no day cottars (landless peasants, but not serfs n. n.) in the village. They owned 24 oxen, 18 cows, 13 pigs, 29 acres of feudal land, 16 acres of autumn crops, hay for 5 mowers (field mowing) and vineyards for 9 diggers<sup>26</sup>.

Settled on a fertile land, having its boundaries caressed by Barcău river and its affluent Almășel, Cenaloș village has had an appreciable economical status. During the Habsburg occupation, they have discussed the regulation issue of the ratio between the serfs and the estate owners, regulation that was included in the Urbarium law in 1759 and 1769. This law has been twisted by many nobles in many cases. During the urbarium regulation in 1772, according to the royal instructions, all towns were

<sup>24</sup> *The Roman-Catholic and Greek-Catholic Schematisms in 1842-1896.*

<sup>25</sup> *General census of the Romanian population from 1930 in terms of nationality, language and religion, second volume, 1938, p. 554.*

<sup>26</sup> State Archive Fund, Oradea, *Conscription of the years 1730-1732*, pages 263-264.

classified according to their benefits and their shortcomings (*beneficio et maleficio*) 4 categories and the settlements in Bihor were organized in 4 classes. Sâniob, Cenaloş and Sfârnaş belonged to the 1<sup>st</sup> class, while Ciuhoi was part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> class. For many reasons Cenaloş village has the following benefits: the arable land is displayed in 2 parts- one part is of good quality and produces pure wheat and the other part is of weaker quality. The hay is of good quality, there are places where you can even mow twice. It has all the Oradea fairs at 33 km away and those in Marghita at 23 km away. There is plenty of pasture and plenty of water for the animals from Barcău River. The locals don't pay tithe. They can work for money. They have the right to sell their alcohol 3 months a year. They've got enough water to melt the hempen; they've got a watermill and the right to pick up fruits from the forest. As for the shortcomings, we may indicate that a part of the land was sterile and the locals used to put manure on it. The river Gepiş sometimes tends to flood a part of the hay<sup>27</sup>. All this information indicates that the villagers were free peasants, they were cultivating cereals on their own land, they had their own pastures and hay where they grew their cattle and had the possibility to do commerce with the products they had as producers.

Cenaloş village had 3 big landlords and 75 small ones in 1865.<sup>28</sup> Later on, there would be only 2 families with bigger possessions: Lukacs Gezank and Vikol Simon and all the villagers were working for them to earn their living. Most of the inhabitants have been serfs with free relocation until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the serfdom was abolished and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the majority of the villagers from Cenaloş would be farmers<sup>29</sup>.

Analyzing the 2011 census we find out that Cenaloş has new confessions that have never been mentioned before in its entire history until the 21<sup>st</sup> century when they appeared<sup>30</sup>. The explanation is found in the free circulation of people after the abolition of communism, in the flux of rural population towards the urban environment (and vice-versa) and in the sale of the remaining free households.

Confession	Ciuhoi	Cenal oş	Sâniob	Sfârna ş	Commun e Ciuhoi	Percentag es
Orthodox	299	164	27	172	662	28,9716
Roman-catholic	8	72	971	2	1053	46,0832

<sup>27</sup> The Fund of Bihor County Prefecture, *Classifier of the cities in the area Eriu*, File no. 166, p. 167.

<sup>28</sup> *Hungary's extent and land income according to categories of cultivation*, Budapest, The Hungarian king. from printing works, 1865, p. 89.

<sup>29</sup> Cenaloş Parish Archive, *The family sheet of the believers*, p. 13-59.

<sup>30</sup> *Census of the population and of Houses of 2011, RPL Centralizer 2011, Ciuhoi commune*.

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Greek-catholic	2	10	0	8	20	0,8753
Reformed	4	3	357	11	375	16,4114
Baptist	5	2	7	1	15	0,6565
Pentecostal	73	5	0	56	134	5,8643
Adventist	2	0	3	0	5	0,2188
Jehovah Witness	0	0	0	3	3	0,1313
Undeclared	15	0	0	3	18	0,7877
<b>Total</b>	408	256	1365	256	2285	100 %

The 2011 religious census in Ciuhoi commune.

### **B. Sociological data about Cenaloș village.**

There are no documents to reveal information about the social life of the villagers from Cenaloș. If we read the report written on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1939 by the archpriest of Marghita, on the occasion of children's examination at Cenaloș school, we find out that "at the religious education exam the children were dressed in traditional clothing, disciplined and attentive, the church cloths were well appropriate, the church was clean..."<sup>31</sup>. From this specification we presume that in this village there was a custom to wear traditional local clothing, kept from generation to generation and that the believers from the village valued the place of worship and divine service very much.

As for the houses where the villagers from Cenaloș used to live in the past, we have the remaining constructions from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some houses were made of burnt brick, called "tieglă". Most of them had walls made of mud or bricks of unburned clay, traditionally called "voioagă" and were covered with tiles called "cerep" which initially had a scale form. The houses had a rectangular form and perpendicularly arranged along the village road. On the street side, they had a room which they called "soba", with 2 small windows called "oblace"; this part of the house was named "casa cea mare" (the big house), that was kept clean and it had "chistași" with "perini"(pillows) and "dricara"(blanket) filled with goose feathers and used during winter. It was usually paved with planks. This room was followed by an intermediary one called "tinda" where they lived during summer and where they received their guests, called "uspatoï" (from ospăț n.n.- feast- ). From here they passed into the 3<sup>rd</sup> room, where we could find the kitchen, also called "casa cea mică" (the small house), in which there was an oven to bake bread and cook meals. Those with lower income had only 2 rooms<sup>32</sup>. Under the same roof, along the rooms towards the

<sup>31</sup> Cenalos Parish Archive, *Minutes of the year 1939*.

<sup>32</sup> In a very extended area of the rural part of Bihor there is a lexical similarity and also an organizational one when speaking about the house and the household. All these details can be analyzed and compared in Vasile Todinca, Mihaela Bulc, *The Romanian*

yard there would be a „tarnat” (porch) made out of brick at about 1 m of height or out of planks and wooden pillars, with a door they called “roștieu”.

In the past the rooms didn't have any floors, they prepared “tina de lipit”, that is home-kneaded clay with husk, manure and water, laid down and leveled on the ground. From time to time it was “lincilit”(stitched) with the same material but mellower, to level up the possible holes. In time, over the empty clay they added tar, then linoleum and later on they added wooden floor. In the evening, the rooms were laminated by the stove fire, or some type of candle called “meci” made from a cup with “oloi de floraica” that is “sunflower oil” in which they added a piece of bread crust and a rag called “ronghi”; after 1900 they used the petrol lamp. The wealthy families used lamps with “ciga” that is lamps with winch and chains, that had a counterweight on one end and a glass lampshade on the other end that amplified the light from the lamp. It used to be hanged on the ceiling and had a decorative purpose. The electricity first appeared in Cenaloș in 1962, when the light poles impressed the villagers to tears<sup>33</sup>.

To protect the house from the smoke, they took the stove outside and built it near the house; only the cooking stove remained in the kitchen and it was made out of brick or terracotta. Another alternative to the stove was “șpor” which was made of iron or cast-iron. In this room they used to live during winter, because it was warm. During summer the kitchen was moved near the stove; the wealthier ones, called “găzdagoi”, built a summer kitchen called “coiha” (cuhnia, lg. Russian). Near the indoor kitchen they had a small pantry called “șpais” (spies lg. German) to keep the supplies. The pantry that kept the supplies named “bucate” around the year was built separately from the rest of the house. They have also built a cellar underground outside the house in the yard to keep the wine. Those who cultivated the vines on “Ciakiheghi hill”, across the river Barcău and on the east side of Sâniob village, have built cellars at the foothills where they prepared the autumn wine and kept it over the year. “Pejniță”, as they used to call it, had a room at the entrance, called “poaită” where they used to dine when they worked during summer; on Sundays, the owner of the vinery used to come here with his relatives called “neamuri” or friends for wine tasting.

Most of the householders had in their yard, called “ocol” annex constructions destined to animal breeding: chicken and pig barn, stable called “poiata” for the cows and horses and at the back of the yard they used to have “goreu” (barn of corn), “șură” (barn of hay) and “sii” (barn for firewood). The hard working villagers also had a series of farming tools to help them with the field work. On the walls from the back of the house they used to keep loom, in the attic they kept its accessories that were

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*Village in answers to the Romanian language Museum from Cluj( Bihor area), Mega Publishing House, Cluj- Napoca, 2012, p. 153-324.*

<sup>33</sup> Information gathered by Erdei Iuliana (born in 1939) from Cenaloș, in 2019.

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assembled in the house during winter; thus the women weaved fabrics they used to make shirts, towels, sheets, sacks, counterpanes from that they needed in the household.

The lands of Cenaloș village have names that were kept over time through the spoken tradition of the villagers, so they bear the names of those who used to own them. Thus, in the north we have “Togul (land) Lucaci” or “Togul Domnului”, after the name of Lukacs Gezank; in the west there is “Togul Vikol” after Vikol Simion and on the east there is “Togul Szabö” after Szabö. In the south there is “The priest’s Hill”, because of its affiliation to the parish and in the south-east there is “Ciuncarechi Hill” (Csanka-rét=scarred pasture, lg. Hungarian), at the foot of which there is a stream called “Bosky Fountain” after the name of its digger.

Along with the closure of the collectivization process in 1962, the peasants were dispossessed of the fields that they had owned, being obliged to willingly give them to the Communist State. However, the village agriculture has taken a step forward because of the mechanization of agriculture that led to a faster and more productive way to work the land and obtain rich harvest. Thus, the peasants got to work their own land and they were organized in the Agricultural Production Cooperative of Cenaloș; some of them were working both in agriculture and in industry. The majority of women from Cenaloș used to work in agriculture and the majority of men used to work in the industry field in Oradea.

From those mentioned above, we may conclude that during the socialist years Cenaloș village has experienced an economic upswing that led to the upgrade of the population living standard. The aspect of the village stands as proof, because it’s made mostly of new, cleaned and proper houses, it has a spacious community center, a paved road from DN 19E road to the center of the village, built in 1978 and repaved only in 2019 when they paved the rest of the roads that connect the village with Sâniob and with the city of Săcuieni.

As for the ethnicity of the inhabitants of Cenaloș we know that in 1919 there were 513 inhabitants, from which 334 were Romanians and the rest were Slovaks, Hungarians, Ruthenians and Jewish<sup>34</sup>. From the census reports of 2011 we find out that in Cenaloș there were 205 Romanians, 49 Hungarians and 2 Slovaks, thus there were 256 inhabitants.<sup>35</sup> Nowadays in the village there are 161 buildings, 127 households and the permanent population has 256 inhabitants. A curious aspect is that **Cenaloș** has never had any gypsies or Romany.

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<sup>34</sup> Silvestru Moldovan, Nicolae Togan, *Dictionary of the Romanian cities from Transylvania, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș*, Second edition, ”Asociațiunii” Publishing House, Sibiu, 1919, p. 48.

<sup>35</sup> *Census of the population and of Houses of 2011, RPL Centralizer 2011, Ciuhoi commune.*

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Ciuhoi</b>	<b>Cenalos</b>	<b>Sâniob</b>	<b>Sfârnaş</b>	<b>Comuna Ciuhoi</b>	<b>Percent ages</b>
Romanian	378	205	27	242	852	37,2867
Hungarian	19	49	1214	14	1296	56,7177
Gipsy	5	0	122	0	127	5,5580
German	0	0	2	0	2	0,0875
Slovakian	3	2	0	0	5	0,2188
Jewish	3	0	0	0	3	0,1313
<b>Total</b>	408	256	1365	256	2285	100 %

The 2011 religious census in Ciuhoi commune.

Analyzing the census from 1869 we may observe that 19 villagers have declared themselves Jewish<sup>36</sup>. There is no written information regarding those few families. From the confessions made by my grandfather Erdei Petru to his son Dumitru, when he was only a child, I've found out that our village had three Jewish families. Around the 1900s a family used to live on the east side of Ciuncarechi Hill, where the "Country road" DN19E passes and they had an Inn where roadmen going towards Oradea or Marghita fairs used to stop. This place bears the name of "Fogadău" (inn, lg. Hungarian) and it is said that many robberies and murders took place here at that time. Nowadays there is a Jewish cemetery in that place with 5-7 tombs marked with Hebraic writing on their gravestones. From 1980 until 1990 the cemetery was taken care of by Cantor's family from the village, Erdei Dumitru; thus he received from the Oradea Jewish Community the right to cultivate the 20 acres of land from around the cemetery.

The second family was called Beim and they lived down the street with the cemetery where they had a "bold" (a store), a butcher's, many other shops in the villages nearby and also a Bank in Marghita. The owner remained in the memory of the villagers as a man obsessed with money, because he left those who used to buy from him on loans and unable to pay back on time without lands. There is information about them until 1930, when they left the village<sup>37</sup>.

The third family was Prais and used to live in the centre of the village, close to my maternal grandmother, Pop Maria. Unfortunately, in 1944 all the family members were sent to the extermination camps by the Germans. My father- the child Erdei

<sup>36</sup> *Religious data of the 1869 census*, Compiled by: László Sebök, CSO Archives, 2005, p. 64

<sup>37</sup> Information gathered by Erdei Dumitru (born in 1940) from Cenaloş, in 2019.

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Dumitru at that time- has witnessed the moment when the Prais family said their goodbyes to all the villagers before they were taken by the honved at Sâniob by carriage to be embarked on the train of death... one of those present said the following: “They will never come back home...” Only two of their children have miraculously escaped: Sony and Ilono, who hid themselves during the raid. They came back to the village when they were teenagers to sell their home where there was also a “bold” and a bar. Before leaving the village they went to their neighbour, Pop Miron, in the barn and took 2 golden watches from under the horses’ manger, that they hid before their parents were taken away. The field was bought by Hava Pavel and it has served as the children’s playground in the village for a long period of time (1950-1990)<sup>38</sup>.

Situated in an ideal spot, at the crossroad between Mill street and the Main street, the young theologian Erdei Miron built a 3,5 m of height concrete cross, surrounded by an iron fence, as an offering to God for his successful graduation at the Faculty of Theology. The cross was built one night, in October 1986, because it was prohibited to place Christian marks during the communist period. After the fall of communism, the field was bought by the Erdei Dumitru family in 1994 and transformed into a recreational park for the people of Cenaloș, which nowadays is being taken care of by Erdei Iuliana, aged 80.

## **2. The history of the orthodox parish**

There aren’t any archeological or documentation proofs regarding the existence of old churches or hermitages in the village center on land. There is some information regarding the disappearance of some towns in 1291. The Hungarian historian Jakó Zsigmond mentions such a phenomenon that occurred on the left side of Barcău River, where the village Maria Magdalena used to be, near Cenaloș village.<sup>39</sup> It seems that this village was destroyed in 1241, when the Tatars have also invaded Bihor. Because of his desire to reorganize Transylvania, King Bela the 4<sup>th</sup> invites other colonists in the affected area offering great privileges to those who responded to his call.<sup>40</sup>

People have only talked about the Greek-Catholic Parish (united) of Cenaloș so far which was built in 1842. From the registers and the parish archive we find out that the worshipers have belonged to the Orthodox Church of Cenaloș and that they had a church made of mud. In the registers with the baptized, married and deceased from 1770-1842 everything was written in Romanian with Cyrillic characters, and the

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> Jakó Zsigmond, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

<sup>40</sup> C. Daicovicu, Ștefan Pascu, V. Cheresteșiu, T. Morariu, *From the history of Transylvania*, Romanian Popular Republic Publishing House, Second Edition, Bucharest, 1960, p. 80.

religious ceremonies took place in the “Mai marii voievozi” (The great voivodes) church that is The Saint Archangels Michael and Gabriel.<sup>41</sup> In 1842 the shift to the Uniate (to the new Greek- Catholic religion) is mentioned in the above registers and everything would be written in Romanian with Latin characters from that moment on; in 1866 people built on the place of the old church a new church - St. Hierarch Nicholas - that still stands nowadays.

During the fight to defend our ancient Romanian faith the villages from Ardeal had a lot to suffer, having an exhausting, unfair and simultaneous fight with two very powerful institutions at that time: the Catholic Church and its powerful episcopate from Oradea Mare and the Reformed Church<sup>42</sup>.

In the summer of 1723, when the Diet of Bratislava was discussing the matter of tithes, the catholic archbishop from Oradea was informed that the serfs threaten with gunpoint the priests in order to give up the unification with the Catholics<sup>43</sup>. In April 1736 a big popular gathering took place in Spinuș (a commune near Cenaloș) where the entire population swore an oath of faith to the orthodox archbishop of Arad and decided to cast away the priests that passed to the Uniate. In 1794 the villagers from Sfârnaș complained that the priest wants to unify them, although 60 souls have already given up the ancestors' faith together with their parish priest and gave it to the Uniate. Also, in 1799 the villagers from Ciuhoi revolted against the parish Ioan Popovici who wanted to force them together with the cantor to accept the Uniate; therefore people asked for the two of them to be replaced. Thus, the priests from Ciuhoi and Bogeii, “despite the higher orders” that they had received, held a gathering in Ciulești and collected money to send the priest from Ciuhoi to the Orthodox Eminence from Arad for instructions<sup>44</sup>.

The Romanians discontent grew more and more in all Romanian villages from Bihor county, especially in those from Luncii Deanery because of the humiliating proposals given by the Uniate archbishop Samuil Vulcan to the imperial chancellery from Wien: to forbid the orthodox priests to enter the villages where his men were working on converting the people; those who discourage the people to accept the Uniate “were to be arrested and taught a lesson by the authorities” (sic); if the County gave the church to the Uniate, those who remained were not given permission to make another church or to have another priest, “even though there were over 100 families who were advised to go –if they refuse to unify- at the orthodox churches from the

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<sup>41</sup> Cenaloș Parish Archive, *Note of those who passed away*, from April 6th, 1770.

<sup>42</sup> See details at Nicolae Fîru, *The Orthodox Romanian Church fighting against Unification 1700-1750*, Printing Press and Diocese Bookshop Publishing House, Caransebeș, 1913, p. 8-9.

<sup>43</sup> Fényes Elek, *op. cit.* p. 224.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 225.

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villages nearby". When the emperor heard the desire of the great Romanian representative who felt and lived amongst the people, he obviously granted his wishes on October 29th 1819<sup>45</sup>.

Out of respect for those who fought in tears with all their heart for the faith that it has been stolen from them, I will only mention the villages that were under pressure by the Uniate and those who opposed the deceitful Uniate: Giriș, Nojorid, Bicăceni, Sfârnaș, Copăceni, Rogoz, Uileac, Prisaca, Ciuhoi, Cociuba, Mociar, Pișcolt, Fegernic, Sânlazăr, Borod, Săbolciu, Parhida, Topa de Criș, Petreu, Tărian etc<sup>46</sup>. Some villages, such as Sărsig, Spinuș and Nădar filed complaints to the authorities saying that people were paid to accept the Uniate. Therefore, Sărsig had 42 families who passed to the Uniate; „the parish house, the church with all its belongings was given to the Uniate”<sup>47</sup>. The priest from the villages that agreed to unify (as was the case of Chioag) was given an additional income of about 300-400 fl. (florins n.n.) and the priests that converted without followers were given 150-200 fl. „from the Hungarian religious fund”<sup>48</sup>.

Until 1948, there have been many methods used to convert the orthodox worshipers to ecumenism. In the archive of Cenaloș village there is a declaration with the registration no. 24 from February 19th 1947, in which the Greek-Orthodox Feher Nicolae states „I declare under oath and in front of the witnesses that all the children born from my marriage with Maria Banc, of Greek-Catholic religion, will be baptized and raised within Greek-Catholic ways and I will not stand against their education”<sup>49</sup>.

Out of respect for the truth, I consider that each worshiper has the duty to study these biographical notes mentioned above in order to be aware of the true nature of the events that unfortunately produced and still do many sufferings and injustice;...unfortunately there were some faithful priests who, compelled by the authorities or enticed with money and material benefits, chose the gold by giving up the right to be firstly born as an Orthodox to a hybrid faith, invented by men and emperors for human and profitable purpose, meant to divide the things that the persecutions, the humiliations and the deprivations suffered by the Romanians, couldn't: the division of faith... This is the way things happened in Cenaloș, a village that has become Greek-Catholic as well since 1842.

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<sup>45</sup> Aurel Tripon, *The Monography of Crișana, Bihor County, National House of Bihor County*, 1936, p. 49-50.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47-51.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 53.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 51.

<sup>49</sup> Cenalos Parish Archive, *Volume no. 24/1947*.

### a. The parish church

The Church from Cenaloş was built in 1866 and cost 24.000 crowns<sup>50</sup>. There isn't any information regarding the name of the founder, the priest that initiated the construction or the construction engineers. It was built with the financial help of the worshippers. The church has a Romanesque style, emphasized by the semi-circular forms of the windows and the door. It has the shape of a vessel, having its apse towards east, 22 m of length, 9 meters of width and 25-30 meters of height at the tower. The interior is divided into narthex, nave and sanctuary.

On the west side, over the porch, there is the bell tower, which is called „toromb”, particular to Ardeal churches. The interior stairs are made of wood and they are as old as the church. In the tower there are three bells of different dimensions, which have the purpose to announce the beginning of church service, the midday and the passing of villagers. The middle bell is still in the tower, but the other original bells have been taken away to make ammunition for the First World War. My maternal grandfather, Pop Alexandru, born in 1909 was an eyewitness at this sad event when the soldiers came in a rush guided by the sound of

the bells and threw them over the tower, in front of the church, leaving holes in the ground and in the souls of the worshippers that were left without church bells. Only the children were happy because they could play in the holes... I've learned a lot of information from my grandfather, back in the days when I was a student at the seminar, stories told with tears in his eyes: tears of pain for the old bells and tears of joy for the new ones, because the biggest one was bought by his father, Pop Florian (known also as "Păcurar") and the small one was bought with the villagers' donations.<sup>51</sup>

In the October 5th 1930 inventory on the mobile and immobile wealth of Cenaloş parish, it is mentioned that there is „a 98 kg bell with fis tone (sharp Fa, n.n)

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<sup>50</sup> The document *Magyarország vármegyéi és városai (magyarország monográfiája), Bihar vármegye és Nagyvárad*, "Apolló" irodalmi társaság, Budapest, 1901, p. 62 mentions 1861 as the year when the new church was built.

<sup>51</sup> From *Address no. 102/1917* signed by the archpriest George M. Preancu from Marghita to the Cenaloş Parish and from the *Meeting of the Diocesan Council of Oradea Mare* from April 4th, 1917, signed by priest Vicar Dr. Stan we find out that the "Petru Bónya Liturgical Foundation from Ciănalăş" was founded, when the late Petru Bónya deposited the amount of 1000 crowns for the purchase of the two bells taken by the army. As there were no prospects of buying the bells in the near future, the Ordinariate ordered that the amount "be withdrawn from the Szentyobb bank and sent to the administration of our diocesan funds". Probably in this fund the donations of the believers from the parish were gathered in time, that is why it is written on the bells that they were poured "from the voluntary collection of the believers". We assume that at the time of the casting it was not known exactly who their donors would be.

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from 1884, a D tone 212 kg bell, an A tone 53 kg bell bought from the worshipers' voluntary collection in 1930".<sup>52</sup> All bells are arranged in „iron chairs” specified on the same parish documents.

As the time passed the three bells have won fame by having the best harmonization and the most endearing voice of all Barcău valley and they saved our village from many disasters of that time. As a son of that village I can say and appreciate that it brought me great joy in my childhood to hear the big bell ring at midday to announce to the villagers working in the field that it was time to go home for lunch...

The walls of the church were massive, made of 0.50 m wide brick. A long period of time that church hasn't been painted, only varnished as expected from a myrrh church. The cult objects from the church do not have any historical or artistic special value, except the images from the church's iconostasis, painted in canvas in a realist style impressing the viewer with their harmony of colours and the balance of proportions. They are as old as the church itself, both the painter and the donor are unknown. The most remarkable images from the iconostasis are the one of Mary, the Mother of our Lord Jesus, that of Jesus Christ our Savior, that of St. John the Baptist and that of Saint Hierarch Nicholas. Above these images there is the scene of Jesus Christ taken off the Cross, which is double the size of the others mentioned above.

In front of the iconostasis we still have today a beautiful chandelier with Bohemian crystals that I had the joy to recondition in 1982 when I studied at the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Cluj-Napoca. Taking into consideration the style of the end of the 19th century, the chandelier is as old as the church. Between 1970-1980 two more chandeliers were donated: one of them was given by the Dudaș Andrei family that had a depiction of a child statue in its decoration and the second one by Gherdan Nistor family.

In 1910 the church was covered with scale shaped tiles and in 1910 the tower was covered with tin. In 1932 the church was completely renovated inside out and in 1954 it suffered minor repairs. In 1966 a massive reparation was done while adding electricity. Within 1995-1997 the tile roof was replaced with aluminum sheets and the church exterior was renovated by replacing the old plaster. The old windows have been replaced with new ones, the men's chairs from both sides have been changed and the two lecterns (from 1930) have been replaced with new ones made by the carpenter Nagy Vincze from Sâniob. The credit for these great actions was given to the curators

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<sup>52</sup> Cenaloș Parish Archive, *Inventory on the movable and immovable treasure of the United Romanian Parish of Cenaloș made on October 5th, 1930*, p. 1. These technical characteristics are also mentioned in the *Bell Execution Contract* from February 18th, 1930, which states that “the bells will be cast of the best quality metal” and will be delivered to the parish until Easter 1930.

(churchwardens) Pop Alexandru and Tirpe Nistor, who got personally involved in the church restoration. All the paintings and the church interior was made by painter Popel Alexandru from Oradea in tempera technique.

At the insistence of the cantor, Erdei Dumitru, the old wooden iconostasis painted in blue with white ornaments was changed with a new one made of sculpted wood and golden sheet elements. The costs have been taken care of by the Erdei Dumitru family, Archbishop Pop Alexandr jr. family and his father, Pop Alexandru senior. The sculpting of the arch pastoral doors and of the deacon's doors made of lime wood polished in gold sheet have been taken care of by the Erdei Dumitru family and were made a few years after the installation of the new iconostasis. The church had a new beautiful appearance, that imposed the installation of a new and bigger chandelier in the heart of the church; the church didn't have funds, therefore the church cantor's family succeeded to donate the last big chandelier made of glass from Padurea Neagra glass factory, because the factory shut down along with all the other glass factories around the country.

The worthy priest Matei Avram who was a parish priest at that time, didn't forget about the heroes of our nation and of Cenaloș and changed the wooden cross from the church yard with a 2m high stone cross and pedestal. Its inscription is on a copper plate and it reveals that it was built „to the memory of the heroes from Division IV Tunuri Munte that have fallen in battle to set free the Northern part of Ardeal in the campaign against fascism in the period August 23rd 1944- Mai 8th 1945. Under this inscription there are the names of the fallen heroes within the lands of our village and the date July 25th 1945 when the wooden cross was built. On June 8th 1994 the cross was replaced with a new one and 15 new heroes from Cenaloș who fought for the country along with their captain Demian Gheorghe were added on the list.

All of these works have been blessed by bishop Ioan Mihălțan on October 26th 1997, when it also received a new patron: St Great Martyr Demetrius, the Myroblyte.

Between 2001-2010 new exterior and interior renovations have been made by the worthy parish priest Pop Florin, works that have been blessed by His Grace Bishop Sofronie Drincec on October 24th 2010, as the church was just religiously certified.

Years later, Erdei Dinu family came up with the idea to install 8 radiant panels because the old terra-cotta stove didn't heat the place during winter as it used to and also a 32000 btu air conditioning for the summer; these were donated to the church in 2016.

#### **b. The church worshippers**

Researching the documents of the Cenaloș parish archive we notice that many orthodox priests served in the old church of Cenaloș: Ioan Costa - 1791, Vasile Aștelean - 1815, blessed by Pavel Avacumovici in 1808, Zaharie Rad - 1820, Gheorghe Fărcaș - 1825, Vasile Popovici - 1828 and Petru Popovici - 1833. Between

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1842-1948, many Greek-catholic priests have served the new church: Georgiu Leucutza - 1842, Paul Chiș 1861, Antoniu Milian (1861-1868), Georgiu Perenyi (1869-1874) Sigismund Șincai (1874-1878), Ioan Senț (1878-1888), Emanuil Papp (1888-1890), Filimon Iuliu (1891-1923), Cavași Candiu (1923-1930), Mădăras Romul (1930-1940), Romocea Vasile (1941-1945) and Otravă Coriolan (1945-1948).

According to the report written on October 29th 1948 it appears that Otravă Coriolan signed the act of surrender of Cenaloș Uniate Parish wealth to the Orthodox Church of Cenaloș. He also signed the reception document for the movable and immovable goods of the parish<sup>53</sup>, serving as an Orthodox priest until the arrival of priest Țicra Traian. This fact was confirmed to me by priestess Țicra Rozalia in an interview on September 7th 1999. After returning to the old Orthodox faith, the church of Cenaloș has had the following priests: Țicra Traian (1950-1977), Baci Virgil (1978-1992), Matei Avram (1992-1997) and Pop Florin-Vasile from 1997 until the present time. With the arrival of priest Țicra until 1997, Cenaloș became a branch of Ciuhoi Orthodox Parish; the priest moved there because their parish priest, the worthy Oros Gavril, was deported by the communist authorities to the Chanel Danube-Black Sea; after his return he was forbidden to preach<sup>54</sup>.

Among the cantors that have activated the lectern of Cenaloș Parish we mention Popa Filimon (1900-1949), Dudaș Teodor (1950-1982), and Erdei Dumitru (1982 to the present moment). Among the trustees we mention Vasile Pantiș (1883), Biluca Paul (1932-1939), Demian Gheorghe (1932-1947), Pop Ioan (1946), Fürtös Pavel (1946), Biluca Nistor (1946), Boroș Ioan (1954-1958), Dobran Ioan (1954-1958), Brezovki Ioan, Pop Alexandru jr. (1991-2008), Tirpe Nistor (1991-2013) și Ungur Ioan (2008 to the present moment).

### **c. The parish house**

The parish documents state that near the church there was a parish house in the shape of an L, built in 1987, made of mud, covered with scales shaped tiles, it had 5 rooms and the building was “low and unsanitary and demands a renovation”<sup>55</sup>. Therefore people started to build a new modern parish house with a bathroom and a parish office in 1947. Because of the harsh conditions after the war, the room, the kitchen and the pantry weren't habitable until 1951; the church inventory mentions the new parish only from 1954.

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<sup>53</sup> Cenaloș Parish Archive, *Handover-receipt report of the Cenaloș Orthodox Parish no. 1443/1948*.

<sup>54</sup> See details in Ciprian-Florin Albu, *op. cit.*, p. 46-49.

<sup>55</sup> Cenaloș Parish Archive, *Inventory on the movable and immovable treasure of the United Romanian Parish from Cenaloș, made on August 23rd 1940*, p. 2.

The continuous pressure along the years on priest Țicra Traian, he gives up both parish houses in 1961 and all its outbuildings to Ciuhoi County Seat so that they build a local dispensary<sup>56</sup>. At the initiative of the Head of Health Department in Bihor, the local Dispensary was built in Cenaloș village in 1971 and it was equipped with the latest medical and dental apparatus and certified medical personnel; it was a rural medical center with a professional prestige in Bihor county. We might find the explanation in the fact that the initiator of this action was the son of the village Cenaloș and the Church deacon's son in Cenaloș, the teacher Popa Filimon, who remained in the memory of the villagers as a nice and kind man, with well educated, moral and ethical children. Popa Ionica was also the reason why the works on the road that links the village to the road Oradea-Marghita were initiated.

Ciuhoi parish house has been the center of the Agricultural Cooperative of Ciuhoi Production until 1978 when it came to its initial purpose, that of a parish house.

The **L** shape building of the parish house in Cenaloș had next to it the **I** shape dispensary. Together they form a **U**, with its arms wide open to those wanting to be spiritually and physically healthy... The symbolic of the initials logical and inspired: **L** symbolizes the freedom (libertate) we run to, the letter **I** symbolizes the forgiveness (iertare) that we aspire to; both being achievable by the Union (uniune) between ourselves and God. The ones who fully understood the meaning were the parish priest Popa Florin who gave up a part of the parish house to assure medical assistance to the locals and dr. Oros Gheorghe, the Dispensary doctor; shortly after the Revolution, dr. Oros founded here "Dominik foster home"... thus proving an undeniable truth: we cannot do anything for others without giving up on ourselves.

#### **d. The parish cemetery**

The church has a 1,6 ha old cemetery and a 0,25 ha new cemetery where the Orthodox Christians along with those of other confessions are buried because they do not have one of their own. On the southern part of the village, that is the side near Dealul Ciucarechi road, there is the Jewish Cemetery.

The parish documents mention that in 1940, near the church there was a "grave yard surrounded with hedgerow, protected by a cloth of wire, lime trees, nuts, chestnuts and lilac, flower groups".<sup>57</sup> It seems that this was the first cemetery of Cenaloș parish, which, according to the ancient tradition, was situated around the village church. Our hypothesis is confirmed by the testimony made by the parishioner

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<sup>56</sup>Idem, *Address to the Financial Department of Oradea*, no. 33 from December 10th 1961.

<sup>57</sup> Cenaloș Parish Archive, *Inventory on the movable and immovable treasure of the Romanian Parish from Cenaloș made on August 23rd 1940*, p.1.

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Hodișan Pavel who confessed to parish priest Pop Florian that when he worked at the village dispensary, he had to consolidate the foundation of the church due to severe issues. During the excavation they've found priests' garments. This discovery confirms that between the church and the old parish house there was an old cemetery on which the new parish house has expanded.

**e. Cultural and religious activities the past**

The cultural society Astra makes its appearance in Cenaloș as well. Thus in "Crisia" magazine we find the name Florian Sabău - a villager from Cenaloș who was an active participant in the cultural activities of Astra during the period between the interwar period. We also during the seminar theologian student Erdei Miron marks the period 1980-1989 with his catechetical activity - he gathered the village children and the young people at church during summer holidays for catechism, he prepared religious and cultural programs for Easter and Christmas and he organized annual pilgrimage to the monasteries of Ardeal with the faithful villagers.

**f. Old books and manuscripts**

Among the remaining religious books at the parish library, we recall a "Strașnic", printed in Blaj in 1773 in Cyrillic, with numerous important notes on the page margins. On the cover page the priest Iuliu Filimon mentions the 1st of December 1890 as "the day of entering in the parish". In the old library, there is the register of baptisms, marriages and deaths from 1770-1842, written in Cyrillic letters. Starting with 1842 the registration is made in the same registers but in Latin letters. Other religious old books were given to "Old books fund" of Oradea's Eparchy Library: "Chiriadromion", București, 1732; "Octoih", Iași, 1749; "Molitvelnic", Blaj, 1757; "Penticostar", Blaj 1768; "Psaltire", Blaj, 1773; "Liturghii", Sibiu, 1798; "Apostol", Blaj, 1802 to be kept and taken care of in appropriate conditions.

**g. The village primary school**

The Romanian schools of Bihor have been mentioned in documentaries since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. When Transylvania passed under Austrian dominion, the Empress Maria Tereza turned her attention to schools, due to the decadence and lack of knowledge of the people that she led and because she wanted to recruit skilful and intelligent soldiers in the imperial army. In 1774 she promoted the scholar reform (Ratio educationis) initiating the secular education (public education) all over the Habsburg Empire. Thus she denied the church monopole over education and built schools in all towns, so that each nation could be taught through its own national schools. At first sight the empress' intention is formidable, but having studied the

historical context, by founding the schools they attempted the Catholicization of Romanians from Transylvania.<sup>58</sup>

In 1793 Bihor County decided to open schools in Greek-oriental laws (Orthodox n.n.) Therefore it has been suggested the foundation of 19 schools for 74 settlements in Oradea mare circle, out of which we remind Ciuhoi and Sfârnaş. In Eriu circle (Eriu-Sâncrai from Sălaj county n. n.) it has been suggested the foundation of 12 schools for 32 settlements , out of which we recall the village of Cenaloş together with Hăuceşti and Sărsig nearby.

In the 8th century the village of Cenaloş had 81 houses which were owned by the Ravodzi family, successors of Eödön and Siniob Abbey. The citizens were obliged to provide the teacher the following products:

Village	Wood	Wheat	Corn	Florins
Cenaloş	6 st.	12 cb.	6 cb.	60
Hăuceşti	2	4	2	-
Sărsig	4	8	4	-

Within the protocol of the first meeting from April 4th 1816, it is mentioned that the county had to keep into account the poverty of the Romanian communes and that they were unable to organize and fund the schools. In the school documents we find the first mention about the existence of the School in **Cenalos**, where, starting with 1874 “qualified docents were always involved”<sup>59</sup>.

We find written specifications about “the old school” of Cenaloş, that was bought in 1891 by the people, “but even nowadays it owes the Pavelian Fund 700 crowns”<sup>60</sup>.

From the school papers of that time we know that during the teaching classes, they used the following books: *Small catechism, Biblical history, ABC book, Romanian Hungarian Alphabet, Geography, The Country Constitution, Natural History, Physics, Economy, Hygiene and Drawing*<sup>61</sup>. During this period of time the Hungarian state organized a complex action to turn the confessional schools that were teaching in Romanian into public schools that teach in Hungarian; this is a measure

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<sup>58</sup> See details at Mihai Săsăujan, *Church Policy of the Wien Court in Transylvania (1740-1761)*, Cluj University Press Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 152-154

<sup>59</sup> *School papers from 1930.*

<sup>60</sup> Oradea State Archive Fund, *File no.183.*

<sup>61</sup> *School papers from 1910.*

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that was taken to accelerate the Magyarisation process of Romanians from Hungary and Transylvania<sup>62</sup>.

Starting with 1917 the documents mention “the new school”, while the old school was considered to be inappropriate. The new building had various rooms; 2 of them were designated for the school and pre-school children. The actual building of Cenaloș School was the house of the farmer Vikol and was bought by the villagers to be transformed in the village school. During 1930-1940, “the Mix Primary State School” from Cenaloș had 6 primary classes, then later on 7 primary classes, accommodating 70-80 boys and girls<sup>63</sup>. As for „The study of religious education”, the record book of priest Romul Mădăras is a solid proof and precious information regarding the seriousness of the teaching and learning in this school. In the report from June 3rd 1932, the inspector Antoniu Baliban, the archpriest of Marghita, mentions that the Religious Education exam was held with “an eminent success” and that the teacher “intensely implicated himself in the education of young Romanian bloomers from Cenaloș. We congratulate him from our hearts! Many years to come!” the school headmaster, Petru Berindei, is also congratulated for his involvement in the education of these great schoolboys and schoolgirls<sup>64</sup>.

Around the 1960's it becomes “The primary school of Cenaloș” because “The Secondary School from Ciuhoi” has been built, where children from Cenaloș, Sfârnaș and Sâniob-part of Ciuhoi commune, continued their studies.

From the confession made by former students at the beginning of this school, we find out that the education was very intensive, the teachers very well prepared and demanding. If the teacher's words weren't convincing enough during their educational activities, other correctional methods were used: the cane and the ruler over the first 3 fingers all together. Neither of them complained that he was mistreated or humiliated in front of the classroom; instead they considered that it was a necessary gesture for good behavior in the classroom. They also said that they were using a small bell (10-15 kg), installed in the school yard on the wall of the wood-barn which had letters written on it that they could not read to announce the beginning and the end of the break; I consider that the bell was from the old church since the writing was in Cyrillic. Its discovery would mean the discovery of other secrets from the past of Cenaloș village.

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<sup>62</sup> Prof Ioan Popovici, Dr. Bujor Dulgău, Pr. Ioan Mircea Ghitea, *From the sufferings of Bihor. Pages from the intellectual's fight in Bihor to defend the faith, the school and the Romanian national being*, vol. I, *Documents 1901-1903*, Romania in the world Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, p. 86.

<sup>63</sup> Cenaloș Parish Archive, pr. Romul Mădăras, *Catechesis Book, years 1931-1934*, p. 1-28.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p.16.

The teachers that engaged their activity at Cenaloş School were the following:

Filimon Popa (1929–1931), Petru Berindei (1931–1937), Vasile Fâşie (1933–1934), Dumitru Boianăiu (1927–1945), Pop Nistor (1946–1947), Raţ Daniela (1947–1958), Otravă Maria (1958–1960), Sasca Iosif (1959–1982) Fürtös Ioan (1960–1990), Hobineac Rozalia (1990-1991), Rodica Sabău (1991-1995), Badea Florica (1995-2003), Gut Mirela (2003-2004), Şipoş Natalia (2004-2005), Badea Florica (2005-2007), Şandor Raluca and Ramona Chereji (2007-2008), Gaşpar Eva (2008-2009), Rusu Camelia (2009-2010) and Demian Marcela (2010-2011). Because the students got fewer, Cenaloş School has been merged with Ciuhoi Secondary School since 2011 where the children are taken by the school minibus.

Getting to know the secrets of this world from this modest countryside school, in 1968-1972, I admit that it was the place where we have found a window towards the existential universe, where we have learnt to plant our first tree for the future; at the village church we have learnt to invest in people in order to redeem eternity, while the village taught us to cherish the traditions and the ancestral customs through which mankind cannot be defeated. The rest came naturally on its own.