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HABILITATION THESIS

TITLE: The History of the family in Transylvania – studies and research from multiple perspectives

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Abstract

This thesis contains an overview of my professional activity during the period elapsed since the PhD thesis, and to date. This was carried out in a period characterized by the opening of Romanian research to the Western one, by efforts to harmonize its results with those accomplished in the international academic environment.

The topics dealt with in this thesis are the ones I have studied more often in these years, coming from thematic areas such as historical demography, family history, the Great War and its demographic consequences, the reflection of Romanian historical research abroad.

The paper is structured in four sections, divided into subchapters. The first section, entitled "Studying the Family from a Historical Demographics Point of View", is dedicated to quantitative research, through historical population databases. In this context, I presented one of the most important projects I have worked in recent years, the Historical Population Database of Transylvania (HPDT), a project developed at the Centre for Population Studies at the Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj.

This database is built, first of all, from the information contained in the baptismal, marriage and death parish registers, from areas and locations selected according to several criteria. As a timeframe, HPDT addresses the period 1850-1914 (occasionally I encountered registers with earlier records, but this case is the exception, not the norm). The locations were chosen so as to best represent the ethnic and confessional diversity of Transylvania, being well known that this Romanian historical province accommodates many ethnic groups (Romanians, Hungarians, Roma, Germans, Jews, Armenians etc.) and denominations (Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans, Moslems etc.). The information contained in HPDT comes mainly from the records of major demographic events - birth (baptism), marriage, death. Depending on how the registers have been filled in, they may contain information about the date of the event, the names of the people, sometimes the names of their parents, sometimes the names of relatives (sons, sisters, brothers, bridesmaids, brides, socio-professional status, civil status, legitimacy / illegitimacy of birth, cause of death, names of priests, names of midwives. To insert this information into HPDT, complex tables were designed to cover all types of parish and civilian registers.

The HPDT also has a dedicated genealogical site, available at <http://hpdt.ro:4080/>. Its launch was received with great enthusiasm, quickly replaced by disappointment, when those people interested, practically from all over Transylvania, noticed how few are the localities introduced in the base.

The first section of the paper also contains the results of the research conducted so far on the basis of information from the HPDT, research on subjects such as family reconstruction, or mortality in Transylvania in the modern era. These researches have shown both the potential of HPDT and its limitations, mainly due to the quality of the sources. Thus, registers from different denominations differ greatly from the point of view of the information contained; in some cases

they are very complete, with a wealth of data, and in many other cases the demographic events are brief, many essential information (surname, social status, etc.) being absent.

Another section of this thesis is dedicated to a project on the mixed marriages in Transylvania in the modern era. The phenomenon of mixed marriages is related to the way in which identity is perceived, both personal and that of the community, to the manner in which the "other", the individual or the community of another ethnicity, race, or confession is seen. From this point of view, Transylvania is one of the best objects of study, its population being characterized by great ethnic and confessional diversity. Thus, Transylvania had, over the centuries, a population composed of three numerically dominant ethnic groups (Romanians, Hungarians and Germans) and six denominations: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Calvinist (or Evangelical Reformed), Lutheran (or Evangelical Augustan Confession), Unitarian and Mosaic.

The research of such a subject was inspired by the idea that the diversity of traditions and culture has been for centuries one of the riches not only of Europe but also of Romania, and the principle of tolerance and peaceful cohabitation has been, in the last decades, the guarantee of maintaining an open society in Europe and respecting cultural diversity. On the other hand, as has been the case in recent decades in many European countries, the application of this generous principle has encountered numerous integration difficulties in the case of important minority populations, especially emigrants, from cultural spaces very different from the host country.

The research of this theme aimed, through its results, to contribute to the understanding and explanation of the integration function of mixed marriages in a given community, and to formulate useful conclusions for any society that faces the challenges of multiculturalism. Within this project, I focused on topics such as the evolution of mixed marriages in Cluj in the interwar period, divorces among mixed couples in the interwar period in Cluj, the position towards mixed marriages of the State, the Church and the broad society, the role of the language in defining the ethnic identity of individuals involved in mixed marriages.

The results of these studies have shown that mixed marriages function as a link inside a society, and their existence has the ability to reduce the likelihood of violent conflicts between different ethnic groups, and to increase social cohesion. Mixed marriage involves not only two individuals but also the groups to which they belong. When there are many marital links between different ethnic groups, there are also other social contacts between them: children in different groups have the opportunity to meet with each other - at school, in the neighborhood, in their free time. Mixed marriages form a bridge between these groups, and often connect the social networks of the two spouses, so that new contacts and interpersonal relationships may emerge beyond the boundaries of these groups.

As we all know, the last years have been marked by the Centenary of the First World War and of the Great Union, events that have naturally found their place in my research projects. The Great War had strong demographic effects, felt both in the years of conflict and in the following decades - the loss of human lives, the decline in birth rates, the increase in mortality, the ravages of epidemics, emigration, population movements, the increase in the number of widows and orphans.

Transylvania, as part of Hungary in the years of the war, had suffered during it. On its territory, no fighting took place, except in the period August-September 1916, in which a few border regions were in the way of the Romanian army's offensive. In contrast, Transylvania was affected by the difficulties of the state of war: massive recruitment of men, drastic drop in living standards, rising food prices and consumer goods, etc. There were numerous requisitions, there were a number of difficulties in the supply of essential goods, the Romanian intellectuals were mobilized and sent to the front, or were imprisoned in Hungary to be more easily supervised, especially after Romania's entry into war in 1916. In this context, we carried out a research on the demographic impact of these events during the years 1913-1918, based on the statistical data collected by the Hungarian authorities of the time. We took into account the evolution of marriages, birth rates, mortality in general and infant mortality. Available figures have shown that the number of marriages has fallen sharply in the years of the war, and will gradually recover after 1918; some marital preferences have also changed, with an increased interest shown by women towards older men, due to the fact that many of the youngest have died on battlefields. The number of births also declined, especially in 1916 and 1917. Such a study comes to complete the overall picture of the devastating effects of the war.

An important section of this thesis is devoted to the presence of Romanian research in history in the international academic environment. The project I have carried out on this topic has aimed the quantitative reconstitution of works on the history of Romanians in western languages, in the form of a database to serve as a working tool especially for foreign researchers interested in this field. The project also aimed to analyze this production in relation to the Western one, thus intending to answer the questions and challenges with which Romanian historical science has frequently encountered over time: to what extent, during the time period under analysis, there has been a systematic preoccupation of Romanian historians to publish in international languages, namely, Western historians to study subjects of Romanian history, if there are constants that can be traced over longer periods and if there are certain moments in which these concerns were more intense than in others, the relationship between the themes and methodologies in Romanian historiography and those in Western academic environment, etc.

Within this project, I approached subjects such as Romanian history journals written in western languages, or the reflection in historiography written in western languages of aspects such as family history, or important institutions in society.

The thesis ends with the presentation of the research directions that I intend to follow in my professional development.