

HABILITATION THESIS

ABSTRACT

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MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN TRANSYLVANIA: HISTORY, HERITAGE AND CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

In my professional experience as a researcher of the medieval and pre-modern history and of the traditional culture, I approached a number of research topics, among which the historical realities of Transylvania in the early Middle Ages, analysing the most important narrative sources and identifying new methods of application of their analysis; the congregational system of medieval Transylvania as a mode of construing a common space of early political representative experience; the multiculturalism and religious denominations in the history of Transylvania.

I consider the study of social realities and of the territorial structures in Transylvania in the Early Middle Ages as fundamental for a better knowledge of the history of this province. The analysis of Anonymus's *Gesta Hungarorum* and of the historical context that it reflects it's a topic of exceptional importance for the medieval historiography of Transylvania. My analysis of this subject attempted to propose a new type of approach, deeply focused to the analysis of the primary sources. This kind of approach opens new possibilities for the reconstruction of the realities of this age.

The development of the topic approached in the PhD thesis is a natural duty of every researcher. The half-century following the Tartar invasion in 1241-1242 is very important for the history of Transylvania. This is the period in which were laid the foundations of the institutional system which was the basis for the organization of Transylvania along a large part of the Middle Ages. The remarkable evolution of the Transylvanian nobility starting with the second half of the 13th century and the asserting of its quality of provincial political class has been accompanied by a strong assertion of its Transylvanian identity and consequently by an accentuated distinction between what the people of those times named Hungary and Transylvania. A number of examples dating back to the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the next provide the conclusive evidence about the Transylvanian nobility's rejection of unwanted intrusions in this province, as landlords, of the Hungarian court aristocrats. The political aspirations of the provincial elite came true a decade after the first mentions in Transylvania of the congregational system: the political governance instituted after 1301 by Ladislaus Kán (1294-1315) was largely due to their success. The Transylvanian nobility's adoption of the status of "legal country" was related to the consolidation of a legislative specificity with regards to not only the existence of laws different from the ones of the kingdom of Hungary, but also to the consistency with which the exceptions were nurtured.

The devastating shocks of the confrontations with the Tatar invaders have profoundly marked the history of Transylvania in the 13th century. The two major Tatar assaults in 1241-

1242 and 1285 were, from this point of view, major events in the history of this province. Besides these, there were also numerous other smaller attacks, not always unimportant. From this point of view, the 13th century is highly significant in the history of Transylvania, even though the province Tatar attacks continued until 1717. Comparing the two Tatar invasions of 1241 and 1285, one can notice an obvious difference between the Transylvanian reactions against them. If in the first case the damage has been devastating, in the second it may be considered to be rather small. Clearly, the Transylvanians have learned from the confrontations with the Tatars from the 13th century, which will allow them, in the next century, to initiate an Eastern offensive with important historical consequences for the historical development of the Romanian medieval states.

Local and regional history, analysed in connection with the local heritage, customs and traditions, are important for configuring, at the local and regional levels, the conscience of the value of the communities' heritage. Far from being an easy task for the researcher, who often faces insurmountable difficulties in documenting the elements and facts of local importance, the local history knows now a new period of revitalization, due to the increased interest of local communities and of their elected representatives.

The issues connected with the study of the valorisation and preservation of the movable heritage lead us to essential questions about the type of analysis we have to perform. The movable heritage research is performed, usually, in the museums and/or archives, or by different other museum research partners, but anyway in connections with them. The category of movable heritage is important for the history and culture of the Romanians and of all other cultural groups in Transylvania, allowing the researchers to study their representative values and to investigate the possibilities to keep alive their practices and traditions.

The research projects I foresee for the future of my work, in relation with the activities identified as possible developments inside the doctoral school, are devoted to the medieval history of Romania; they are oriented as well towards a perspective that aims to blend the historiographical approach with the demo-ethno-anthropological disciplines and with the investigation of the monumental, mobile and intangible heritage. At the same time, these projects are aiming to fulfill the main directions of the developments strategy of the PdD research programs of University Babes Bolyai, considering the perspectives of the international cooperation, the participation in the European research programs and the integration of the scientific research with the PhD program activity.