Habilitation Thesis

Church and Family in Transylvania (18th-21st Centuries)

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Abstract

This habilitation thesis summarizes the main achievements I have accomplished in my research, teaching and academic activity since the completion of my doctoral degree. These achievements are presented chronologically and thematically in the first two parts. The third part focuses on my career development plan, while the fourth lists the bibliography used both in writing this thesis and in several of my most significant publications.

The first part includes the results of my research on the History of the Church from the post-doctoral period, during which I finished editing the entire correspondence of the Orthodox Metropolitan Vasile Mangra (1850-1918), largely unpublished before. In this context, I present the main international achievements in the field of Church History. Then I show the steps I followed in the process of selecting and editing the documents, highlighting their importance for acquiring better knowledge of the personality under consideration and the age in which he lived and conducted his ecclesiastical and political career. In addition to this, I have published the regulations which governed the functioning of the institutions of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania during the 18th-19th centuries in another, collective edition, this time. Even though the material was not previously unpublished, editing it has been important for practical reasons. The texts included in this edition had seen the light of print in several publications and assembling them in a single volume was deemed necessary on this account.

A special research was the one concerning the Orthodox Vicariate of Oradea. What was known about this institution was that it had existed since the 18th century, but its beginnings were unclear, as were various aspects of Bihor’s ecclesiastical history in the second half of the 19th century. Regarding the beginnings of the Vicariate of Oradea, I discovered that the decision to establish it had been reached at the Illyrian Congress held in Timișoara in 1790-1791. There were primarily two main reasons why the deputies agreed to create the vicarage. The former was administrative and ecclesiastical, for the episcopal see from Oradea had been vacant for a long time and had to be filled, while the latter was strategic, because the Serbian Metropolitanate of Karlowitz intended to consolidate its confessional borders in the context of the Greek-Catholic proselytizing.
In this part, I also outline the beginnings of my teaching activity at university level and my first participations in international scientific sessions.

The second part is dedicated to the research I have devoted to the History of the Family since 2007, with an overview of the specialized international historiography. An important moment in my becoming familiar with this line of research has been the editing of the ecclesiastical and secular family legislation issued in Transylvania during the 19th century. The resulting compendium is a genuine working instrument for all those who want to study the manner in which, for instance, marriage and divorce were regulated among the Romanians in Transylvania.

To provide other researchers with useful working tools in their analyses, I have edited, together with my colleagues, a chrestomathy of memoirist texts and original, unpublished documents that reflect the cycle of family life and, respectively, the matrimonial behavior of the Romanian population in Transylvania, taking into account the legislation in force at the time.

A research which is still underway concerns mixed marriages. The research was initiated in order to find explanations for at least some of the fundamental questions arising from this subject: a) what was and what is the perspective of Transylvania’s inhabitants on mixed marriage; b) which were the determining factors for concluding a mixed marriage and c) whether intermarriage can be an indicator of social cohesion. In the context of this research, what is also important is the investigation of the perception regarding mixed marriages in the secular and ecclesiastical legislative enactments from Transylvania, as well as the analysis of the customs related to mixed marriage amongst the main denominations in this province of Romania. The studies undertaken reveal that state intervention and secularization were factors that moderated the categorical discourse of the Churches in Transylvania on the subject of mixed marriages. The researches carried out in the field have confirmed that the changes society underwent over the past century exerted a direct influence on individual mentality as well. Conjugal relations during this period proved to be less inclined to maintain the confessional-ethnic traditions and more open to accepting the other. In other words, the criteria that had determined the conclusion of a marriage during the 19th century, such as the maintenance of language, confession and ethnicity, had lost some of their previous significance.

My involvement in research on family history facilitated an international opening through my participation in various prestigious scientific events, such as those organized by the Social Science History Association, Commission Internationale de Démographie Historique, European
Social Science History Conference, European Society of Historical Demography. In this part I also present my main teaching achievements in two major university centers, the Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris.

The third part presents the plan for my professional, scientific and academic career development, emphasizing the long- and short-term objectives in the areas of research and teaching. The thesis concludes with the fourth part, in which the bibliography is presented in detail.