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**SOCIO–CULTURAL EFFECTS OF MODERNIZATION IN
TÂRGU SECUIESC (1750–1944)**

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Abstract

As an ethnographer and museologist at the Museum of Târgu Secuiesc, I am in daily contact with the important objects and documents of the guilds, which once had a significant role in the life of the town. Due to historical researches made, we already knew a lot about the medieval city and the functioning of the guilds. Yet the bourgeois modernisation of the 19th century, the impact of this process upon the local society, its culture and lifestyle hasn't been studied deeper until now.

During the doctoral school, with the help of the methods of historical and urban anthropology, I studied and deepened our knowledge about the socio-cultural effects of the modernization of this town. After studying the bibliography, I determined the main areas of this complex process, which can be analyzed and interpreted mainly by the demographic and social structure of the town, the appearance of the civic associations, the structure and use of space and by the visual representation of the modernization (photographs and postcards). Questions that came up during the research, were divided into five main groups and treated individually in this dissertation, trying to reach satisfactory answers.

1. As a first step, I planned to explore the basic, most important components of the process of urbanization of Târgu Secuiesc. Analyzing the administrative structure, the economic and ethnic background of the place, I documented and demonstrated its transformation into a town. As this research would have been incomplete without the knowledge of the local society in the examined period, I tried to find answers to questions such as: which families lived here, which was the scale of the migration and the establishment of foreign population in the town, which was the degree of mobility and internal social rearrangement of the inhabitants.

2. I am aware of the fact, that urbanization is not only the fast and spectacular numerical development of the population living in a particular place. It is also the continuous and organic naturalization of urban mentality and culture, life strategies, and everyday lifestyle. As a next step, I focused on revealing as detailed as possible, which cultural and educational institutions and associations of this small Szekler town assumed consciously the spreading of the bourgeois civic values.

3. At the beginning of my investigations, I assumed that social groups (the guild masters, merchants and their families) that had been living for a long time in this place, played an important role in forming of the associations, being the base of the local cityzenhood through their life vision, strategy and way of life.

4. I also assumed that the civic way of life had a fundamental impact on the built environment of this market-town. While around the former market place spectacular family and community buildings were built, behind them small wooden houses covered with shingles stayed hidden, which patially can be seen even nowadays. Their presence calls into attention the fact that a good part of the residents had not switched over to a good established bourgeois lifestyle, neither in the dualistic (1867–1914) nor in the inter-war (1920–1944) period.

5. Further I assumed that the appearance of new family and community buildings (such as confessional, economical, cultural, recreational and sports ones) have radically changed not only the spatial structure of the town, but also the use of the common spaces. According to my hypothesis, the local population gradually changed the spatial structure of the town. While forming new goals and appearing of new benchmarks, the buildings became fingerprints of the continuous change of the local society. The question emerged how these new locations (various shops, restaurants, cafes, pubs, promenades, cultural and sports units) changed the daily habits and celebrations of the local society regarding the use of the common space.

During my research I investigated documents in both state and church archives, in museums and in libraries, I studied articles of local and regional newspapers, I collected, digitalized, documented and processed visual materials (sketches, maps, paintings, drawings, personal photographs, postcards) related to the local urban life.

According to the above aspects, the thesis is divided into four main parts.

First I examined the demographic components of the urbanization of the place (a village at the beginning), I analyze the development and growth of population, the migrations and the immigrations. My basic hypothesis is, that not only resident craftsmen, aware and proud of their guild traditions have played a key-role in the urbanization of the place, but also those mobile social groups, that came into the town after Szeklerland's militarization in 1764 from larger urban centers and by accommodation for shorter or longer periods or by the permanent establishment in this place, introduced new models of urban life.

In the second part of my paper I was looking for answers to questions about civic associations: when and how were they formed here, in Târgu Secuiesc, who played important

role in their formation, operation, and leadership, what values, models of life did they pass on, what was the role they played in the spreading and acceptance of the new models.

In the third part of the thesis I examined how the configuration of the market place, the old square and the life of specific courtyards changed during these social transformations, what kind of public institutions were there built in or near the market, how the newly established restaurants, cafes, pubs, dance halls, sport grounds and promenades served and changed the daily activities and the recreation of people belonging to different social strata.

In the fourth part of the thesis I analyzed the role of the vintage photos and postcards in representing the landmarks of the development, in documenting the changes in daily life and festive celebrations.

In the Annex of the thesis I made a database including photographs and postcards representing the town (various institutions and civic associations, outstanding events and personalities related to it), as well as various maps, drawings, manuscripts and cumulative tables. I wished to create a more detailed and nuanced image of the life of a Szekler market place from the late 19th to mid 20th century, also representing an important issue of my research.

Through my research I tried to reveal the fundamental factors and specific characteristics of the urbanization of Targu Secuiesc, as well as their social and cultural impacts. In the first part of the thesis, based on church records and official data from population censuses, I demonstrate how the market-place in the center of the Kézdi Seat had developed from demographical, social, ethnical and confessional point of view, from the early 18th century to the end the of the Second World War.

Different historical and demographic analysis indicate that in the early 18th century there lived about in 1500 people here. Half of the population were artisans and merchants, while a third of it were farmers. Although the town can be considered both urban and agrarian, it maintained its status of town even during the 18th century.

Forced militarization in 1764 and the establishment of a Military School in 1823 have radically changed the life of the Protestant majority of the town. As the big number of soldiers needed more services and products of craftsmen, the town's economy developed, they even formed new guilds. Although the moving to western, more developed craft centers for shorter or longer period was a practice in the guilds lifes, and foreign craftsmen and merchants permanently arrived here from other cities and remote areas, the establishment of the military

institution resulted in a relatively short period of time in a considerable growth of the number of foreigners in the town. Consequently, inward migration has continuously changed the social, religious and ethnic structure of the town.

The total population of Târgu Secuiesc was of 3559 inhabitants in 1850, so in a hundred and fifty years the local population doubled practically. Data of Roman Catholic church records from 1724 and of Protestant church records from 1734 show, that German, Armenian, Serbian, Slovak, Romanian, Gypsy and Hebrew persons and their families came to the place. Checking and analyzing the names of the baptismal registries, I managed to show that out of the 301 family names registered, 230 were first recorded only in the 18th century, while 71 were already used before. With nominal analysis I also documented that despite of the continuing immigration, the population grew primarily by natural growth of the old local families. Archival data confirmed that the town was opened to foreigners beginning with the 17–18 centuries. A lot of foreigners were settling here temporarily or permanently, primarily due to the military institutions. I also point out that those who moved from here or died during various epidemics were always successfully replaced by new immigrants.

Data from official population censuses and church records show that the loss of 500 persons, which occurred between 1881 to 1891, mainly due to migration to Romania after the customs war, was later replaced again by immigrants. Although the increase of the town's population stopped temporarily because of the First World War, in 1941 the number of inhabitants was 6615, which means that between 1850–1941 the population doubled again. If we compare this demographic growth with other towns in Transylvania, or Western Europe, we can see that the development of Târgu Secuiesc in the analyzed period stopped, remarkable urbanization had not been done due to the lack of industrialization, and residents were locked in their earlier guild traditions. Although in the dualist age the government had not given significant attention to the development of this area, the residents of Târgu Secuiesc permanently acclimatized new models of life and new institutions. This process was promoted mostly by recently established people and families, who arrived in the town with new types of urban cultural elements, social patterns and life strategies.

At the beginning of my research I assumed that the families of craftsmen, who constantly lived in the place, played an important role in initiating, creating and sustaining civil societies. But the list of persons who have assumed responsibilities in these societies shows that not the indigenous, but the fresh arrived persons had significant role in promoting

civic thinking, values and institutions. I emphasize that associations organized in Târgu Secuiesc essentially contributed to the evolution of the bourgeoisie and to the spreading of bourgeois life patterns not only in town, but also in the nearby villages.

The hypothesis according to which urbanization had a marked effect on the use of the urban space and on the built environment, was confirmed during the research. In the decades following the militarization in 1764, brick buildings covered with tiles proliferated in the western and the southern part of the town. First the Protestants had built their imposing church in the southern part of the market, then some time after it the Catholics did the same in the northern part of it, in the so-called Kanta. After the great fire from 1834, which destroyed the center of the town, mainly in the last years of the 19th century, rich families and also cultural, religious, social and economic associations built spectacular buildings around the market. This place became an updated location, where successful entrepreneurs and some institutions represented their economic status by impressive Art Nouveau buildings.

In Târgu Secuiesc the gradual separation of public and private spaces started in the dualistic period, this process being completed much later, after the forced socialist modernization following the Second World War. Although the characteristic, open courtyards have allowed for a long time to come for people to take a look at their neighbors' intimate life, in the discussed period the detachment of these two spheres had begun.

I documented by maps, charts and descriptions that in the second part of the 19th century the original administrative and cultural center of the town moved from the southern to the northern part of the market, to bordering village Kanta, with Catholic majority. This change actually represents the changes in the confessional structure of the local society. Newly arrived families were mostly Catholic, and their natural increase was more relevant than that of the Protestants. The predominantly Protestant town in the 16th century, became by the end of the considered period of Catholic majority.

While rebuilding the center, the religious, cultural, economic and recreational functions of the new buildings radically altered both the spatial structure of the town, as well as the ways of using it. Finally the research has shown the initial assumption: during the process of urbanization there were established new locations, new reference points of the town, which reflected the changes of its social structure.

These new public spaces (eg.: promenades, sports fields, baths) together with new objectives (Vigado cultural house, hotels, restaurants, cafes, pubs, schools, hospitals) quickly

became popular locations of the town's social life. I stress upon the fact that educated and affluent citizens of the town had organically integrated in their lives not only public spaces located in the town, but also nearby natural attractions (Baile Balványos, Fortyogo, Lake Saint Ana). Weekend and summer trips, tourism became part of the life of the citizens. In this period the use of public spaces acquired new, specifically urban accents.

While in the late 19th century, early 20th century the spatial and social structure of the town changed as shown, photography also became part of the civic everyday life. Nevertheless private photos and postcards presented only partially the process of urbanization, the real face of the town. Those who made them always sorted out consciously the best buildings, the nicest sights of it, those which broadcasted the festive appearance, and never the characteristic but poorer neighborhoods and backyards.

In conclusion I point out that during the considered period the demographic structure of the town had changed but not radically. Due to the fact that there was no spectacular development in the economic life and due to the lack of industrialization the town was left behind in comparison with the much more dynamic development of other Szekler towns (Sfântu Gheorghe, Odorheiu Secuiesc). While in cultural and social life many elements of the bourgeois lifestyle were acclimated, in the absence of industrialization the town remained far behind many other European cities. Târgu Secuiesc preserved its ethnic structure and pre-modern urban traditions.

Key words:

fair, town, urbanization, lifestyle, modernization, demography, family research, family reconstruction, migration, social mobility, joint life, urban space, private space, public representation.

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