

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
DOCTORAL SCHOOL POPULATION STUDIES AND MINORITY
HISTORY

THESIS
THE FIELD OF HISTORY

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Cluj-Napoca

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***Demographic evolutions in the shire/county of Sălaj:
1876-1941***

Summary

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Content

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1. Historiography, sources, methodology and the territorial framework of analysis.....	6
1.1. History of the problem.....	6
1.1.1. <i>Historical demography. Universal historiographical guidelines</i>	6
1.1.2. <i>Concerns of historical demography in Romanian historiography</i>	12
1.1.3. <i>Concerns of historical demography with reference to the area of Sălaj</i>	22
1.2. Demographic sources and documentary sources.....	25
1.2.1. <i>Parish registers of civil status</i>	25
1.2.2. <i>Civil status registers of the state</i>	27
1.2.3. <i>Censuses</i>	27
1.3. Research methodology.....	31
1.4. The territorial analysis framework. Structuring and administrative-territorial restructuring of Sălaj in the time period 1876-1941.....	32
Chapter 2. Population dynamics in Sălaj shire/county between 1869 and 1941.....	37
2.1. Census of 1869.....	37
2.2. Census of 1880.....	41
2.3. Census of 1890.....	44
2.4. Census of 1900.....	45
2.5. Census of 1910.....	45
2.6. Census of 1930.....	46
2.7. Census of 1941.....	48
Chapter 3. The natural movement of the population in the Sălaj shire/county (1876-1941)....	53
3.1. The evolution of the birth rate.....	53
3.1.1. <i>The evolution of the gross birth rate</i>	59
3.1.2. <i>Distribution of births by sex</i>	63
3.1.3. <i>Seasonal movement of births</i>	66
3.1.4. <i>Illegitimate births</i>	73
3.2. Evolution of mortality.....	81
3.2.1. <i>The evolution of the gross mortality rate</i>	97
3.2.2. <i>Gender distribution of mortality</i>	100

3.2.3. <i>Seasonal movement of mortality</i>	103
3.2.4. <i>Structure by age groups of mortality</i>	108
3.3. The demographic "revolution" (transition).....	114
3.3.1. <i>The evolution of natural, real and migratory growth</i>	115
3.4. The evolution of nuptials.....	119
3.4.1. <i>The evolution of the gross marriage rate</i>	126
3.4.2. <i>Seasonal movement of marriages</i>	129
3.4.3. <i>Age at marriage</i>	134
3.4.4. <i>Marital status at marriage</i>	139
3.4.5. <i>Mixed marriages</i>	143
3.4.6. <i>Dissolution of marriages</i>	149
3.5. Reproductive behavior and fertility in the Greek-Catholic parishes of Bulgari, Biușa and Nușfalău in the second half of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century. Nominative exploitation of the parish registers of civil status.....	151
 Chapter 4. Demographic structures of the population of Sălaj shire/county between 1880 and 1941.....	157
4.1. The evolution of the structure by nationality of the population of Sălaj.....	157
4.2. The ethnic structure of the population of the towns of Sălaj.....	166
4.3. Confessional structure of the population of Sălaj.....	170
4.4. Gender structure of the Sălaj population.....	176
4.5. Structure by age groups of the population of Sălaj.....	180
4.6. Structure of the population of Sălaj according to marital status.....	184
4.7. The socio-professional composition of the population of Sălaj.....	190
Chapter 5. Conclusions.....	200
Bibliography.....	208
List of tables.....	221
List of graphics.....	225
List of figures.....	226
Annexes.....	227

KEYWORDS

Demographic evolution, Sălaj, shire, county, population dynamics, birth rate, mortality rate, marriage rate, demographic transition, demographic structures

SUMMARY

The topic of this doctoral thesis, entitled *Demographic evolutions in the Sălaj shire/county: 1876-1941*, is limited to demography as a scientific field. This is defined, in the specialized literature, generically, as a science that studies the population as a relatively autonomous demographic system, its states, inputs and outputs from the system, population structures, as well as the interdependencies between them.

The present doctoral thesis, entitled *Demographic evolutions in the Sălaj shire/county: 1876-1941*, is subsumed under the disciplines of historical demography and contemporary demography, proposing to capture the dynamics and changes produced in the population structure of the Sălaj area in the chronological interval between 1876 and 1941. The second aspect that this theme proposes is that of capturing some particularities related to the family and the cycle of family life in the villages of Bulgari, Biușa and Nușfalău in the Sălaj region in the mentioned chronological interval. Romanian historical demography research mainly focused on global aspects regarding births, marriages and deaths, with only a few researchers carrying out studies starting from the reconstruction of families from different parishes or villages.

Through this research, we followed the dynamics and changes in the population structure of the former Sălaj shire/county in the chronological interval 1876-1941, both at macrozonal and microzonal levels. Along with following the dynamics of the population in this space and the factors that influenced it, we also addressed aspects related to the natural movement of the population (birth rate, mortality, marriage rate), as well as the migratory movement. These phenomena are less studied by historical demography and contemporary demography research dedicated to the historical-geographical space of Sălaj.

Since the natural and migratory movement of the population brings changes not only in terms of numbers, but also in structure, we followed the population of the Sălaj shire/county also according to cultural characteristics (ethno-confessional membership), personal (age groups, sex, marital status) and socio-economic (socio-professional structure).

The research did not stop only at the quantitative description of demographic problems, but was also based on a qualitative analysis of the phenomena and other aspects of the life of individuals and families of the old Sălaj shire/county. For this purpose, we carried out a microanalysis, a descent to the level of the parish registers of the villages of Bulgari, Biuşa and Nuşfalău, in order to capture some particularities related to the family and the cycle of family life. The reconstruction of the families from Bulgari, Biuşa and Nuşfalău localities was done starting from the standards of the HPDT (*Historical Population Database of Transylvania*) and using the interrelation methods that this database offers. By entering data from the parish registers of births, marriages and deaths of the communities mentioned above, we have traced the course of people's lives over several generations.

The thesis is divided into five chapters totaling 269 pages. In the first chapter, I presented the historiography of the problem, the sources we used, the research methodology and the territorial analysis framework, considering the fact that the territory of Sălaj underwent various changes in the interval considered by us. For the writing of this paper I have used several categories of sources and sources of documentation. We have the information about the population in the Sălaj area thanks to the ecclesiastical records (parochial civil status registers), state civil status registers, censuses and volumes published by the Royal Hungarian Central Statistical Office, which contain annual information on the natural movement of the population. This information is supplemented by certain studies that address the issue of population structure and demographic phenomena in this area.

The research methodology aimed at combining macro-quantitative analysis with micro-qualitative research. Historical demography frames population behavior in extremely rigorous figures, studies demographic crises, geographic mobility, addresses the issue of nuptials, fecundity and mortality, which give a series of information related to the domestic group and its biological reproduction. That is why the subjects that deal with aspects of the history of the population, involve both quantitative and qualitative evaluations.

The research methods used in the research were the "stripping and valorization" of the parish registers of civil status, according to the method launched by Michel Fleury and Louis Henry, which gave us the opportunity to process the data from the parish registers at a non-nominative level. Most of those who today practice historical demography based on the exploitation of parish registers processed the research method from French demography, but adapted to the specific Transylvanian realities by Sorina Paula Bolovan, who published such an extensive study for the first time in our country.

The second method used for the valorization of parish registers at nominative level, but also at non-nominative level, consisted in the use of statistical means of analysis specific to historical demography. This method consisted in entering all the data related to births, marriages and deaths from the civil status parish registers of the Greek Catholics from the villages of Bulgari, Biuşa and Nuşfalău into a database (*Historical Population Database of Transylvania*), in order to capture some particularities related to the family and the cycle of rural family life.

In the second chapter of the thesis, we followed the dynamics of the population in Sălaj shire/county between the seven censuses carried out by the Austro-Hungarian, then Romanian, after the Great Union and Hungarian authorities after the Vienna Diktat. The second chapter was not only focused on a numerical description, but also on the explanation of the main factors that influenced the demographic dynamics. Between 1869 and 1941, the population of Sălaj shire/county grew from 193,082 inhabitants to 283,560, which represented a real numerical increase of 90,478 (46.8%), with an average annual growth rate of 0.54% . Except for the eighth decade (when the population of the county enters a demographic decline due to the cholera epidemic of 1872-1873 and other local epidemics), the dynamics of the population of Sălaj was ascending until 1920 when the negative effects of the First World War are felt at the level of the total population of the county . In 1930, two subdivisions and a city (with a total population of 84,896 inhabitants) were attached to Sălaj county. In the 1941 census, the town and the two aforementioned nets were excluded from the county, which led to a decrease in population compared to 1930 to which is added the exodus of refugees and forced expulsions. At the level of the control sample consisting of seven rural villages, we observed a demographic evolution almost identical to that of the shire/county. The total population of the seven settlements increased from 9,529 inhabitants in 1869 to 13,330 in 1941, the real increase being 3,801 inhabitants (39.8%). In the eighth decade the mortality was growing due to the cholera epidemic of 1873, and to local epidemics of typhus, diphtheria, whooping-cough, etc., being recorded as the causes of most of the deaths. The negative effects of the First World War can also be observed at the level of the seven settlements. The demographic regression compared to 1910 was 134 people, and the percentage decrease amounted to -1.16%.

Regarding the distribution of the population of Sălaj by medium, we noticed that, in the urban environment, the population growth was higher than the rural population growth, this is because a large part of the natural growth of the rural environment was assimilated by the cities. Between 1869 and 1941, the urban population increased by 66.5%, from 10,573 inhabitants to 17,606. Its share in the

entire population changing from 5.4% to 6.2%. In the same time frame, the rural population increased by 45.7%.

The third chapter is the most extensive and dealt with the basic components of natural population movement (birth rate, mortality rate, marriage rate). These were treated from several perspectives, with aspects related to the gender distribution of births and deaths, seasonal movement, illegitimacy of births, the age group structure of mortality, mixed marriages, age at marriage, etc. In this chapter, aspects related to the migratory movement and the demographic transition were also addressed. In addition to all this, the third chapter also contains a micro-analysis, based on parish registers of marital status, analyzing reproductive behavior and fertility in the Greek-Catholic parishes of Bulgari, Buișa and Nușfalău. In the period 1876-1941, the evolution of the birth rate in the shire and later in Sălaj county experienced several stages, under the influence of certain factors. Until 1914, the average annual number of births gradually increased due to the abolition of feudal relations. During the First World War, the birth rate experienced a serious decline as a result of the departure of young men to the front, the decrease in agricultural production and other negative effects produced by the war. During the administrative reform of 1925, the territory of Sălaj County was expanded, which led to an artificial increase in the number of births, this structure being preserved until 1940. At the level of the control sample, analyzing the ten-year distribution, we could observe a reduction of the average annual number of births starting from 1921 and up to 1940. The outbreak of the Second World War had negative effects on the birth rate in the Sălaj shire ceded to Hungary.

Regarding the gross birth rate, which shows the influx of those born into a population, it has either decreased or increased, with the index experiencing slower or more abrupt decreases or increases. The lowest level of the gross birth rate index was recorded in 1917 and 1918 (16.5‰), when the birth rate experienced an important decrease due to the state of war. The highest gross birth rate was recorded in 1888 (48.3‰), being associated with a socio-economic stability that marked the ninth decade of the 19th century.

Regarding the gender distribution of births in the Sălaj shire/county between 1876 and 1941, we could observe an "overbirth" of males over females. This aspect is also valid at the level of the control sample in the mentioned interval.

The analysis of the seasonal movement of births in the years 1877, 1887, 1897, 1907 and 1930, reveals a series of aspects related to the reproductive behavior of the people in the investigated space. The sources show us that the month with the most births was March (with June as the

conception month). In June, people are not so busy with agricultural activities. The fewest births were recorded in November and December (with February and March as conception months). In the months of February and March, individuals began agricultural activities, which led to a decrease in sexual relations. Another important aspect that we could observe from the analysis of births and conceptions is that people did not really respect the religious norms regarding sexual abstinence during fasting, the conception being quite high during the fasting months.

In the interval between 1876-1910, at the level of Sălaj shire, the illegitimacy index (the share of illegitimate births) increased from one decade to another. The increase in illegitimate births shows the mental transformations that occurred in the middle of the 19th century. The illegitimacy index had a different evolution at the level of the control sample. Depending on the collective mind, confession and the degree of penetration of rural morality by urban mental influences, the index of illegitimacy registered at the level of the studied settlements, increases or decreases during the studied interval. And in the area of Sălaj, the distance between rural and urban determined a lower or higher value of the illegitimacy index. At the level of the control sample, the illegitimacy index is much higher in localities located at a shorter distance from cities compared to localities located at a greater distance.

Studying the phenomenon of mortality in the shire and later in Sălaj county between 1876 and 1941, reveals a series of factors that caused significant increases in the number of deaths in this interval. Prolonged snows and heavy rains, landslides and floods affected people's lands. Poor productivity led to a high cost of grain, famine and disease of the population. Due to malnutrition and starvation, the individual became much more vulnerable to epidemics. In the studied period, infectious diseases were the major cause of the increase in the number of deaths. Until the end of the 19th century, smallpox (vomiting) caused many deaths in Sălaj shire. Vaccination against it has caused it to decrease in intensity and virulence. Since the end of the 19th century, tuberculosis begins to strongly affect the county. Similarly, the sources from the beginning of the 20th century, referring to the years 1902, 1905, 1910, 1911, 1912 and 1915, show that among the infectious diseases, tuberculosis claimed the most victims. Also, in 1930, tuberculosis was the infectious disease that caused the most deaths. Other infectious diseases such as whooping cough, scarlet fever, diphtheria, typhus or measles, had quite high fatality rates. In addition to natural calamities and infectious diseases, the people in the area of Sălaj also faced the harmful effects of the two world wars during the studied period.

The dynamics of the gross death rate recorded annual variations, as did the gross birth rate. Between 1876 and 1941, the highest value of the gross mortality rate was recorded in 1880 (43.1‰), the year in which epidemics of smallpox (vomiting), diphtheria, measles, scarlet fever and dysentery affected the population of Sălaj shire. The lowest value of the gross death rate was recorded in 1941 (16.6‰), at the height of the war, and the missing and dead were not included in the county-wide death toll.

Regarding the gender distribution of mortality, between 1876 and 1941, male mortality was higher than female mortality at the level of Sălaj shire/county. With some small exceptions, this phenomenon was also valid for the control sample during the researched period.

Regarding the seasonal movement of mortality, sources from the years 1897 and 1930 show that, for people from the Sălaj area, most deaths occurred in autumn and spring. During these times of the year, contact with cold air caused many illnesses followed by deaths. In general, throughout the cold season, the death toll was high. We noted that there were increases in the number of deaths during the summer as well, mainly caused by the excessive consumption of unripe and unwashed fruits and vegetables, but also the lack of supervision of small children, the presence of women in agricultural work being necessary.

Related to the age group structure of mortality in Sălaj shire at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, we found that the highest mortality was in the age categories up to 14 years, especially in the newborn. Until the age of 14, children were very vulnerable to death. Insufficient medical assistance, poor nutrition, lack of hygiene education, etc. were the causes of high mortality in the 0-14 age group. The next age group with high mortality is the one between 15-59 years. At the county level, throughout the studied period, the mortality of this group was higher than that of those aged 60 and over. With a few exceptions, this aspect can also be observed at the level of the control sample. Regarding the age group of 60 years and over, we observed an increase in life expectancy, in all of Romania and not only, increasing the average life expectancy of the population.

From the second half of the eighth decade of the 19th century, Sălaj shire moves to a new demographic regime, following the model of Transylvania. The gross mortality rate in Sălaj shire dropped from 36.1‰, in the second part of the eighth decade of the 19th century, to 26.8‰ before the outbreak of the First World War. The gross birth rate started to decrease only from the end of the nineties, when its value was 45‰, reaching between 1911-1914 the value of 39.4‰. It is obvious that,

after 1880, Sălaj shire falls under the phenomenon of demographic transition, which involved a development and modernization of society.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the phenomenon of emigration was also present in Sălaj shire. And in the case of our investigation area, this phenomenon intensified between 1901-1910, with 6,361 people leaving Sălaj shire. The main cause of this phenomenon was the poor economic situation of many peasants.

In the investigated interval, the annual number of marriages at the shire/county level of Sălaj was influenced by different factors. They determined a higher or lower number of marriages between 1876 and 1941. In years when agricultural productions were quantitatively good, the marriage rate was usually higher. During the Great War, due to the mobilization of men to the front, the number of marriages registered an obvious decline. Nuptiality was also influenced by the negative effects of epidemics. In the eighties and the last decade of the nineteenth century, the insecurity caused by epidemics reduced interest in starting new families.

The evolution of the gross rate of marriages at the level of the Sălaj shire/county, between 1876 and 1941, recorded annual variations. The lowest level of the gross marriage rate was recorded in 1915. As a result of the mobilization of men to the front, the gross marriage rate index was only 2.9% that year. The highest gross marriage rate was recorded in 1921 (12.8%). In the years following the Great War, the number of marriages experienced a considerable increase, this is because a good number of soldiers who returned from the front started marriages quickly.

As for the seasonal distribution of marriages, this was influenced both by periods of religious fasting and by the calendar of agricultural work. At the Sălaj shire/county level and at the control sample level, most marriages were registered in the months of February, May and November. A significant reduction in the number of marriages was recorded in the months of July, August and September, both at macrozonal and microzonal levels.

Analysis of the age at marriage of partners between 1876 and 1941 shows that, at both the shire and sample levels, in all age ranges, men chose younger partners, followed by those of similar age. Another aspect observed is that the vast majority of men married before the age of 30, while the vast majority of women married before the age of 24.

Regarding the marital status at the time of marriage, the vast majority of marriages were concluded between the spouses at the time of the first marriage. The death of one of the partners was the main factor leading to the interruption of the cycle of family life, and the best solution for solving

this problem was remarriage. The natural development of the family life cycle could also be interrupted by divorce. The number of remarriages in which one of the partners had the status of divorce is extremely small in our investigation area.

The analysis of mixed marriages from the confessional and ethnic point of view in the area of Sălaj between 1876 and 1941 shows that, compared to the religious criterion, the ethnic one was a priority in structuring marital behaviors.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, in Sălaj shire and in three of the seven settlements studied, we observed an increase in the number of divorces. Such an upward trend was also recorded at the level of the whole of Transylvania, being the result of the introduction of civil legislation in matrimonial matters in the years 1894-1895, but also of the natural trends of modernization of demographic behavior.

Examining the data on the reproductive behavior of individuals from the Greek-Catholic parishes of Bulgari, Biușa and Nușfalău reveals, in general, an identical behavior. In all three settlements, the average age of women at first marriage was below 22 years, following the marital pattern in the Eastern and South-Eastern European area of the 19th century. Another aspect that I was able to observe by compiling the family files is related to the interval between marriage and the first birth. In all three analyzed parishes, it can be seen that young families needed a period of adaptation to the rigors of this status, and contraceptive methods were used to delay the birth of the first child. Regarding the average age of women at the last birth, it was under 35 years in the case of all settlements, which indicates the use of contraceptive means. The files with the 30 reconstituted families reveal a major problem of the era, high child mortality, affecting both families with many children and those with fewer children.

Based on the seven censuses that we had at hand, in the fourth chapter the population of the Sălaj shire/county was analyzed from the point of view of the structure by nationalities, denominations, by gender, by age groups, by marital status and composition socio-professional. Between 1880 and 1941, the ethnic structure of the Sălaj shire/county underwent changes depending on the political regime, the territorial-administrative changes and the events that took place during this interval. However, the Romanian ethnic element was the majority in Sălaj throughout this period. During the period of Austro-Hungarian dualism, the phenomenon of ethnic assimilation through Hungarianization affected the Romanians in Sălaj shire, their share decreasing from 60.38% in 1880 to 59.13% in 1910. At the same time, the share of Hungarians increased from 34.03% to 37.93%. The

process of Hungarianization did not only affect the Romanians, but also the Jews, Gypsies, Slovaks and Germans in the county, the aim being to artificially increase the number of the Hungarian population and reduce that of other nationalities. During the Austro-Hungarian dualism, the cities were real places of concentration of the Hungarian population. The proportion of the Hungarian element experienced a rapid artificial increase in the towns of the county. After the Great Union of 1918, population records were made on the basis of the declared nationality (not on the basis of the language spoken, as in the dualist period) of the reviewed individuals, which allowed individuals to declare their actual nationality. In 1920, the share of the Romanian population in the total population increased, and that of the Hungarians decreased compared to 1910. Following the outbreak of the Second World War and the Vienna Diktat of August 1940, Sălajul was part of the Romanian territories from Transylvania ceded to Hungary. The Vienna Diktat had dire consequences for the population through the exodus of refugees, population expulsions and other losses recorded after this event.

Regarding the confessional structure, the Greek-Catholic one, associated almost entirely with the Romanian nationality, represented the majority denomination in the Sălaj shire/county between 1880 and 1941. During the period of Austro-Hungarian dualism, the denominations associated with the Romanian nationality experienced a decrease in the share in the total population, while most denominations associated with the Hungarian ethnicity were on an upward trend. Also during the period of dualism, the presence of Jews in the county is attested by the registration of the Mosaic religion, which saw an increase in its weight in the total population, from 4.07 in 1880 to 4.27 in 1910. After the Great Union, in the 1930 census, the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics experienced a significant increase, while the number of those of the Reformed and Roman Catholic denominations had a more modest increase compared to the 1900-1910 interval. After the Vienna Diktat, from August 1940, the confessional structure of Sălaj shire underwent major changes. After the establishment of Hungarian power, the Romanian Church was suppressed. The number of Orthodox in the shire of Sălaj decreases compared to 1930. In some localities with a majority Hungarian population, a decrease in the number of Greek Catholics is also observed between 1930 and 1941. The Roman Catholic and Reformed churches, once again under the protection of the Hungarian state, register a increase in the number of followers.

Regarding the gender structure of the population of Sălaj shire/county, in all the censuses conducted between 1880 and 1941, the share of the female gender was higher compared to that of the male gender. The numerical superiority of women is primarily associated with an overbirth rate, but

also with a male overmortality that existed in the era. On the other hand, the majority of people who emigrated from Sălaj shire between 1899 and 1914 were male. Then, military events during World War I and World War II amplified male excess mortality. All these factors influenced the gender structure of our investigation area during this interval.

The analysis of the age group structure of the population of Sălaj shire between 1880 and 1941 highlighted the phenomenon of population aging, which took off at the end of the 19th century and continued into the 20th century. Thus, the percentage of those aged 60 and over registered an important increase, from 6.11% in 1880 to 8.00% in 1941. Such an increase was also observed in most of the settlements that make up the control sample between 1900 and 1941. The successive reduction of the birth rate, as a result of Sălaj shire entering the phase of demographic transition, together with the general decrease in mortality, had the effect of increasing life expectancy and, implicitly, the aging of the population.

Regarding the structure of the population of the Sălaj shire/county by marital status, between 1880 and 1941, we observed a downward trend in the unmarried population and an increase in the married population. This situation shows that, from this perspective, our area of investigation presents a delay in the process of demographic transition, characterized by the increase in celibacy and the decrease in the number of married people. The percentage of widows experienced a decrease in the interval 1880-1941, a phenomenon that is due to the decrease in mortality and the increase in life expectancy for married people. The share of divorced people increased during this period, a process that reflects the innovative trends in Transylvanian society manifested in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The examination of the socio-professional structure of Sălaj between 1880-1941 highlights the fact that it maintains its predominantly agrarian character throughout this period. The censuses conducted between 1880 and 1941 show that the vast majority of the population in Sălaj shire/county was employed in agriculture. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the Hall takes steps towards a modern bourgeois system. Progress can be seen in the case of the industrial, commercial, financial, etc. sector. However, in the censuses carried out in 1930 and 1941, these branches are still poorly developed in the shire/county of Sălaj.

The last chapter of the doctoral thesis is intended exclusively for conclusions.

