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***HISTORY. CIVILIZATION. CULTURE* DOCTORAL SCHOOL**

***Urbanization of Miercurea Ciuc from 1876 to the
First World War***

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On the subject of the history of Miercurea Ciuc in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some significant events and unusual aspects of local history are readily accessible, including to the wider public – local people, visitors to the town, and anyone interested in its past – in the form of short articles and commemorative notices, mainly published in the press of the time.

In addition, thanks to earlier research and to the specialist literature, we also know the wider context, the general processes in the course of which not only Miercurea Ciuc but also many other towns in Hungary, including in the Szekely Land, changed and developed under the Dual Monarchy. Thus we know that at the beginning of the twentieth century a number of places took on a more significant administrative role, but that in numerous cases the attempt to make the transition from the way of life of a sizeable village to that of a town took years and brought to the surface serious differences of opinion among the inhabitants concerned. The railways slowly extended their reach throughout the country, linking many otherwise isolated settlements to an extensive network that was both Empire-wide and international. The outward aspect of towns changed: modern public buildings made their appearance, residential buildings became increasingly decorative, and the characteristic features of the architectural style in vogue started to appear on more and more facades. Streets became straighter, wider and cleaner and in due course were tarmacked – and the list of changes could continue.

However, it is much more difficult to capture the particular features of a process – in the present case, the specific things that render the development of Miercurea Ciuc unique – without identifying them exclusively with individual events and significant moments and thus losing sight of the powerful effects of the predominant tendencies at work. This is an especial challenge here because in our case a major part of the source material has been destroyed.

On the basis of records of building construction and of the processes described in the dissertation (the town's promotion to the status of county town, the construction of its County Hall, the Vigadó building, what was the Catholic High School complex with its boys' theological training school and boarding accommodation, and new residential and other buildings, together with its expansion, the laying-out of new streets, the construction of pavements, the channelling of watercourses, improvements in public health infrastructure, and

so on), we can confidently state that these years at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century marked one of the most important periods in the history of Miercurea Ciuc and one in which the town underwent significant development. While this dissertation is strongly focused on accounts of the construction of certain buildings, I believe that these case studies also shed light on many other aspects of urbanisation, besides describing research results that are relevant to the history of art.

With regard to the timeframe of my dissertation, I should underline the fact that its jumping-off point is not 1867, the year of the Compromise, but rather 1876, when the county of Ciuc was established under the provisions of Law XXXIII/1876 on the definition of the area of certain jurisdictions and connected measures, and Miercurea Ciuc became its county town.¹ My dissertation traces the development of the town up until the First World War, but I have deliberately chosen not to delimit this period more precisely. While there is no doubt that from many points of view the outbreak of war constituted a rupture with what had gone before, some of the processes that had begun in the last years of the nineteenth century had not come to an end by 1914 or by 1918, and we can even find examples of some of these projects being realised as late as the inter-war period. For this reason, besides a separate chapter at the end of the dissertation dealing with events after the First World War, I have not finished my discussion of some subjects with the news of the events that overturned everything, nor with the invasion and retreat of Romanian troops in 1916. I even discuss some aspects of the cultural life of Miercurea Ciuc in a case study in which the central event is a fundraising soirée held in Spring 1920 – although, naturally, its antecedents go back further than that, as is made clear in the relevant chapter.

The spatial limits of the town – and of the research topic – also deserve a mention here. Şumuleu Ciuc, Jigodin and Toplița form part of present-day Miercurea Ciuc, but of course this was not always the case. The boundary between Miercurea Ciuc and Martonfalva is still clearly visible on a widely-known map from the mid-nineteenth century² – Mikó Castle, for example, belonged to the latter at that time. It is clear from the data concerned with the history of settlements collected by Géza Vámszer and from János Szócs' notes on the same subject that

¹ 1876. évi XXXIII. törvénycikk némely törvényhatóság területének szabályozásáról és az ezzel kapcsolatos intézkedésekről.

<https://net.jogtar.hu/getpdf?docid=87600033.TV&targetdate=&printTitle=1876.+%C3%A9vi+XXXIII.+t%C3%B6rv%C3%A9nycikk&referer=1000ev> (Ultima descărcare: 15 iunie 2022.)

² Mai târziu voi mai reveni asupra hărții desenate de Géza Vámszer, care a fost publicată în volumul: I will return later to the map drawn by Géza Vámszer, which was published in Vofkori György: *Csikszereda és Csíksomlyó képes története*. Typografika, Békéscsaba, 2007.

while Martonfalva and, later, Csütörtökfalva became part of Miercurea Ciuc in the second half of the nineteenth century,³ Șumuleu Ciuc, Jigodin and Toplița continued for a long time to be separate settlements,⁴ and I have therefore for the purposes of my investigations limited myself to the area of the town as it was at the close of the nineteenth century.

In my dissertation I have endeavoured to rely primarily on archive sources (and on other kinds of sources, but preponderantly written ones) when discussing some subjects. I have tried to proceed in this way whenever possible, but in Miercurea Ciuc the position as regards source materials is distinctly unusual. I have supplemented these sources with information taken from the press of the day, recollections, archive images and elsewhere. However, there are also some questions and issues for which all I had at my disposal were newspaper articles, longer articles, monographs, studies and collections of data, again from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Something I must not fail to mention is that at the same time as I was processing these sources I also made an analysis of the buildings concerned in my role as an art historian; I wrote detailed descriptions of them and attempted to place them within a broader historical and architectural context.

I would also like to underline the fact that a significant proportion of the source materials for the town I have studied display a narrative and descriptive point of view that is characteristically mocking and (self)ironising, and that I have not always managed to ignore the language that stems from this approach. Here, of course, I am not referring principally to the writers of memorials who from time to time came to Miercurea Ciuc from very distant places and who bequeathed to posterity texts that reveal the disappointment or even disdain that they felt towards the settlement but, for example, even to Imre Tivai Nagy, someone to whose writings I frequently return, a man who did much to aid the socio-economic development of the town and its surroundings but who at the same time categorised the state of local government there in the late nineteenth century as follows: *“The Town Council was made up of the trunkus⁵ [indigenous] element of the population along with some manly traders and entrepreneurs. At the beginning of this period, the poorest of this latter group was paying scarcely more than 20 forints in taxes. The indigenous citizens hated the members of the other group with a deadly hatred, and if the latter found a way to speak up in a meeting they would abuse them verbally*

³ Vámszer Géza: *Csik vármegye településtörténete*. Helytörténeti adatok. Jegyzetekkel ellátta Szócs János. Pallas-Akadémia, Csíkszereda, 2007. 38., 58.

⁴ Ibid. 51.

⁵ Term used, particularly by locals, to describe the original inhabitants of Miercurea Ciuc.

and wonder aloud scornfully what the 'parvenu' wanted. Viscount Antal Becze, who owned a house and lands in the town, would frequently slip out of meetings of the council of deputies when he was called a 'parvenu' by some indigenous member gesticulating, hat on head and pipe in mouth, against the 'parvenus' in the meeting. On such occasions, the mayor presiding at the meeting would vainly admonish the irate member: 'Take your hat off and shut up, you donkey!' or 'Get out, you dolt!', but as these polite admonitions had little effect, the meeting would continue without any offence or interruption. [...] I am closely acquainted with the noble magistrates from the time when I used to employ all my linguistic abilities in an attempt to persuade them to stop writing Tanáts instead of Tanács [Council] on official documents. However, I did not succeed in convincing either the mayor or the notary about this spelling. As for the gentleman councillors, I did not even attempt to persuade them of the point, because in any case they hardly ever wrote the word. As far as conferring was concerned, they conferred, but they hardly wrote anything down. Their positions did not necessitate too much writing at that time. Even the mayor did not trouble himself too much with writing. So the majority of the writing was left to the notary, József Jakab. Only he kept writing non-stop, as this had been his ambition ever since he had acquired the skill.⁶

In addition, I would like to say a few words about the photographs in the text and the images that accompany it. In those cases in which I considered that an archive image, some detail of a building, a portrait etc. would flesh out what I had just described by facilitating both reading and assimilation, I have inserted the image in the relevant part of the text. By contrast, in situations in which there was a need for a full photographic documentation to show the ground plan or facades of a building, I have placed the relevant images in an annex in order not to overburden the text with them.

After this introduction, followed by a summary of the conceptual and methodological framework, the sources used and the history of my research, the dissertation reviews the history of the town from its beginnings up to the Compromise. I then analyse the way the town was transformed, with a particular focus on the story of the building of the new Ciuc County Hall, the Vigadó and the Catholic High School complex. Quite apart from the fact that the existence of archive sources made possible a detailed reconstruction of the story of the erection of these three public buildings, the emphasis I have placed on them can be justified by a number of considerations. We are dealing in each case with a different kind of building, and the interests

⁶ Tivai Nagy Imre: *Emlékezés régi csikiakról*. Csikszereda Kiadóhivatal, Csikszereda, 2009. 36–39.

of the parties most involved in planning its construction – the government itself, the county, the town (and its inhabitants), and the Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania – were different. It is not by chance that the story of the planning and construction of these three key buildings and the local reaction to them covers almost the whole of the period under study: the new County Hall was finished in the late 1880s, the need for a cultural centre and the construction of the Vigadó building were under discussion in the early years of the twentieth century, and the final handing-over of the Catholic High School building complex took place immediately prior to the outbreak of the First World War.

I next turn my attention to the construction of residential buildings and more specifically to the circumstances and details of the construction of what was Antal Fejér's house on Vár Street, since this is the only residential building erected in Miercurea Ciuc in this period for which a significant proportion of the contemporary construction documentation has survived. After examining buildings, I deal with issues connected with the laying out of new streets, the organising of pavements and the channelling of the watercourses that traverse the town.

In the final sections of the dissertation I set the processes described in the case of Miercurea Ciuc in a wider context. I also give a brief account of what happened in the town after the First World War.

I believe it is relevant to point out the fact that while in the case of Cluj, to take an example, historians and art historians have recently devoted individual works to political life, the functioning of local government, industry, public works, epidemics and the built patrimony during the Dual Monarchy, in the case of Miercurea Ciuc no such targeted research has yet been carried out (of course, there remains the important question of the extent to which the different situation of the latter town with regard to source materials would allow this to be done) – which is a further justification for the broader perspective my dissertation employs.

Let us now look at some of the research results. Miercurea Ciuc's new County Hall was built in the late nineteenth century and officially opened in February 1888. As for the immediate circumstances that gave rise to this building project, it is important to emphasise the fact that when, in the course of the administrative reforms of the late nineteenth century, the status of county town of Ciuc county was transferred from Șumuleu Ciuc to Miercurea Ciuc, the latter, which was still at that time more rural than urban in character, had to construct a headquarters for its new administrative role that was fitting in terms both of location and of size and appearance.

Even so, the decision to build a new County Hall could not be implemented for a long time, for the reason that obtaining a suitable plot of land for the construction necessitated an exchange of land which involved not only the county but also the military authorities. The complications connected with this exchange of land delayed the building of the new headquarters for a lengthy period, and the story of the exchange of plots of land that emerges from the sources is of particular interest, since it provides a very good illustration of relations between the different branches of government in late nineteenth-century Hungary. Besides the history of the land exchange, I have also reconstructed a detailed history of the building of Ciuc county's new County Hall, including the reasons behind the modifications to the plans that became necessary during the process, the financial circumstances of the construction and the actual construction process. Possibly one of the most important results of this research was the gathering of information about Ignác Hám, the architect behind the new County Hall, who emerges as an architect from western Hungary who played a major role in making the new County Hall a building of high quality in terms both of the work that went into it and of its visual aspect. For Ignác Hám, an exhaustive study of the *Magyar tiszti cím- és névtár* (Directory of the titles and names of Hungarian public servants) brought to light details about his career, in the course of which he visited many counties in Hungary and was present (among other projects) for the final stages of the construction of the County Hall in Nagybecskerek, which was built in parallel with that in Miercurea Ciuc. A further important research finding is that the new Ciuc County Hall can be assigned to the third major period of Hungarian county hall architecture; besides the Baroque and later the Neoclassical architecture found in county halls, those which needed to be built after the Compromise, particularly in new county towns, form a significant group. One of the most widely-found characteristics of this latter group is the fact that they were built in an eclectic style, initially Neo-Renaissance and later Neo-Baroque. Consideration of the circumstances and period of construction of the new County Hall and of the general characteristics shared by county halls built in this period made it possible to place the Miercurea Ciuc County Hall in a wider context.

The other building to which I have devoted a more detailed study in my research to date is the Miercurea Ciuc Vigadó, completed in 1904. Already in the late nineteenth century there had existed a strong desire for a suitable hall or building for public cultural purposes, for plays performed by the town's amateur theatre groups, for musical soirées and for hosting visiting artistes. After a lengthy period of waiting and many years of inadequate conditions, the new Reduta [Redoubt] building, put up in less than a year, finally proved a disappointment for the

enthusiasm and high hopes of the people of Miercurea Ciuc, since it very quickly proved to be almost entirely impossible to use because of planning errors; it had to be closed in the middle of January 1905 for a lengthy period, only two weeks after the inaugural ceremony. One important result of my research into the Vigadó that deserves to be highlighted has to do with its architect, on this occasion Róbert Szász. From information so far published regarding him I was able to discover that Róbert Szász, who was generally described merely as an engineer belonging to the State Office of Architecture, was in fact a member of the noble Szemerjai Szász family of Trei Scaune [Three Seats] and that his best-known relatives were Károly Szemerjai Szász (I), a teacher at the college in Aiud, and Károly Szemerjai Szász (II), a Reformed bishop. During my research, the name of Róbert Szász also came up in connection with a house in Cluj, which could open up a new line of research, it being very probable, though as yet unproven, that the house in Cluj too was built by the same man who designed the Vigadó building. For the Vigadó, another discovery was a rich collection of architect's drawings, currently held in the Miercurea Ciuc Archives (Harghita County Directorate of the National Archives). This material includes plans drawn up at the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century in the hope that the Vigadó could be renovated and transformed – plans which sadly were never implemented. We are talking about detailed plans, cross-sections, and ideas for repurposing the various storeys of the building that give us information about its walls, structure and the technical decisions taken that is of great value to today's researchers.

At the meeting-point of the roads that lead from Miercurea Ciuc to Toplița and to Șumuleu Ciuc, on an extensive site, stands the imposing building of the onetime Miercurea Ciuc secondary school of the Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania; the building is now home to two institutions, the Márton Áron Secondary School and the Segítő Mária [Mary Help of Christians] Roman Catholic Theological High School. The construction of this ensemble, whose striking dimensions and distinctive main facade mean that it dominates the townscape to this day, began in 1909; the first two wings were inaugurated in 1911, and the building was handed over for use in 1913. Although this school is one of the most prestigious secondary schools built by the Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania in the early twentieth century and one of the most important public buildings erected in Miercurea Ciuc at the beginning of the last century, it has not yet been studied from an art history perspective. The research upon which I embarked in 2012 sets out to remedy this deficiency.

As will already have become evident from the presentation of the history of the research project that I give at the beginning of my dissertation, the crucial question, which in the end became

the basis for researching this complex of buildings, took shape from the very outset – namely, the issue of the identity of its architect. Since the one-sided and at times repetitive statements found in the specialist literature had not yet been compared with the relevant source materials, the identity of the designer of the onetime Catholic secondary school in Miercurea Ciuc was for a long time uncertain. During the process of collecting archive sources, a different way of approaching the building took shape – that of researching it from the point of view of its construction history. However, bearing in mind that many details regarding this are still unclear, the chapter concerned limits itself to discussing the issue of the planning process, presenting it in as comprehensive and multi-faceted a way as possible and formulating possible answers, which means that the next step will be that of summarising the history of the building's construction.

. The idea of moving the centuries-old educational institution founded by the Franciscans from Șumuleu Ciuc to Miercurea Ciuc and of erecting a new building for the town that would be spacious, generously sized, impressive and decorative was first put forward in the late nineteenth century. The reasons for the relocation were principally the lack of space and dated character of the original building, but also the lack of storerooms and of suitable rooms for art and for physical education. Although there were also some who opposed the idea, chiefly by invoking the traditions of Șumuleu Ciuc and the beneficial effects of the environment there, the fact that the headquarters of the newly-founded county of Ciuc had been established at Miercurea Ciuc was no longer a minor consideration, and the town had begun to develop in such a way as to offer new opportunities for both teachers and students.

Although the need for relocation and reconstruction was soon beyond any doubt, the laborious process took many years, during which time numerous overturnings of the situation also came into play. While the specialist literature is unanimous in identifying the former Catholic secondary school building in Miercurea Ciuc as the work of the renowned Budapest architect Ignác Alpár, the new research summarised in this dissertation offers a more nuanced picture. We can take it as certain that the architectural drawings made as suggestions by Ignác Alpár at the beginning of the twentieth century were, after a lengthy interruption, taken further and adapted to suit local needs by Sándor Pápai, the architect of the Transylvania Roman Catholic Status, in a way that had a decisive influence on the design of the building's principal facade. My dissertation also presents recently discovered and previously unknown details of Sándor Pápai's oeuvre.

Besides the retracing of the story of the building's construction, another research task was that of clarifying the extent to which the process described above can be regarded as typical of the building of secondary schools belonging to the Roman Catholic Status of Transylvania during that period. What makes this question a pertinent one is the fact that, to judge by research to date, it appears that the designing of the Catholic secondary school in Târgu Secuiesc-Canta took place in a similar way, with the difference that in that case the plans were drawn not by Ignác Alpár but by a different Budapest architect, Albert Kőrössy.

In consequence, a major section of the dissertation first looks at the subject of the planning of the onetime Catholic secondary school in Miercurea Ciuc and its architect and then sets the results of the research mentioned above in the context of the construction of schools in Hungary at that time and of the pedagogical and hygiene-related needs and standards involved in their modernisation. Since a brief but extremely lively description of the first two wings of the building – the secondary school and the boarding house – has survived from the time when it was handed over for use, it has also been possible to compare the plans with the finalised sections of the building. The complex of buildings, which has undergone recent renovation, is still a symbol of high quality education, and an additional aim of the present dissertation is to contribute to a fuller knowledge and understanding of the history of this secondary school.

As far as has been possible, I have also dealt with the current perception and use of the public buildings I have examined. Although it seems inconceivable that it will ever be possible to put together a more or less complete historical topography of Miercurea Ciuc, given the present state of research and the limited sources available, I believe that the research results I present in my dissertation can stand as a milestone along the route. In addition to the research described above, it has for the first time been possible to retrace the circumstances and history of the construction of a private house in Miercurea Ciuc in this period, and, in another first, to undertake a systematic study of how the town (and its centre) expanded and developed.

I am conscious of the fact that the inclusion of all this material has made my text both highly complex and multi-faceted, but I believe that it is precisely this that allows it to convey a more authentic picture of the development of the town during the Dual Monarchy and of the nature of this development.

I would now like to refocus on the unique characteristics of the development process. A century ago, Imre Tivai Nagy formulated certain characteristics of public cultural life in the area that have a degree of relevance from other points of view as well: *“My experience is that the*

progress of public culture in Ciuc county has always been managed in a haphazard and unplanned way. Our public institutions have been founded and have failed in a spontaneous manner, or perhaps on the basis of antipathies or sympathies, and steady competence has had nothing to do either with their founding or with their failure. [...] The reason for these unhappy circumstances is in the first place the fact that our society is lacking in leading and guiding forces, since we are poor from both a financial and a mentality point of view, being merely a few envious nobodies, so that it is unsurprising that no one wants to take a leading role or undertakes to do so. [...] We have only one thing in common, a naive ignorance and a simplistic mentality, which means that we always regard as good only what we do ourselves and view all the aspirations and opinions of the rest of the group as self-serving or at least suspect.”⁷

In his text *Jellemvonások (Character Traits)* – from which the extract above is taken – Tivai, departing from his customary ironic tone and anecdotal style, is harshly critical of his contemporaries and of public thinking in Miercurea Ciuc. Although the characterisation quoted may seem exaggerated in places, the kinds of behaviour described may also be felt strongly in articles in the press of the time – frequently cited as sources in this dissertation. It could of course be said that the press is the kind of genre that has always favoured critical comments. All the same, I have “witnessed” (in my research) differences of opinion, both long-lasting and paralysing, that have had a detrimental effect on the town’s development; a first example would be the disputes regarding the relocation of the onetime Catholic high school from Șumuleu Ciuc to Miercurea Ciuc, and a second a brusque and radical change of perception about the designer of the Vigadó building, who was fêted at one moment and in the next criticised for all the failures involved in the execution of the project. This state of affairs was also due to the lack both of a more fully developed vision and of any general desire for progress and modernisation, and to the lack of the necessary wish to cooperate and organise. However, the problem was above all the absence of a solid bourgeois stratum in society to provide all this.

The principal motive force behind the urban development of Miercurea Ciuc was its administrative importance and the fact that at the beginning of the period under study it became the county town of the new county of Ciuc. Other roles connected with development, such as the commercial (the pull exerted by markets and later by shops, and their economic power) and the cultural, fell into second place. As for the building of the railway and the station, although they undoubtedly contributed to modernisation and facilitated the circulation of news,

⁷ Tivai Nagy Imre: op. cit. 67–69.

information and travellers, they cannot be regarded as factors of major importance for the progress of the town.

Other specifics of the development process stand out if we compare Miercurea Ciuc with other towns in the Szekely Land. Judit Pál has devoted a number of studies to a parallel analysis of these places. It is clear that while in the case of Sfântu Gheorghe, for example, we can rely on powerful and charismatic mayors – first Bálint Császár and then Ferenc Gödri – in Miercurea Ciuc the importance of the town's first citizen is at best uncertain. Dr. Jenő Újfalusi was mayor of Miercurea Ciuc for the greater part of the period under discussion, and even though his name is naturally often mentioned in connection with specific investments and developments, the sources suggest that he was more of a quiet executor than an initiator or a real leader with a vision – a statement that is in accord with the statements of Imre Nagy Tivai cited above.

In addition, it appears from various declarations and statistics that the population grew by 182% in this period, a rate of increase that put Miercurea Ciuc among the fastest-growing towns in Hungary.⁸ The town also headed the list in terms of the number of people in the rural hinterland it served – a figure that greatly exceeded that for its own population.⁹ However, as many have already highlighted, these figures are deceptive if not qualified, since even in 1910 Miercurea Ciuc had only just over 3500 inhabitants.¹⁰

Nor can we ignore poverty as a local specific, as reflected in the size of investments during this period; while the total value of investments in the other Szekely towns between 1879 and 1908 exceeded 500,000 crowns, in Miercurea Ciuc the total was only 43.439 crowns, and according to official data these investments were financed entirely from loans.¹¹ Here the construction of the Vigadó building represents a special case. While it is true that it was not financed from the town budget, the source of the loan was not an external credit, i.e. the central government, since the construction of this palace was made possible with the help of a special property institution belonging to the Székely community, the Csíki Magánjavak. Here we should also mention a

⁸ Thirring Gusztáv: *Városaink népességének alakulása 1787-től 1910-ig*. Klny. a *Városi Szemle* 1911/7–8. számaiból. Apud Pál Judit: *Városok a kiváltságok és a modernizáció kihívásai között*. In: Bárdi Nándor – Pál Judit (szerk.): *Székelyföld története III. 1867–1990*. MTA BTK–EME–HRM, Székelyudvarhely, 2016. 254.

⁹ Beluszky Pál – Győri Róbert: *Magyar városhálózat a 20. század elején*. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest, 2005. 146.

¹⁰ Thirring Gusztáv: *Városaink népességének alakulása 1787-től 1910-ig*. Klny. a *Városi Szemle* 1911/7–8. számaiból. Apud Pál Judit: *Városok a kiváltságok és a modernizáció kihívásai között*. In: Bárdi Nándor – Pál Judit (szerk.): *Székelyföld története III. 1867–1990*. MTA BTK–EME–HRM, Székelyudvarhely, 2016. 254.

¹¹ Thirring Gusztáv: *A magyar városok statisztikai évkönyve*. A magyar városok országos kongresszusának iratai. II., Budapest, 1912. 621. Apud Pál Judit: *Városok a kiváltságok és a modernizáció kihívásai között*. In: Bárdi Nándor – Pál Judit (szerk.): op. cit. 252.

phenomenon to which Tivai Nagy (to cite him once again) draws our attention in connection with the building of the railway: since at the beginning of the period studied the inhabitants of Miercurea Ciuc and the surrounding area were mainly engaged in agriculture, it was hard to plan construction works on the basis of their continuous labour, since most of them would down tools at busy times in the agricultural year. However, it is true that this situation had changed to some degree by 1900.¹²

This having been said, the questions raised in the Introduction as a follow-up to the work of Judit Pál – Is it possible to speak of urban development in the specific context of the Szekely Land during the Dual Monarchy, and, if so, what did this development signify? What urban functions can be taken into consideration and how important was their presence in the town studied? How did a specific town experience the transformation or loss of its privileges? How organic was development? How important a role did the State play in the development of the town? To what extent was local society able to cope with the challenges of modernisation, how did it react, what techniques did it develop? How did traditional and modern elements coexist, and how did they combine? – have for the most part been answered, although some of the conclusions drawn are hard to support with concrete data. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Miercurea Ciuc too experienced a demand for larger, more highly decorated and more representative buildings, for better and more comfortable living conditions, for streets and pavements that were clean and easily negotiable and for a modern lifestyle. Whether sooner or later, innovations in the look of streets, in facades and in people's homes inevitably made their appearance. All the same, it seems that the town – possibly in part because of the centuries of stagnation and the lack of a tradition of organic development, or possibly because it was not ready for the new administrative role that had been entrusted to it without the necessary preparation – was not suitable ground for these innovations, with the result that initiatives and developments took place only sporadically or remained unfinished.

Finally, I would like to mention a possible direction for further research. The change that took place in the urban landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not merely an expression of modernity but was also important both for the direct representation of a settlement and for its representation as mediated through postcards. As Gábor Gyáni says in *Vidéki urbanizáció* (Rural Urbanisation), “*In the end, let us not forget that what makes a given*

¹² Pál Judit: *Városok a kiváltságok és a modernizáció kihívásai között*. In: Bárdi Nándor – Pál Judit (szerk.): op. cit. 258.

place a town is what it looks like".¹³ Taking this statement as her jumping-off point, Anna Keszeg has given a summary of what made up the visual landscape of a town at the beginning of the last century (from streets, buildings, street furniture and public transport to the interior of the place's coffee shops, its theatre performances and cinemas) and then, for some of the largest towns in Hungary at the beginning of that century, has analysed which items from this whole list can be identified on the postcards that were becoming more and more widespread and what conclusions can be drawn from them in the case of the towns selected. Keszeg synthesised into five points the codes she was looking for in the pictorial material from each place: "1. *The new spatial structures of the modern town – boulevards, streets, squares*; 2. *The types of building a modern town has – apartment buildings, headquarters of institutions, courthouses, new educational institutions, town halls, factories, etc.*; 3. *Urban furniture and public transport – publicity pillars for posters, benches, bus stops, public transport, private cars*; 4. *Places for leisure time activities – coffee shop, circus, cabaret, fairs, cinema*; 5. *Spatial structures shaped by tourism and shopping – hotels, shops, department stores, banks and other commercial spaces.*"¹⁴

Although no systematic analysis of postcards showing Miercurea Ciuc has yet been made, taking Gábor Gyáni's statement and Anna Keszeg's study as a starting-point gives us ample grounds for reflection. On the basis of the images that were circulated, we may state that the appearance of Miercurea Ciuc in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries conferred upon it the character of a town, irrespective of the quality of the activities that were actually taking place behind its exterior aspect.

At the same time, according to Keszeg's observations, town halls are shown on the majority of postcards – for example, 50 postcards from Debrecen, 190 from Oradea and 139 from Szeged show either the whole of the institution or part of it.¹⁵ By contrast, in Miercurea Ciuc the number of representations of the Town Hall is overshadowed by that of the County Hall and of the other public buildings. Should the reason for this be sought only in the fact that the Miercurea Ciuc Town Hall was a quite simple and unadorned building, almost completely lacking in striking features and inherited from an earlier period, or also in the fact that Miercurea Ciuc regarded

¹³ Gyáni Gábor: *Vidéki urbanizáció*. In: Idem: *Az urbanizáció társadalomtörténete*. Tanulmányok. Korunk Komp-Press, Kolozsvár, 2012. 30.

¹⁴ Keszeg Anna: *A Magyar Királyság városainak látványstruktúrái a századforduló képeslapjain*. In: Kálai Sándor (szerk.): *Médiakultúra Közép-Kelet-Európában*. Letöltés 4. Média- és kommunikációtudományi könyvsorozat. Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, Kolozsvár, 2016. 135–137.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 140.

irself primarily as a county town? In the next stage of my research I will endeavour to give an answer to this question too, as well as to those already mentioned.