

**BABEȘ BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA**  
**FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY**  
**DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF POPULATION STUDIES AND HISTORY OF**  
**MINORITIES**

**PHD THESIS**  
**FIELD OF HISTORY**

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Cluj-Napoca

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**THESES**

*Communities in change. Inertia and social mobility in Transylvania (second half of the 19th century, beginning of the 20th century) Gurghiu Valley case study*  
*Summary*

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## KEYWORDS

*Demographic evolution, social mobility, marital mobility, education mobility, academic peregrination, demographic structure*

## SUMMARY

The topic of this PhD thesis, entitled *Communities in change. Inertia and social mobility in Transylvania. A case study of the Gurghiu Valley (1850-1910)*, is limited to demography as a scientific field. The present research, subsumed to the field of historical demography, aimed at capturing the dynamics and changes in the population structure of Turda (1866-1875), Mureş-Turda (1876-1910) counties and of the Gurghiu Valley micro-area in Mureş county, in the chronological interval 1850-1910.

In preparing this work, we were particularly motivated by the desire to restore and introduce into the scientific circuit new information, existing in archival collections and not only, but also to bring into discussion certain themes such as social mobility, marital mobility, marital fertility. Although this thesis is about a regional history theme, the historical reconstruction of the Mureş-Turda county and the villages of the Gurghiu Valley is intended to integrate this subject into the history of Transylvania.

The subject of the PhD thesis is concerned with several aspects of the Romanian and Hungarian society in the Gurghiu Valley micro-area, namely the seasonal movement of births, nuptials and deaths, the phenomenon of marital fertility, mixed confessional marriages, the problem of illegitimate births.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters plus some final conclusions and a bibliography. In the first chapter, I presented the historiography of the problem, the sources I used and the research methodology. Several categories of sources and documentary sources have been used for this paper. We have information about the population in the Mureş area thanks to censuses and volumes published by the Royal Hungarian Central Statistical Office, which contain annual information about the natural population movement. The present research has not only focused on a quantitative description of the demographic issues, but has also aimed to be a qualitative analysis of the phenomena and other aspects of the lives of individuals and families in the villages of the Gurghiu Valley.

In this regard, we conducted a microanalysis of reproductive behavior in Romanian communities (Orşova, Caşva, Hodac, Gurghiu) and Hungarian (Gurghiu) communities, and a study on intergenerational social mobility of individuals in the communities of Gurghiu and

Hodac. The reconstruction of families in these localities was done based on HPDT standards and using the interrelation methods that this database offers. By entering data from parish civil registers on births, marriages and deaths, we were able to create selective datasets and family reconstruction databases.

As a working method we propose the reconstruction of families and life course and social mobility tables, which include the association relationship between the social position of origin and destination. We will use HISCO and Hisclass\_5 coding to compare intergenerational mobility, stratification and social change, but we will also consider particular aspects such as the socio-professional background of individuals and the type of education completed.

In the second chapter of the paper, I followed the population dynamics in Turda and Mureș-Turda counties and in Gurghiu Valley between the seven censuses carried out by the Austro-Hungarian authorities.

Between 1850 and 1930, the population in our sample of ten villages (Adrian, Cașva, Comori, Gurghiu, Hodac, Ibănești, Jabeșița, Orșova, Solovăstru) increased from 7.971 inhabitants to 16.985 in 1930, which represented a real numerical increase of 9.014 people (113.1%). With the exception of the eighth decade, the dynamic was upward from one decade to the next. At macro-area level the situation was similar. In the period 1880-1930, the population of Mureș-Turda county increased from 158.999 inhabitants to 289.546, which represented a real numerical increase of 130.547 individuals (82.1%).

We also witnessed a process of population growth in urban areas. In the county area, between 1880 and 1930, the increase in urban population was balanced. Thus, between 1880 and 1900, the population concentrated in urban areas increased by 7.539 (40.7%) people, while the period 1900-1930 saw an increase in urban residents by 21.733 (83.3%).

In the chapters three, four and five, were analyzed the basic components of the natural movement of the population – birth rate, mortality rate, marriage rate.

The population dynamics in the researched area was also influenced by the main phenomena that make up the natural movement. In terms of the birth rate and the gross birth rate indicator, there was an upward or downward trend from one year to the next. By examining the evolution of the gross birth rate in Mureș-Turda County, spread over five years, it was possible to observe much better the general trend that characterized the birth rate phenomenon in the period 1876-1912. Thus, between 1876 and 1880, the gross birth rate was extremely high at 39.9‰ and in the period 1881-1885 at 44.1‰. This significant increase followed a period of economic and social stability. Then the birth rate gradually began to

decline, reaching a low of 37.7‰ in the first decade of the 20th century. At the level of the control sample, the gross birth rate fell from 43.2‰ in 1850 to 35‰ in 1910.

In terms of the birth structure by demographic category, a preponderance of male births compared to female births was observed at county level and in the sample. In general, the proportion of male births ranged between 51-52% of the annual total of births and at county level.

Analysis of the seasonal movement of births also painted a picture of the reproductive behavior of individuals. Both at macro-area level and at the level of the eight parishes, the birth rate was not conditioned by religious restrictions (holidays, fasts) or by the rhythm of agricultural work during the year.

Between 1876 and 1910, the illegitimacy index at county level increased from one decade to the next (7.2% in 1876 to 13.7% in 1910). The increase in illegitimate births shows the changes in mentality at the beginning of the 20th century. At the level of the sample certain peculiarities were noted, throughout the period under analysis the average illegitimacy index was 3 percent lower than that recorded at the county level.

The dynamics of the death rate showed annual variations, as was the case for the gross birth rate. Between 1876 and 1910, the highest value was recorded in 1882 of 38‰, and the lowest value in 1899 of 23.4‰. From the ninth decade of the 19th century, Mureș-Turda County moved towards a new demographic regime, following the Transylvanian model. The gross mortality rate decreased from 32.1‰ (1892) to 26.3‰ (1912). The number of deaths in the villages surveyed also fell in the first decade of the 20th century, but marital fertility remained fairly high during this period.

In the ninth decade of the 19th century, Mureș-Turda county also experienced the beginning of the demographic transition period. This new regime brought important changes to the two main components of the natural population movement as mentioned above.

In the chapters three, four and five, were analyzed the basic components of the natural movement of the population – birth rate, mortality rate, marriage rate. The dynamics of the population in the researched area was also influenced by the main phenomena that make up the natural movement.

In chapter four regarding the nuptial phenomenon, we wanted to answer the following research questions: What was the average age at first marriage for women and men? What pattern does our micro zone fit into according to John Hajnal's theory? Was the ethnic criterion dominant in choosing a partner, in relation to the religious one? What were the reasons for filing separation lawsuits?

Given John Hajnal's theory, the villages in our sample fall into a cleavage zone, where the two models interfere. As for the average age of men at first marriage 24.7 and 27.1 years the micro zone follows the Western European pattern. Regarding the average age at first marriage of women, the sample fits into the Eastern pattern, as 80% of women marry between the ages of 19-22 years.

In Transylvania, the average age at first marriage was, in the same time interval around 25 years for men, they could marry only after participating in the three lots for the army and 18-21 years for women.

The mating behavior of individuals in the Gurghiu area was influenced by various economic and social factors. In years when agricultural yields were good, nuptial was high. The high number of marriages in certain months of the year, January, February and November, reflects the concordance between the rhythm of daily life dominated by agricultural work or religious prohibitions. The situation was similar at county level, with the peak periods being January-February and November.

The presence of marriages in the months of April and December, although in a period of prohibition imposed by the religious calendar, is explicable by the fact that 48.5% of the total population of the county in 1890, consisted of Reformed, Evangelical, and Unitarian. The criteria for selecting partners according to characteristics such as age, marital status, religion, and ethnicity revealed a number of interesting issues. The analysis of mixed marriages in terms of denomination revealed that the majority of individuals chose their partners with more emphasis on ethnicity than denomination.

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.

Also, in terms of remarriage, there have been very few cases where one of the partners was divorced. In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the county of Mureș-Turda and in four of the ten localities studied (Gurghiu, Glăjărie, Hodac, Ibănești) we observed an increase in the number of divorces. Such an upward trend was also recorded at the level of the entire Transylvania, being the result of the introduction of civil legislation regarding marriage in the years 1894-1895, but also of the natural trends of modernization of demographic behavior. The case study carried out on the basis of the data collected from the documents of the matrimonial processes of the Greek-Catholic couples captured a series of details from the life of traditional families. Behavioural aspects (drunkenness, violence, adultery) and a number of



specific behaviours to rural families (parental authority, parental choice of partner) were captured.

Trials filed before 1890 could last up to 10 years, after the introduction of civil legislation in 1894/1895 the duration of the trial dropped to a few months. The expenses of a separation process were quite high, and for this reason many gave up and preferred to live in cohabitation with someone else or reconcile with their partner.

The analysis of mixed marriages from a religious point of view revealed that most individuals chose their partners with more emphasis on ethnicity and not on religion.

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century recorded significant changes in the Mureș-Turda county regarding the phenomenon of marriage, with all its components (number, seasonal movement, population structure by marital status). All this reflects the process of modernization of society, in general, the slow change of some conservative practices.

The data on the reproductive behaviour of individuals in the Gurghiu area give us a picture of traditionalist communities. The families in the Romanian and Hungarian villages chose the model of a traditional large family, although the women, we believe, used contraceptive methods at the beginning of the marriage (the interval between the end of the marriage and the first birth being 2.5 years), their age at the final birth was quite advanced, 38.7 years in the women from Hodac and 37.3 years in the women from Gurghiu, having a longer reproductive career and a higher offspring.

The research on the aspects of reproductive behavior, at the level of the four localities highlighted a similarity between the Greek-Catholic from Cașva and Hodac regarding the number of children born. Among the Calvin-Reformed and Roman-Catholics of Gurghiu, the family system was spread with a somewhat smaller number of descendants, because they adopted preventive behavior at a younger age.

In the sixth chapter we wanted to present the dynamics of the peasant household and its social and economic functioning in the Romanian villages of Orșova, Comori, Solovăstru and Hodac. Using the model of analysis applied by Peter Laslett and E. A. Hammel on the villages of the studied micro-area we found that most domestic groups are married families with children (nucleus family) representing 57.8% - characteristic of the Western European model, but there is also a high percentage of 6.1% of multiple families and 8.1% of extended families – specific to the Balkan area. This shows that the Gurghiu Valley belongs to a transition zone where the two models, East European and West European, interfere.

According to the analysis model applied by Karl Kaser, our communities fit into model four – a household consisting of a couple with children. After the boys marry, their wives come and live with them. The transfer of property is not related to the death of the father or the marriage of one of the sons, but when the household divides into several groups after generations, using the property jointly. If there were several siblings, only one remained to look after the parents, the others were given a place to live, right next to the parental home. In the case of girls, they left the parental home after marriage, only single girls remained to live with their parents and in these cases it was the son-in-law who took over the running of the household.

The structure of a household is dynamic, over several generations it can change from a simple to a complex structure and to a multiple structure. This can be determined by several factors: marriage strategies, family economics, property size and inheritance.

According to Karl Kaser's explanation, the change of the head of the family and the transmission of property were not closely linked to the marriage of the children or the death of the father, but occurred with the emergence of a new generation. This pattern was prevalent in Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, Albania and many parts of Serbia and Bulgaria.

In the seventh chapter we aimed to capture the changes that occurred in the occupational structure in Mureş-Turda County and the control sample in the period 1850-1910. The analysis of the census data illustrated the process of transformation and modernization experienced by the Muresian society, which was especially visible in the censuses of 1900 and 1900. The percentage of the working population in the industrial sector increased from 8% in 1880 to 9.8% in 1900 and 13.3% in 1910. The percentage of the working population in agriculture decreased by 5% between 1900 and 1910, a situation also found in the control sample. This change is due to the emergence of factories and manufactures in the towns of the county of Târgu Mureş and the Saxon Reghin in the ninth decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The creation of new jobs has in turn led to an increase in the urban population. Thus, the population of the municipality of Târgu Mureş increased from 12,883 in 1880 to 25,517 in 1910, representing a real increase of 12,634 (98%).

Society in the Gurghiu Valley area at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was predominantly agrarian and immobile from a socio-professional point of view. Romanian and Hungarian families in the area studied were based on certain principles: individuals inherited the social status of their parents and only a very small percentage outlived their social status, a fairly high percentage married within the social group. The rate of social immobility among the

Roman Catholic and Reformed population was 57.4%, most cases were recorded in the class of day laborers (155) and farmers (129). A high number of cases are also found in the class of skilled workers (furriers, shoemakers, tailors, potters, craftsmen) which indicates that the trades or at least the professional concept was passed on from father to son.

The rate of social immobility among Orthodox and Greek-Catholic young people was 74.1% in Gurghiu and 82% in Hodac, which is characteristic of a traditional area.

As far as marital mobility is concerned, individuals did not take on the social status of their parents-in-law, they only received a certain prestige if they joined a wealthy family. In rural communities, it was the woman who changed her status at the time of marriage, taking over that of her husband.

In the second part of chapter seven, we can deduce that ethnicity or denomination does not play an important role in terms of students' access to higher education, only that there are strong socio-professional specificities that are strongly emphasized according to ethnicity, and that these characteristics underline different social developments.

Education was a factor determining the social status of the individual in this area being closely related to the social status of the father. Those who graduated from an upper secondary school experienced a social jump from class 3 to classes 1 and 2. There was also downward social mobility in this area as a product of the small-scale industrialisation that emerged at the end of the 19th century.

We are dealing with a diversification of occupations - the sons of priests choose to pursue a career in medicine, in law, choose to study engineering, the sons of merchants become notaries and civil servants. Many individuals choose not to return to their home village, and we find them in cities such as Reghin, Târgu-Mureş or Cluj-Napoca. Although some of the sons of priests chose other professions, the preservation of status and social prestige was ensured by other members of the family, through marital strategies between the families of priests and the networks of kinship created through them.

Regarding the orientation towards study centers, it is very clear how Cluj was the preferred center for university studies both at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. The option of choosing the university center was dominated by localism and most probably by material reasons.