

*For a new history of territory and population.
The perspective of urban history*

The presentation of my professional activity follows the main topics approached since obtaining the title of PhD in History (2005) until the present:

- a. the history of the Greek-Catholic Church in Transylvania;
- b. the union of the Transylvanian Romanians with the Church of Rome;
- c. the history of religious tolerance in Transylvania;
- d. Transylvanian Principality in the 18th century;
- e. the history of religious minorities.

These themes reflect the evolution of my scientific interest from the ecclesiastical history of the Transylvanian Romanians to the general one of the Transylvanian Principality in the 18th century from a confessional-religious, social and cultural perspective and, more recently, to the research of the history of religious minorities, especially the Jewish one. Changing the angle of approach is explained by the conviction that has gradually taken shape in my mind and according to which the Romanians, as a distinct confessional group with their own identity, cannot be individually understood, without taking into consideration the other confessional groups or religious communities with which they have come into contact during pre-modern and modern history. In a similar manner, they represented an object of government for the secular and ecclesiastical central authority, adept of modernization, and the tension between acceptance of change and resistance led, in time, to changing the image specific to the ethnic communities of pre-modern Transylvania. To some extent, this image can still be perceived today through the patrimony that belonged to them and gave them a certain identity. Sacred places and areas still partially preserve the patrimony and sometimes help us restore the universe of the missing communities. History builds a link with the present and the researcher has to come down from the archives to find the vestiges of the past in the real world, thus, being able to diversify the perspectives of the analysis. Therefore, the evolution from ecclesiastical towards social and patrimonial and from the majority historical confessions to minority communities and the way in which they specifically marked the urban landscape of Transylvania in the pre-modern and modern age, characterize my scientific activity in the period under consideration.

The doctoral thesis devoted to the work of the Greek-Catholic bishop Ioan Bob (1782-1830) was subsumed with priority to the history of the ecclesiastical institutions in the context of the tendency of the Romanian historiography after 1989 to critically recover the history of the Church, especially the Greek Catholic Church, severely censored and ideologized during the communist regime. Without being able to exhaust a subject whose complexity was consistent with the vastness of the existing documentary material, the research of the thesis left open fertile investigation directions. I explored some of these directions afterwards, others remaining possible starting points for a resumption of the subject from a different perspective.

The insistence on the general history of the Greek-Catholic Church in Transylvania in the 18th century had as a result the publication of the volumes of documents devoted to the confessional unrests of the middle of the 18th century [*On the Church of the Romanians in Transylvania. External documents (1744-1754)*, in collaboration with Laura Stanciu and Keith Hitchins] and to the edition of the confessional conscription of the clergy and the Greek-Catholic Church in 1767 („... *virtuti decreti tollerantiae beneficia clero Graeci restituenda ...*”. *The Romanian Church in Transylvania in the statistical sources of 1767*, in collaboration with Ana Dumitran și Florean-Adrian Laslo). The significance of the latter is also reflected by its inclusion in the more recent volume published by Ambrus Miskolczy and Árpád E. Varga

(*Jozefinizmus tündérorszáiban, Erdély történeti demográfiájának forrásai a XVIII. Század második felében*, 2013). Within the chronological period approached by the doctoral thesis as well, there is the research theme on the theological dimension of the culture of the Transylvanian School, especially the neglected representatives of the current, such as Dimitrie Vaida and Teodor Pop. Just started, this theme remains to be developed in the upcoming period.

Approaching the subject of the union of the Transylvanian Romanians with the Church of Rome was occasioned by the collaboration on the research project initiated by Pro Oriente Foundation, to which I contributed with several scientific papers published in journals or in the two synthesis volumes of the project (*The union of the Transylvanian Romanians with the Church of Rome*, vol. I, *From the beginnings until 1701*, vol. II, *From 1701 until 1761*). Thus, another direction of research has emerged, devoted to the contouring of the identity profile of the Romanians in Transylvania not united with the Church of Rome and to the historiographical reflection of this theme, materialized for the time being through the chronological period 1701-1744).

The history of religious tolerance in Transylvania was the subject of a research project, conducted between 2009-2011 (*Etatism and Confessional Diversity in a Multicultural Territory. Politics of Religious Tolerance in Transylvania during Joseph II*). In this context, I approached the inter-confessional relations from the period immediately preceding or following the publication of the Edict of Tolerance (1781) at the level of all Transylvanian historical Churches. Relevant results of the project were the volume of documents *Under the sign of tolerance. The Transylvanian Churches in new documents, 1781-1790*, but also the change of the direction of investigation, from the one subsumed to the ecclesiastical history, to the study of the social changes during the Eighteenth century reformism era. I have, thus, signalled the relationship between the Edict of Tolerance and the Edict of Concivility (published in 1781 as well), with particular relevance for the evolution of the Transylvanian society, especially of the urban communities, during the last two decades of the 18th century and the first decades of the next century. The study devoted to the edification of Romanian churches in the major cities of the Transylvanian Principality under the new conditions created by the policy of religious tolerance occasioned the beginning of a change in the direction of approach on the history of Transylvanian Principality, with reference to the end of the pre-modern period and the late modern period.

The new approach is illustrated by the volume of studies that brings together the works of the scientific conference organized in 2013 under the generic name of „Economy and Society in Central Eastern Europe. Territory, Population, Consumption”, whereby I have raised the issue of renewing the research of the relations between the economy and society, starting with a thorough understanding of the concepts of *territory* and *population*, on which the present approach focuses. The study of the evolution of the communities, especially the urban ones, which have entered since the end of the 18th century in their modernization phase, illustrated by the gradual integration of the periphery into the urban territory, can be better understood by the systematic exploitation of the statistical sources (confessional, fiscal and military conscriptions, censuses) as well as of the cartographic and topographical sources. Especially the latter, less used by historians, may contribute to the detailed reconstruction of the evolution of cities. On the other hand, the subsuming of most of the Transylvanian cities in the typology used in Europe (that of small and medium-sized towns), as well as the investigation of the development models of the big cities, are able to link the Romanian historical research with the methodology of the European urban history. I have approached this issue in some of the more recent studies, but for the closer dialogue between proper historical research and urbanism studies and architectural history the recent volume, *The City and the Great War: Architecture, Urbanism and Society after 1918* (edited in collaboration with Valeriu-Eugen Drăgan) advocates best. This volume extends the scope of the investigation to the contemporary period,

offering extremely useful research opportunities, for example on the consequences of urbanistic policies during the communist regime.

The research direction to which I have paid particular attention in the last period is the study of the history of confessional and religious minorities, especially of the Jewish minority, from the perspective of their sacred spaces (synagogues and cemeteries). The research of the funeral inscriptions in the Jewish cemetery in Alba Iulia, whose beginnings are probably prior to the 18th century, has a practical, preserving and restoring component, made possible thanks to the collaboration with topography and restoration specialists. Nor is the educational dimension to be neglected, being reflected by the training of the students participating in this project in the spirit of protecting the patrimony and the responsibility for the cultural heritage of the missing communities, as is the case with many of the Jewish communities.

The career development proposals are based on the above mentioned. They prioritize the historical study of the cities, according to the methodology of urban history, which also includes the research of the minority patrimony. Along with the cultural heritage of the dominant communities (Hungarians, Saxons, Romanians), these have contributed to shaping the image of Transylvanian cities. This study involves teamwork, both for the identification of documentary material and for field investigations, which will provide fertile research topics to the future PhD students. The practical course taught to the students at the BA level for a few years (*Confessional and Religious Minorities*) and the one recently proposed to the Master level (*Ethnic Minorities*) reflect the orientation of my teaching activity in this direction as well. Of course, I will not neglect the older research topics, which will also offer research topics for the PhD students.

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