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***”By now only the name of the village is Hungarian ...”
Demography of Magyaralsózsuk (Jucu), Magyarkályán
(Căianu) and Vajdakamarás (Vaida-Cămarăș) at the
Beginning of the 18th Century***

Many aspects of the demography of early modern Transylvania are still waiting to be unfolded. Demographic studies about the era shed light on only certain segments of the whole picture, due to the fragmented historical sources, as well as the limited scope of the censuses. Moreover, in the absence of fundamental research, it is not even possible to examine the migration processes that took place in the era. The censuses (*conscriptioes*) made in the first decades of the 18th century, which in many cases contain the names of the householders, are suitable for examining the demographic changes and the ethnic distribution of certain settlements. This article provides an insight into the demography of the Unitarian settlements belonging to the castle domain of Gyalu by using censuses and ecclesiastical sources. It should be emphasized that this type of research is only a drop in the ocean in terms of the complexity of the issue. However, its results hopefully contribute to a deeper understanding of the demographic changes of Transylvania.

Key words: history of Transylvania, early modern history, demography, population history, migration, demographic changes, ethnicity, urbaria, Unitarian bishop records, censuses



Many aspects of the demography of early modern Transylvania are still waiting to be unfolded. Demographic studies about the era shed light on only certain segments of the whole picture, due to the fragmented historical sources, as well as the limited scope of the censuses. An in-depth, interdisciplinary approach to the issue not only provides insight to the population history of the examined period, but it also highlights a forgotten segment of our nation's past. In the absence of fundamental research, however, it is not even possible to examine the migration processes took place in the era.

The censuses (*conscriptioes*) made in the first decades of the 18th century, which in many cases contain the names of the householders, are suitable for examining the demography of certain settlements. In the following, I will examine the population history of the Unitarian settlements belonging to the castle domain of Gyalu (Gilău, RO), with particular reference to the dynamics of different migration movements and changes in ethnic distribution.

Demographic changes in the Unitarian settlements of the castle domain of Gyalu

The Urbaria of the Castle Domain of Gyalu, published in 1944, provides the most comprehensive picture of the history of the domain and the demography of the settlements belonging to it. In addition to discussing the development of the domain, the author, Zsigmond Jakó, published *urbaria* covering nearly three centuries, providing valuable data on the population history of early modern Transylvania.¹ Putting aside the description of the history of the domain, of which Jakó gives a detailed analysis in the introduction, I would like to focus on the issue of possession, especially the question of from when the examined settlements belonged to the domain. Jakó writes the following in this regard: “[...] in 1649, when Zsigmond Rákóczy handed over Gyalu [i.e., the castle domain] to Ferenc, the son of György II Rákóczy, the novel accessories of the domain were Alsómagyarzsuk, Visa (Vișea, RO), Vajdakamarás, Asszonyfalva (Săcel, RO), Magyar – and Oláhkályán, Ajton (Aiton, RO), and Magyar – and Oláhbányabükk (Vâlcele, RO).”² Presumably, before the above mentioned year, the settlements became part of the domain. However, we have contradictory data about how long the examined settlements belonged to the domain. According to Sándor Varga, the villages of the Transylvanian Plain belonging to the domain, such as the settlements we examine, may have been seceded from the domain between 1727 and 1731. By contrast, József Benkő claims that Magyaralsózsuk and Magyararkályán were no longer in the hands of the treasury (*fiscus*) in 1669.³ Because of the lack of information in connection with the landowner society, we are unable to confirm or confute the assertions of the authors. However, it is undoubtable that the examined settlements were once part of the domain for a longer or shorter period of time.

The first reliable data regarding the demography of the examined settlements are dated to 1652. By analysing them, we may get an insight into the economic and social conditions of the given community, and at the same time, we can make an attempt to estimate the ethnic distribution of the residents. In Magyaralsózsuk, the manorial officials registered 4 householders in 1652, which, even taking into account the generally applied multiplication method used to estimate the number of a family, assumes a total of 20

¹ JAKÓ 1944. p. 1–418. Besides Jakó, many other scholars contributed to the examination of the population history of the Principality of Transylvania. Among them, first and foremost László Makkai and Attila T. Szabó should be mentioned. In addition, it is worth highlighting the work of David Prodan who also enriched our knowledge in many aspects concerning the demography of the early modern Transylvania by publishing the *urbaria* of the Land of Fogaras. For the latter, see PRODAN – URSUȚIU – URSUȚIU 1970; PRODAN 1976.

² JAKÓ 1944. p. XX.

³ VARGA 2011. p. 23; BENKŐ 1999 p. 364.

residents in the settlement. In the light of the fact that the urbarium also listed the number of children of the householders, the latter number reduces to 12, which may already give rise to suspicions that only part of the settlement belonged to the domain.⁴ An urbarium, only mentioned by Jakó, which in 1643 listed Magyaralsózsuk as a *partial estate* also confirms our assumption. Furthermore, the urbarium elaborated in 1652 does not include the term *integra* in contrast to the other two examined settlements. It probably intended to indicate that the entire village belonged to the castle domain. In addition, there are many accounts which named the Suki family as the landowner of the settlement and the surrounding areas.⁵ Based on their names (e.g., Bakk, Béres; Lőrinc, Pál),⁶ the registered householders are considered to be Hungarians. However, during the late Middle Ages, the Suki family settled a large number of Romanian serfs (*jobbagiones*) on its lands, including Ábeltelke, which is adjacent to Magyaralsózsuk.⁷ Unfortunately, we cannot give an answer to the question of how many Romanian serfs may have moved to Magyaralsózsuk from Ábeltelke, but there is no doubt that the number of Romanian settlers in the surrounding villages increased significantly during the examined period.⁸

In Magyaralkályán, also in 1652, the manorial officials registered 18 householders. Applying the multiplier used to estimate the number of a family, and complementing that with the number of the residents left out from the urbarium, a total population of 100 people can be assumed.⁹ The vast majority of the registered householders have Hungarian names (e.g., Kályáni, Nagy, Székely, Varga; Imre, István, Péter), but surnames used by Romanians (e.g., Mo[[]dovai, Paska) also appear in the urbarium. It is worth noting that the householders with Romanian surnames are all listed as newcomers (*advenae*), which suggests that they may have settled in the village shortly prior 1652.¹⁰ Romanians, similarly to Magyaralsózsuk, had been settled in the vicinity of the settlement during the late Middle Ages. The appearance of Oláhkályán in the written sources confirms the presence of the Romanian population.¹¹ According to Léstyán, Oláhkályán was depopulated by the 17th century, which is also approved by the urbarium dated to 1652, which mentions a bare settlement next to Magyaralkályán.¹² On the other hand, another account suggests that the sheer part was actually the original settlement which had been scorched by the army of Giorgio Basta at the beginning of the 17th century.¹³ In the case of Vajdakamarás, we also have an urbarium from 1652,

⁴ JAKÓ 1944. p. 142.

⁵ JAKÓ 1944. p. XCVII; KENOSI – UZONI 2009. p. 280.

⁶ JAKÓ 1944. p. 142.

⁷ H. BALÁZS 1939. p. 24–25, 63; VARGA 2011. p. 15.

⁸ VARGA 2011. p. 23; MAKKAI 1942. p. 240–242.

⁹ If we take into consideration other data listed in the urbarium (marital status of the householders, number of children, existential conditions of the people living in the given household), the number of the population may reduce.

¹⁰ JAKÓ 1944. p. 139.

¹¹ H. BALÁZS 1939. p. 63. Oláhkályán first appears in written sources in 1457 as "*utraque Kályán*". The first mention of Oláhkályán dated to 1468. For the latter, see LÉSTYÁN 2000. p. 220; MAKKAI 1942. p. 234.

¹² LÉSTYÁN 2000. p. 220; JAKÓ 1944. p. 140.

¹³ CoATSz.

according to that 24 householders lived in the settlement in the given year. Hence the total population – calculated with the previously applied multiplier – could have been approximately 100–120 people. The names in the urbarium (e.g., Dombi, Farkas, Kis, Szabó; András, Gergely, Pál) suggest that the majority of the residents was Hungarian. Moreover, considering the many identical surnames (e.g., Hagyó, Kodori, Nagy), there might be possible family connections with the inhabitants of Magyarakályán.¹⁴

More data on the demography of the settlements have been preserved by the Unitarian episcopal visitation records. Although each of the settlement had Unitarian parish in the examined period, we have no data in connection with visitation (*generalis visitatio*) in Magyaralsózsuk, despite the fact that the landowner Suki family, according to many accounts, belonged to this religious confession. Hence, the Unitarian Church somehow had to be represented in the village.¹⁵ In our view, however, it does not mean the omission of the *visitatores*, but it could be in connection with the unique situation of the Unitarian community in the settlement. As Kénosi and Uzoni state: “*in their* [i.e., the Suki family’s] *manor houses in Alsó- and Felsőzsuk, court preachers perform the worship. [...] For some time now, on Sundays, theology students have been going out from the city* [i.e., Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, RO)] *for worship, to whom are therefore being given the Christmas income of the mill.*”¹⁶ Thus, the visitators left out Magyaralsózsuk not out of negligence, but presumably for that reason, as it was not relevant to carry out the visitation in the settlement – given the possibly complete absence of church property.

In Magyarakályán, the visitation took place on April 14, 1693, on which occasion the number of *parishioners* was listed. Since that time only the Unitarian Church was present in the settlement, we have the opportunity to estimate the number of the Hungarian population. The church officials registered 9 parishioners, which – using the multiplier suggested by Lehel Molnár – assumes a Hungarian population of up to 36 people at the date of the visitation.¹⁷ Two visitations took place in Vajdakamarás (1693, 1711), however, the parishioners were not listed in either case, therefore we do not have data on the number of the Hungarian population. Nevertheless, the indirect information contained in the bishop’s records suggest that the Hungarian population, or a certain part of it, stayed in the village. The correspondence of the surnames mentioned in the records (e.g., Balogh, Kodori, Nagy) with the surnames listed in the urbarium analysed above also proves the aforementioned concept.¹⁸

In contrast with the Unitarian bishop records, the census dated to 1713 provides a much broader insight into the demography of the examined settlements. The census records, similar to the urbaria analysed above, sought primarily to assess the economic conditions of the householders, thus, it provides potentially valuable data not from a socio-historical rather than an

¹⁴ JAKÓ 1944. p. 137–138.

¹⁵ KÉNOSI–UZONI 2009. p. 280. Moreover, the Hungarian population, which may have already been in minority back then, was probably Unitarian without exception.

¹⁶ KÉNOSI–UZONI 2009. p. 301.

¹⁷ UNÉPVIRE p. 124; MOLNÁR 2020. p. 132.

¹⁸ UNÉPVIRE p. 122–123.

economic historical perspective. However, regarding the fact that the officials in charge of the census assessment also listed the names of the householders, we have the opportunity to analyse the ethnic proportion of the settlements. At the date of the census, 29 householders were registered in Magyaralsózsuk, which assumes a total population of approximately 150–160 people. Six of the householders are listed without name, all of whom are referred as vagabonds (*vagi*), which term was presumably intended to express that these people were not permanent residents. The rest of the householders were divided into three categories, such as serfs (*coloni, jobbagiones*), cottars (*inquilini*) and court servants (*aulici servi*). Based on their names (e.g., Durnye, Filip, Mold[o]ván, Oltyán, Vacar, Vaszka; Komán, Miron, Nikita, Teodor, Timofi, Vasilie, Vonye), they all can be considered Romanians.¹⁹ Also in 1713, 14 householders were registered in Magyarkályán, which assumes a total population of approximately 70–80 people. Householders identified as *vagus* (4 per.) are again listed without a name, therefore we are not able to determine their nationality. The remaining 10 householders, similarly to Magyaralsózsuk, were classified according to their social status. While the serfs (2 per.) can be considered to be Hungarians (János Kis, András Pap), most of the cottars (5 per.) and court servants²⁰ (3 per.) had family name or first name of Romanian origin (e.g., Mold[o]ván; Juon, Gyorgye, Stefán, Vasilie).²¹ In Vajdakamarás, 11 householders were registered in 1713, which assumes a total population of approximately 60 people. The vagabonds (3 per.) were not registered by name this time either, and – unlike the other two settlements – the officials did not list any court servants. The census contains mostly names of Hungarian origin (e.g., Árva, Farkas, Fehérvári, Kádár, Magyarországi; András, Gergely, Miklós), and in one case (Jére Orosz) the nationality of the householder is uncertain.²²

In addition to the analysis of the written sources connected to the demography of the settlements, it is also worth taking a look at the wider migration processes in order to understand the demographic changes. During the early modern era, the population of the region was constantly afflicted by wars and epidemics, which caused significant decline in the population of many villages, especially in the settlements along the main roads.²³ These demographic catastrophes have apparently affected the population of Magyarkályán and Vajdakamarás, as the decline in the population is demonstrated. In the case of Magyarkályán, at the same time, a large-scale population change took place as well, as a result the proportion of the Romanian population increased significantly. Vajdakamarás, although its population declined during the era, preserved its Hungarian majority. In Magyaralsózsuk, a population change may also have taken place, due to the appearance of new Romanian families and the rapid increase in the number of the previously settled Romanian population.

¹⁹ CONSCRIPTIO p. 180–181.

²⁰ Romanian court servants were probably given their surnames, which are often of Hungarian origin, after their occupation (e.g., Hajtás, Puskás, Vincellér).

²¹ CONSCRIPTIO p. 191–192.

²² CONSCRIPTIO p. 168–169.

²³ MAKKAI 2000. p. 40; SZABÓ 2002. p. 224.

Among the collection of Attila T. Szabó, we can read the following about Magyararkályán: *“by now only the name of the village is Hungarian [...] most of its residents came from other settlements [...] the names of the rest [...] Kodori, Székely, Szabó, Nemes, Hosszú, Csobán, descendants of Hungarians, but they abandoned their nationality, forgot their language, and they all follow the Eastern Orthodox Church.”*²⁴ Although this note dates from 1864, there can be no doubt that both Magyararkályán and Magyaralsózsuk had already lost the vast majority of their Hungarian population during the early modern period. Thus, even then, the villages preserved the memory of the former residents only in their names. On the other hand, Vajdakamarás retained its Hungarian majority. As the Hungarian population became a minority, and as the landlords initiated mostly violent religious conversions,²⁵ the Unitarian parishes ceased to operate in the settlements over time.²⁶ Although the Unitarian community remained intact in Magyaralsózsuk for decades, a Greek Catholic parish was also established in the settlement due to the significant number of Romanian population. In Magyararkályán the Unitarian population converted to the Calvinist confession, while the Romanian serfs formed a Greek Catholic parish here as well. In Vajdakamarás, the Unitarian Church was also replaced by the Calvinist Church, and at the same time a smaller Greek Catholic community was also formed.²⁷ As we have seen, an extensive population movement took place during the examined period. As a result of these migration processes, new incomers, mostly Romanians settled in the villages. Thus, the ethnic distribution of the examined settlements changed dramatically, predicting the expansion of the Romanian population in Transylvania.

²⁴ CoASZT

²⁵ While Kénosi and Uzoni highlight the cruelty of the missionaries in both Magyararkályán and Vajdakamarás, Benkő emphasizes – at least in connection with Vajdakamarás – that the Unitarian population converted of its own free will. KÉNOSI – UZONI 2009 p. 281–283, 326–328; BENKŐ 1999 p. 368.

²⁶ In 1766, the visitors listed Magyaralsózsuk as the *filia* of Kolozsvár. At the same year, the church officials in Magyararkályán and Vajdakamarás did not find any Unitarians. MOLNÁR 2020. p. 123. cf. MATKÓ 1997. p. 42.

²⁷ For the number of members of the parishes, see BENKŐ 1999. p. 407; MOLNÁR 2020. p. 123; TOGAN 1898. p. 25

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