

**ROMANIAN ACADEMY
„GEORGE BARITIU” INSTITUT OF HISTORY
CLUJ-NAPOCA**

**THE SOCIETY OF 20TH CENTURY
FROM THE REFORMED DIOCESE OF ODORHEI**

Phd Thesis Abstract

**Scientific Leader:
C.S. I. dr. Simion Retegan**

**Candidate:
Kolumbán Zsuzsánna**

**Cluj-Napoca
2010**

CONTENTS

Introduction

The History of the Reformed Diocese of Odorhei

The religious reform and the formation of the Reformed Diocese
The structure of the diocese. The ecclesiastic institutions and their functioning
Church law. Legislative activity
Ecclesiastic discipline. Punishments and their evolution

The Reformed family in the 19th century

The Family
The criteria for choosing the partner
The Engagement
The Marriage
The Birth rate
The functions in the family and the problem of liquidation of illiteracy
The Emigration
The Mortality
Remarrying

The Divorce in the Reformed Diocese of Odorhei in the 19th century

Some statistic data
The causes of divorces
Adultery
Concubinage
Illegitimate children
Marriage concluded because of the will of the parents
Quarrel
Aggressiveness – Beating
Alcoholism
Swear-words
Lack of respect for parents
Theft
Diseases, Imperfections of the body
The impossibility of fulfilling the duties in the household
The impossibility of fulfilling the duties in the family life

Conclusions

Annexes

Bibliography

Original sources

Abbreviations

Introduction

The history of the Odorhei zone has been and is treated in several scientific works. But if we look through these, we can easily realise that besides the political and military history, the history of economy and culture, the history of education and of different schools the works on historic demography are entirely missing.

Works of a special importance – which do not refer only to the district of Odorhei – appear in those written by the historians Csetri Elek and Imreh Istvan, which assess the land records or the data of the censuses in the 19th century, or those by Mr Egyed Akos, for example the theme of emigration, and which contain demographical and statistical data with regard to the district of Odorhei. Thus **this paper is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the history of the ordinary people from the area of Odorhei** and to guide other researchers, too, towards the study of the demographical phenomena specific to the area. **The research on the spot has extended over the localities that formed the diocese of Odorhei, and in time over the 19th century** (with some exceptions).

This paper uses **original sources**, which have not been evaluated yet, recorded during the 19th century by different ecclesiastical forums from the Reformed diocese of Odorhei. We can enumerate here the **Proceedings of the partial synods** (1800 – 1868), the **Proceedings of the matrimonial ecclesiastic Law court** (1868 – 1895), and the **Documents of the divorce processes** (1868-1895), the **List of the finalized processes** (1874-1895), **The Protocol of the ecclesiastic and laic norms and laws** (1782–1844), **Proceedings of the canonical visitations** and **Parochial records of the legal status of a person** (with regard to birth, marriage). These sources give us the possibility to gather data concerning the history of the diocese, the ecclesiastic institutions and their functioning, the church law, the ecclesiastic discipline and the punishment given during the studied century, but also data with reference to the Reformed communities that formed the diocese, the every day life of the believers, the main moments in the life of the ordinary people, the value hierarchy according to which they organized their life.

In order to get an ample assessment of the information given by the mentioned sources, we structured the thesis into three thematic parts, i.e.:

1. The history of the Reformed Diocese of Odorhei

*Taking into account the fact that the majority of the evaluated sources belong to the institution of church, the study of these documents requires the possession of some information about the issuing institution, e.g. the functions, its functioning, its development, its method of work and its regulations. Thus in this first chapter we try to create a proper general frame for our analyses. We make a short presentation of the history of the Reformed church from Transylvania, then the **history of the diocese** pointing out the territory and the population of the diocese, **the structure of the diocese, the ecclesiastical institutions and their functioning, the matrimonial ecclesiastic law, the ecclesiastic discipline and punishment methods used in the 19th century.***

The Reformed diocese of Odorhei was formed as a result of the extension of the Protestantism on the Szekler territory. The documents, which could enlighten this process characterized by conflicts, are extremely few and give us data concerning the conflicts which appeared between the Reformed and the Romano-Catholics and Unitarians, respectively, mostly because of the utilization of the existing churches. Simultaneously with the efforts initiated by the government of the principality in order to calm the situation, the first

Reformed communities were organized, then by the end of the 16th century the first dioceses were formed.

The formation of the Reformed diocese of Odorhei can be traced back at around the year 1580. The diocese was formed from the localities which had accepted the Reformed religion, keeping their new religion in the period of the counter-reform, too, and in the localities where the Reformed managed to conquer some churches from the Unitarians on the basis of the principle “maior pars”.

The diocese was then formed from communities, which were united into a superior instance having the aim of assuring the ruling, the order and the administration. The communities ruled by priests and presbyters were basic units of the ecclesiastic structure, which had certain rights, such as the election of their own leaders and autonomy in solving the financial problems. The ruling over all the communities and thus over the diocese was in the hands of the archpriest, who had among other main obligations the examination of the population's moral and faithful life, obligation which was achieved through the canonical visitations.

In his job of resolving the financial, administrative and juridical problems the archpriest was assisted by the partial synod that was formed from priests. Thus we can say that practically the diocese was the representative of the priests having the aim to keep the ecclesiastical norms and laws. The partial synod, convoked 4 –6 times every year by the archpriest, had among its functions the supervision of the activity of the priests, the election of the archpriest, the resolving of the financial problems and of the divorce processes. After the ecclesiastic structure had been reorganized between the years 1861 – 1871, the partial synod continued to exist under the name of public assembly, being the main institution under the leading of the diocese together with the diocesan council. However the judicial function of the church continued to be represented by the two newly created institutions: the public law court and the matrimonial ecclesiastic law court.

The existence, the functioning and the development of the mentioned institutions and of the whole ecclesiastic system was assured by a series of norms and laws formed by the institutions with legislative functions: the general and partial synods. But we must also mention that the ecclesiastic law is in a close relationship with the laic one, if we take into account the fact that the ecclesiastic legislative activity was based on laws and collections of laws such as Tripartitum, Aprobatae, the Diploma Leopoldinum, The imperial Decree from 1780, etc., which assured the equality and the autonomy of the Reformed confession against the other religions, later the individuality within the framework of the Hungarian Reformed church.

Though there has never been formed an ecclesiastic constitution there were main laws, such as the canons of Geleji, which were formulated on basis of the decisions of the synod from Satu Mare in 1646 and the laws formulated between 1861 – 1871. These basic laws were completed, modified through the decisions of the general synods. An important role was played by the customs and by the jurisprudence that have the power of a law by using the works of Bod Peter during the works of the partial synods and of the ecclesiastic law court for marriages.

Attested also by the archpriest's visitations and by the activity of the main ecclesiastic institutions, the Reformed church considered that its most important mission was that of moral education of its subjects. The right of the church of making laws actually refers to the ecclesiastic discipline, and the ecclesiastic discipline is nothing else but the moral order realized in order to control the moral behaviour of the subjects. The church was one of the most important institutions that had penal authority having the right to punish all kind of guilt except murder. With the help of the given punishments those moral models were achieved and modified, which in the end were recognized as being own by the Reformed communities.

In spite of the possibilities offered by the ecclesiastic law, the control of the church over the population could not be maintained. The distance between the church and the Reformed society is also attested by the decay of the ecclesiastic discipline, a process that accelerated especially during the 19th century. The decay of the ecclesiastic discipline is illustrated by the evolution of the given punishments by the ecclesiastic law courts, too. In the first half of the 19th century we can still read in the protocols of the partial synods about punishments such as begging for someone's pardon, excommunication, league punishment, limiting of the right to come to the God's table, which had the aim of making the guilty person feel ashamed. During this period the church punished some of its subjects by passing them to the laic authorities. After the reorganization of the 60's in the documents of the divorce processes and in the marriage protocols of the ecclesiastic law courts we can find pecuniary punishments, too.

At the basis of such transformations were the changes that happened at the level of the collective mentality, caused by different political events and by the spirit of the epoch in general. The process of reorganization, achieved by the laws from 1861, 1868 and 1871, thus can be considered to be an endeavouring of the Reformed church to correspond to the new necessities of the population. Obviously the taken measures did not bring the expected result, the process of outstripping between the church and the population culminating through the law from 1894, by which the church lost its last instruments of control over the population.

2. The Reformed family in the 19th century.

*The second chapter is dedicated to the Reformed family. We were trying to analyse the characteristics of the familial group from the **setting up of the family, possibilities of knowing each other for the young people, the engagement, the marriage, the birth of the children, the dissolution of the group by the death of those who were married, remarriage.** In order to realize a case study we chose the locality Lutita (more exactly the Reformed community from Lutita, together with the branches communities Alunis and Dejuti), a locality which is situated not far the town whose inhabitants are mostly Reformed. On the basis of the Records of the mentioned community and on the totalised Records of the diocese we are analysing problems such as **the age of the people when getting married, when giving birth to a child or at dying, crises years from the point of view of mortality, etc.** I have also tried to treat problems such as **emigration and its effects, the level of liquidation of illiteracy at the end of the 19th century, the functions in the family and their evolution.***

The population of the Reformed diocese of Odorhei organized its everyday life according to a hierarchy of values achieved along the years. These values influenced the life of each fellow from the society, the evolution of life and the family relations. For the boys this meant the participation to the agricultural works starting at the age of 12, first under the guidance of the father. After the age of 20, for a period of 3 – 6 years the boys established their own household, this process of breaking the relations with the parents culminating usually at the moment of the marriage. So, in the majority of the cases, the reaching of the age of 22 – 26 meant the acceptance of the status of head the family and leader of an own household. Among the obligations of the man were the leading, protecting and supporting the family. Regarding the looking after the children, the man had the obligation to educate the sons and to assure a richer dowry for the daughters. Depending on his physical state, the man could fulfil his function of head of the family till the end of his life.

The periods from the life of a woman can be tied to the process of setting up a family and its evolution. The first 10 years after the childhood were the years of preparing for marriage, then followed the formation of the family with the giving birth to the children, the period of bringing up the children, and at the end the period of old age spent with the bringing up of the grandchildren. The woman, the leader of the house, the educator of the children, the partner of the husband, is considered to be responsible for the husband's happiness, which the

latter can find only in the comfort of the home realized by the wife for him. She obeys her husband and she must comply with his wishes. Weaker than the man from a physical point of view, but stronger from the point of view of morality, thus the morality of the family depends on that of the woman's. A strong woman can bring the man on the correct way of life, but if the woman stepped on the path of sin, the family is considered to be lost. Thus the living space of the women was relatively small, and their education was not so good, and the sins they committed were considered to be more serious than those of men and were punished as such. Without a stable material basis, the woman did not have the possibility to live an autonomous life.

The functions and the status from the family and society in general corresponded to the model of the previous century. The changes can be noticed, just after the 1880's, as a result of the emigration. These transformations were more obvious in the case of the women, because the household work in the big towns gave the possibility to an intellectual development, and the status of the women passed through a re-evaluation.

We can say that the changes that can be noticed in the last decades of the century can be considered to be the first signs of a longer transformation. The events will continue in the next century in a more accelerated rhythm. The changes which happened at the level of the collective mentality, which can be connected to the political, economical and demographical events (the period of the reforms, the revolution, the creation of the dual state) reached their climax in the interwar period, manifesting itself among other things by changing the family model belonging to the old demographic regime, etc.

3. The divorce in the Reformed diocese of Odorhei in the 19th century.

*In this chapter we presented the statistical data that characterize **the phenomenon of the dissolution of the couples** in the studied geographical space. We discussed problems such as **the evolution of the gross rate of the divorce, the evolution of the number of the processes, the age at the divorce, the residence of those who have divorced, the duration of the marriages broken through divorce, the structure of the age of those who have divorced, the remarrying of those who have divorced, the causes of the divorces and their evolution, etc.***

During our research work at the Archives of the Reformed Diocese of Odorhei concerning the period between the years 1801 – 1895, I have tried to study all the existing documents that could be connected to the divorce processes. But, as it usually always happens, several times we met lacks in the materials. These facts, together with others caused by the methods used at drawing up these documents, made the realization of an exact calculation impossible. At the same time, for a more accurate demographical analyse of the divorces from the 19th century and of the studied population we do not have all the necessary statistical data: for example we do not know the number of the married couples of Reformed religion.

*In order to establish the number of the divorce processes, i.e. that of the value that constitutes the basis of the calculations, we chose as basic criterion the existence of the sentence. So we worked only with the data of those trials that had a sentence. Thus in the paper we processed information offered by **2424 divorce processes**. But we cannot put the equality sign between this value and the real number of the processes, so this fact constitutes a source of error.*

The society of the 19th century was one based on family. Each man had as supreme target to get married, to have children to create a vital space, to solve his problems connected to the inheritance of his goods. Inside the family each person had his or her own role, already acknowledged and accepted in the childhood. We have already said that the leader and supporter role belonged to the man, the woman having the role of mother, wife and

housewife. These functions required certain behaviour that was reflected extremely well in the documents of the divorce processes, as well as there can be found deviant behaviours, too, thus we can observe what the society accept or rejects from the individual behaviour.

Probably the documents present only from one side the cases, because the families when reach the territory of justice – the aim being the dissolving of the relations – change their behaviour, keeping very little from romanticism of their relation. We must have in view the fact that there is the possibility that the parties might misinform the authorities in order to reach their aims of separation more quickly, and that the witnesses might give some information to favour those persons who asked them to represent in the process.

However, the scenes of the divorce processes belong to the everyday life. In spite of the strict rules, the truth slipped in the documents of the processes due to the fact that we have in discussion a traditional society, belonging to the old regime. The divorce was not considered, first of all, a deviance, but a way, which had to be chosen in order to re-establish the quietness and the harmony. And this is why the divorce processes were not professionalized, and a good selection of the information gives us the possibility to state a lot of things referring to the customs and way of life of ordinary people.

We have observed that the wives from the second half of the 19th century had a small vital space. Probably the majority of them spent their life within the borders of the native village, or went to the nearest town or visited their relatives from the nearby villages only in the presence of their husbands. A good wife was one who spent most of her time working around the house, which accepted the advice of her husband, and helped him in raising the annual income. The Reformed church expected from the woman the same things as the society in general. The woman who was wandering in the village, who was staying at the neighbours instead of working, who did not like working, who did not look after her husband and children, was not considered to be a good wife, because she was not good to offer her children a proper education. The wife had to obey her parents, then her husband; she had to be able to organize the work around the house. That big number of illiterate women resulted due to this function of the woman.

On the other hand, the role of the husband was in the first place, the leading of the household and the managing of the family income, fact which presumed a greater mobility and a higher level of knowledge, i.e. writing, reading and counting. Consequently, the vital space of the husband was bigger; they were more mobile than the women because they used to go to the market with products to farther villages or to the town.

According to these functions we can state which were those **behaviours that were considered to be deviant** by the society. First of all, we have to name those people who committed a guilt connected to conjugal infidelity, then those who were beating, then the alcoholics, the thieves, those who unable to fulfil their duties in the household or in the family life, etc.

Cause of the divorce	The guilty person Women/Men	No. of divorces
Unfaithful leaving	F	27
	M	22
Marriage concluded because of the will of the parents	F	563
	M	128
Threatening the partner's life	F	3
	M	41
Lack of sexual life	F	65
	M	38
Sterility	F	20

Impotency	M	20
Excessiveness in sexual life (legitimate)	F	2
	M	13
Aggressiveness, corporal threatening	F	5
	M	137
Quarrel	F	29
	M	4
Alcoholism	F	12
	M	11
Swear-words	F	2
	M	2
Theft	F	1
	M	1
Diseases, Imperfections of the body	F	26
	M	18
The impossibility of fulfilling the duties in the household	F	51
	M	10
The impossibility of fulfilling the duties in the family life	F	132
	M	136
Concubinage	F	80
	M	103
Illegal marriage		9
Adultery	F	470
	M	243

The community despised these people and sometimes they were isolated. This fact is also attested by the rejection of the testimony given by people who had deviant behaviour, their words not having any value in front of the community.

These negative examples can be considered to be necessary for a community, though. The Reformed church managed to exemplify through them behaviours that ought not to be followed by the members of the community. This is why the guilt was made public, and the applied punishments have had a public character for such a long time. In order to refuse the deviant behaviours and customs, the church punished those who were guilty, but at the same time admitted that those who had made a mistake were pardoned. But we can state that the population never forgot the done guilt.

At the beginning of the chapters we presented the historiography of the treated theme and of the main used works. The used **bibliography**, the **list of abbreviations**, a **complete list of the original sources**, the **map of the diocese**, a **table with the communities which formed the diocese** and the **data concerning the evolution of the population of the diocese in the 19th century**, a **process presented in detail** and different statistical tables were annexed to the paper.

ORIGINAL SOURCES

ARCHIVES OF THE REFORMED DIOCESE OF ODORHEI (ARDO)

- The Protocol of the ecclesiastic and laic norms and laws. 1782–1844.
- Liber ecclesiae orthodoxae in sede Udvarhely existensis. 1644. (Protocol no. 2.; It contains data with regard to the years 1643-1735.)
- The proceedings of the partial synods. 1800-1868. (VII. 1800-1806.; VIII. 1813-1821.; X. 1822-1835.; XIV. 1836-1848.; XXVI. 1849-1858.; XII. 1858-1874.)
- The documents of the divorce processes. 1867-1895. (Between 1867-1892 1 packet annually, between 1893-1895 two packets for each year, 32 packets altogether.)
- Proceedings of the ecclesiastic law court for marriages. 1868-1895.
- List of the finalized processes. 1874-1895, 1877-1889, 1888-1889, 1890-1895.
- Proceedings of the canonical visitations. 1800-1811, 1829, 1838, 1841-1843, 1846, 1852, 1854, 1859, 1860, 1863, 1865, 1868, 1877.
- Parochial records of the legal status of a person (with regard to birth, marriage).
- (Reformed Diocese of Odorhei). 1833, 1835, 1836, 1837, 1839, 1840-41, 1843.
- Schooling statistical tabels. 1839-123/23, 1841-123/25, 1842-123/26, 1844-123/27, 1845-123/28.
- Tabella populationis (Generale statistical tabels). 1799-1831.
- The sermons of the pastor Lukácsffi Lajos. 1837-1863.

NATIONAL RECORDS

DIRECTION HARGHITA COUNTY, MIERCUREA CIUC

- Parochial records of the legal status of a person (with regard to birth, marriage). Lutita (It contains data concerning Dejutiú and Alunis)
No. 361 (378 p.) 1762-1866
No. 362 (329 p.) 1866-1892
No. 363 (43 p.) 1893-1895