

THE LEGACY OF A 20TH-CENTURY CLERIC: A CATHOLIC PRIEST'S ECONOMIC CHRONICLES ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSIGHTS FROM WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

Mária SZIKSZAI

Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

e-mail: maria@szikszaimaria.ro

Abstract

This study focuses on a unique collection of personal economic records and additional documents from the 20th century, belonging to a Catholic priest from Satu Mare County, Romania. The material is exceptional, as it represents a rare collection of written documents from the Hungarian-speaking region of the 20th century, authored by a Catholic priest. These records provide an in-depth look into the life of a priest, who, despite his clerical duties, maintained a strong connection to farming, a legacy from his farmer-herdsman parents of Swabian descent. The economic records, which span from 1949 to the 1960s, offer insights into the priest's personal and economic life. They include narratives about managing a parish, engaging in farming activities, and handling personal financial transactions. These documents not only reflect his efforts to balance religious responsibilities with agricultural interests but also illuminate the socio-economic conditions of the time. The study explores the priest's economic decisions, the value he placed on different assets, and his understanding of wealth in a changing society. It also examines the broader context of peasant embourgeoisement in 20th-century Romania, highlighting how a priest and his family navigated the transition from a traditional peasant lifestyle to a more bourgeois existence. This transition is evidenced by their adoption of modern goods and technologies, changes in family dynamics, and shifts in career strategies, reflecting the complex interplay between personal, economic, and social factors during a period of significant societal change. Overall, the paper offers a micro-historical perspective on the life of this 20th-century priest, providing valuable insights into his unique experiences and the broader socio-economic transformations of the era.

Keywords: anthropology of writing, economic records, 20th Century Romania, clerical and agricultural life

1. Introduction

In the first half of the 20th century, a novel paradigm emerged within the French Annales School, redirecting the focus of social science researchers towards previously unconventional sources. These included diaries, memoirs, correspondence, or economic journals that documented daily events, offering a new perspective that was termed as micro, or small-scale. Research with a micro-historical perspective has turned to sources that were previously not given much importance in academic discourse. Researchers such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (1975), Carlo Ginzburg (1992) or Natalie Zemon Davies (1983) have drawn the attention of historians and anthropologists to the everyday life of the lower, peripheral groups.¹ Although there were some early attempts to study private correspondence (Znanięcki-Thomas, 2006, first edition 1918-20), the study of ordinary people's

¹ On the emergence and early use of the concept of microhistory: Ginzburg, Tedeschi & Tedeschi, (1993).

correspondence was later reinvigorated by the micro-historical turn. There have been excellent summaries on the subject, such as American letter writing (Henkin, 2006), French, Italian, and Spanish correspondence (Lyons, 2012), or more recently, the European history of women's letter writing (Monagle, James, Garrioch & Caine, 2023). This change of perspective had a great impact on the social sciences of the various national languages. In the Hungarian language area, researchers have been exploring written sources since the 1950s, such as serf letters (Balázs, 1951), soldiers' letters (Imreh, 1964; Karacs, 1993; Bene, 1999; Kokó, 1999), written sources is folk literature in general (Imreh, 1960; Bellon, 1971; Hoppál – Küllős, 1972; Forrai, 1987; Keszeg, 1997), documents of folk medicine (Bényei, 1976; Gulyás, 1992), wills (Bene, 1989), letters in verse (Albert, 1999), peasant notebooks in verse (Farkas, 1999), manuscript prayers (Barna, 1987), craftsmen's manuscripts (Bathó, 1997), religious letters (Frauhammer, 1999), recipe books, cookery books (Geszt, 1999, Vékony, 1998), groomsman's books (Horváth, 1994), autobiographies of ordinary people (Küllős, 2000, Szikszai, 2016), economic diaries (Mohay, 1994), private peasant letters (Szili, 2000, Borbély, 2006, Prikler, 2021) or the issue of publishing folk texts (Barna, 2003), to name but a few examples. The present study applies this research paradigm in terms of source exploration.

The anthropological research discussed in this paper builds on a very fortunate situation: it is based on economic records that have survived in a collection of personal documents compiled in the 20th century. The document collection under study is unique in the region, with 2,400 documents on paper, handwritten or typed, preserved in a personal archive. The economic records discussed in this study are part of this rich source material.

2. Mihály Tyukodi: From Peasant Roots to Priesthood

Mihály Tyukodi, the author and collector of the documents in question, represented the first generation of intellectuals in his family. From the documents he left behind, we can say that his way of life and mentality did not completely break away from that of his farmer-herdsman parents and, more importantly, that Mihály tried to make use of this knowledge throughout his life. Mihály and his family came from a village in Satu Mare County, Romania. The family tree can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century from the family registry extracts left behind. The marriage of Mihály's parents, Mihály Kind and Maria Reich, took place on February 2, 1902. They had nine children, Mihály being the fifth in the line. The family, which had been speaking only Hungarian by the early 20th century, decided in the early 1940s to change their Swabian surname to Hungarian.² The family took the name Tyukodi in early 1942.

Mihály Kind Jr., our protagonist was born in 1916 in Căpleni (Romania) and died in 1997 in Alba Iulia. His parents were farmers, descendants of the Swabian settlers settled here in the 18th century by the Counts of Károlyi. Until 1930 the family lived by working on their own land, and as Mihály writes, they were among the wealthiest families in the village. They were farmers, originally one of the families that employed the poorer families of the village to work their land. But in 1930 they suddenly lost most of their land. Mihály tells us that from then on, they were very poor, and that his parents had difficulty providing for the family.

Mihály grew up in this Swabian village in Satu Mare County, but he did not continue his parents' way of life, instead, he chose to become a priest. Although he worked as a priest and teacher until the end of his life, he used the knowledge he had brought from home: in addition to his parish work, he also worked in agriculture, animal husbandry and viticulture.

² About the economic nationalization processes from 1867 to 1944 in the Satu-Mare region, the borderland between Hungary and Romania, see Blomqvist 2014.

Looking at his story of life, it is clear that farming played a greater role in his life at certain times.

The source material for the present study is Mihály Tyukodi's economic records, which have not yet been published, and other documents containing farming information.³ Mihály Tyukodi's records are unique in their kind, as there is no known collection of written documents of such magnitude from the Hungarian-speaking region of the 20th century, left behind by a Catholic priest. This paper examines how a non-agricultural person raised by farming parents tried to farm in the 20th century, what were the assets of economic value to him, what were the sources of his income, what material or intellectual assets he used his income for. We will also examine what Mihály Tyukodi and those around him considered wealth to be, what were the measures of poverty and, finally, to what extent the family's lifestyle in the 20th century could be considered a phase of peasant embourgeoisement.

3. Crisis and Record-Keeping: Understanding Mihály Tyukodi's Financial Documentation

A prominent part of written sources comprises collections of personal written texts, which raise at least two questions: firstly, they are an interesting subject for research into the writing habitus, and secondly, they are a record of a bygone era, thus offering insights into how society functioned during that period.

Mihály Tyukodi's first economic records date from 1949 and were made in his first place of ministry, where Mihály was no longer an assistant pastor, but the head of the parish. It was then that he really started his career and was economically independent for the first time. In 1950 the records were interrupted, as Mihály went to prison from 1950 to 1953.⁴ The second set of notes, dating 1954-55, is no longer a diary-like narrative text like the previous one, but a series of columns of expenses and receipts in a booklet. The third set of records dates from the 1960s, from 1966 and 1967, a series of data preserved also in a booklet, in which the author recorded income and expenditure for 18 months.

The economic records preserved in the collection of documents under study are not systematic enough to allow us to follow the economic activity of the target person continuously and over the long term, as has been done in some known Hungarian ethnographic research.⁵ The research question arises, therefore, that if these records are not systematic, why were these the years in which Mihály recorded his expenditure and income? The question is relevant, as it seems that it was important for Mihály Tyukodi to keep accurate track of his finances in some periods and not in others.

My answer consists of two parts. One reason for the periodicity of the records is that the compiler of the records was not a farmer, small producer or trader who intended to live from the goods he produced or their sale, and therefore it was not necessary for him to keep track of his expenditure and income. On the other hand, a closer look at the years shows that all these years were a crisis for Mihály. Let us take them in turn.

³ The books based on the 2400 documents left behind by Mihály Tyukodi are: Szikszai, 2020; Szikszai, 2021a; Szikszai, 2022; Szikszai, 2023.

⁴ Mihály Tyukodi was detained by the Romanian communist authorities in 1950. For an in-depth analysis of the Catholic Church's circumstances in communist Romania, refer to: Bozgan, (2000); Tismăneanu, Dobrinu & Vasile, (eds.), (2007); Catalan, (1999), Șincan, A. (2013).

⁵ See Mohay 1994, with a detailed historical and scientific overview of the topic (Mohay, 1994, pp. 3-24). It is worth pointing out here that, although the summary work by Tamás Mohay is at first glance methodologically close to the present work in the sense that it analyses written economic records, the present work departs from it in several respects. One of the differences is that in the work referred to the collector took the documents personally from the informant and also used the informant's verbal comments, while in the case of Mihály Tyukodi we had access to the documents left behind by the informant long after his death.

The second half of the forties represented a crisis in that in 1947, for the first time, the young Mihály Tyukodi was faced with the responsibility of running a parish. As a teacher and assistant pastor, he had previously had an insight into parish finances, but he did not make the day-to-day decisions. He noted that he was aware that his new role entailed new responsibilities. From 1947 onwards, therefore, we can assume this motivation behind his efforts to keep records of his managerial activities.

Another observation can also be made here. For this we need to look more closely at the first booklet in which Mihály wrote his notes. These notes, dating from 1949, have survived in an older hardcover booklet. The first part of the booklet already contained similar data written earlier, economic records from 1892 to 1898. It is not clear from the texts who originally owned this booklet in the 19th century, but it is clear that the records refer to the household of a large farmer, as servants and two coachmen are mentioned. It was in this booklet that Mihály began writing his own text in 1947. Apparently, Mihály had consulted the booklet and read the old records. When we consider how he got the idea to record his economic progress, we cannot point to a pattern from his parents' house - he does not mention a single word about knowing anyone in his family or his environment taking notes. His decision to keep records of his farming may have been influenced by this booklet. I think it is safe to say that this set of economic records from 1892 to 1898 served as a model for the young Mihály.

The years 1954-55 were again a time of crisis. Mihály Tyukodi returned home from prison in 1953. He returned to the village where he had served before his years in prison, but his job was in serious trouble. The deacon to whom his parish belonged asked the communist authorities to confirm Mihály in his former position in the village Sâi, but the authorities refused to approve it. Mihály lived in Sâi, the village where he had lived before his years in prison, but he had no official appointment. Eventually, the deacon resolved his application by temporarily appointing Mihály as his own assistant pastor, for which he did not need to ask permission from the authorities. This crisis was resolved when Bishop Áron Márton was released from prison in the spring of 1955, and in the autumn of the same year he appointed Mihály as a theology teacher. Mihály then moved to Alba Iulia, and his economic records were interrupted, as he did not have to make responsible economic decisions in this place.

The third crisis had to do with settling in new stations in the 1960s. In 1965, Mihály left the seminary and served as priest for a few months in Ocna Șugatag, and from August 1967 he worked in Beltiug. 1966-67 was therefore another challenging period, as he was again responsible for taking day-to-day economic decisions, and the new start of the economic diary was linked to this.

As we have seen above, the crisis years were therefore the years when Mihály paid more attention to his finances and wanted to make them clearer for himself, so he kept records. In addition to these three sources, there are other texts in the material which contain information on economic decisions, processes and activities. An important additional source are the letters from the collection, which sometimes contain more detailed descriptions of Mihály's everyday money and goods transactions, his practice of balancing income and expenditure, or his habit of borrowing money. The notes in the letters are not only about the financial situation of an individual, family or community, but also about their relationship to goods and money, the unwritten rules about them, the behaviors they considered appropriate, their goals, their saving practices, their values and interests.

Mihály Tyukodi was not a farmer. He was raised by peasant parents, then he graduated in Catholic theology in 1942 and worked as a religious education teacher, priest and theology teacher. But farming was a lifelong preoccupation of his: while carrying out his priestly duties, he tried to live and farm in the village as much as possible. With few

exceptions, he served in rural parishes, and by his own admission he preferred to serve in the village rather than the city. It is also clear from his writings that he loved to do this work: he loved living in the village, he loved working on the farm, and he loved tending his vineyard more than anything else. He was able to apply for a driving license at the age of seventy and not give up after the first, second or third failed test, because he planned to drive to his vineyard, far from the village, to cultivate the vines. On May 6, 1981, he wrote in a letter: ‘I have much joy in my farmstead. My farm has many joys. I have many pleasures in my vineyard. Hens, ducks and their broods. I often think of Horatius: *Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis paterna rura exercet*: he who cultivates the land away from troubles is the happy one.’⁶

Mihály’s farming activities were given greater or lesser importance in his income depending on where he lived and what his financial situation was, but we also see that he could not make a living from farming alone, even when he decided to do so – when already as being retired.

And now let’s look at the challenges posed by the research resources. Our first finding with the sources is that the records are not consistent: categories do not appear in the same form in successive months, so it is sometimes difficult to infer the type of expenditure from an abbreviation. Individual items are not recorded regularly either - for example, there are periods when one presumably received a salary every month, but this was not always recorded. Sometimes he only recorded the name of the person and not the basis on which he received money from them or gave money to them. With all this in mind, we will begin to discuss the records for 1947-48, 1954, 1966 and 1967, noting that although these figures only approximate the true situation, they do paint a picture of the conditions at the time.

a. 1947-48

In the first booklet, Mihály writes in narrative mode about his economic situation. In his first few sentences he tells us how much money he had to start with and what his plans were. We learn that he started his career on 9 October 1948, when he had approximately 17,000 lei.⁷ He does not say where this money came from. He planned to order their meals from a family in the village, and lists the names of the women who supplied the parish with food in the first months. He adds that in the first month a woman from the village supplied it ‘as a favour’. In the meantime, a cantor was added to the group, and a seminarian on holiday joined them, so they had to employ a cook. They bought a litre of milk a day, which cost them approximately 1,000 lei a month. At this point, it is worth looking again at the starting capital: if a litre of milk a day cost 1,000 lei a month, the starting capital of 17,000 lei that he mentions cannot have been that much.

The next change came in January, when they got a cow. It is not clear from the text exactly who received it, how and from whom, but Mihály records only that ‘in January it was indicated that we would receive a cow’. They made butter from the milk, sold it and made money. This gave them ‘a big boost’ because, as he writes, ‘the food tasted different’. He mentions in particular how delicious their curdled milk was.⁸ As a result, their income and expenditure ‘normalized’, i.e. they achieved a balance.⁹ In the meantime, they received another cow and gave it to a parish priest to keep.

⁶ Our translation, the original text: “Sok örööm van a majorságomban. Tyúkok, kacsák, és a költéseik. Horatius jár sokszor az eszemben: *Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis paterna rura exercet*: aki távol a gondoktól földet művel, az a boldog.” (Mihály Tyukodi, letter, 6 may 1986)

⁷ Although he wrote in Hungarian, he uses the Romanian name for money (“leu”, plural “lei”).

⁸ Our translation, the original text: “Januárban jelezték, hogy kapunk 1 tehenet, mindjárt ki is hozta Tom Mihály kurátorom. Nagyszerűt lendített rajtunk. Más lett az ételek íze.” (Mihály Tyukodi, economic note, 1949).

⁹ The original text: “Kiadásaink és bevételeink normalizálódtak.” (Mihály Tyukodi, economic note, 1949).

Another turnaround came in March, when they were visited by the bishop's secretary. It seems that until then, the small farm had focused exclusively on livestock, but the secretary argued that this strategy was not appropriate and that Mihály should also look at the land. The secretary promised an advance on seeds. The former parish administrator took charge of the land, which they wanted to cultivate with the villagers. Mihály also describes how the people expected to receive 2/3 share for their work, and as the parish promised them less than this, some of them "stirred up tension". In the spring they sowed wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, sunflowers, poppies, corn and sugar cane. Later Mihály also mentions turnips and hemp. Meanwhile, he indicates that a third cow was being added and he planned to send half of the yield in butter to the centre. He notes that the first calf would be his, the second two would be theirs (he doesn't name who), and the rest so in rotation. He started delivering butter in May, with deliveries of 1.5-2 kg. In May, he also recorded that he bought a cart of hay from the teacher for 3,500 lei, which he considered expensive, but he had no choice because there was not enough rain and the pasture was not suitable. In May, he received a loan of 10,000 lei until 1 October, and in the meantime, he got his loan back. He also noted in May that he lent 1.5 liters of sour cream to the wife of an acquaintance. He donated a kilo of the butter to a Romanian engineer because, he wrote, it was his name day.

In March 1949, Mihály told his parents that they were soon to have a fourth cow, and that he was to become a four-cow farmer, which, as the text makes clear, filled him with pride. This comment is very important: the son who works in his first parish does not write to his parents about his priestly duties and achievements, but he is proud of his achievements as a farmer and the wealth he has gained here.

In his booklet Mihály sometimes wrote down the names of people who were at work, working on the parish land. He noted the names of the butter churners separately, which suggests that villagers also went to churn and were paid in butter, according to his entries, in half and half.

In May, he bought 6 goslings and set two hens. At the end of June he hatched 22 chickens. A Romanian woman also gave chickens to him as a gift, and he recorded that three of them had been stolen one night. He complained that the beet had not sprouted, and was replaced by sunflower and beans in another place. Then, at the end of June, he was pleased to write that the new crop had sprouted and the rows were showing. In July and August he kept a record of how much butter he had sold to whom. It seems he was able to sell 3-4 kg of butter a week - he probably produced double that and half went to the churner.

Mihály continued his notes in early October, saying that harvesting had begun. 109 bags of potatoes were harvested. The maize was still being harvested, but there were already 20 bags. He reported that he had sent one of his cows home, presumably this is why he made much less butter in September, only 3 kg. In early October they had 4 piglets. He said the piglets were nice. The farm manager was paid: he received the piglet, a hundredweight of wheat, a hundredweight of grain, and one additional batch is illegible. He would also receive 4 hundredweights of corn, 4 hundredweights of grain and salt. The name of the last item is also illegible, perhaps it is petroleum. From this note we can infer that although the records were made by Mihály and he considered himself a farmer with four cows, the farm was not run by him but by a person in charge who was paid in produce for this work. In mid-October, Mihály paid three instalments of his tax, 2,482 lei each. A fourth instalment of the same amount was still outstanding. He had also paid 1,200 lei in municipal tax.

A letter from the 1940s reveals the difficult economic situation of the Satu Mare region in the post-war years, and exactly where the locals saw the border between poverty and wealth at that moment. In this letter from the 1940s, Mihály's sister wrote that poverty in her village was so great that half the village could not afford to slaughter pigs. The text tells

us that in this village, the economic situation was considered acceptable when a family slaughtered pigs at the beginning of winter. If the family was better off, they would slaughter several pigs in the same winter, but each family would have liked to slaughter one. The pig slaughter provided the family with the fat for cooking and the meat for the next six months to a year. In addition to the fat, the letters also mention smoked meat, sausages and bacon, all of which were produced during the pig slaughter. Mihály's sister points out that at this time families were so impoverished that they could not save enough money to buy a pig. This small text passage highlights how a community imagines its own – economic – well-being and what is considered by popular opinion to be poverty at a given moment.

The chapter on the 1940s concludes with another interesting story. On 24 March 1949, an acquaintance sent a letter to Mihály from the village Mezőfény. After thanking him for his kind remembrance (the date indicates that Mihály probably greeted him on his name day), he answered Mihály's questions and gave him farming advice. Mihály wanted to farm in his first years of independence, and wanted to try growing new crops. But he needed advice on this, so he wrote to a friend. They mentioned "honey reed", but they probably did not mean sugar cane but sweet sorghum. Gedeon Rásonyi Papp writes in 1943 that the sweet sorghum spread after 1936, after Gaszton Lublováry, a resident of Miskolc, sent 20 grains to Szilveszter Bergendy, then editor of magazine entitled "Gyümölcskultúra" [Fruit Culture], who helped the plant spread within a few years. It was then that it was named "méznád / honey reed" (Rásonyi Papp 1943). There is no indication in the records whether Mihály eventually tried the plant. However, he did not give up the idea of introducing new plants: he tried to grow melons in Beltiug, but his attempts were not clearly successful: in 1974 he complained that his melons did not like the rain, but the vines grew very well. He tried melons later, as he sometimes mentions melons ripening in his garden, and we know that in 1980, when he was living in the village Giungi, he was given some delicious watermelon, yellow and sugar melon seeds by someone.

b. 1954

In 1954, Mihály recorded his income and expenses in a booklet – the income until August, expenses until July. These notes were no longer written in narrative form, as before, but in two columns, side by side, recording expenditure and income. The January 1954 notes show that part of Mihály's income came from his priestly activities: mass intentions¹⁰, baptisms, and church salary. The intentions were partly paid for by the local people, in which case he mostly listed a price of 5-5 lei per intention. On some occasion he wrote 12 lei next to a name, but he did not indicate the number of intentions. In 1954 he usually recorded 1-2 masses per person, and among the names there are three Romanian names: Gheorghe, Virgil, Petru. He received a larger sum from his fellow priest János Dobos, 157 lei for 19 mass intentions that he had to perform.

Income from baptisms in 1954, in brackets the amount of income: January (8 lei), February (one baptism and two initiations¹¹ paid in one, 17 lei), April (12 lei), May (7 lei), June (40+3+10 lei, and 30 lei for initiation and baptism), July (45 lei for one baptism, 4 intentions and one initiation, and 10+10 lei for baptism). Only one funeral was recorded this year, in June 25 lei for a funeral and a requiem.

In January 1954, Mihály received 82 lei for 60 litres of wine and sold butter worth 25 lei. He also assisted someone in bookbinding – unfortunately, he does not give details of this, but only wrote the name of the village Borlești next to the item, and recorded income of 10

¹⁰ Mass intentions: masses that people paid for and in which the priest prayed for the intention of the faithful to be fulfilled.

¹¹ It mentions the initiations only in this year, but it is not clear from the records exactly what this meant.

lei. Borlești and the book(binding) also appear in the following months, in 1954 for approximately 135 lei. The amount is only approximate because in three cases he received the same amount for bookbinding and mass intention and did not record the sum for each item.

Butter continued to be a source of income for him in the remaining months of 1954: after 25 lei in January, he recorded 146 lei in February, 50 lei in March and 80 lei in April, a total of 301 lei of butter income for the year.

One of the interesting entries in 1954 concerns telegrams. In March Mihály sent a telegram for Joseph's day and paid 5 lei for it, and then in May he sent a telegram for which he paid 15 lei, but here unfortunately he did not record to whom or for what occasion he sent it. The price of the telegram depended on the length of the text, and the fact that he paid more for the telegram in May than in March suggests that he sent a longer text to someone. The data is valuable not so much because of its cost but because of the cultural significance of the communication practice.

As for expenditure: in 1954, only a small amount of expenditure is included which does not cover everyday needs. There are no major purchases or expenditures, and looking at the annual data, it seems that Mihály tried to buy only the most essential items. As for food, sugar, rice, oil appear twice, veal and beef once in the annual list. In May, he gave 10 lei for vanilla - the only time a spice or flavoring other than salt appears on the lists. He also bought soap, needles and ashtrays once, in March. There are, however, some mail-related expenses: in January he bought envelopes for 10.80 lei, in February he bought two pencils for 1.5 lei, in March ink for 1 lei, and in May he recorded an expense of 6 lei as postage. In July he paid 10 lei for photographs. He bought corn for 100 lei in January and gave his brother 400 lei for corn in February. The amounts of money given to family members are regularly present, and these are the larger expenses: as we have just seen, he gave money to one of his brothers for corn in February, another brother 34 lei in January, 200 lei in February and also 500 lei in March, his mother 50 lei in March, his aunt 40 lei for a trip in the same month, and 124 lei to the aunt a month later, also for a trip. He gave 70 lei for a coat in February and 235 in July. He paid a fine on his identity card in April 1954, 35 lei - he does not give details of what happened, one can only speculate whether he lost it or renewed the expired document too late.

c. 1966-67

In 1966-67, he kept the same notes as in the previous booklet. In 1966, in addition to his church salary (1659 lei), Mihály's sources of income were baptisms, weddings, funeral fees, and a state salary (he called it a state allowance, 553 lei per month). Only in December did he record income from farming: in December he had an income of 900 lei from the sale of hay.

The income for January 1967 includes the church monthly salary (1635 lei), the state monthly salary (545 lei), a wedding fee (75 lei), 125 lei from mass intentions and 500 lei from the sale of hay. In the following month, in addition to salaries, he recorded income of 100 lei from two funerals and 300 lei for hay. In March, in addition to salaries, he had income of 240 lei from the sale of eggs. In the following months - until August, while the records last - the only income was from salaries and church services (weddings, funerals).

Between 1966-67, the expenditure side shows a high value tangible asset, and this is no coincidence. Between 1955-65 Mihály worked at the theological seminary and had no particular need for household goods during this period. However, from 1966 he started to work again in a parish and the acquisition of capital goods can be linked to this change.

In March 1966 he bought a typewriter for 1500 lei. This was a considerable sum, since his church salary at that time was 1659 lei a month. In November 1966, he bought straps, 4 stainless steel knives, 4 forks, 4 small spoons, 4 spoons, a meat shovel, a tray, a cutlery holder and an ashtray, all the items that a household would need. The ashtray was a particular item because he did not smoke cigarettes and was constantly trying to dissuade his close friends from smoking. Two of his brothers smoked cigarettes. By 1966 only his brother the cantor was still alive, but he rarely visited Mihály, so there was no need to buy an ashtray. He must have bought the ashtray with other guests in mind. He also bought a rubber helmet – probably for a bicycle, a luggage rack – probably also for the bicycle, a knife, a rosary and finally an electric iron. The following month he bought a vacuum cleaner for 1000 lei.

In January 1967, he bought a washing machine (1185 lei), then in May a bed, bedside table (1300 lei), duvet (153 lei), blanket (80 lei). A bed would reappear on the list in June, and in August he bought a wardrobe and table (1500 lei), 4 chairs (226 lei) and a stove (950 lei) – the latter probably related to his move to Beltiug. In August, he bought shoe polish (4 lei), toothpaste (3 lei), shaving soap (1 lei), and bluing powder (3 lei). He also bought other small items this year: in February he bought pruning shears (56 lei), a saw (10 lei), a loudspeaker (300 lei), in August a bucket (25 lei). He could not have needed a loudspeaker at home himself, he never wrote that he used one at home, but later it is mentioned that he used one at church. Just as he wrote about the soap he bought in February that he bought it for the church. In April it cost 205 lei to repair his bicycle. Also in April he donated 1000 lei to a church, the entry indicates that it may have been the church where his brother worked.

In May 1967, he gave 500 lei to his sister and wrote that he was giving it for shirts and clothes. This sister often sewed clothes for him – in this case she had to buy materials for Mihály. In February, Mihály bought a pig for 2485 lei.

Food also appears in his 1967 lists: the most common are bread, milk, margarine, sugar, flour, veal (18 lei), other meats (144 lei), noodles (7, 4, 16 lei), and drinks, such as wine and brandy (300 lei) in March, wine (95 lei) in April, beer (105 lei) in June, rum (3 lei) in July, and soda (20 lei) in August. In May, he bought cakes for children (105 lei), but he doesn't go into any more detail than that. Several times he bought maize, maize flour, oats and wheat, and once he wrote next to one of them that it was for the chickens. In May he also bought petroleum, matches and sugar at the same time (20 lei).

The list may seem like a dull enumeration, but there are some purchases where it is worth looking behind the data. One of the entries above says that in June 1966, Mihály Tyukodi spent 105 lei on beer. To better understand the text, let us start from a statement made by Mihály in 1965, when he writes: 'Where do I put my money? I have never gone into a confectioner's shop to eat an ice cream in my life. I have never had a glass of beer to buy for myself. Well, I hardly spend a penny on myself. I'm saving. So where does my money go? I don't know.'¹² He wrote these lines to his sister on 14 February 1965. In his letter he was arguing that he was living a frugal life, but now he had to buy clothes for himself, and he clearly felt he had to justify that. In the justification, he explains that he spends very little and that his spending never involves what he considers to be luxury items, such as ice cream or beer.¹³ Here, then, the discourse is an argument in which he distances himself from a comfortable, spending lifestyle and emphasizes his own strict money management and frugal lifestyle.

¹² Our translation, the original text: "Hát hova teszem a pénzemet? Még életemben be nem mentem egy cukrászdába, hogy egy fagyaltot megegyem. Egy pohár sört meg nem ittam, hogy magamnak vegyem azt. Hát én tényleg alig költök magamra egy lejt. Spórolok. Hová megy hát a pénzem? Nem tudom." (Mihály Tyukodi, letter, 14 february 1965).

¹³ I wrote about this in more detail in Szikszai 2020. 163-165.

An examination of Mihály's economic entries, however, adds another dimension to the interpretation. Notwithstanding the above quoted statement, one of Mihály's budget tables includes beer as an expense, since in June 1967 an item called 'beer drink'¹⁴ is listed on the expenditure page, as we have seen, to the value of 105 lei. One could say that, lo and behold, Mihály Tyukodi did buy himself a beer. Before interpreting the text, however, let us bear in mind that in the course of our research we are confronted with information from a variety of sources. One type of information is that which is told to the researcher by the data provider. In our case, this corresponds to the primary disclosures in the texts of letters and memos. The other source of information comes from observation: the researcher not only listens to what the data provider says, but also observes what the data provider does. In our case, however, there can be no observation of the informants, as these documents are about events in the 1950s and 1960s. In our case, what we can do is to compare the information found in different texts. It so happens that the data within each text appears to be contradictory, at least at first glance. However, let's explore how the story described above developed.

As we have seen, the record does not say on what occasion Mihály bought the beer, but the amount of the expenditure is thought-provoking. It is a relatively large amount, not the price of a bottle of beer, which suggests that Mihály bought a large quantity of beer. But why would someone suddenly buy a large quantity of beer?

We can rule out Mihály's personal celebrations. His birthday was on 1 July, which is close enough to the beer purchase in June, but knowing the full documentary evidence, we can safely reject this hypothesis. Mihály never celebrated his birthday, neither before nor after that year. Apart from his sisters, no one ever greeted him on his birthday, nor did they know the date of his birthday. His sisters only greeted him, in passing, when they sent him a letter on those very days. But they did not even send Mihály a letter or other greetings especially for this day. Instead of his birthday, Mihály used to celebrate his name-day. Everyone knew when to greet him by his name. On his name day, many people wrote to him, and sometimes he was visited by friends and colleagues – yet, this detail offers no assistance in addressing our current issue: his name day was at the end of September, and the beer was bought in June.

We know that in June 1967, Mihály was a parish priest in the village Ocna Șugatag. He moved to Belciug in the same year, but not before mid-August, where he served for 9 years. In June, therefore, we find Mihály still in Ocna Șugatag, and after knowing the location, it is worth checking whether there may have been a larger celebration in Ocna Șugatag in June 1967. And indeed, in Ocna Șugatag the church feast of St Peter and St Paul the Apostles is on 26 June, and this is most likely the key to the solution. We can reasonably assume that the reason for the purchase of beer was the festive treat for the priests who came to the pilgrimage feast.

And here we can return to his original statement, when Mihály claims that he never consumed beer he had personally purchased. We will never know whether Mihály consumed even one glass of the beer he bought at the time, but it is clear that beer appears in the expenditure, and that was on the table on this festive occasion.

4. The family as an economic unit

The above-mentioned documents, the records of a Catholic priest, are not only about a person, their author, but also provide the reader with information about the society in which the documents were written, about the families, their way of life, their mentality. Mihály

¹⁴ Our translation, the original text: "sörital" (Mihály Tyukodi, economic note, 1967).

lived far away from his parents and siblings, yet until the 1980s, when his generation retired, they lived as if they were one extended family, even when they moved to distant settlements. While he lived in the settlements like Satu Mare, Sâi, Alba Iulia, Ocna Șugatag, Beltiug, Tășnad, Giungi, and the village Ady Endre, his siblings lived in Căpleni, Carei, Târgu Mureș, Zalău, and one later of them in Hungary. After a while, every summer they held an annual meeting of the siblings, which meant that on a pre-arranged day they would gather and spend the day talking. It was not only the correspondence that bound them together in the intervening period but also the fact that these scattered siblings thought of themselves as a large family and built their strategies accordingly. For example, the care of the children of siblings who had several children was sometimes taken over by the sisters pursuing an ecclesiastical career: they took the children and raised them for years, and Mihály sending monthly sums to these sisters to care for the children. Together they also decided on major investments, such as the renovation of the parental home. They consulted when one or other of the siblings was about to make a major investment, such as buying a washing machine or a sewing machine. They put pressure on each other when they felt that money was going in the wrong direction, for example, when they disapproved of someone wanting to spend money on house renovations instead of buying school clothes for the children.¹⁵ The extended family thus functioned as a unit in which, despite disagreements, major economic and financial decisions were made together.

5. Anthropological Insights from Written Documents

In the 1960s, the accumulation of wealth in backyard goods made possible a second wave of peasant embourgeoisement, or at least this is how Hungarian ethnographic research interprets this period when discussing the economic processes of the Carpathian Basin.¹⁶ Reading the economic documents in Mihály Tyukodi's papers, I wondered whether this process could be observed in the case of Mihály's extended family¹⁷, whether we could speak of peasant embourgeoisement¹⁸ in their case. At the end of the research, my answer is that this process began in this family during their generation but was not completed.

The Hungarian ethnographic literature has extensively researched the concepts of peasant, peasantry¹⁹, here we highlight only two of them. Imre Kovách emphasizes the means of production and the control over economic decisions when he defines the peasantry: "Peasant' should be understood as a small farmer who does not necessarily own the means of production, but has real control over decisions, their application and implementation" (Kovách, 2010, p. 239). As Mihály Sárkány puts it, peasants are:

agricultural producers who, in addition to their agricultural production, may also engage in other work (e.g. fishing, handicrafts) and carry out their productive activities in societies in which they have the possibility of owning the labor and tools necessary for their own reproduction, but whose general conditions of work are owned either by the

¹⁵ For details on joint family decisions, see Szikszai M. 2020. 168-181.

¹⁶ Thus, Tamás Mohay (Mohay 1994. 171.) refers to the sixties.

¹⁷ Some of Mihály's siblings stayed in their native village and worked in agriculture and animal husbandry, some of his sisters became nuns, one brother became a cantor, and as we have seen, he himself became a priest.

¹⁸ For more on the topic, see Erdei, 1987; Kovách, 2010; Laki, 2021. There was a debate about to what extent the social processes observed in Hungary during the seventies and eighties can be considered as embourgeoisement (Laki, 2021, p. 15-26).

¹⁹ See Szabó, 1965; Hoffmann, 1998; Faragó, 1999. Regarding the history of the concept of peasantry and the disappearance of peasantry, for a summary see: Kovách, 2010.

state or by individual persons who, by virtue of their ownership, appropriate part of the goods they produce (Sárkány, 1983, p. 31).²⁰

On this basis, we can consider Mihály's parents' members of the peasant class. However, the situation is different for Mihály and his siblings' generation.

In the subsequent sections, this paper investigates whether we can characterize Mihály Tyukodi and his family's situation as one of embourgeoisement, using the criteria outlined by Gyula Benda (1991, p. 169). Benda classifies the changes that can be observed during the process of embourgeoisement into four groups.

The first such change is the change of economic mentality, the emergence of an entrepreneurial mentality, which implies that the traditional peasant becomes a farmer (Benda, 1991, p. 172). However, in Tyukodi Mihály's case, we cannot speak of becoming a farmer: he imagined farming in the model of his parents, in the model of the period of their life when they were big farmers, but this was only an image of an ideal state and an aspiration for Mihály. He was constrained in this by his profession and qualifications, on the one hand, and by the socialist-minded economic establishment, on the other, but it is also very likely that his skills and abilities would not have qualified him to be a farmer. We recall that in 1949, when he was very proud of being a farmer with four cows, he could not actually develop a real farming strategy, and the visit of the bishop's secretary made him realize that, beside livestock, he would have to do something about the land as well. He then hired a competent person to run the farm. And this was still true later: farming was a nice activity for him, but he could never think of it as an entrepreneurial activity. In this sense, Mihály was already too much of a first-generation intellectual and, as such, a good example of embourgeoisement.

The second change can be traced to the level of individualization: the interest in new forms of social and family life accompanies this change (Benda, 1991, p. 172). From the data available to us, we can say that this is not clearly happening in Mihály's micro-environment. This generation insisted on maintaining and operating the previous family structure, even when many of them lived in urban areas and it was more difficult to implement decisions at the extended family level. But while they tried to maintain extended family planning at the cost of conflicts, their way of life did change: those siblings who moved to the city read literary journals and knew foreign languages – Mihály, for example, read French, German, Latin, Romanian and Hungarian. They all had a small library at home, reading novels, poetry and history books. They liked music, meaning classical music and church music. We can say that the conditions of this category were partially met.

The third change relates to the process of becoming a citizen, and the main actor in this process is the individual who has changed from being subjected to a landlord to becoming a member of the nation. For our protagonists, the first few decades of the 20th century were very turbulent in this respect, as they alternated between one state and another during the world wars, and then, when the borders of the country stabilized, they found themselves in a double minority as Swabians assimilated into Hungarians: after the Second World War, they lived as a religious and ethnic minority in the predominantly Orthodox Romanian state. By the mid-20th century, the Swabian farmers living on the former Károlyi

²⁰ Our translation, the original text: "(...) a parasztságot most a következőképpen definiáljuk: a parasztok mezőgazdasági termelők, akik mezőgazdasági termelésük mellett végezhetnek egyéb munkát is (pl. halászat, kézműipar), és termelőtevékenységüket olyan társadalmakban folytatják, amelyekben lehetőségük van a saját újratermelésükhöz szükséges munkaerőnek és munkaeszközöknek birtoklására, de általános munkafeltételeiknek tulajdonosa vagy az állam, vagy egyes jogi személyek, akik tulajdonosi helyzetük alapján az általuk termelt javak egy részét elsajátítják."

estates had become first-generation intellectuals with Romanian citizenship, claiming to belong to the Hungarian ethnic group.

Fourthly, Gyula Benda considers the change in lifestyle and mentality to be the area where embourgeoisement can be observed, and this includes family planning, the change in child rearing and urbanization.

The economic records presented in the first half of the study provide the most information on the way of life. In terms of lifestyle, until 1960 Mihály's siblings who remained in the village followed the lifestyle of their parents, farming and rearing livestock. In 1960, on the pressure of the communist authorities, most of them joined the collective farm system, which put their budding individual farming aspirations on hold for good. The other group of brothers and sisters turned to a church career, and, in addition, they obtained diplomas as teachers and nurses. They thus moved away from the parental model.

From the data presented above, we have also seen that a change in material goods took place from the mid-20th century onwards: from the 1950s and 1960s, the goods purchased changed and the use of new material goods spread in the extended family. Electricity was introduced in Mihály's home village in the 1960s. From the mid-20th century onwards, the family bought radios, washing machines and sewing machines, while Mihály bought and used a typewriter, washing machine, radios and tape recorders. From the 1960s onwards, the family also began to use the telephone. Beyond the devices, it is also worth considering the aspect of general literacy: as we have seen, those of Mihály's siblings who had a higher level of education got in an urban environment, regularly ordered and read literary and cultural magazines, regularly corresponded, read books, had a basic musical literacy, and in this they also differed from their farmer-keeper parents and siblings – a distinction that is palpable even when we know that Mihály's father was a member of the local brass band.

When we talk about lifestyle, we cannot omit housing-related issues. In the region of the city of Carei, where this family lived, bathrooms were not a compulsory part of the home in the 1960s. In 1964, Mihály's brother was preparing to partition off a kitchen area from the room where he and his young family lived, and the flat thus created was to be given to an elderly lady, who would then take over the flat she had been using, consisting of a room, a large kitchen and a pantry. A bathroom is not mentioned as part of any of the apartments. In 1979 Mihály was able to renovate a vacant village house he had bought a long time ago in preparation for his retirement, and at that time he added a bathroom, which he saw as a novelty, a step towards modernity.

The career strategies of Mihály and his siblings can also be seen as an aspiration to bourgeoisie, in the sense that they turned away from their parents' peasant-herdsman lifestyle by entering intellectual careers. These young people saw a career in the church as the only way to move away from the peasant lifestyle. Mihály's eldest brother went to theology (and died young as a student), his other brother became a cantor and he himself a priest. Three of his sisters turned to monastic orders, two of them graduated as teachers during their novitiate, one became a nurse. Of the three sisters, one eventually chose a civil life and got married. The other two sisters continued to consider themselves nuns after the banning of the monastic orders in Romania in 1948 and used their nun's names in correspondence. In their case, a shift from peasant life to a working life can be traced²¹, as one of them worked as a teacher, later as a sacristan, then in an office, and the other as a hospital nurse.

²¹ Ferenc Erdei indicates that the peasant bourgeoisie "transforms the former peasant farmers and peasant workers towards the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie on the one hand, and towards the working class on the other" (Erdei: 1987: 41).

However, at the level of their values, they did not fully move away from the lifestyle offered by the city: yes, as intellectuals they read literature and read newspapers, but they did not embrace the entertainment or socialization opportunities offered by the city. Nor did they adapt to the urban lifestyle on a culinary level: they did not like the food from the shops, like the noodles and the meat, but stuck to the food grown in the village and, if they could, they tried to slaughter pigs every year as city dwellers, as was the custom in their home village. They adhered to the religious practices they had been socialized to in their home village as children and later perfected in theology and monastic orders. They also adhered to the concept of the extended family and had a very strong sense of family responsibility. It can be said that peasant values continued to play a very important role in shaping their values and their framework of life, and only later, in the upbringing of their children, were new aspirations discovered. The education of the next generation was of paramount importance, and a great deal of time and money was devoted to promoting their educational advancement. It was believed that education, schooling was an opportunity for children to break out of what was then a less valuable model of life as farmers and herdsman, and as such was a process towards embourgeoisement.

6. Conclusions

The data for the period under discussion can therefore be interpreted as the beginning of embourgeoisement, but they do not clearly point towards the end of this process. The economic system in Romania made it impossible for a small entrepreneurial class to emerge from the mid-20th century onwards, and the ambitions of this family as farmers remained rather modest. The change in mentality and lifestyle is partial: on the one hand, they embrace certain achievements of intellectualism, not interpreted in too broad terms, but at the same time they cling to such things as the traditional family ties, the culinary customs of their home village, and the values and mentality acquired in their childhood socialization environment form the basis of their values. The change in the means of production does introduce the use of new, modern objects into their value system, the perception of these new objects as values, but the process stops at the level where modern tools replace the tools of the traditional peasant household, no big, spectacular breakthrough occurs at the level of mentality. The mentality of this generation has not yet been radically transformed, but there remains a strong basis of respect for the values of the peasant culture of the peasant farmer-keeper. It could be said that the political system of the 20th century in Romania and the resulting economic and social structure mean that the process of embourgeoisement seems to be a protracted one and will probably only be completed in the next generation.

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