

ABSTRACT

THE SCRIBE OF THE SECLER VILLAGE COMMUNITIES. THE LIFE AND WORK OF ISTVÁN IMREH

In this book I provide insight into the typical characters of late 20th century Transylvanian Hungarian historiography, as well as to follow the life's work of a historian and sociologist who had been involved in the organizational aspect of scientific life as well. Researching the life of Imreh István, I was most interested in how the historian, born in 1919 and having lived through the 20th century, managed to both hold on to his public positions and leave behind a surprisingly coherent and reliable body of work, while most of his contemporaries were forced onto dead-end tracks or paths of no return by political changes. It is a given that individual elements of a multi-faceted answer are to be found in the interplay of a sequence of fortunate coincidences but holding on to public positions often also required a level of compromise in the face of circumstances.

The first part of my work follows Imreh István's life between 1919 and 1944 in a chronological manner. The periods between 1944–1948 and 1948–1989 respectively are grouped into thematic sections. The roughly one-and-a-half-decade post-revolution period of the historian's life is presented in one extended chapter.

I started my work from a theory linked to *intellectual history* which states that next to sources, the nature of historical discourse is also influenced by the character of the historian and by the context in which a body of text is created. My relatively extensive detailing of the broader (political) and narrower (institutional, social) context in which Imreh István's life's work developed is explained in part by the lack of reference studies, and by my curiosity for, the manner in which he interacted with his circle of friends and family, beyond the role he played in intellectual circles. The reason for organizing my writing into units based on epochs of political history stems from the nature of 20th century authoritarian regimes, which deeply impacted the lives of *average Joes* and intellectuals, the latter perhaps to an even greater extent.