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**Assessment of the Scholarly Achievements and Academic Contributions
of Dr Ján Golian, Associate Professor,
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Assessment of the Scientific and Pedagogical Output of Dr Ján Golian

In my assessment, the scholarly profile of Ján Golian represents an exceptionally strong and methodologically mature contribution to historical research in Slovakia and, at the same time, one that clearly aspires to the standards and research agendas of Western European historiography. His long-term research programme is coherent, thematically focused, and characterised by a gradual but well-conceived expansion from national to international and comparative perspectives.

The core of Ján Golian's research lies in the historical demography of the territory of present-day Slovakia, complemented by studies in the history of everyday

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life, family history, and selected issues of the Slovak national movement in the long nineteenth century. Notably, he made early and sustained contributions to aggregate population research, utilizing systematic data extraction and quantitative analysis from church parish registers. Within the Slovak scholarly environment, this approach has established him as one of the leading specialists in historical-demographic methodology.

Importantly, Golian did not limit himself to empirical exploitation of parish registers but devoted significant attention to their methodological and interpretative dimensions. This effort culminated in the university textbook, *Chapters from Historical Demography. Analysis of Church Parish Registers and the Possibilities of Interpretation* (Trnava, 2024). The publication goes beyond a conventional teaching manual: it offers a critical synthesis of demographic methods, source criticism, and interpretative frameworks, and thus fills a notable gap in Slovak historiography. Comparable methodological textbooks are common in Western European historical demography but remain rare in the Slovak context; in this regard, Golian's work clearly elevates domestic scholarship towards international standards.

In recent years, his research focus has shifted towards the study of epidemics and anti-epidemic measures in the nineteenth century. This thematic reorientation is both timely and intellectually productive, as it connects demographic analysis with social, institutional, and cultural history, as well as with the history of public health. Golian's contribution to this field extends beyond his own publications. He served as the principal investigator of the VEGA project No. 1/0397/21, co-organised a thematic panel at the European Association for Urban History (EAUH) Conference in Ostrava in 2024, and co-edited a monothematic issue of *Historický časopis* (3/2024). These activities demonstrate his ability to shape research agendas and to integrate Slovak historiography into broader European scholarly debates.

A further qualitative step in his research development is represented by his current work on the decline of mortality and changing mortality patterns in nineteenth-century society. This line of inquiry, supported by the VEGA project no. 1/0121/25, explicitly addresses processes that are central to Western European historical-demographic research, such as the epidemiological transition and long-term improvements in population health. His participation as a co-researcher in the international COST Action project: *The Great Leap: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Health Inequalities, 1800–2022*, further strengthens the comparative and

interdisciplinary dimension of his work and confirms its relevance within a European research framework.

The international orientation of Ján Golian's scholarly activity is also evident in his regular participation in major European and global congresses of historical and social sciences (including ICHS, ESHD, EAUH, and ESSH seminars) and in the reception of his work in foreign academic publications. Within the academic environment, such consistent international visibility remains above average and should be regarded as a significant indicator of scholarly maturity and ambition.

Equally important is Golian's pedagogical activity and his role in the cultivation of the next generation of researchers. He has supervised a substantial number of bachelor's and master's theses, and it deserves particular emphasis that two of his former students have successfully published the results of their master's research as scholarly articles in journals indexed in the Scopus database. This achievement reflects not only the quality of the students themselves, but also the effectiveness of Golian's research-led supervision and mentoring.

In conclusion, I assess the scholarly output and academic profile of Ján Golian as distinctive and fully compatible with the standards of Western European historical research. His work combines methodological rigour, thematic relevance, and international engagement, and it demonstrates a level of scholarly maturity that clearly justifies his habilitation.

Assessment of the Habilitation Thesis / Habilitation Work

The habilitation achievement of Dr. Ján Golian is the monograph entitled *Analysis of the Causes of Death in the Population in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century, with Special Emphasis on Infectious Diseases [Analýza príčin úmrtí obyvateľstva v druhej polovici 19. storočia s osobitným ohľadom na nákazlivé choroby]*. The volume comprises 322 pages, including references, and consists of the introduction, five substantive chapters, and a concluding chapter entitled *Final Conclusions*. The study also includes two cartographic materials, fifty-eight graphs, and two tables, which constitute the core analytical component of the work.

In the introduction, Ján Golian familiarises the reader with the issues surrounding historical-demographic research on causes of death, focusing on the population of the parish of Detva in the second half of the 19th century. Referring to Pierre Goubert, the author emphasises the complexity of such research, the difficulties

arising from the heterogeneity of parish register entries, and their considerable value for understanding the lives and experiences of entire generations. Golian also points out that this type of research remains insufficiently developed in the Slovak context when compared with Western European countries, where advanced statistical methods and modern classifications, such as ICD-10h, are commonly applied.

The research method adopted in the monograph, namely, a detailed analysis of data from the parish of Detva for the years 1861–1885 allows the causes of death to be examined within a broader social, political, and economic context. The inclusion of epidemic periods further enhances the analytical and interpretative value of the study. The introduction also outlines the structure of the monograph and highlights the importance of analysing causes of death for understanding processes of modernisation and social change in nineteenth-century Slovakia.

Chapter 1 presents the background and foundations of the research. The Author provides a detailed account of the process of constructing a database of causes of death for the parish of Detva, based on parish registers. Particular emphasis is placed on the meticulous extraction of data, which links information on causes of death with individual-level characteristics of the deceased, thereby enabling a comprehensive demographic and epidemiological analysis.

For data processing, the Author employed Microsoft Excel, in which each record was assigned a unique sequential identifier, facilitating accurate identification and ensuring the continuity of entries. The database compiled for this study comprises 9,623 individual records and contains detailed information on, inter alia, the date of death; the name and surname of the deceased and family-related data; place of residence and house number; sex and age at death (converted into years); causes of death, including their translation from Latin into Slovak and English; administered sacraments; the date of burial and the officiating clergyman; as well as additional remarks concerning the circumstances of death or marital status.

The chapter also highlights the difficulties associated with the lack of uniformity in the source material, resulting from diverse spellings of personal names and place names, as well as from linguistic processes related to the use of Hungarian and Latin. The standardisation of the data subsequently enabled the classification of causes of death according to the ICD-10h framework, which made it possible to analyse health-related and demographic trends within the studied population.

In summary, the creation of a detailed and well-structured database constitutes a solid foundation for further scholarly analysis. It allows for precise examination of causes of death, demographic patterns, and the circumstances surrounding mortality, thereby significantly enriching our understanding of the living conditions and health profile of the nineteenth-century Slovak population.

Chapter II, entitled *Characteristics of the Studied Population*, represents a particularly strong and methodologically sophisticated component of Dr. Golian's habilitation work. The demographic analysis of the parish of Detva, based on the 1869 census, provides an exceptionally detailed reconstruction of both the age and socio-economic structure of the population, demonstrating a level of rigor and precision rarely found in comparable Slovak studies. The examination of age distribution, presented through population pyramids, reveals a clearly expansive population structure with a broad base, indicative of high fertility and the predominance of younger age cohorts. The progressive decline in older age groups confirms the historically high mortality rates typical of pre-transitional populations. This chapter stands out for its comparative perspective, situating Detva within broader Central European demographic patterns and thereby highlighting both commonalities and distinctive local features.

Dr Golian's critical treatment of anomalies in the 15–24 and 25–29 age groups is exemplary. Rather than ignoring these inconsistencies, he interprets them as the result of historical processes, notably the emigration of young people in the 1840s, as well as systematic inaccuracies in age reporting. This nuanced, source-critical approach demonstrates a level of analytical maturity that significantly exceeds the standard in Slovak historical-demographic research. The careful differentiation between urban and rural populations further strengthens the chapter. The higher proportion of working-age individuals in the town versus a predominance of children in rural areas reflects socio-economic realities with remarkable clarity. Dr Golian treats even minor differences with methodological caution, demonstrating both analytical precision and intellectual integrity.

The chapter's longitudinal analysis, comparing the 1869 census with those of 1900 and 1910 is particularly valuable. It reveals a notable stability in population structure over time, with only moderate growth in the pre-working-age cohort and a relatively constant share of the post-working-age group. This comparative perspective is almost unprecedented in Slovak historical-demographic studies and significantly enhances the scholarly contribution of the work.

Of exceptional merit is the detailed scrutiny of the oldest age group (75+), which exposes significant discrepancies between ages reported in the census and those recorded in parish registers. Dr Golian convincingly identifies this phenomenon as age heaping, arising from imprecise record-keeping, difficulties in establishing exact birth dates, and limited administrative oversight. By explicitly addressing these source limitations, the author demonstrates methodological transparency and strengthens the credibility of his findings – a practice rarely observed with such rigor in regional historical-demographic research.

In conclusion, despite the inherent imperfections of the sources, Chapter II provides **insightful, highly reliable, and methodologically advanced analyses** of the demographic structure, socio-economic composition, and population dynamics of nineteenth-century Detva. It clearly sets Dr Golian's work apart from previous Slovak studies, establishing him as a leading figure in the historical-demographic investigation of the region and laying a robust foundation for the subsequent chapters of his monograph.

Chapter III is devoted to the analysis of the demographic characteristics of the parish of Detva in the years 1861–1885, based on data derived from parish death registers. Dr Ján Golian provides a meticulous reconstruction of mortality dynamics across different age groups, employing selected life table parameters, such as life expectancy (e_x), the survival probability (l_x), and the probability of death (q_x). The use of life tables allows for a far more comprehensive and analytically rigorous depiction of mortality processes than a simple tally of deaths.

Particular attention must be paid to the methodological approach adopted by Dr. Golian. He deliberately chose to employ a method for constructing life tables based on the distribution of the deceased, a technique widely used in the biology of prehistoric populations described by Gábor Acsádi and József Nemeskéri in their seminal work *History of Human Life Span and Mortality* (1970). This approach, known as Halley's method (Acsádi & Nemeskéri 1970), is based on the distribution of the deceased by age and assumes a stationary population model. However, over extended periods, the assumption of constant fertility and mortality, and the resulting constant population growth, represents a simplification. To address this, Acsádi and Nemeskéri applied the stable population model, reconstructing the distribution of the deceased while incorporating a non-zero value of natural population increase. **In his work, Dr. Golian skilfully applied both stationary and stable population models, demonstrating**

methodological sophistication and a nuanced understanding of the limitations and possibilities of historical demographic analysis. This approach is exceptionally rare in historical demography, where life tables are typically constructed from data on the living population by age cohorts and the corresponding probabilities of death. The absence of reliable census data on the living population in Detva for the period under study compelled the author to seek an innovative methodological solution. This decision reflects a highly competent and reflective adaptation of research tools to the limitations of the source material, demonstrating both creativity and methodological rigor.

The analysis unequivocally shows that the highest proportion of deaths occurred among infants and young children aged 0–5, who accounted for more than half of all recorded deaths. The next group exhibiting a marked increase in mortality consisted of middle-aged adults, primarily as a consequence of the cholera epidemics of 1871–1875. The population of older adults was very small, resulting in a sharp decline in deaths among those aged over 75. The survival probability (l_x) reveals that the most significant attrition of the population occurred in the first five years of life, directly reflecting high infant mortality and the impact of childhood epidemics. After the age of 40, the rate of decline in survivorship accelerated, reaching near-zero values after age 70. Similarly, the probability of death (q_x) showed a strong age-dependence and sensitivity to epidemic periods: in infants it exceeded 50%, while in older age groups it increased progressively with age, with deviations attributable to the practicalities of age registration in parish records.

A particularly valuable aspect of the chapter is the analysis of the impact of infectious diseases on life expectancy. Based on the raw data, the author calculated that the life expectancy of a newborn (e_0) was only around 22 years, while e_5 reached approximately 37 years. After removing deaths caused by infectious diseases and reconstructing the distribution of the deceased to account for natural population growth, the life expectancy of a newborn increased to 34.4 years – an improvement of over 12 years – while e_5 rose to 46.5 years, an increase of approximately 9 years. These results convincingly illustrate the dramatic effect of infectious diseases on life expectancy, particularly among children, but also across the adult population.

Dr. Golian convincingly demonstrates that the demographic dynamics of Detva in the 19th century were largely determined by sanitary and epidemiological factors. Only the hypothetical elimination of infectious diseases and the consideration of natural

population growth bring the observed demographic parameters closer to those characteristics of contemporary Western European populations. This chapter, therefore, represents a **methodologically mature, analytically sophisticated, and substantively significant contribution** to the study of historical demography and the history of public health in Central Europe, distinguishing Dr. Golian's work as **leading in its field within the Slovak context**.

Chapter IV is far more than a descriptive statistical account; it represents a rigorous attempt to correlate causes of death with social, economic, and demographic determinants, thereby offering substantial value for research in social history, historical demography, and the history of public health. The chapter delivers a meticulous and nuanced analysis of individuals in permanent celibacy. Dr. Golian convincingly demonstrates that they accounted for merely around 3% of the population under study, a proportion strikingly lower than the 15–20% reported in Western and Central European contexts. The chapter systematically identifies the key factors underlying celibacy: economic constraints, social pressures, and health-related limitations, including physical and mental disabilities. Analysis of age at death reveals that a notable proportion of unmarried individuals died during working ages (30–45), with a predominance of men (57.6%). Causes of death in this subgroup are characterized by a low incidence of infectious diseases, while non-specific symptoms such as fever and dropsy, alongside external causes (accidents, suicide, and violence), predominate. The chapter astutely underscores the impact of social conditions on demographic patterns, convincingly arguing that individual life choices were strongly conditioned by economic and familial contexts.

Moreover, Dr. Golian examines mortality within ecclesiastical charitable institutions, revealing that 80 individuals died in the studied period, predominantly elderly (46.9% aged 60+), with gender evenly distributed. The remarkably low prevalence of infectious diseases in this population suggests effective institutional care or superior access to medical services relative to the general local population. Deaths were primarily attributable to senescent exhaustion and general symptoms, reflecting the advanced age of the cohort. The chapter also examines socially marginalized groups, including *tuláci* (vagrants or wanderers) and foreigners, highlighting their distinct demographic patterns. Among *tuláci*, 88.5% of deaths occurred in adulthood, whereas among foreigners, a significant proportion involved children (27% aged 0–14). Mortality among *tuláci* (vagrants or wanderers) was dominated by non-specific

symptomatic causes, while foreigners were disproportionately affected by infectious diseases, including tuberculosis, typhus, and cholera. Importantly, the chapter acknowledges substantial gaps in parish registers regarding age, cause of death, and addresses, which sharply illustrates the methodological challenges inherent in researching migratory and socially marginalized populations.

Strengths of the chapter:

1. Methodological rigor – Dr. Golian systematically and transparently documents his sources, carefully delineates inclusion criteria for each analysed group, and openly discusses limitations arising from the quality of parish records.
2. Social analysis – The chapter convincingly demonstrates the linkage between social structure and mortality patterns, highlighting the influence of economic status, institutional care, and migration.
3. Comparative perspective – The references to broader European contexts allow readers to situate local phenomena within a wider historical framework, enhancing the work's comparative significance.
4. Demographic precision – Detailed cross-tabulations by age, sex, marital status, and cause of death enable a sophisticated and thorough examination of mortality patterns.

Critical remarks:

1. Data gaps – While the author notes incomplete information in the registers (age, cause of death, addresses), the impact of these omissions on the robustness of conclusions, especially regarding *tuláci* and foreigners, could be discussed more explicitly.
2. Analysis of causes of death – Although the chapter identifies the predominance of symptomatic causes, a more granular analysis of age- and sex-specific mortality patterns would strengthen the interpretative depth.
3. Engagement with comparative literature – The chapter references relevant sources, yet a more systematic juxtaposition with studies from regions exhibiting similar social and demographic structures could substantively reinforce the conclusions.

In conclusion, Chapter IV constitutes a major and methodologically sophisticated contribution to the demographic and social history of 19th-century Detva. It convincingly demonstrates how social, economic, and institutional factors shaped mortality patterns and the spectrum of causes of death. The chapter stands out for its

methodological transparency, rigorous treatment of diverse social groups, and critical evaluation of source quality. The conclusions are coherent, logically structured, and provide a robust foundation for further inquiry in social history, historical epidemiology, and migration demography. While limitations arising from incomplete data necessitate cautious interpretation in certain areas, the chapter fully meets the scientific and substantive requirements expected of a habilitation thesis. It offers valuable insights for scholars in historical demography, social history, and public health.

Overall evaluation: Chapter IV is a methodologically robust, analytically rigorous, and substantively significant work. It provides a firm platform for further socio-demographic research and exemplifies the academic standards expected of habilitation-level scholarship.

Chapter V of the thesis presents a comprehensive and methodologically rigorous analysis of the impact of infectious diseases on mortality in the 19th-century population of Detva, focusing on two principal causes: measles (osýpky) and diphtheria (záškrt). Dr. Golian systematically integrates demographic, epidemiological, and spatial data, providing both a synthetic overview of the epidemics and insight into their local determinants.

The analysis of measles is carried out in a highly detailed and precise manner. The author documents the overwhelming predominance of deaths among children up to four years of age (82% of all deaths), with the highest mortality observed in infants under one year (39.2%). Seasonal patterns are clearly identified, with peaks in spring and early summer, consistent with classical mechanisms of airborne disease transmission. The chapter also considers the spatial dimension of the epidemic, demonstrating higher mortality in rural households (lazy) compared to the town, and presenting individual family cases that illustrate the ease of disease transmission within households.

The section on diphtheria is equally strong analytically. Dr. Golian situates the epidemic within a broad historical context, from ancient descriptions of the disease to the discovery of the causative bacterium, *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*, and the development of treatment and prevention strategies in the 19th and 20th centuries. Data from Detva indicate that diphtheria primarily affected children aged 1–9 years (73.5% of deaths). Similar to measles, the disease exhibits typical seasonal patterns for airborne infections, with a peak in March 1881, and a clear spatial distribution favouring rural households over the town. Detailed family case studies further illustrate

the dynamics of transmission within households, highlighting the influence of local social conditions and family structure on the course of the epidemics.

A major strength of the chapter lies in the meticulous presentation and interpretation of numerical data. The conclusions are clear, logically derived, and well-grounded in comparative literature, both locally and in the broader European context. Dr. Golian convincingly demonstrates that infectious mortality was strongly influenced by age, seasonality, and local conditions, with children constituting the most severely affected group for both diseases.

Chapter V thus represents a significant contribution to historical epidemiology, combining robust empirical analysis with careful contextualization in social and historical frameworks. **The work stands out for its methodological rigor, clarity of data presentation, and critical engagement with sources, making it a valuable reference** for further research on infectious diseases in historical populations and their mechanisms of transmission.

The conclusion of the habilitation presents a concise, yet highly insightful synthesis of the research achievements and key findings derived from the analysis of causes of death in the parish of Detva during the years 1861–1885. The author consistently revisits the hypotheses and research questions posed at the outset, rigorously assessing their validity in light of the collected empirical data. The study unequivocally confirms the exceptionally high mortality of children during the period under investigation. In epidemic years, children under 14 accounted for up to 70% of all deaths, while infants represented approximately 30% of overall mortality. The analysis further demonstrates that infectious diseases, classified under categories “A” and “B,” dominated the causes of death, reaching levels of up to 80% during severe epidemic periods, thereby substantially reducing life expectancy at birth. The Author exhibits commendable critical awareness of source-related and methodological limitations, particularly concerning symptomatic (“R”) and perinatal (“P”) diagnoses, which were frequently recorded in parish registers but did not always allow for precise medical classification. Simultaneously, the work demonstrates the value of a systematic examination of these records, as they provide crucial insights into the health and demographic realities of the population and allow for the reconstruction of complex mortality patterns. The study is distinguished by its interdisciplinary approach, incorporating both spatial and socio-cultural perspectives. Mortality differences between the parish centre and rural settlements are analysed, as well as among

specific social groups, including the Roma, illegitimate children, single individuals, and residents of charitable institutions. The results clearly show that each group exhibited a distinct mortality profile and vulnerability to infectious diseases, with child mortality particularly elevated in marginalized communities, highlighting the critical influence of social inequalities on population health. Regarding specific infectious diseases, the author demonstrates that whooping cough caused the greatest number of deaths during the studied period, whereas childhood epidemics were dominated by measles and smallpox. Chronic diseases such as tuberculosis primarily affected adults, while cholera outbreaks, though less frequent, had catastrophic consequences for the overall population. The conclusion also identifies significant avenues for future research, particularly concerning the spatial spread of infections (GIS analysis), correlations with climatic conditions, and comparisons with epidemics in other European regions. The author emphasizes the importance of standardizing the classification of causes of death using the ICD10h method and applying it to parish register data, thereby aligning local studies with international research trends and enhancing their comparative value.

Overall Assessment

Dr. Golian's habilitation thesis represents an exemplary achievement in historical-demographic scholarship. Its key strengths lie in methodological rigor, analytical sophistication, critical engagement with primary sources, and an interdisciplinary approach that effectively integrates demographic, epidemiological, and social perspectives. The study offers a thorough reconstruction of nineteenth-century mortality patterns in Detva, providing nuanced insights into the determinants of infectious mortality, and makes a substantive contribution to both Slovak and Central European historiography. Overall, the work stands as a significant, reliable, and methodologically outstanding contribution, establishing a solid foundation for future research in historical demography, epidemiology, and social history.

Final Recommendation

Upon a thorough and critical evaluation of Dr. Ján Golian's scientific, research, and pedagogical engagement accomplishments, I assert with full confidence that he has established an extraordinary and original corpus of work in his discipline, thereby fully satisfying the requirements for the award of the habilitated doctorate.

Dr. Golian's habilitation thesis exemplifies the highest standards of scholarly rigor and methodological sophistication. His meticulous research demonstrates exceptional analytical precision, critical engagement with primary and secondary sources, and an exemplary capacity to integrate interdisciplinary perspectives, encompassing demographic, epidemiological, and social-historical dimensions. The monograph constitutes a seminal contribution to the understanding of nineteenth-century mortality patterns in the parish of Detva and, more broadly, to the historiography of Slovakia and Central Europe.

The study not only advances knowledge in historical demography but also sets a methodological benchmark for future research. Dr. Golian's work embodies intellectual independence, scientific creativity, and a profound understanding of complex socio-demographic phenomena, demonstrating his capacity to conduct research of international significance.

In accordance with § 76 of Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts, as amended, and pursuant to § 1(8) and subsequent provisions of Decree No. 246/2019 Coll. on the procedure for obtaining scientific and pedagogical titles or artistic and pedagogical titles of associate and extraordinary professors, I hereby unequivocally and with the highest recommendation propose that Dr. Ján Golian be conferred the academic degree of "habilitated doctor" (docent) in the field of Humanities, in the discipline of History.

This recommendation reflects not only Dr. Golian's outstanding scholarly achievements but also his demonstrated leadership, intellectual authority, and enduring contribution to the advancement of historical and demographic research. His habilitation represents a landmark accomplishment that firmly establishes him as a preeminent scholar in his field.