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# ETHNIC IDENTITY AND THE ISSUE OF OTHERNESS THROUGH MARRIAGE IN NORTHWEST TRANSYLVANIA (SECOND HALF OF THE XIX - EARLY XX CENTURY)

Mircea BRIE\*

**Abstract.** *The ethnic structure of this region has been strongly influenced by the evolution of different historical-geographical, and political factors, but also by the evolution of the confessional structure. Ethnicity, from this point of view, is closely related to religion. What is typical and important to note is that the ethnic structure is very diverse. In addition to Romanians and Hungarians, also Gypsies, Germans, Slovaks, Jews, Ruthenians, and Serbs are present; other ethnic groups are numerically insignificant.*

*For this period we identified two important categories of documents relating to ethnic identity of Transylvanians: 1. records made by the Austrian state authorities; 2. Church documents. They must be viewed and analyzed with great care because they do not correspond directly to the necessity to establish ethnic identities.*

*The documents that are available to us do not allow for an accurate determination of a person's ethnicity. Given the lack of a variable on nationality from the few censuses conducted by the Hungarian State, we propose based on analysis of other documents (particularly those of ecclesiastical origin) to: a. check the mother tongue, b. establish religious identity and c. run an onomastic study.*

**Keywords:** *ethnicity, confession, censuses, ecclesiastical documents, Transylvania*

The ethnic structure of this region has been strongly influenced by the evolution of different historical-geographical, and political factors, but also by the evolution of the confessional structure. Ethnicity, from this point of view, is closely related to religion.

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What is typical and important to note is that the ethnic structure is very diverse. In addition to Romanians and Hungarians, also Gypsies, Germans, Slovaks, Jews, Ruthenians, and Serbs are present; other ethnic groups are numerically insignificant.

### **Ethnic identity in the information sources**

For this period we identified two important categories of documents relating to ethnic identity of individuals or communities of people: 1. records made by the Austrian state authorities, known after 1867 as the Austro-Hungarian (censuses and other records of state authorities), 2. Church records, (split into two categories: a. civil status registers and annual reports of parishes, church authorities b. funds, documents and minutes recorded by the bishops) (Brie, 2008: 39). This information is supplemented not only by references of various researchers, who take on the issue of ethno-religious structure of population in this region directly or tangentially.

The sources of information should be considered and analyzed with great care because they do not correspond directly to the necessity to establish the ethnic identity.

#### **a. Censuses**

Following the few official censuses conducted by the Austrian and the Austro-Hungarian states, for this very period, we will try capturing the demographic issues in their evolution. In our opinion, this would remove the most part of the shortcomings of the church funds research (often these funds – we particularly refer to parish records and reports of marital status - are incomplete, subjective, many of them having gotten lost in time, etc.) and it would also make possible the framing within a general demographic context of the whole population belonging to these area settlements<sup>1</sup>.

This is how we looked into the data from the censuses run within this period by the Austrian and Austrian-Hungarian states after 1867<sup>2</sup>. Such censuses were conducted in 1850, 1857, 1869, 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1910<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Data on administrative units in this region was also recorded in the work of Iosif I. Adam, I. Pușcaș, *Izvoare de demografie istorică*, vol. II, *Secolul al XIX-lea – 1914.*, Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Statului, București, 1987.

<sup>2</sup> We used data from the published works of Traian Rotariu on censuses of 1880, 1900 and 1910, but not only them (we also had available the Ioan Russu Șireanu, *Românii din statul ungar*, publicată at la Arad in 1904, and which is an analysis of the census from 1900, a.s.o.).

<sup>3</sup> Information referring to these censuses that we will briefly present was collected from Traian Rotariu (coord.), Maria Semeniuc, Mezei Elemér, *Recensământul din*

On the territory of Hungary and Transylvania, following the first census from 1784-1787, a new official and general census was only carried out after six and a half decades, at the beginning of XIX century. After suppressing the revolution from 1848/1849 in Hungary and in particular after the political and administrative restructuring of the Monarchy, a new census became inevitable. Other countries of the Austrian Empire needed a census, as well. The Imperial Commissioner in charge of civil affairs, Karl Geringer, ordered Hungary to conduct a census on April 24, 1850.

The census was started in the summer of 1850, but because of preparations for war against Prussia, its carrying off was put on hold until its completion in the summer of 1851. Perhaps most of the census had been completed in Transylvania since the summer of 1850. According to estimates of that time, 5-6% of the population were missing from the census records, but this margin of error was subsequently considered as being too high.

The census used nationality as a criterion for recording the population. The census instructions did not clarify the meaning of the concept of nationality so that, when filling in the respective heading, several understandings of the matter intertwined. Moreover, the Hungarian statisticians received, generally with skepticism, the results of nationality records because, in their opinion, the executive body of the absolutist Austrian government was biased when finding the figure representing the number of Hungarians and tried to obtain a value lower than the real one.

Since the census of 1850 did not have the expected results in all respects, the Austrian Interior Ministry began almost immediately to prepare a next census. Under the time laws, the census should have taken place every 3 years, so the next census was due in 1854. Due to political and administrative reforms, the census was delayed. After extensive preparatory work, on March 23, 1857 the imperial patent was promulgated on the new census. Questions concerning religion and marital status were shaped in the same manner as in 1850, but in 1857, following the previous census experience, the nationality of population was no longer recorded.

In religion, this time next to Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran (Evangelical) Reformed, Unitarians and Israel, new separate sections are allowed for Armenian Catholics, Armenian-Gregorian and other religions.

In 1863, the census, which according to the regulation had to be carried out at every six years, was delayed throughout the whole Austrian empire. After other delays, finally Law III of 1869 ordered the census to be conducted in Hungary, by synchronizing the recording with the one from the Austrian part of the empire; it became in the meantime two-headed (the dualism of 1867).

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1910. *Transilvania*, Studia Censualica Transsilvanica, Editura Staff, Cluj-Napoca, 1999, p. 693-712.

This census gives us information about the religious structure of the region under study and less about ethnic groups.

The next census, the one from 1880, was already undertaken by a more independent body with increased power, that is the Hungarian Royal National Institute of Statistics, established in 1871.

Through individual questionnaires, the census from 1880 acquired a more “personal” character. A special emphasis was put on maintaining the household as the unit of the census, which was expressed by requiring that the individual polls be submitted on households.

Compared against these changes that were more formal, the real novelty of the 1880 census was the introduction of questions about the mother tongue. Thus, the census form was completed.

The instruction on language read: “The 6<sup>th</sup> heading will register the person’s mother tongue. Each heading will record the language declared by the person, and this statement must be firmly done and no reviewer has the right to influence the person”. According to the instruction, the children’s mother tongue could be different from that of the parents. Determination of nationality based on language and how the literal interpretation of language was done made those who could not speak be left out of the mother tongue heading; they were recorded into a separate heading. This section contained mostly infants (98% aged 0-2 y.o.), thus those very ones who could not speak because of their early age. Of course, this procedure was wrong because it is obvious that those reported in this group belonged to a certain nationality, too. Acknowledging the error, a proportional distribution was subsequently made between the languages for those who could not speak.

The new census, the one from 1890, regulated by Law IX of 1890 (which had nearly identical contents with the previous census law) and with the reference point of December 31, 1890, was carried out between January 1<sup>st</sup> and January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1891. Confession was an important criterion for the classification of the population. The census of 1890, the recording of the mother tongue was generally the same as it was in 1880, with the stipulation that the children who had not yet been able to speak were recorded depending on their mother’s mother tongue.

In the decade that followed the 1890 census, there were several significant events affecting the next census. This would be the case of the two important records: the census of the Gypsies in 1893 and the census of agriculture in 1895. Then, significant effects had the introduction, effective October 1895, of the civil status registers and closely related the reorganization of statistics on natural movement, together with Law XXXV of 1899, which allowed for a more solid census and statistical service. From then on it functioned under the name that it better reflected its tasks, i.e. Central Institute of Statistics of Hungary.

In general keeping the characteristics of the 1890 census, the 1900 census suffered some changes and additions. The census results were published in ten volumes, between 1902 and 1909.

In 1900 only an alive mother tongue could be entered, thus Latin, Gypsy and Jewish languages were not recorded. The fields of language and religion presented in the first volume of the census were simplified by removing one heading.

The last inventory of people from the old Hungary was carried out based on Law VIII of 1910. The reference date was fixed on December 31, 1910; all local works needed to be carried out, like previous censuses, during the first ten days of the new year.

A significant technical innovation of the census was the large-scale introduction of the pre-printed answers. To avoid, however, errors and abuse, the mother tongue and other spoken languages were still entered the traditional way. The prerequisite for hiring new reviewers was - this time, too – mastery of the Hungarian language.

## **b. Church documents**

Ecclesiastical information gives us a relatively clear picture of the religious structure, but not of the ethnic structure. This information should be closely analysed, if possible even be compared with information from other sources, because often, this information refers only to followers of that denomination, and not least we can see a certain bias that slipped in when data was recorded. A comparison between information from multiple documentary sources is, we believe, welcome if we want to achieve its purpose, namely to determine the structures of ethnic and confessional structures and the respective links between them.

Parish registers of civil status are complex sources for the researcher interested in historical demography, social history, economic history, toponymy, birthday, etc. Processing the data contained in these records requires a specific methodology. They allow us to observe trends that occurred on the long-term demographic events with reference to birth, marriages and deaths (Pascu, 1980: 12-13; Brie, 2008: 39). To study the observations made by representatives of churches, Sorina Paula Bolovan uses the method of family reconstitution sheets (SP Bolovan, 1999: 33). These records allow us to study the various events or demographic phenomena in terms of the confessional. By looking into the confessional we can deduce, to some extent, the ethnicity of those recorded registries. There are two major groups within the region, namely Romanians and Hungarians, and they are individualized, with some exceptions of course,

by religious confession<sup>4</sup>; we could establish an approximate direction to infer ethnicity. On the other hand, neither the prewar censuses are not directly related to ethnicity, but to the mother tongue<sup>5</sup>. This fact brings into question the relativity of interpretation of such documentary sources in view of determining the ethnicity.

We also have the annual reports of parishes; these reports allow us to verify and supplement data provided by the parish registers (even more as both documentary sources have been damaged to various extents). The research of these documents, the survey of data, the quantification of information, are followed by analysis and interpretation from many points of view. Ethno-religious structure of this period is influenced both by local realities and by socio-economic situation of the whole of Transylvania (Adam; Pușcaș, 1987: 117).

### **Political context – factor of influence on the evolution of ethnic structure of population**

The political reality, the events with political overtones that occurred during the XIX and XX centuries, had a direct influence on the conduct of the processes and phenomena related to ethno-religious developments of the population in the area subject to our research. Transylvania was part of Austrian Empire structures (before 1867) and then until 1918 it was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

The first big event of the XIX century, which influenced the Habsburg policy on ethnic and religious issues, was the revolution of 1848. This year highlights revolutionary conflicts of ethnic and religious nature that existed at the time between Romanians and Hungarians living in Transylvania. Both ethnic communities were attached to the values expressed in that year by their own people

The second half of the XIX century was a very tense period during which this region was strongly affected by measures that were taken at political level. The Imperial Constitution of 1849 gave freedom to all inhabitants of the monarchy. At the beginning of the 7th decade of the XIX century, Romanians and other ethnic groups were granted political and religious rights. In 1865, however, the Diet of Transylvania in Cluj opened its session and the incorporation of Transylvania to Hungary was greatly supported. On this occasion the Diet abolished the autonomy of the principality, all problems and

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<sup>4</sup> Romanians are usually Greek Catholics or Orthodox, and Hungarians are Roman Catholics or Protestants (Calvinists).

<sup>5</sup> These issues will be addressed during this work and we will try to remove the shortcomings on the subject using other means for determining ethnicity or confession, by linking the mother tongue with the anthroponym of the target study.

interests of this territory remained under discussion and subsequent decision issued by the Diet in Budapest.

The Austrian state as a result of deep internal crisis and external pressure will yield to Hungary and in 1867 will put the basis of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. As a result of this agreement Hungary was able to keep Transylvania. During the period that followed and until the First World War, people of ethnicities other than Hungarian underwent an intense process of Magyarization. This policy was supported by either a series of laws designed for this purpose or by abolishing laws that favoured non-Hungarian population, Romanian population in particular; we refer here to "*Law on equal rights of the Romanian nation*" and "*Law on the official character of the Romanian language*". The policy lead by the Hungarian Parliament and Government resulted in the period that followed 1867 in pushing Romanians out of the political, social and cultural life. From Hungarian laws that were passed during this period and had negative consequences for all ethnic groups of non-Hungarian ethnic group we would like to remind "*Law of nationalities*" and "*Education Law*". These two laws were motivated by the fact that in Hungary there is only one nation and only one official language, respectively Hungarian. Among other such laws such we can also mention "*Election Laws*" that resulted in the restriction of voting rights for non-Hungarian ethnic groups (especially after 1874) (Ilies, 1998: 18-19). In 1892 the "Apponyi Law" was voted and passed; this was the law regulating schooling. This law had an even stronger effect on the non-Magyar population of Hungary that was undergoing Magyarization. Confessional education was abolished and the Hungarian language learning was introduced as a mandatory class in all schools. These laws, together with others, shaped a disastrous period for the non-Magyar population in the region, aiming at its forced Magyarization.

1 December 1918 brought the unification of Transylvania, Banat, Crisana and Maramures with Romania (Ilies, 1998). The Romanian State shall guarantee, through the Constitution of 1923, individual and collective freedoms of all citizens of this country, regardless of nationality or religion. The Law of Religions from 1928 would guarantee freedom and protection to all churches. The new administration favored religious freedom for all nationalities within its borders (Ilieș, 1998).

Unreservedly we can note that political events, both national and international, are very important in determining the ethnic and religious composition. It is not only the politics that influences this structure. We met other factors among which we highlight the social, the economic, the cultural, the geographical, a.s.o.



## Methods of determining the ethnic identity

As the nationality variable is lacking from the very few censuses conducted by the Hungarian state, we propose that, based on other documents (mainly those of ecclesiastical origins) to: a. check the mother tongue; b. establish the confessional identity; c. onomastic study.

The available documents do not allow us to accurately determine a person's ethnicity. Even if we wanted to highlight just ethnicity, we cannot do this because at the level of the XIX century even the official censuses do not use the nationality variable, but only the mother tongue variable. Parish registers and civil status reports allow for establishing a person's ethnic identity in an even lesser extent, the criterion by which the population was recorded was their confession. In the latter case, establishing a relationship between ethnicity and religion has an even greater margin of error. Ecclesiastical documents, however, are the only ones allowing us a research of the marital process, in the sense that we would take on.

The criteria that can determine the ethnicity in this region are, in addition to individual declaration of ethnicity (data is very scarce), language, religion and the name of the person (mainly family name). Obviously, when using these criteria, we must consider all these indicators, not just one. An individual may know or may not know the language of the people to which he/she belongs. He/she loses the religious identity, or simply converts to another denomination or religion. The variable of name is even more relative. A person, often through marriage, changes her/his name. At the beginning of the XX century, the process of linguistic change is increasing under the influence of the Apponyi Law (Şişeştean, 2002: 15). But, what is ethnic identity? An individual who loses his religion, name and language (especially) and does not lose ethnic identity? Ethnic, national identity is more complex than the religious or linguistic issue (Bocşan, 1997: 130). Precisely for that reason, we must consider all factors together with socio-political, economic and cultural conditions that imprint a particular ethnic reality.

It is necessary to use at least two of the mentioned criteria. If we consider religion, we can say that Romanians are Orthodox and Greek Catholics. We do not exclude the fact that some Hungarians might be Greek Catholics or Orthodox<sup>6</sup>. We need to consider all factors, all possible indicators. The fact that we found in documents Hungarians of Greek Catholic or Orthodox religion is explained to a lesser extent by converting Hungarians to these confessions, though we find many such cases, rather by some Romanians'

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<sup>6</sup> A good example is the village of Beius Şuncuiuş (Bihor county), where in 1900 there were, according to census 370 Romanian Hungarian, 388 Greek Catholics, plus the 19 Orthodox. From here we can easily conclude that some of the declared Hungarian majority population in the village were Greek Catholic or Orthodox

Magyarisation, but who will not give up their religion. After being Magyarised, many Romanians converted to Roman Catholicism or Protestantism.

Another problem that occurs in establishing ethnic identity according to religion is in this area, but not limited to Jews. In 1880, for example, in Beiuș and Vașcău there were 621 Israelis (Rotariu, 1997: 50-82) and in 1900, across the entire Country of Beiuș there were altogether 1,709 Israelis (Ilieș, 1998: 327). All these people are in fact Jews. In censuses conducted by the Austrian-Hungarian state, the region does not list any Jew (because of census procedures). Most of them declare themselves as Hungarians or Romanians, according to case.

The declared native language is not only for Jews a questionable criterion for establishing ethnic identity. However, the language of a person defines a great part of the ethnic identity of that person. The direction of this phenomenon was the loss of the Romanians' linguistic identity. Another quite interesting, is that of a person's native language knowledge. In 1880, when the census was conducted incorporating such a metric, those who did not speak were recorded at the section "unknown language". In the *Country of Beiuș* there are records of 1,446 people with unknown language (this category also includes children who did not speak yet and therefore could not declare their language) (Rotariu, 1997: 50-82). What ethnicity did they have? In cities such as Stei, Lunca or Buntești (Bihar County) where the share of Orthodox and those who declared Romanian as their mother tongue is overwhelming and the number of people with unknown language is quite high, then we can deduce that they were Romanian.

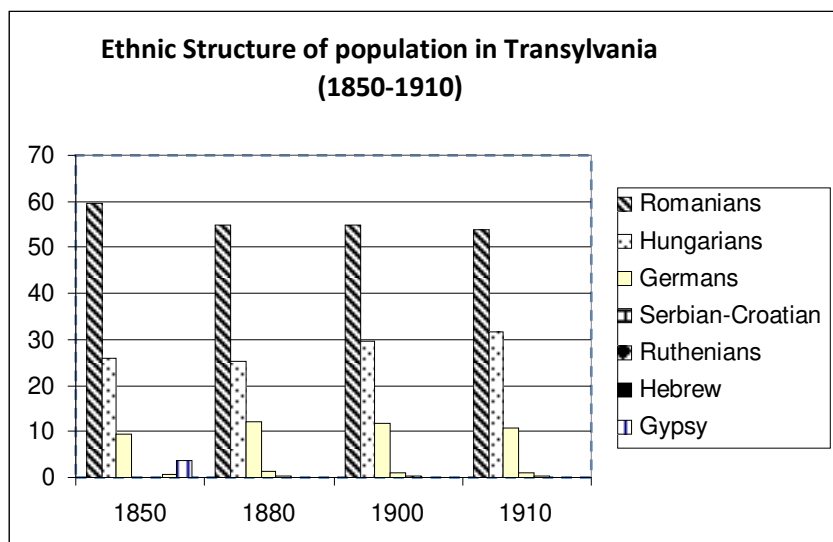
Using both criteria associated with anthroponyms is required, as we have seen. Moreover, it appears that in the process of losing the ethnic identity, language is lost first, then religion and, finally, the anthroponym.

Ethnicity is expressed in a determinant way in the choice of the life partner. This factor should not be neglected in any way. But we cannot say that within the marriage process ethnicity takes a more important role than religious belief. It is important to note the ethnic determinisms that in association with the confessional determinisms influence the marital act. Most marriages take place between partners of the same denomination. A small part of marriages involve a partner of another religion, but in this case, we can say that only a small proportion involved a partner belonging to other ethnic group.

### **Image of ethnic structure evolution in Transylvania**

What deserves a special mention is that with the establishment of the Habsburg rule in Transylvania, at the end of the XVIII century, major demographic changes began due to immigration and systematic colonization, controlled and coordinated by the Austrian state. This process has considerably increased the share of ethnic Hungarians, Germans and Jews. This process resulted in a heterogeneousness of the population from the ethnicity point of

view. The political context after 1867 knows a constant increase in the share of ethnic Hungarians, compared to other ethnic groups, a steady increase until the onset of World War I.



For the year of 1850, the data refers only to the Principality of Transylvania

Romanians, in 1880, were representing 55.07% of the total population of Transylvania; their share will fall to 54.98% in 1900 and to 53.74% in 1910. All this in terms of population increase of Romanians of 27.1%, with a real increase of 2,224,336 (1880) to 2,827,419 (1910) (I. Bolovan, 2000: 14).

Hungarians in the same period were developing a reverse evolution than Romanians. Their share increased from 25.05% (1880) to 29.54% (1900) and 31.6% (1910). In absolute figures, the increase is from 1,012,154 (1880) to 1,662,180 (1910) (Ioan Bolovan, 2000: 14).

The Germanic population grew from 485,917 in 1880 to 564,559 in 1910. In percentage this time, the German population during the same period experienced a decline from 12,03% to 10,73% (Ioan Bolovan, 2000: 14). Other ethnic groups, least significant in number, have evolved similarly to other non-Hungarian ethnic groups.

Changes taking place after World War I influenced the demographic structure of the Romanian state. Reunification of Romania was accompanied by important changes in terms of ethno-religion.

An important effect was the increase in the Romanian population: it almost doubled. Another demographic effect was the increase in population of another ethnic group (other than Romanian) and other religion (other than Orthodox). Within the borders of the Romanian state, according to the 1930

census, lived about 5 million other nationalities (28.1% of the entire population). This percentage varies from region to region (Muresan, 1999: 50).

### **Ethnic determinism and constraints in the marital process**

Marriage between two young Greek Catholic and Orthodox religion was regarded as almost normal in some communities. This is explained by the fact that few parishioners perceived differences between the two faiths. However, let us consider the ethnic aspect, as well. Ethnicity cannot be separated in this case from religion. The Greek Catholics and Orthodox are in this area of mostly Romanian ethnicity. For these things must be taken into account more as we address an almost entirely rural space, where customary “laws” overlap the official laws. On the other hand, mixed communities of Greek Catholics and Roman Catholics, mixed marriages are accepted more easily at the “official” level, because both denominations were under the same higher authority, under the papal chair respectively.

**a. The case of Romanians:** the phenomenon of preserving ethnic identity is evident in both denominations. Following a complex investigation, which involved the analysis of 8,373 mixed marriages (Brie, 2009: 389), the following conclusions reached: 1. when choosing a partner of another denomination, 42.95% of the young Greek Catholic choose a partner of Orthodox confession, 2. on the other hand, 40.12% of the young Orthodox choose Greek Catholics. The option for a Romanian partner was therefore, for both communities, the first after their own confession.

The Orthodox parish of Feneriș (CRSC BH, file 412: 47-68) during 1860-1910 had 300 marriages, of which 45 (i.e. 15%) were mixed marriages, inter-confessional. But all these marriages are done with Greek Catholic partners. The town has a compact Romanian population of 1,880 people, where in addition to the 567 Romanian, there are 4 Germans and 5 Jews (Rotariu, 1997: 7).

Interestingly, in the village (in 1880) there is no Greek Catholic. These marriages explain the fact that in 1900 (Rotariu, 1999: 147), the village registered 25 Greek Catholics. Here is therefore not just a religious issue, these young people come through marriage to an Orthodox parish, but they remain Greek Catholic or even tilt the other partner towards Greek Catholicism. Under the “*General Austrian Civil Code*” (promulgated on 29 May 1853), the marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic is officiated before the Catholic priest (Rotariu, 1999: 147). Although it was not fully complied with, the law favored the two Catholic denominations: Roman Catholicism and Greek Catholicism. Of the 45 marriages with Greek Catholic partners, only 5 are local partners. At the beginning of the period studied, most marriages are mixed between local Orthodox girls and Greek Catholic boys from other places. Only while nearing 1900 and after, the number of marriages involving partners from other villages

between Greek Catholic boys and Orthodox girls is increasing. It seems that the consanguinity threshold was reached and in these circumstances the young look into marrying partners from other localities. First, partners are chosen from the Orthodox (112 such marriages), then from the Greek Catholic (40 cases). Why only Greek Catholics, given that the neighboring villages had also young people of other confessions? This fact has two general explanations available for both Orthodox and Greek Catholics in this region. On the one hand, the difference in the rural world, between the two denominations is hardly perceived, and on the other hand, the ethnic component occurs. The latter works in many cases in a very decisive manner.

We found a similar situation in the Orthodox Parish of Forău (CRSC BH, file 438: 4-29), a village, again with a majority of Orthodox Romanian population<sup>7</sup>. In the period 1864-1891 there were 338 marriages registered, mostly between Orthodox partners. That fact that the village is not very big determined the young people to largely marry partners from outside the village. All 26 of mixed marriages are concluded with Greek Catholic partners. In this town, all marriages are concluded by the Orthodox girls.

Săliște de Beius (CRSC BH, file 1079: 22-39; file 1080: 1-12) is a settlement situated in Romanian compact area, where the majority of Romanians were Orthodox. In this town, in the period of 1870-1929, the Orthodox priest recorded 178 marriages. Of these 114 are with partners from other localities, and only one mixed marriage was recorded (Catholic girl, Greek Orthodox boy). Although they are obliged to resort to marriages with partners from other localities (in the village only 351 people lived in 1880) (Rotariu, 1997: 5), the young people in this village do not use mixed marriages. If we analyze the localities of origins of these young people we note that they do not only come from compact Orthodox villages. In this locality, the strongest factor of influence is the confession, and only then the ethnicity; this is by no means to be pushed aside given the fact that 18 people of other ethnicities lived in the village.

The orthodox Parish Buntești (CRSC BH, file 192: 69-88) is very similar, from our point of view, with the one of Beius Săliște. Of the 218 marriages in the period 1853-1910, only two are mixed (all with Greek Catholics partners). Only 54% marriages are closed between partners within the parish. We found the same situation in Hinchiriș. Here, in the period 1865-1908, 227 marriages were registered, only one is mixed (an Orthodox girl with a boy Greek Catholic from another location) (CRSC BH, file 516: 4-21). In the town of Bradet (CRSC BH, file 174: 13-26), in 1871-1895 the Orthodox priest in the parish recorded a number of 117 marriages (4.7 marriages / year). None of these was a mixed marriage. Of these marriages, 121 are with partners from another town. In Poieni de Sus (CRSC BH, file 914: 9-24) in 1870-1900, all 187

<sup>7</sup> According to Hungarian census, in 1880, the village recorded 1,127 people split in 1,114 Orthodox; in 1900, of 1.300 people, 1,293 are Orthodox.

marriages were made within the Orthodox confession. And in this case, as well, more than half of marriages were between partners from other localities.

As for the Greek Catholic population, it is more open to inter-ethnic mixed marriages. It is situated, geographically, in a region which is more heterogeneous, both ethnic and confessional. A high percentage of mixed marriages, GC-O, was recorded in deaneries with a large Orthodox population (Barcău, Beiuș, Crișul Repede, Holod, Sebiș, Șimand or Șiria) and in the deaneries where the two religious communities of Romanians were in minority (Lunca, Mako or Oradea). Other Greek Catholic deaneries recorded very low percentages of mixed marriages involving Orthodox partners. The reason for this is found in the low proportion (almost non-existent) in these deaneries of the Orthodox community and not in a lower affinity for such marriages<sup>8</sup>. We should not neglect in this context the Catholic spiritual affinity between Greek Catholics and Roman Catholics, which contributed to the erosion and dilution of ethnic precepts. Then, many GC were Hungarian in some regions and their Hungarian marriage or RC or even CH has no relevance to the erosion of national spirit of the Romanians.

**b. The case of Hungarians:** the ethnic determinism is also visible, although not at the same extent. An ethnic affinity between young Roman Catholics and the Reformed can be seen in several localities that were analyzed. This affinity in question is highlighted where one of the two communities was in minority compared with a third confession (usually Romanian).

In the Roman Catholic parish of Tileagd most mixed marriages were concluded with CH partners (42 cases, representing 73,68%). Of these, 25 marriages were concluded by men (16 involving partners from other cities, and 9 were between partners who lived in Tileagd) and 17 by women (5 between Tileagd people, and 12 involved partners outside the village). This preference to CH has two explanations: on the one hand, the large size of the reformed community, which provides most options for young people willing to enter a marriage outside the religious group, and on the other hand, the ethnic affinity between the two communities (many of RC in this locality were Hungarians like most of the Reformed).

A greater inclination towards religion Roman Catholic partners was shown by the reformed young people in Boiu (7 out of 12 marriages involving young people of this religion). The ethnic component, together with the socio-professional determinism led to such mixed marriages, mainly concluded between partners from different localities. In 1866, an RC furrier marries a young CH girl, both partners being from Boiu (*CRSC BH*, file 142: 96-97). On

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<sup>8</sup> Studies made on these deaneries have shown just the opposite: in proportion to the Orthodox population of these localities the number of mixed marriages involving the partners is more significant.

28 February 1872, Laszlo Marko (27 yo), an RC from Oradea, “machinist” by profession, married Sara Suranyi (18 yo) (*CRSC BH*, file 142: 106-107).

In Reformed parish of Balc, the absence of a confessional otherness was generated, we believe, also by the large overlap of the two ethnic and confessional components. It is known that this region shared Reformed faith (in small part Roman Catholic, too), the Romanians were Greek Catholic and Orthodox and the Slovaks were Roman Catholic. These religious and ethnic groups showed several features of a strong preservation behavior of their identity. Obviously there were exceptions to this general framework. In such a context, the religious otherness, doubled by the ethnic otherness, was a low. When ethnic component disappears (the case of Roman Catholic Hungarian identified within marriages with Reformed partners in Suplacu de Barcău and Ip), the confessional otherness was more obvious.

c. The Strong national identity preservation can be noted in the **Slovak communities** in the Valley of Barcău. The Roman Catholic parish register of civil status from Suplacu of Barcău includes, as recorded from the beginning of register by the parish priest, in addition to the marriages between the youth from Suplacu de Barcău, those of Roman Catholic communities in Balc, Borumlaca, Ip and Vărzari. The population in the village of Suplacu de Barcău was majority Hungarian, so they shared mainly the Hungarian Reformed faith (1,226 people in 1900) (Rotariu, 1999: 155). There is also a small group of Roman Catholic parishioners (up to 201 people in 1900) (Rotariu, 1999: 155). In addition to the two communities, two major religious communities were present: the Greek Catholic (346 people) and the Jewish (132 people). In Borumlaca, along with the 205 Romanians lived 380 Slovaks (Rotariu, 1999: 155). They fully shared Roman Catholic faith. The Slovak community of Roman Catholic religion had majority in Varzari (230 of the 249 people sharing this ethnicity) (Rotariu, 1999: 146-147). In Balc, the Roman Catholic community, which numbered in 1900 129 people, had both Hungarians, and Slovaks. The small Roman Catholic community of Ip (this community did not exceed 60 people in 1900) consisted mostly of Hungarians (Rotariu, 1999: 523). In the period we studied there were 223 marriages (10,6 marriages / year). Of these, 27 were mixed marriages (12,1%). When opting for mixed marriages, the RC young people of this parish almost all chose to marry a partner of the Reformed confession. These options represent 96,3% of all mixed marriages. Of the 26 RC-CH marriages, 14 were completed by women, and 12 by men. The lack of mixed marriages with partners of other faiths is placed primarily on the absence of such religious communities in these villages and in neighboring villages. Secondly, a strong instinct of conservation and preservation of their identity is to be noted. The Roman Catholics in these villages prefer to marry among themselves. This behavior is more visible to the ethnic Slovak Roman Catholics trying to keep their identity, than the Hungarian Roman Catholic.

Moreover, the relatively high number of RC-CH mixed marriages was due just to marriages between Roman Catholics and Reformed Hungarians.

d. *It is still the ethnic determinism* that draws the evangelicals **Germans** close to the Roman Catholic **Germans**. Due to dispersion and powerful Magyarization process to which the Roman Catholic Swabians were submitted, preservation of ethnic identity by means of marriage was less possible. To this it also added the small number of these communities that were most often under pressure of consanguinity. However, in many Swabian localities within Satu Mare region or Palota (Commune of Santandrei, Bihor County) features of marital behavior are noted to ensure survival of isolated communities

### Conclusions

The ethnic identity of the inhabitants of northwestern Transylvania proved to be very strong during the second half of the XIX century and early XX century. Constraints and ethnic determinisms for marital process proved to be, next to the confessional determinism, decisive in the choice of partner. Preservation of ethnic identity through marriage however sees some nuances and mutations in time. Over time, the ethnic and religious otherness proved to be growing, in the city more than in rural areas. Ethno-confessional constraints and determinisms fall in the category of traditional behavioral models.

Not all ethnic groups have a similar behavior with regard to this phenomenon of “dilution” of strong ethnic identity through marriage. Small and isolated groups are exposed by achieving consanguinity threshold. They, bound to perform marriages outside their own group, choose the closest option in relation to the confessional. Roman Catholic Swabians choose Roman Catholic Hungarians or Slovaks, or Greek Catholics Romanians. The Protestant Germans choose Protestant Hungarians. The Orthodox Serbs or Ukrainians choose Romanians of the same confession. The Greek Catholic Ruthenians choose Greek Catholic Romanians or even Hungarians. These are just a few tendencies that we have noted. No doubt, however, the phenomenon of ethnic otherness is often associated with confessional otherness. The young people are either forced by local demographic realities to make marriages outside their own communities, or are determined to do these things by new social and professional realities that manifest themselves as strong determinism. These trends are present especially in the pre-urban and urban environments of mixed ethnic and religious living, in places of transit, more within the young circles with non-agricultural occupations, more in men in terms of personal empowerment and in women by constraints generated by the lack of local options (knowing that the woman moves less).



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