

CHANGING RELIGIOUS PATTERNS IN THE CARPATHIAN BASIN

The Carpathian Basin¹ is both religiously and ethnically the most diverse region of the present-day Europe. This is the area where the Roman Catholicism, the Protestantism and the Orthodoxy meet, unseparately mix with each other and where also the presence of the Jewish and Islamic culture looks back on more than one thousand years. The religious spatial structure closely connected with the natural and social environment, mainly with the ethnic structure, with the traditional life style of the population, with the 'soul of the people' was radically changed several times during the last half of a millennium. The study of this and of the spatial characteristic of the religiousness seems to be very important due to the recent slow down of the secularization, to the extremely increasing of the role of the religion and to the spreading of the free churches, religious communities at the expense of the historical ('big', 'national') churches. This paper attempts to outline the main changes and the present state of the religious structure on the base of the estimated and census data (before 1790 and after) during the last five hundred years.

CHANGE IN THE RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN (1495 - 1989)

At the time of the royal assessment of taxes the division of the about 3.1 million total population of the Kingdom of Hungary according to the religious affiliation could be the following: 89.5% Catholic (Hungarians, Croats, Germans, Slovaks), 10.1% Orthodox (Rumanians, Serbs, Ruthenians) and 0.4%

¹ Carpathian Basin: Hungary, Slovakia, Transcarpathia in Ukraine, Transylvania in Rumania, Vojvodina in Yugoslavia, Croatia without Dalmatia, Adriatic Islands and Istria, Prekmurje (Transmura Region) in Slovenia, Burgenland in Austria.

Jewish² (*Tab.1., Fig.1.*). This religious structure was fundamentally transformed due to the rapid spreading of the Reformation during the early, politically and ideologically chaotic decades of the Ottoman occupation and due to the increasing immigration of the Orthodox (Serbs, Rumanians, Ruthenians) and Muslim (Bosnians, Turks) population. At the turn of the centuries 16th and 17th 80% of the total population of the Kingdom of Hungary torn into three parts counted as Protestant³ The Germans and Slovaks followed the Luther's teachings almost completely, while 90% of the Hungarians became adherent of the Helvetic Confession (eg. Zwingli, Bullinger, Calvin) at that time. The Unitarian (Antitrinitarian) Church played also an extraordinary important role among the Transylvanian Hungarians during the second half of the 16th century. Only the Croats and few Hungarians (around Pozsony-Bratislava, Nagyszombat-Trnava, Győr, in North-east Szeklerland, in Moldavia) were true to the Catholic faith. At the same time Slavonia, Southeast Transdanubia, Bačka, Banat, Apușeni Mountains, the South and North-east Carpathians, became dominantly Orthodox religious territory due to the gradual immigration of Serbs, Rumanians and Ruthenians. Into the administrative centres and fortresses of the territories under Ottoman rule Muslims (eg. Bosnians, Turks) moved in large number.

The Habsburg Empire as the most important secular-power pillar of the Catholic Church responded to the retreat of the European Catholicism with more and more violent Counter-Reformation, with Catholic renewal during the 17th and 18th century. At the beginning the majority of the Protestant social elite, the aristocrats, later their subjects, serfs were forced to re-catholize according to the principle of 'cuius regio, eius religio' (whose the land, that determine the religion). The Union of Ruthenians (Ungvár-Užhorod, 1646) with the Catholic Church was also an important success of the Counter-Reformation. The focus of the Re-Catholization led by the Jesuits and supported by the state moved to the liberated territories at the turn of centuries of 17th and 18th, at the time of the drive out of the Turks from Hungary. A considerable part of the Orthodox Rumanians⁴ desiring national-social emancipation and political ad-

2 Our calculations based mainly on the publications: *Kubinyi, A.* 1996. 135-161., *Szabó, I.* 1941. 51. The presumable ethnic structure of the mentioned denominations was the following in 1495. Catholics: 2,073,000 Hungarians, 340,000 Croats, 200,000 Germans, 170,000 Slovaks; Orthodoxes: 180,000 Rumanians, 100,000 Serbs, 35,000 Ruthenians and 11,000 Jews.

3 *Gesztelyi, T.* (ed.) 1995. 76.

4 The Catholic church of Byzantine rite became more and more popular among the Rumanians first of all in Maramureș-Máramaros, Satu Mare-Szatmár, Sălaj-Szilágy counties, in North and Central Transylvania, in the environments of Făgăraș-Fogaras and Hațeg-Hátszeg following 1699.

vantage converted to the Catholic faith of Byzantine rite in 1698/99. In addition of conversions the position of Catholicism was reinforced also by the state-colonization of Roman Catholic (mostly German) population in the liberated, mostly southern territories (East Slavonia, Bačka, Banat) first of all during the first half of the 18th century. The ratio of the Protestants fell as a result of the Counter-Reformation from 80% (late 16th century) to 23% in 1790. At this time the share of Catholics reached 55.1%⁵. The majority of the Hungarians, Slovaks and Germans became Roman Catholic due to the Re-Catholization and the 'Swabian' immigration from Germany. By the end of the 18th century formed the religious space-structure which remained basically unchanged to 1945.

The increasing conversion of the Orthodoxes to Greek Catholics resulted certain modification⁶ in the religious structure during the first half of 19th century. The Greek Catholics could increase their share among the Rumanians of Grand Duchy of Transylvania from 16.6% to 50.4% between 1761 and 1850⁷. Some shift in the religious structure occurred beside of the conversions the different natural movement, demographical behaviour of the different religious groups to the advantage of Catholics and at expense of Protestants⁸. The number of Jews of the studied area increased from 88,000 to 932,000 (between 1790 and 1910) due to the large Jewish immigration waves connected with the antisemitic pogroms, persecutions of Jews in Russia and with the liberal Hungarian laws⁹. The Jewish population engaged mostly in commerce and in economic trade settled down beside of the capital, Budapest in the north-eastern territories¹⁰ and in other important towns¹¹. According to the last Austro-Hungarian census (1910) 52.1% out of the 20.9 million total population of the studied area declared themselves as Roman Catholic, while the ratio of the other

5 Wellman, I. 1989. 69.

6 The percentage of Greek Catholics (Uniates) increased from 6.3 to 10.3, while the ratio of the Orthodoxes decreased from 20.9% to 17.7% between 1790 and 1840.

7 This case we identified the Rumanians of Transylvania as the collectivity of the Orthodoxes and Greek Catholics. Source of data in case of 1761: Ciobanu, V. 1926 *Statistica românilor din Ardeal...*, Cluj, in case of 1850: Bielz, E.A. 1857 *Handbuch der Landeskunde Siebenbürgens*, Hermannstadt, 162.p.

8 The ratio of the Roman Catholics increased from 48.8 % to 51.5 %, parallel with the fall of the share of Protestants from 23% to 19.8% between 1790 and 1900.

9 Eg. Act Nr. XVII. (about the civil and political equality of the Jews before the law, 27.12.1867) and Act Nr. XLIII. (among others about the listing of the Jewish denomination into the accepted churches in Hungary, 22.11.1895).

10 Eg. Kassa-Košice, Ungvár-Užhorod, Munkács-Mukačeve, Beregszász-Berehove, Huszt-Hust, Máramarosziget-Sighetu, Szatmárnémeti-Satu Mare.

11 Eg. Miskolc, Debrecen, Nagyvárad-Oradea, Arad, Temesvár-Timișoara, Újvidék-Novi Sad, Kolozsvár-Cluj, Marosvásárhely-Târgu Mureș.

denominations was the following: Greek Catholics 9.7%, Orthodoxes 14.3%, Reformed (Calvinists) 12.6%, Lutherans 6.4% and persons of Jewish religious affiliation 4.5%.

The partitioning of the territory of Hungary (1920) did not result basic changes in the religious structure of the successor states in the interwar period. However the percentage of Orthodoxes slightly increased and of the Roman Catholics and of Reformed decreased in similar way in Vojvodina and Transylvania as a result of the growing immigration of Serbs and Rumanians and of the escape, emigration, repatriation of hundred thousands of Hungarians and Germans. The Czechoslovak government intensively supported the development of Russian identity of the Ruthenians treated as 'hungarophil' ethnic group and in accordance with it their conversion from Greek Catholic to Orthodox was forced. As a result of the Czech propaganda favouring the Orthodoxy, the share of the Orthodoxes dropped from 0.04% to 15.3% in Transcarpathia between 1910 and 1930, parallel to the decrease of the Greek Catholics from 64.1% to 49.1%.

During the World War II — as a result of the Hungarian territorial revisionist successes — 82% (725,000 persons) of the Jews of the region became Hungarian citizen. Between 1941 and 1944 681,000 persons mostly of Hungarian mother tongue and identity were deported (partly killed) out of the 825,000 persons qualified of Jewish ethnic origin in the enlarged territory of Hungary. The total number of the Holocaust locally survived (in Budapest 119,000 persons) and of the from the deportation returned Jews numbered 260,500 in the former territory of Hungary at the end of 1945¹². From Slovakia of J. Tiso 71,000 persons were deported out of the 87,000 Jews between 1942 and 1944. During the same period the Rumanian authorities did not deport, liquidate the Jews (45,000) of South Transylvania and of the Banat, like they did in Transnistria, Bessarabia and in Moldova. Significant changes occurred in the religious structure of our region due to the migration (evacuation, escape, expulsion, deportation, voluntary immigration, repatriation etc.) of many million persons and to the anticlerical measures during the period of 1944 - 1950. The exodus to Israel and the extremely decrease of percentage of the survived Jews continued¹³. The number of Lutherans also strikingly decreased as a result of the escape, deportation of Germans and of the voluntary emigration of ten thou-

12 Stark, T. 1989. 26.

13 The ratio of the Jews fell from 3.5% to 1.7% in Transylvania, from 5.1% to 1.5% in Hungary, from 14.1% to 3.1% in Transcarpathia, from 4.1% to 0.2% in Slovakia between 1930 and 1948/51.

sands of Slovaks by 104,000 in Transylvania, by 52,000 in Hungary, by 44,000 in Vojvodina between 1930 and 1948/1953. Similar demographical losses were observed among the Roman Catholic believers of Transylvania (-100,000) and of Vojvodina (-200,000) because of the German and Hungarian casualties and emigration. The Ruthenian and Rumanian Greek Catholic (Uniate) churches were liquidated due to the measures claiming the realization of national (Ukrainian, Rumanian) and religious (Orthodox) unity between 1949 and 1950¹⁴. As a result of these acts 1,6 million Transylvanian, 450,000 Transcarpathian and 225,000 Slovakian Greek Catholic believers were forced declared Orthodox. Transcarpathia and Vojvodina became provinces inhabited dominantly by Orthodox population due to the conversions and to the mass immigration of Russians, Ukrainians and Serbs by 1950.

Parallel to these events the building up of the party-state, the dividing of the church and the state, depriving of the churches of their financial basis and of their independence in the Communist countries of the region was already in progress. Following this the secularization accelerated, the indifference concerning the religious life intensified and the number of the nonreligious, atheists increased among the growing up generations and in the urbanized areas due to the atheist, anticlerical ideological education. The ratio of the nonreligious, atheist population was estimated at 15.9% in Hungary and Rumania, at 16.7% in Yugoslavia and at 20.1% in Czechoslovakia in 1988¹⁵.

RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN SINCE 1989

Following the collapse of Communism and of the Marxist ideology it seems as if the population of the region got tired of the global ideologies, organizations and their demand on traditional moral standards, on smaller organizations, on local-regional identities increased. This resulted not only a 'religious renaissance' in the majority of the former Communist countries, but the strengthening of smaller churches, religious communities and an increasing religious 'pluralization', too.¹⁶ According to the census data and estimations around 1990 only 13.6 million persons (44.5%) declared themselves Roman Catholics and one million (3.3%) Greek Catholics out of the total population of

14 Date of the liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church: in Transylvania 21.10.1948, in Transcarpathia 29.08.1949, in Slovakia 28.04.1950 (Gesztelyi T.(ed.) 1991. 69.).

15 *Britannica. Book of the Year-Encyclopaedia*.... 1989. 762-763.

16 *Andorka, R.* 1991. 46.

30.6 million (*Tab. 1., Fig. 1., 2.*). The number of the Orthodox believers exceeded the 7.7 millions due to the keeping of 50 - 90% of the former Greek Catholics forcibly converted in Transcarpathia and Transylvania between 1948 and 1950. The number and share of the Lutherans struck recently by considerable Transylvanian Saxon migratory loss sank below one million and 3%. The increase of the atheists, nonreligious and of persons with unknown religious affiliation was special big in Slovakia, Hungary and in Vojvodina due to the mentioned ideological reasons (*Tab. 1., Fig. 1., 2., 3.*). At the same time, following the collapse of the Ceaușescu-dictatorship their proportion did not exceed the 0.4% in Transylvania. The free churches, small religious communities, sects singularly strengthened mainly at the expense of the big, historical churches and the number of their believers increased from 144,000 to 627,000 (2%) between 1930 and 1990. Out of these communities the Pentecostals (170,000), Baptists (130,000) and Adventists (45,000) could extraordinarily enlarge the camp of their adherents, first of all in Transylvania¹⁷.

Nearly one half of the believers (about 14 million) of the studied area counted as *Roman Catholic*, who represent absolute majority in Burgenland (82%), in Croatia (76,6%), in Prekmurje (73,6%), in Slovakia (60,4%) and in Hungary (57,8%). They are the dominant denomination in Hungary west of the Tisza River, in whole Slovakia excluding the peripheric areas of East- and Central Slovakia, in the middle of Rumania, in the North-east Szeklerland and in the North-East of the Yugoslav Bačka region (*Fig. 4.*). Their most populous communities live (outside of the Roman Catholic countries-regions, in thousand persons) in Subotica-Szabadka (62), Timișoara-Temesvár (43), Miercurea Ciuc-Csíkszereda (35), Oradea-Nagyvárad (30), Arad (28) and Satu Mare-Szatmárnémeti (27).

17 Transylvania was the homeland of the 93 % of the Pentecostals, of the 73 % of the Baptists and of 64 % of the Adventists of the Carpatho-Pannonian Area in 1992.

Tab. 1. Religious Structure of the Population of the Carpatho-Pannonian Area

country, region	year	Total Population	Roman Catholic	Greek Catholic	Lutheran	Reformed	Unitarian	Orthodox	Isaacite	Other Religious	Unknown	Non Religious	RC%	GC%	Lu%	Re%	Un%	Or%	Isr%	Out%	Unk %	Non %
Slovakia	1930	3323347	2384915	212653	400594	141363		8979	135975	21978	0	16890	71.76	6.4	12.1	4.25	0	0.27	4.09	0.66	0	0.5
	1991	5274335	3187383	178733	326397	82345		34376	912	30603	917835	515551	60.43	3.39	6.19	1.57	0	0.65	0.02	0.58	17	9.8
Hungary	1930	8685109	5631146	201092	533846	1813144	6266	39839	444552	15224		67883	64.84	2.32	6.15	20.9	0.07	0.46	5.12	0.18	0	0
	1989	10374823	6000000	230000	430000	2000000	12000	38000	80000	38100		1546723	57.83	2.22	4.14	19.3	0.12	0.37	0.77	0.37	0	15
Transcarpathia (in Ukraine)	1930	734249	71559	360269	2750	75340		112228	103319	8884		9746	49.1	0.37	10.2	0	15.3	14.1	1.21	0	0	0
	1989	1245618	70000	350000	3000	95000		700000	3000	0	24618	562	28.1	0.24	7.63	0	56.2	0.24	0	2	0	0
Transylvania (in Rumania)	1930	5548991	947788	1385452	274415	696320	68330	1932412	192833	45681	29668	2792	17.08	25	34.8	12.5	1.23	34.8	3.08	0.82	0.1	0.1
	1992	7723313	854935	206833	36264	796682	75978	5360102	2768	366142	4595	19014	11.07	2.68	0.47	10.3	0.98	69.4	0.44	4.74	0.1	0.2
Vojvodina (in Yugoslavia)	1931	1624158	727213	18026	119140	39130		689296	18179	12805	369	0	44.77	1.11	7.34	2.41	0	42.4	1.12	0.79	0	0
	1991	2013889	434683	24000	58925	20000		1170694	284	14830	211345	79128	21.58	1.19	2.93	0.99	0	58.1	0.01	0.74	10	3.9
Pannonian Croatia (in Croatia)	1931	3785000	3059220	12883	15765	14231		647136	22760	12500	505	0	80.82	0.34	0.42	0.38	0	17.1	0.6	0.33	0	0
	1991	4784265	3666784	12003	3469	7374		532141	633	375700		186161	76.64	0.25	0.07	0.15	0	11.1	0.01	7.85	0	3.9
Transmura Region (in Slovenia)	1931	90717	67114	9	22163	761		175	476	19			75.98	0.01	24.4	0.84	0	0.19	0.52	0.02	0	0
	1991	89887	66180		14611			258	14	311	7431	1082	73.63	0	16.3	0	0	0.29	0.02	0.35	8.3	1.2
Burgenland (in Austria)	1934	299447	254750		40382					4036		279	85.07	0	13.1	0.59	0	0	0	1.35	0	0.1
	1991	270880	222284		35379	1595			33	7242	940	3407	82.06	0	13.1	0.59	0	0	0.01	2.67	0.3	1.3
	1495	3109000	2783000	0	0	0	0	315000	11000			89.51	0	0	0	0	0	10.1	0.35	0	0	0
	1790	9940000	4853000	628000	855000	1400000	34000	2078000	88000	4000			48.82	6.32	8.6	14.1	0.34	20.9	0.89	0.04	0	0
	1840	12880406	6130188	1322344	1066210	1846844	47280	2283505	244035	0			47.59	10.3	7.81	14.3	0.37	17.7	1.89	0	0	0
CARPATHO-PANNONIAN AREA	1869	15417327	7502000	1592689	1109154	2024332	54438	2579653	552133	2928			48.66	10.3	7.19	13.1	0.35	16.7	3.58	0.02	0	0
	1880	14447687	6849050	1494090	1118415	2024615	55791	2267390	627214	11122			47.41	10.3	7.74	14	0.39	15.7	4.34	0.08	0	0
	1890	17349398	8820770	1667980	1204500	2225126	61645	2631843	752222	12312			50.84	9.61	6.94	12.8	0.36	15.2	4.18	0.07	0	0
	1890	19254559	9919913	1854143	1288942	2441142	68568	2815713	851378	14760			51.52	9.63	6.69	12.7	0.36	14.6	4.42	0.08	0	0
	1910	20886487	10888138	2025508	1340143	2621329	74296	2987163	932458	17452			52.13	9.7	6.42	12.6	0.36	14.3	4.46	0.08	0	0
	1930	23461521	12608984	2190114	1408817	2780163	74596	3337452	917597	143798			53.74	9.33	6	11.8	0.32	14.2	3.91	0.61	0	0
	1990	30605540	13613235	1000884	907713	3002669	87978	7720081	87561	685200	1212401	2287813	44.48	3.27	2.97	9.81	0.29	25.2	0.29	2.24	4	7.5

Sources: 1850 and after: census data, 1495 - 1840: estimations, 1495: Our calculation based on Kubinyi A. A Magyar Királyság népessége a 15. század végén (Population of the Kingdom of Hungary at the end of 15th century), orfenei Szemle (Budapest) XXXVIII, 1996, 2-3, pp 157-159, and on Szabó I. 1941. A magyarság etelajza (The biography of the Hungarians), Magyar Történelmi Társulat, Budapest, 51 p., 1790: Wellman I. Magyarország népességének fejlődése a 18. században (Population development of Hungary in the 18th century).—in: Ember Gy. - Heckenstun G. (Eds.), Magyarország története 1686-1790 I., Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 69 p., 1840: Fényes E. Magyarország statisztikája (Statistics of Hungary), 1. 1842, Pest, 52 p.

Fig. 1. Religious structure of the population in the Carpathian Basin (1495-1990)

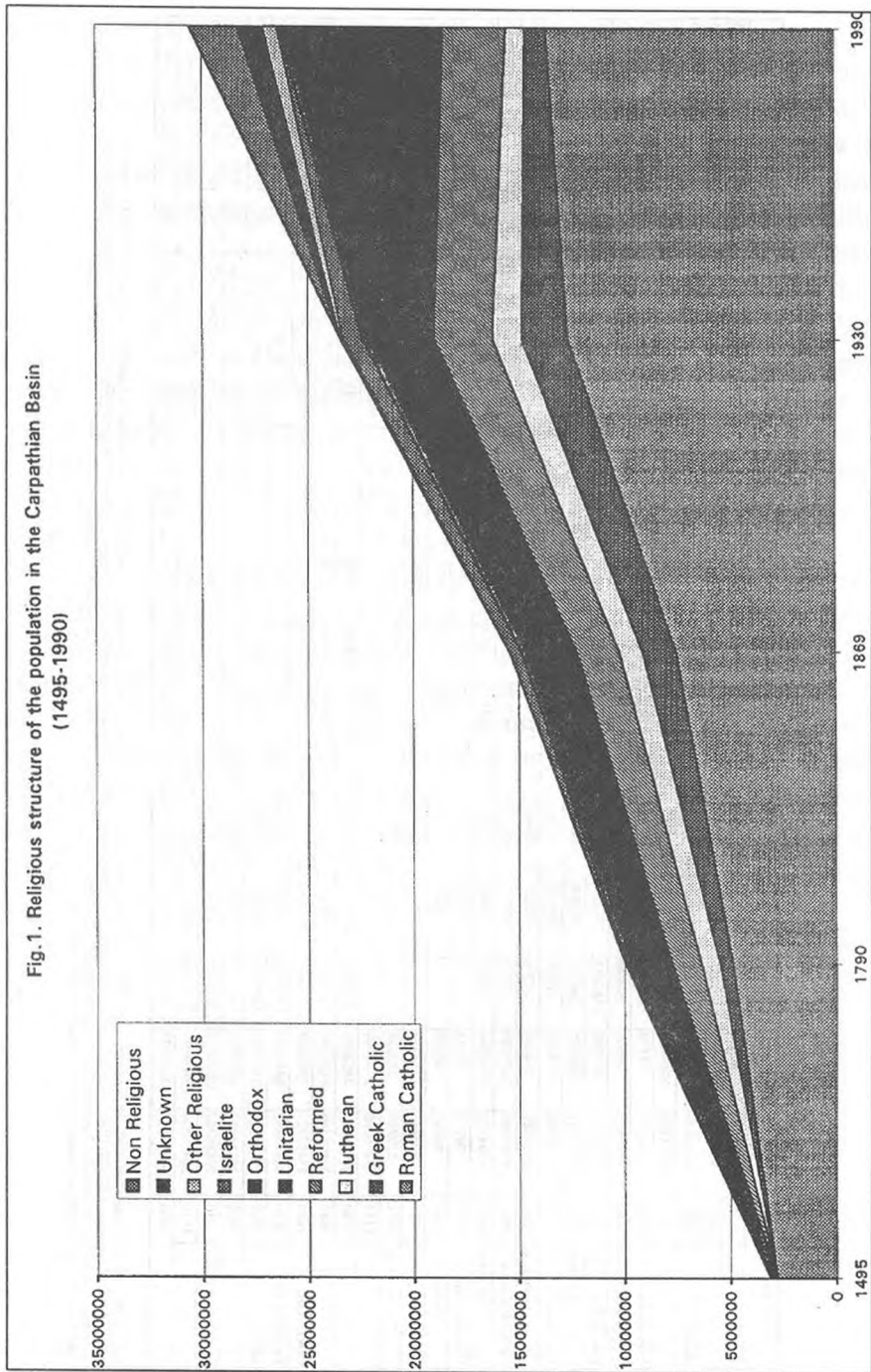
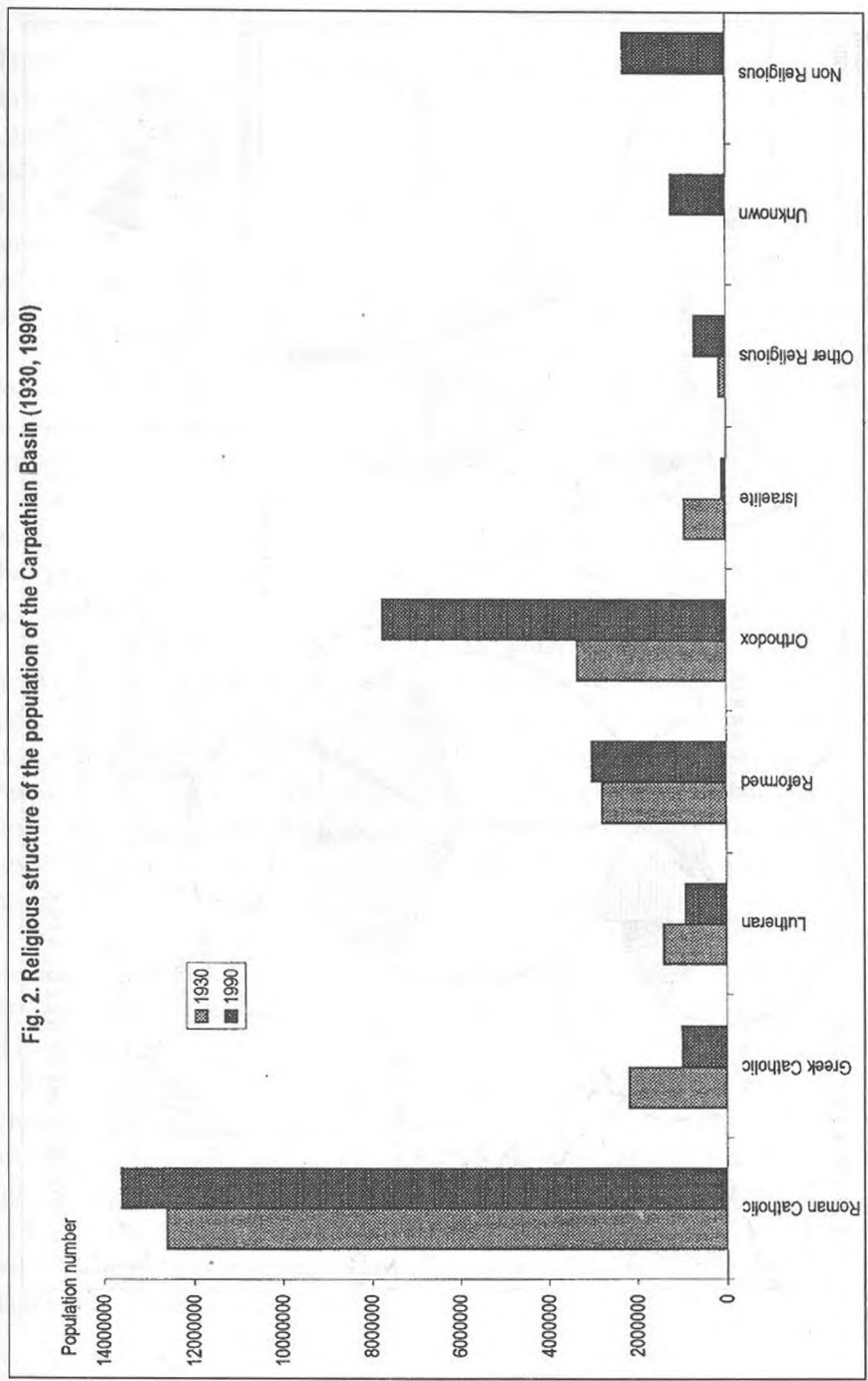
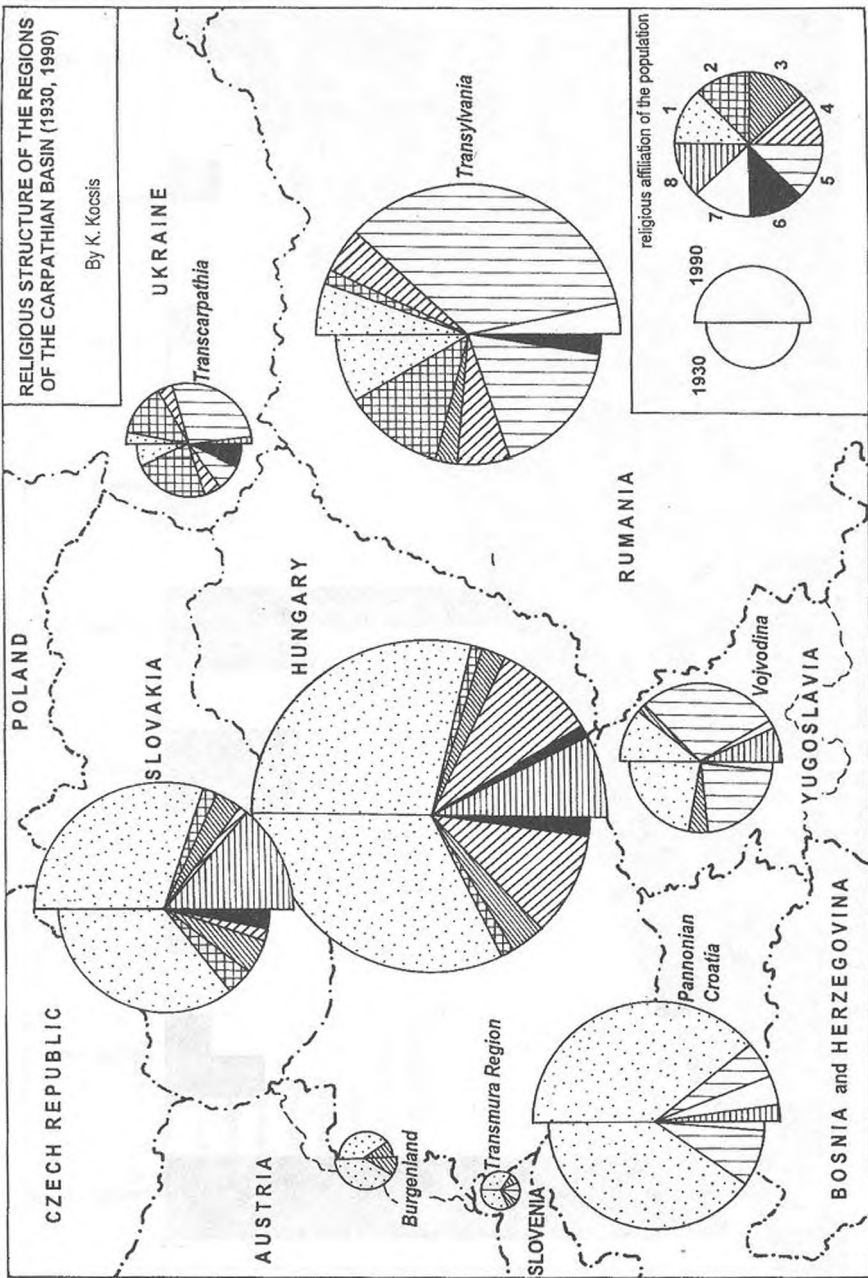


Fig. 2. Religious structure of the population of the Carpathian Basin (1930, 1990)



RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE OF THE REGIONS OF THE CARPATHIAN BASIN (1930, 1990)

By K. Kocsis



The population of *Orthodox* faith of 7.7 million form an absolute majority in Transylvania (69.4%), in Vojvodina (58.1%) and in Transcarpathia (56.2%), mainly in the Rumanian, Serbian, Russian, Ukrainian and East-Ruthenian ethnic area. The Orthodoxy was mostly driven out in Croatia (Krajina, West Slavonia) due to the escape and expelling of the majority of the Serbs between 1991 and 1995. The most important Orthodox communities of the Carpatho-Pannonian Area, beyond the borders of Orthodox countries lived (in thousand persons) in Zagreb (39), Rijeka (18), Osijek (14), Vukovar (13), Sisak (9), Budapest and Petrinja (7-7) at the beginning of 1991.

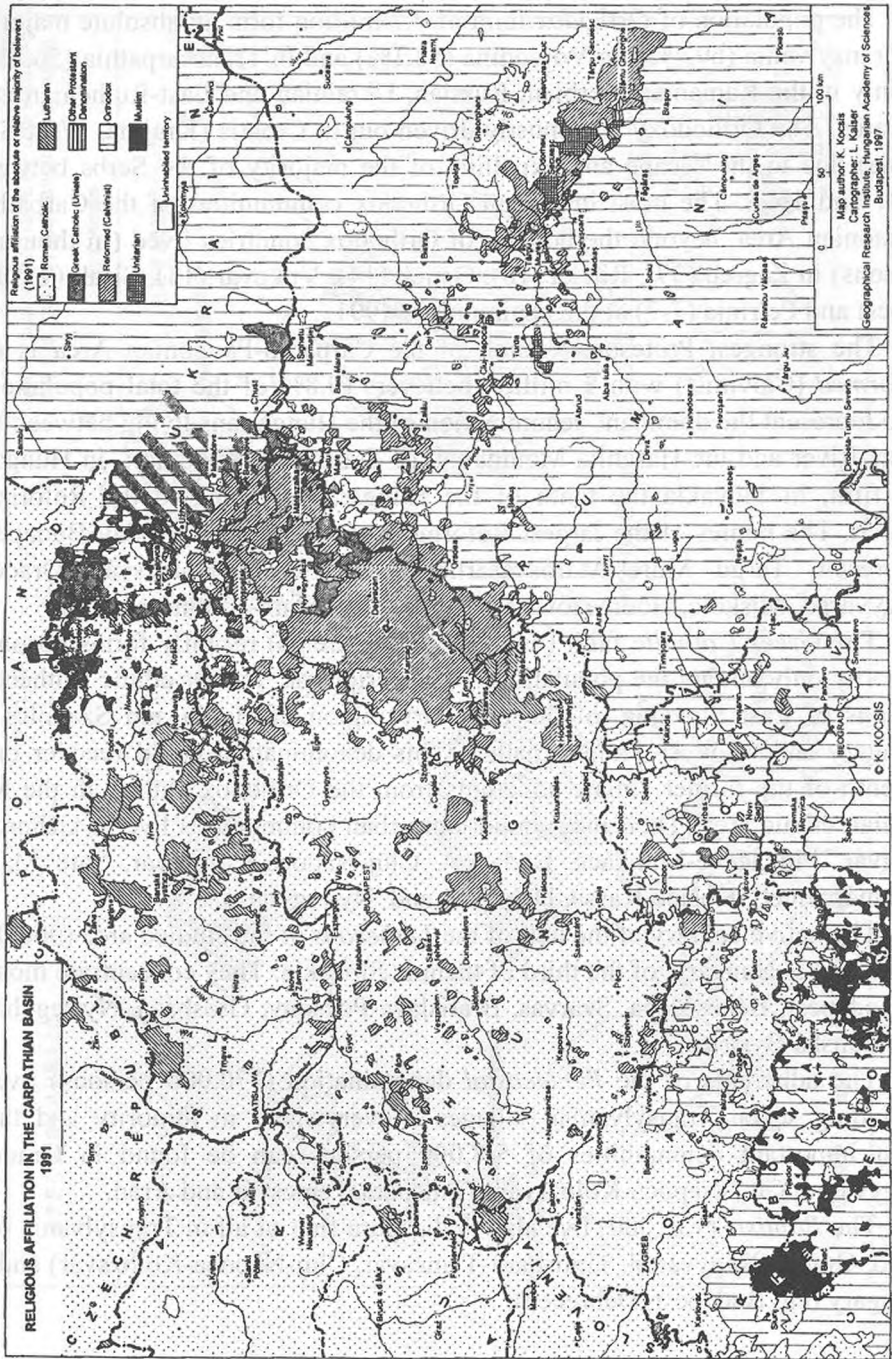
The strongest Protestant church of the Carpatho-Pannonian Area is the *Reformed* (Calvinist) with 3 million believers (9.8% of the total population), who represent the dominant denomination of the Hungarians living between the Tisza River and the Harghita Mountains. In Transylvania the half, in Hungary the fifth, in Slovakia the tenth of the Hungarians belong to the Reformed church. The homes of the largest Reformed communities are today Budapest, Debrecen, Târgu Mureş-Marosvásárhely, Cluj-Napoca-Kolozsvár, Oradea-Nagyvárad, Miskolc, Hódmezővásárhely and Satu Mare-Szatmárnémeti.

The *Greek Catholic* faith (one million adherents) recently forms absolute majority only among the population of the peripheric, former ethnic Ruthenian regions of East Slovakia, of the boundary region of Hajdú and Szabolcs in Hungary and of West Transcarpathia. This denomination could recover only seventh of the former Uniate adherents from the Orthodox church in the Rumanian ethnic area. Their most important urban communities live in Užhorod-Ungvár, Mukačeve-Munkács, Budapest, Cluj-Napoca-Kolozsvár, Satu Mare-Szatmárnémeti, Košice-Kassa, Debrecen and Nyíregyháza.

The native country of the half of the *Lutherans* of the studied area (900,000 believers) is Hungary, of the third of them is Slovakia. They concentrate mostly in Budapest, Békéscsaba, Szarvas, Bratislava-Pozsony, Orosháza, Nyíregyháza and Banská Bystrica.

The adherents of the *Pentecostal* denomination (170,000 persons) live – excluding seven Transylvanian villages – everywhere in minority and their most important communities of 5-8,000 persons can be found in Oradea-Nagyvárad, Cluj-Napoca-Kolozsvár, Timișoara-Temesvár and Arad.

The *Baptists* (130,000) live also in diaspora first of all in Transylvania (eg. Arad, Oradea-Nagyvárad, Timișoara-Temesvár, Cluj-Napoca-Kolozsvár) and in Hungary (eg. Budapest, Debrecen).



The main basis of the *Unitarian* Church taking care of 88,000 souls are some Székely-Hungarian villages in the neighbourhood of Odorheiu Secuiesc-Székelyudvarhely, in the South-west from Turda-Torda and in some important centres of attraction (Odorheiu Secuiesc-Székelyudvarhely, Budapest, Târgu Mureş-Marosvásárhely, Cluj-Napoca-Kolozsvár).

The number of the *Jews* of the region fell – due to the Holocaust and to the emigration – to the level of 1790 (88,000 persons). 85% (75,000 believers) of them is resident of Budapest (75,000)¹⁸, where the majority of them could survive locally the deportations of 1944.¹⁹ The Jews of the countryside are mostly inhabitants of Debrecen, Miskolc and Szeged.

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18 Gesztelyi, T. (ed.) 1991. 154.

19 Stark, T. 1989. 26.