

THE ETHNIC AND CONFESSIONAL STRUCTURE OF HARGHITA COUNTY IN 2011

GEORGE-BOGDAN TOFAN¹

Abstract

On 5th July 2013, the National Institute of Statistics published the final results of the 2011 Population and Household Census. Therefore, for this study, we reviewed the statistical data regarding the ethnic and confessional structure of Harghita County, mentioning the fact that, at the 2011 census, registering one's religion and ethnicity was done based on each person's statement.

However, for those who did not wish to divulge these information, there is no available information for these two characteristics, and, in our article, these people were classified as undeclared.

Consequently, when it comes to Harghita County's ethnic structure, only 302 435 people declared their ethnicity, Romanians numbering 39 196 people (13.0%), Hungarians 257 707 people (85.2%), Gypsies or Rroma 5 326 people (1.7%), while other ethnicities comprising 206 people (0.1%). The declared confessional structure was 302 144 people, most being Roman Catholics, that is 200 663 persons (66.4%), followed by Orthodox, with 37 670 persons (12.4%), Reformed (36 760 people or 12.2%), Unitarians (21 023 people or 7.0%) and other religions, without religions and atheists (6 028 people or 2.0%).

Key words: the 2011 population census, Romanians, Hungarians, the religious structure.

1. Introduction

The aim of the analysis at hand is to emphasize two of the main structural indicators (*ethnicity and religion*), which offer a synthetic view on population structure (*quality*) in Harghita County (Pop, 2008). The reason behind this endeavour was that, during communism, there were several impediments in regards to studying ethnic and religious structure, as the latter was not registered prior to 1990.

Thus geographic research now focuses extensively on the whole or on different parts in order to find the basic characteristics of the population residing in Harghita County (Pop, 2007). This includes several studies written by the Cluj-Napoca Geographic School: *Așezările și organizarea spațiului*

¹ „Babeș-Bolyai” University, Faculty of Geography, Cluj-Napoca, 5-7 Clinicilor Street, 400006, Romania, E-mail: bogdan_tofan2000@yahoo.com.

geografic în Depresiunea Giurgeului, M. Șeer, 2004; *Depresiunile Giurgeu și Ciuc. Studiu de Geografie Regională*, V. Mara, 2008; *Componenta nordică a ulucului depresionar din Grupa Centrală a Carpaților Orientali (Drăgoiasa-Glodu-Bilbor-Secu-Borsec-Corbu-Tulgheș)*, G. B. Tofan, 2013; as well as the monographic series, published by the Romanian Academy, focusing on *Harghita County*, P. Cocean, A. Niță, Șt. Dombay, 2013, not to mention I. Lăcătușu's paper, entitled *Structuri etnice și confesionale în județele Harghita și Covasna*, 2008. The ethnic and religious structures of Harghita County have certain specificities, just like in Covasna, being one of the two Romanian counties where the Romanian population is a minority, as Hungarians make up most of the county's population (Cocean & colab., 2013).

In the analysis at hand, two of the main structural indicators were emphasized (ethnicity and religion), offering a synthetical perspective on the population quality of Harghita County.

We must mention the fact that we may not know the exact ethnicity and religion of a large section of the total stable population (310 867 people), as the census was performed indirectly, from administrative sources.

Therefore, the presented structures for the two ethnic and cultural characteristics are calculated based on the number of people who declared their ethnicity and religion, and not on the total number of the stable population.

Within the ethnic structure of this county's population, out of a total of 310 867 people, there are 8 432 people with unknown ethnic identity, and 8 723 people whose religion is unavailable.

2. Objectives and Methodology

In order to analyse the *ethnic and religious structures* of Harghita County, I began by collecting statistical data, followed by editing and interpreting it, in specific tables for each situation, which enabled the creation of the cartographic material, as an addendum and guide for understanding the territorial realities of Harghita. All these elements, perceived as a unitary whole, led to a natural and clear view on the ethnic and religious realities of Harghita, of its urban and rural areas, of its cities and towns: *Miercurea-Ciuc*, *Odorheiu-Secuiesc*, *Toplița*, *Gheorgheni*, *Cristuru-Secuiesc*, *Borsec*, *Băile-Tușnad*, and *Vlăhița*, as well as of its 58 communes.

3. The ethnic structure of population

Following the last censuses, we observe that the main ethnic structures of Harghita County are those of *Hungarians*, *Romanians*, *Gypsies (Roma)*, and

Germans, followed, in some areas of the county, by *Ceangăi*, *Ukrainians*, *Turks*, *Russians-Lipovans*, *Armenians*, *Serbs*, *Jews*, *Tartars*, *Slovaks*, etc.

Szeklers had population this area since the second half of the 12th century, when the first groups colonised the Odorheiu Secuiesc area, a process which gradually continued until the end of the 13th century, thus fully creating the Szekler domains (Cocean & colab., 2013).

The *Hungarian population* had a percentage of 85.2% (257 707 people) in 2011, out of the total of 302 435 people who declared their ethnicity, the stable population being 310 867 people, which led to a slightly larger percentage than in 2002 (84.6%), even though they had been more numerous then (276 038 people).

In terms of habitation representation, the situation in 2011 was similar to that of 2002 (80.0% in urban areas, in 2011, meaning 101 894 people, and 79.1% in 2002 (113 998 people). In rural areas, their representation was stronger, that is 89.0%, in 2011 as well as in 2002 (155 813 people, in 2011, 162 040 people in 2002).

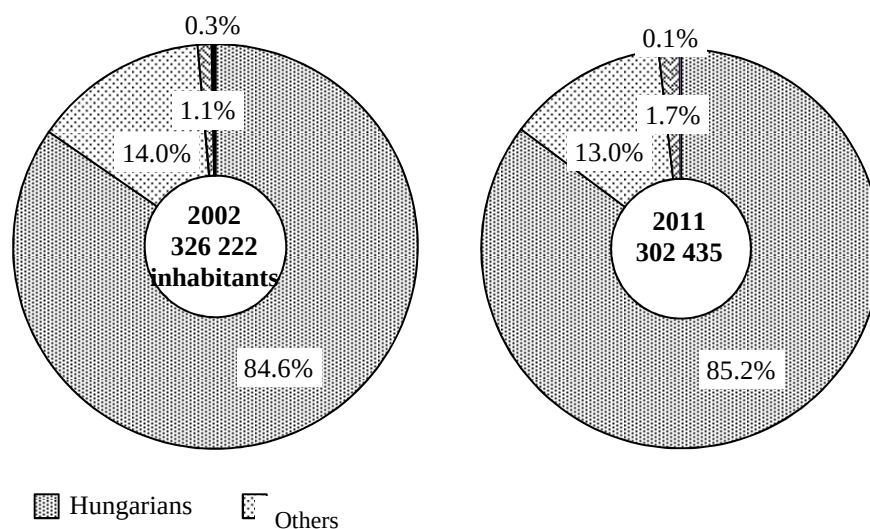


Fig. 1. The ethnic structure of Harghita County, in 2002 and 2011.

In the county's urban areas, the percentages of Hungarians in six of its cities exceeds 80% (Miercurea-Ciuc 81.5%, Gheorgheni 88.0%, Băile Tușnad 91.5%, Odorheiu Secuiesc 95.7%, Cristuru Secuiesc 95.0% and Vlăhița 99.0%), with lower values in Borsec (77.5%), Bălan (36.2%), and Toplița (23.4%), due to a higher Romanian population. Out of all 58 communes, 47 had an Hungarian majority that exceeded 90% (Tușnad 92.6%, Ulieș 93.7%, Frumoasa 95.8%,

Cozmeni 96.4%, Corund 97.0%, Ocland 98.5%, Dănești 99.1%, Merești 99.2%, Lunca de Jos 99.3%, Racu 99.5%, Cârța 99.6%, Vârșag 99.7%, Lueta 99.8% etc.).

The lowest representations of this ethnicity can be found in the northern part of Giurgeu and Bilbor depressions, which have a Romanian majority (Voșlăbeni 40.3%, Tulgheș 29.2%, Gălăuțaș 20.7%, Sârmaș 18.1%, Corbu 9.2%, Subcetate 4.4% and Bilbor with only 0.3%).

Romanian presence dates back to the 7th and 9th centuries, evident in a series of archeological finds in Eliseni, Șimonești and Filiaș, which belong to the *Ipoțești-Cândești Culture*. Romanians are also mentioned in several documents, during the period of Hungarian expansion in Transylvania, as well as in chronicles, alongside Hungarians and Germans (Cocean & colab., 2013).

Beginning with the 16th-17th centuries, in order to economically capitalize the uninhabited lands of Giurgeului Depression, the noble families of Ditrău-Lăzarea, created new villages, inhabited mostly by Transylvanian and Moldavian Romanians (Voșlăbeni, Subcetate, Sârmaș, Gălăuțaș, Bilbor, Corbu, Tulgheș). The Romanian population of Harghita County had a percentage of just 13.0% (numbering 39 196 people) in 2011, fewer than in 2002 (14.0%, 45 870 people).

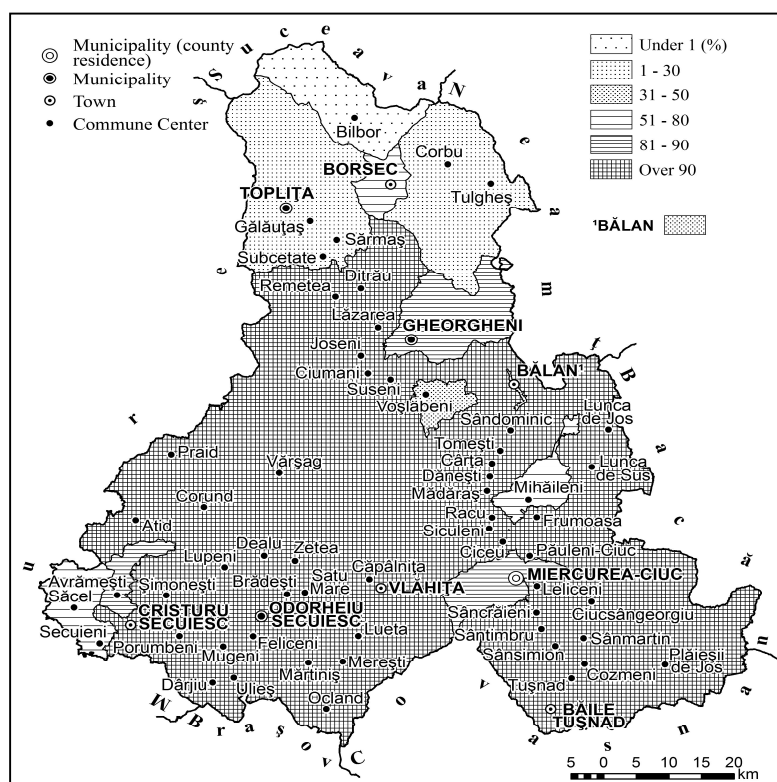


Fig. 2. The percentage of Hungarian population in Harghita County, in 2011.

The same decrease can be found in its habitational structure. In 2011, only 18.1% (23 100 people) of the county's inhabitants (127 324) were Romanians, compared to 2002, when they held 19.4% (27 936 people out of 144 083) in urban areas. At commune level (2011), Romanians represented 9.2% (16 096 people out of 175 119 people living in rural areas), compared to 2002, with 9.8% (17 934 people out of a total of 182 139 people).

Table 1: The ethnic structure of Harghita County, in 2002 and 2011

Year	Category	Total	Hungarians	Romanians	Gypsy (Roma)	Germans	Other ethnicities and undeclared
2002	County	326222	276038	45870	3835	140	339
		100.0	84.6	14.0	1.1	0.1	0.2
	Urban	144083	113998	27936	1796	112	241
		100.0	79.1	19.4	1.2	0.1	0.2
	Rural	182139	162040	17934	2039	28	98
		100.0	89.0	9.8	1.1	0.01	0.09
2011	County	302435	257707	39196	5326	70	136
		100.0	85.2	13.0	1.7	0.0	0.0
	Urban	127324	101894	23100	2165	59	106
		100.0	80.0	17.4	1.6	0.5	0.5
	Rural	175111	155813	16096	3161	11	30
		100.0	89.0	9.0	1.7	0.0	0.0

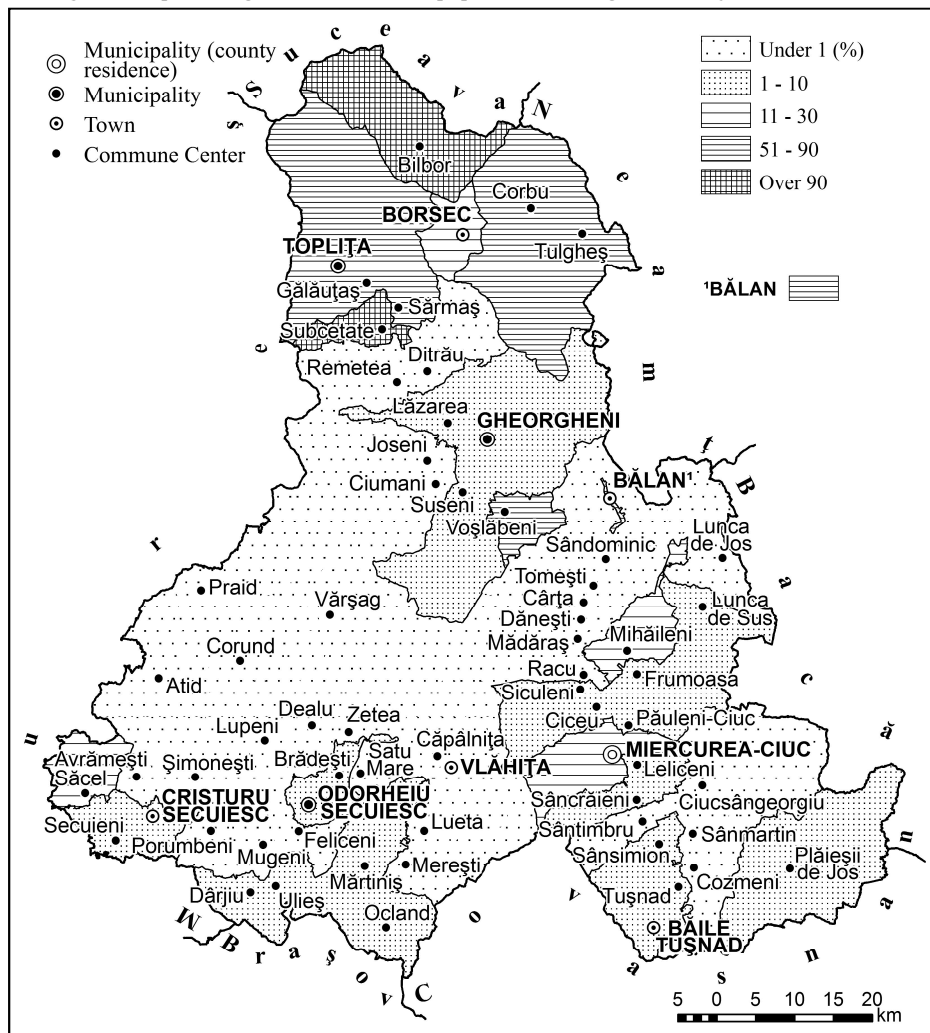
Examining the distribution of the Romanian population at administrative level (communes, towns, and cities) across the 67 units, reveals that the largest percentages can only be found in the northern part of the county, with percentages exceeding 50% (Voşlăbeni 58.6%, Bălan 62.0%, Toplița 72.5%, Tulgheș 70.4%, Gălăuțăș 78.1%), even more than 80% (Sărmaș 81.4%, Corbu 86.0%) or surpassing 90% (Subcetate 92.0%, Bilbor 99.7%).

In comparison to the analysed situation, we must emphasize the fact that Romanians find themselves below 50% in the rest of the administrative-territorial units (58 localities), due to a high percentage of Hungarians in these places.

However, reasonable values can be found in Borsec (22.1%), Săcel (19.7%), Mihăileni (19.0%) and Miercurea-Ciuc (17.4%). 22 localities have a Romanian population below 10% (Gheorgheni 9.5%, Băile Tușnad 6.5%, Plăieșii de Jos 6.2%, Siculeni 5.0%, Frumoasa 2.3%, Cristuru Secuiesc 2.1%, Lelicieni 1.6%, Dârjiu 1.3%, etc.), while 32 below 1% (Feliceni 0.9%, Praid 0.8%, Ditrău 0.7%, Avrămești 0.7%, Mugeni 0.5%, Dealu 0.4%, Cârța 0.3%, Ciucsângeorgiu 0.3%, Corund 0.3%, Lueta 0.2%, Ciumani 0.2%, Sântimbru

0.2%, Căpâlnița 0.2%, Tomești 0.2%, etc., the lowest percentages being found in three places (Mădăraș, Porumbeni and Satu Mare) with 0.1% each, due to a reduced number of Romanians, as they were included in the *other ethnicity* category (two persons in each).

Fig. 3. The percentage of the Romanian population in Harghita County, in 2011.



The third most numerous ethnicity is the *Gypsy (Roma) population*, which grew from 1.1% (3 835) in 2002 to 1.7% (5 326) in 2011, mostly concentrated in the communes situated in the Transylvanian Subcarpathians: Secuieni (22.0%), Săcel (18.6%), Avrămești (11.5%), Atid (6.8%), Dârjiu

(5.7%), Tuşnad (5.6%), Sâncrăieni (4.9%), etc. There are 11 communes where they were not declared (Bilbor) or declared themselves as Hungarians (Cârța, Ciumani, Lueta, Lunca de Jos, Lunca de Sus, Păuleni-Ciuc, Racu, Remetea, Siculeni and Vârșag); in urban areas, the highest percentages were found in Toplița (3.8%), Cristuru Secuiesc (2.7%), Gheorgheni (2.5%), Băile Tuşnad (1.7%), Odorheiu Secuiesc (1.5%), Bălan (1.4%), Miercurea Ciuc (0.9%), Borsec (0.2%) and Vlăhița (0.1%).

Germans primarily colonised Borsec, as specialists for making the glass used for mineral water bottling, Bălan, for mining, and also the town with the best industries in the county, Odorheiu-Secuiesc.

Currently, the *german population* follows the same descending national trend, their numbers decreasing from 140 inhabitants in 2002 to only 70 in 2011, most Germans residing in urban areas (84.2%, 59 people, in 2011), especially in Miercurea-Ciuc (31.4% out of the county total). In rural areas, Germans reach 15.7% (11 people), living in the following places: Ditrău, Feliceni, Gălăuțaș, Lăzarea, Lupeni, Mihăileni, Sânsimion, Sântimbru and Siculeni.

Other ethnicities (136 people) and *undeclared* (8 432 people) presented insignificant values in 2011 (0.04%), 0.02% less than in 2002. Out of the total of 136 people from other ethnicities, found across the county in 2011, most found in urban areas, the highest number belongs to Ceangai (30, out of which 17 in Miercurea-Ciuc), Ukrainians (14), followed by Turks (11), Armenians (6), Russian-Lipovans (5), Serbs (5), Jews (5), Tartars (3), Slovaks (3), Italians (3), Polish (3), Greek (1), Czech (1) and Chinese (1), as well as 45 people belonging to other ethnicities.

4. The religious structure of the population

The confessional structure of Harghita County's population in 2011 numbered 302 144 people (310 867 stable population), and consisted of: 66.4% Roman-Catholics (200 663), 12.4% Orthodox (37 670), 12.1% Reformed (36 760), 6.9% Unitarians (21 023), 0.6% Jehova Witnesses (1 724), 0.4% Baptists (811), other religions or cults, no religion, atheists, and undeclared 1.2% (Table 2, Fig. 4).

The religion with the most adherents in six of the county's urban settlements is the Roman-Catholic religion (Vlăhița 89.0%, Băile Tuşnad 84.7%, Gheorgheni 80.7%, Miercurea-Ciuc 73.5%, Borsec 73.0%, Odorheiu Secuiesc 51.1%), while in two urban centres the Orthodox religion is predominant (Toplița 71.6% and Bălan 52.0%). In Cristuru Secuiesc, the largest religion is Protestant Reformation (47.7%).

At commune level, in areas with a predominant Hungarian population, Roman-Catholics are the most frequent (in 37 settlements), followed by

Reformed (seven settlements) and Unitarians (six settlements), the Orthodox religion being characteristic to the Romanian populace (eight settlements).

The number of *Roman-Catholics* slightly increased (from 65.3% in 2002 to 66.4% in 2011) due to a minor growth of the Hungarian population (84.6% in 2002 and 85.2% in 2011). Most followers of this religion are found in rural areas (72.3%, 126 604), especially in Remetea (5 925), Sândominic (5 908), Ditrău (5312), Joseni (5 303), Zetea (5 302), Lunca de Jos (5 204), Suseni (4 836), Corund (4 644) etc.

Orthodox Christians, following the evolution of the Romanian population, slightly decreased compared to 2002 (12.4%, 37 670 people), by 17.0% (21 496 people) in urban areas and by 9.2% (16 174 people) in rural areas. The highest percentages can be found in two communes where values exceed 90% (Subcetate 94.6%, 1 717 people, and Bilbor with 99.7%, 2 606 people), while the smallest number of recorded adherents are in Satu Mare, Căpâlnița, Porumbeni, Vârșag, Sântimbru, Mădăraș etc.

The third most numerous religion is the *Reformed* (12.2%, 36 760 people, 19 281 people in urban areas and 17 479 in rural areas). The places where this religion predominated were: Cristuru Secuiesc (4 462), Praid (4 305), Feliceni (2011), Mugeni (1 765), Secuieni (1 524), Atit (1 447), Porumbeni (1 422) and Ulieș (821).

Table 2: The confessional structure of Harghita County, in 2002 and 2011

Years	Category	Declared population	Roman-Catholics	Orthodox	Reformed	Unitarian	Other religion	Without religion	Atheists	Undeclared
2002	County	326222	212937	43277	41269	23220	3846	578	56	514
		100.0	65.2	13.2	12.6	7.1	1.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
	Urban	144083	83277	25735	21576	10363	2167	248	44	337
		100.0	57.8	17.8	15.0	7.2	1.5	0.1	0.0	0.1
	Rural	182139	12960	17542	19693	12857	1679	330	12	177
2011	County	302144	20063	37670	36760	21023	5260	655	113	8723
		100.0	66.4	12.4	12.2	7.0	1.7	0.2	0.0	-
	Urban	127130	74059	21496	19281	9207	2738	259	90	5288
		100.0	58.3	17.0	15.1	7.2	2.1	0.2	0.1	-
	Rural	175014	12664	16174	17479	11816	2522	396	23	3435
		100.0	72.4	9.2	10.0	6.7	1.4	0.2	0.0	-

Unitarians, also representative for the Hungarian population, reached 7.0% (21 023 people) out of the total of 302 144 declared persons, 7.2% of the urban population and 6.7% of the rural population, with higher

numbers in Șimonești (2 612), Mărtiniș (1 898), Avrămești (1 600), Merești (964), Ocland (887) and Dârjiu (628).

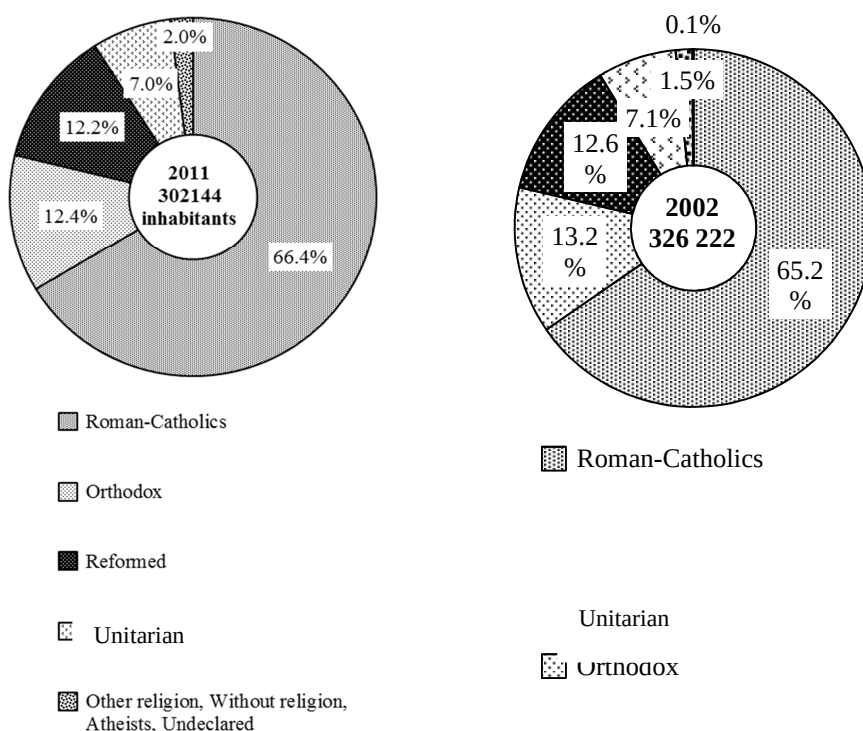


Fig. 4. The confessional structure of Harghita County, in 2002 and 2011.

Besides the above mentioned religions, one might observe the rise of the Neoprotestant *Jehova's Witnesses* cult (0.5%, 1 724 people), followed by *Baptists* (0.2%, 811 people) and *Pentecostals* (0.1%, 575 people), and the decrease of the *Serbian Orthodox* (4 people), *Old Calendar Orthodox* (6 people) and *Jewish* (7 people) religions. People of other religions besides those previously presented (*Greek-Catholics*, *Adventists*, *Jews*, *Evangelical*, etc.) represent 1.7% (5 260 people), while those *without religion, and atheists* 0.2% (768 people). 8 723 people (out of a total of 310 867) did not declare their religion.

5. Conclusions

At the 2011 census, the population of Harghita County decreased by 15 355 compared to 2002. From a stable population of 310 867, only 302 435 people declared their ethnicity, while 302 144 people declared their religion.

Thus, a significant number of people (8 432, and 8 723 respectively) did not want to declare these characteristics. For these people, information was gathered indirectly from administrative sources. In terms of ethnicity, the majority is held by Hungarians (85.2%), followed by Romanians (13.0%) and Gypsies (1.7%). Compared to 2002, the Gypsy population increased from 1.1% to 1.7%, while Romanians decreased from 14.0% to 13.0%. The confessional structure, closely related to the ethnic structure, is dominated by Roman-Catholics (66.4%), followed by Orthodox (12.4%), then by Reformed (12.2%) and Unitarians (7.0%), the last two corresponding to the Hungarian populace. All these four religions make up 98% of the county's population.

This space has an distinctive *cultural diversity*, which leads to a *behavioural diversity*. Thus I analysed *ethnicity and religion*, for a cultural identification of minority and majority groups, as these elements are place defining. As specific indicators, language and religion are basic criteria for Romanians, Szeklers and Germans, religion for Jews, while life style for Gypsies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by the strategic grant POSDRU/159/1.5/S/133391, Project “*Doctoral and Post-doctoral programs of excellence for highly qualified human resources training for research in the field of Life sciences, Environment and Earth Science*” cofinanced by the European Social Found within the Sectorial Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007 – 2013”.

REFERENCES

- Cocan, P., Niță, A., Dombay, Șt. (2013), *Județul Harghita*, Edit. Academiei Române, București.
- Lăcătușu, I. (2008), *Structuri etnice și confesionale în județele Covasna și Harghita*, Edit. Univ. Petru-Maior, Târgu-Mureș.
- Mara, V. (2014), *Giurgeu și Ciuc. Studiu de Geografie Regională*, Edit. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Pop, P. Gr. (2007), *Caracteristici geodemografice ale municipiului Dej, în perioada 1850-2002*, Studia UBB, Geographia, LII, 1, Cluj-Napoca.
- Pop, P. Gr. (2008), *Structurile (Calitatea) populației localităților comunei Țaga, județul Cluj, în perioada 1910-2002*, Studia UBB, Geographia, LIII, 2, Cluj-Napoca.
- Șeer, I. M. (2004), *Așezările și organizarea spațiului geografic în Depresiunea Giurgeului*, Teză de doctorat, Univ. Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca.
- Tofan, G. B. (2013), *Componenta nordică a ulucului depresionar din Grupa Centrală a Carpaților Orientali (Drăgoiasa-Glodu-Bilbor-Secu-Borsec-Corbu-Tulgheș)*, Edit. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- <http://www.statistici.insse.ro/shop>.