

GEODEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF THE REFORMED CULT IN ROMANIA (1930-2011)

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Abstract: The Reformed Religion was brought into Transylvania in 1550 and swiftly adopted by a part of the Hungarian nobility and the urban patriciate. In the inter-war period, after the Greater Union of all the Romanian Provinces on December 1, 1918 the Reformed Church had two Episcopates: the Episcopate of Transylvania and ‘Piatra Craiului’ Episcopate. Major changes in the numerical evolution and territorial distribution of the Reformed Romanian populations were the following: a) a decrease from 710,706 faithful in 1930, to 701,077 in 2002 and to 600,932 in 2011– as a consequence of the general negative natural balance in Romania (ever fewer births) and emigration (mostly after 2007) after the country’s adherence to the European Union.; b) changes in the distribution of the Calvinist faithful by habitat, from 21 % in the town area of 1930 to some 53 % in 2002, and 50.5% to-day.

Key words: population, Reformed Cult, Romania

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INTRODUCTION

The Reformed Religion (Calvinism)¹ (1509-1566) accepts only two holy sacraments – Baptism and Communion, refuting the dogma of the actual presence of “Lord Jesus body and blood” in the act of Communion, nor does it accept to invoke the saints, or the Episcopal institution either, etc. Preachers were to be chosen by the faithful and the spiritual leadership of each Calvinist Church was assigned to an elected council.

¹ Influenced by Martin Luther (1483-1546) and his views, Jean Calvin would publish (Basel, 1536) the first edition of his work “Christianae religionis institution”. After having been ousted from France for generating religious unrest, Calvin settled in Geneva (Switzerland) and continued being a vigorous preacher.

In Romania, Calvinism was introduced in Transylvania (1550) and adopted right away by a part of the Magyar nobility and the urban patriciate. However, it had to compete with the Lutheran Church. In 1558, Pastor Péter Meliuz Juhárez succeeded in determining the Cluj clergy to adhere to Calvinism, which would shortly be adopted by most of Transylvania's Magyar population. In 1564, at the Synod held in Arad Town, the two Protestant cults finally separated² into Calvinist (Reformed) and Lutheran (Evangelical). The Reformed Bishopric of Transylvania was initially located in Arad. The language used in the Divine Service and in administration was Hungarian.

In the inter-war period, the Reformed Church in Romania³ had two bishoprics: the Bishopric of Transylvania (Episcopal See in Cluj) and the Bishopric of Piatra Craiului (Episcopal See in Oradea). The first diocese was set up in the 16th century, when Protestantism became the dominant religion of the Transylvanian Magyar population, the second diocese, opened in 1920, gathered the faithful from the west of Romania.

The inter-war Reformed population

Twelve years after Greater Romania had come into being (1930), Reformed believers (710,706 people, i.e. 3.9% of the country's total population), ranked fourth among the other faiths, and were found mostly in the historical provinces of Transylvania (497,861 persons; 15.5%), Crișana-Maramureș (177,522; 12.8%), Banat (20,937; 2.2%) and Wallachia (10,257; 0.3%). In the other historical provinces, their number did not surpass 1,500 people: 1,402 in Moldavia, 843 in Dobrogea, 727 in Basarabia, 623 in Oltenia and 534 in Bucovina. Other counties with a numerically significant Magyar population are Trei-Scaune (40.6%), Odorhei (37.4%), Mureș (30.3%), Sălaj (24.5%), Cluj (21.7%), Bihor (21.0%), Târnava Mică (16.6%), Satu Mare (15.0%), Turda (14.4%) and Someș (12.8%) (Figure 1). In all of the former Moldavian and Wallachian counties, Calvinists represented under 1% per total inhabitants.

In terms of settlement, 74.7% (530,728) lived in the country-side and 25.3% (179,978) in town. The higher share of town-dwellers than the average in Romania (20.2%) was due to the very great number of Magyar faithful who lived in the central and western parts of this country: Transylvania 79.4% in the country-side (Alba 11,032, Brașov 4,528, Ciuc 1,310, Cluj 43,194, Făgăraș 1,375, Hunedoara 11,014, Mureș 72,108, Odorhei 4,222, Sălaj 78,249, Sibiu 1,699, Someș 23,103, Târnava Mare 6,218, Târnava Mică 21,943, Trei-Scaune 48,091 and Turda 20,210) and 20.6% in town; Crișana-Maramureș 67.7% in the country-side (Arad 15,519, Bihor 75,079, Maramureș 1,370 and Satu Mare 28,120) and 32.3% in town; Banat 64.6% lived in the country-side (Caraș 648, Severin 5,388 and Timiș-Torontal 7,473) and 35.4% in town. With the exception

² The obvious distinction between Luther's and Calvin's schools was their position to liturgical practices and religious feasts. Luther preserved everything from the Roman and Byzantine times which did not contravene to the Holy Scriptures: the altar, candles, paintings and the celebration of major events in Christ's life. Calvin removed anything that was not indicated by the Holy Scriptures, preserving only the great religious feasts: Jesus' Birthday, Palm Sunday, the Resurrection, Ascension and Whitsuntide (<http://www.ief-aper.ro/index.php?Scurt-istoric-al-Bisericii-Reformate-din-Romania>).

³ In the course of its history, since foundation to the present-day, the Reformed Church in Romania had several denominations: „Evangelico Reformata, vulgo Calviniana”, „Helvet Hitvallasu Evangeliumi Reformatus Egyház” (Reformed Evangelical Church of Helvetic Confession), „Reformatus Egyház” (Reformed Church) and the Reformed Calvinist Cult.

of Bucovina, where Calvinist villagers represented 78.1%, their proportion in the other historical provinces was reversed: substantially more in town than in the country-side (84,5% in Basarabia, 92,8% in Dobrogea, 74,8% in Moldova, 88,5% in Muntenia și 74,4% in Oltenia). This happened because the people who had arrived from the Romanian provinces englobed in the Austrian Empire, settled in town.

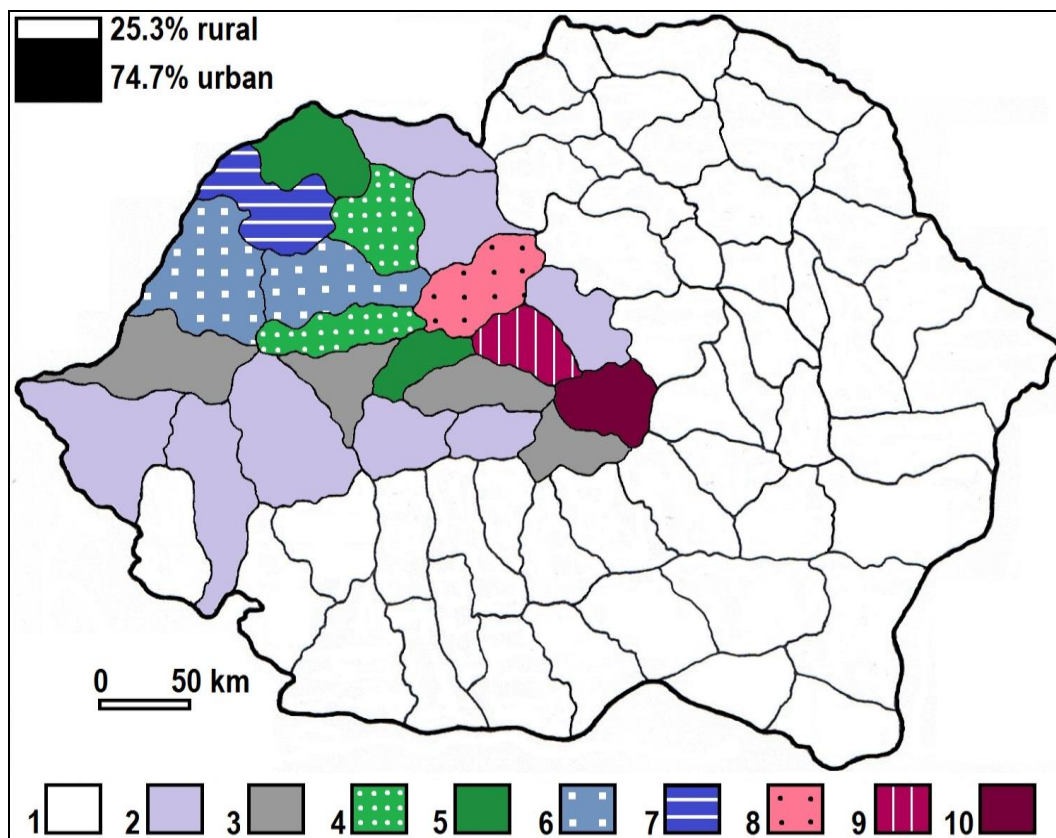


Figure 1. The share of the Reformed population in Romania's counties (1930)

1. under 1%; 2. 1-5%; 3. 5-10%; 4. 10-15%; 5. 15-20%;
6. 20-25%; 7. 25-30%; 8. 30-35%; 9. 35-40%; 10. over 40%.

The Reformed population after World War Two

The restrictive policy promoted by the communist regime installed in Romania after 1948, limited this cult, so that the Bishopric of Piatra Craiului was dismantled despite the protests lodged by István Sulyók and Károly Nagy, Bishops of Piatra Craiului and Transylvanian, respectively. In their view, the official policy was discriminatory and fascist. However, for all the protests of the Reformed Church in Romania, the greatest part of its patrimony was lost.

The 1992 census returns regarding the confessional situation of the population showed a number of 802,454 Calvinists (3.51% of Romania's population). In terms of the country's religious structure, the Reformed religion ranks third after the Orthodox (ca 87%) and the Roman-Catholic (5%) ones. In 1992, just like in 1930, most Calvinists lived in Transylvania (66.86% total Reformed population in Romania), Crișana-Maramureș (30.06%) and Banat

(2.34%). In terms of numbers and proportion, the situation looked as follows: Mureș 174,616 people (28.62% of the county's inhabitants), Bihor 124,580 (19.50%), Cluj 103,837 (14.10%), Covasna 79,802 (34.21%), Satu Mare 76,614 (19.11%), Sălaj 54,175 (20.30%), Harghita 44,558 (12.79%) and Maramureș 24,654 (4.56%).

The 1992 census data (versus 1930) revealed that 54.6% of the Calvinist population lived in town (percentages similar to those of Romania's urban population). In all the other historical provinces (except for Transylvania (53.42%), the proportion of urban Calvinists was in excess of its average in Romania: Wallachia 89.52%, Dobrogea 88.93%, Moldavia 87.08%, Banat 71.49%, Oltenia 65.71% and Crișana-Maramureș 55.44%. The very high proportion of Calvinist towns- folk in Moldavia and Wallachia comes from the fact that people who, for economic reasons or government assignment, left their traditional regions and settled in town. In this way, the confessional structure was changed; moreover, the urban architecture acquired some new-elements, namely, the religious buildings of this cult.

The ethnical structure of the Reformed population in 1992 reveals 95.37% Magyars, 2.19% Roma, 2.01% Romanians, 0.34% Germans, etc. This explains its high percentage in counties hosting a significant Magyar population (Mureș, Bihor, Cluj, Covasna, Satu Mare, Sălaj, Harghita, etc.).

In 1992, and at present, too, the Reformed faithful in Romania are grouped by the parishes and districts of the two bishoprics: the Bishopric of Transylvania, Episcopal See in Cluj-Napoca and the Bishopric of Piatra Craiului for Crișana region, Episcopal See in Oradea. As established by the Ministry of Culture and the Cults – Department for the Cults, the Bishopric of Transylvania had 16 districts – Aiud, Brașov, Călata (Huedin), Cluj-Exterior, Cluj, Dej, Gurghiu (Reghin), Hunedoara, Mureș, Mureș-Câmpie, Odorheiul Secuiesc, Sfântu Gheorghe, Târnăveni, Târgu Secuiesc, Turda and Baraolt – 506 parishes and 96 philiats, with 490 priests; the Bishopric of Piatra Craiului had 9 districts – Bihor, Baia Mare, Satu Mare, Carei, Eriu (Marghita), Arad, Timișoara, Șimleul Silvaniei and Zalău – with 274 parishes and 44 philiats served by 260 priests.

The 2002 census returns gave a number of 701,077 Calvinists in Romania, slightly fewer than in 1930 even (710,706), due both to the negative natural increase of Romania's population in general, and to sustained emigration to Hungary and Western Europe of people from the centre and west of this country.

In 2002, the county distribution of Reformed faithful looked as follows: Mureș 157,046 (27.03% from total county population), Bihor 108,769 (18.12%), Cluj 86,811 (12.35%), Covasna 74,312 (33.40%), Satu Mare 68,619 (18.68%), Sălaj 48,452 (19.53%), Harghita 41,269 (12.65%), Maramureș 20,808 (4.07%), Alba 14,805 (3.86%), Brașov 14,489 (2.45%), Bistrița-Năsăud 14,398 (4.61%), Timiș 12,962 (1.91%), Arad 12,359 (2.67%) and Hunedoara 11,466 (2.36%). Elsewhere, they numbered under 100,000 inhabitants. Noteworthy, with the exception of Bucharest city (1,880 persons), Moldavian and Wallachian counties registered rather few Reformed people (under 1,000): Argeș 310, Constanța 287, Prahova 219, Bacău 162, Dolj 157, etc.), with larger numbers in the towns of Târgu Mureș (45,104), Cluj-Napoca (38,779), Oradea (33,800), Sfântu Gheorghe (22,804), Satu Mare (22,475), Odorhei Secuiesc (11,138), Zalău (9,591), Baia Mare (9,576), Brașov (7,193), Reghin (7,188), Timișoara (6,209), Arad (5,406) and Covasna (5,246).

The recentmost population census (2011) indicated a decrease of Reformed faithful in Romania (600,932 persons, 2.99% of the country's population), as a

consequence of the general negative natural balance in Romania (ever fewer births) and emigration (mostly after 2007) after the country's adherence to the European Union.

By comparison to previous censuses, the 2011 one showed highest values of Calvinists in the counties populated by a significant number of Magyar nationals: Mureş 138,129 (25.08%), Bihor 95,250 (16.55%), Cluj 73,660 (10.66%), Covasna 67,791 (32.25%), Satu Mare 60,343 (17.52%), Sălaj 42,128 (18.77%), Harghita 36,760 (11.82%), Maramureş 16,246 (3.39%), Bistriţa Năsăud 11,675 (4.08%), Braşov 11,426 (2.08%) and Alba 11,080 (3.24%). In the other counties they are under 10,000, just like in 2002. In the south and south-east of Romania, except for Bucharest Municipium, (1,291 Reformed faithful) they totalled up to 150 persons (Figure 2).

As regards the living milieu, 50.5% (303,475 persons) dwelt in town and 49.5% (297,475 persons) in the country-side (Figure 2). Towns with highest numbers of Reformed faithful are those of 2002, but the values of this category are obviously depleted: Târgu Mureş (36,491), Cluj-Napoca (31,597), Oradea (26,755), Sfântu Gheorghe (19,975), Satu Mare (17,955), Odorheiu Secuiesc (9,678), Zalău (7,449), Baia Mare (6,412), Braşov (5,218), Reghin (5,654), Covasna (4,386), Timişoara (4,159), Arad (3,904).

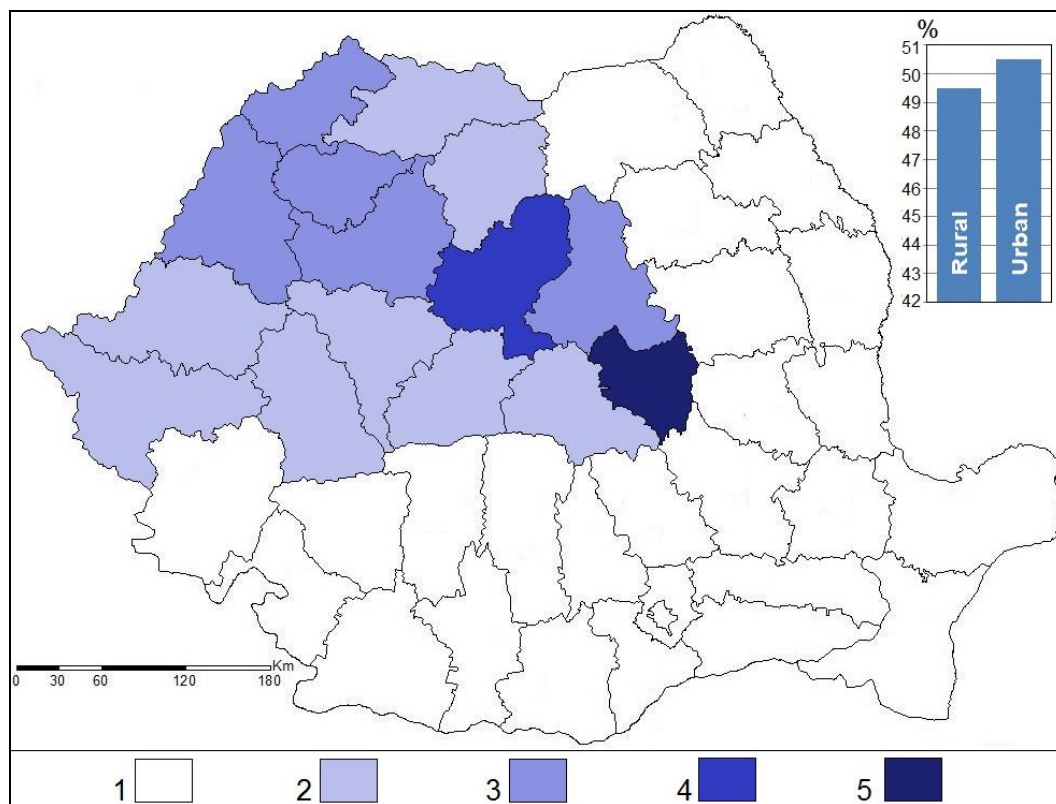


Figure 2. Reformed population in Romania's counties (2011)

1. under 1%; 2. 1-10%; 3. 10-20%; 4. 20-30%, 5. over 30%.

As a **conclusion**, the numerical evolution of Romania's Reformed population, consisting mainly of Magyar nationals, had initially an increasing

trend, which reversed after 1992, the result of lower birth-rate values and emigration. Just like in the inter-war period, most Calvinists live in the counties of Transylvania (Mureș, Cluj, Covasna, Sălaj and Harghita), Crișana-Maramureș (Bihor, Satu Mare and Maramureș), as well as Banat (Timiș). A change in the living milieu ratio of this population has been noticed within the study interval, namely, within the past few decades most Calvinist's have become townspeople.

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