

ETHNICITY AND RELIGION IN THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAIN SPACE, CASE STUDY: MINING CENTERS IN THE BANAT MOUNTAINS

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Citation: Lung, M-S., Mureşan, G-A. (2020). Ethnicity and Religion in the Carpathian Mountain Space: Case Study: Mining Centers in the Banat Mountains. *Revista Română de Geografie Politică*, 22(1), 27-37. <https://doi.org/10.30892/rrgp.221104-334>

Abstract: In this study we pursued an analysis on the nature of continuity of the ethnic and religious structure of five mining centers in the Banat Mountains. The five centers are: Reşiţa, Oraviţa, Bocşa, Dognecea and Anina, and the analyzed time period is 1880-2011. The elements that influenced the ethnic and religious structure were represented by the colonization periods in this region, starting from the second half of the 19th century, which continued until the first part of the 20th century. The study was based on statistical data obtained from the specialized literature and from the National Institute of Statistics website. These data were then processed in the form of graphs and tables. Ethnic and religious continuity has been preserved throughout the analyzed period, ethnicities and confessions from 1880 being found in 2011. The numbers in 2011 were smaller than in 1880, but enough for continuity to be maintained.

Key words: ethnicity, religion, Banat Mountains, mining centers

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study is to reflect on the ethnic and religious structure of five major mining centers in Banat Mountains. We also intend to carry out an analysis of ethnic and religious continuity from 1880 to 2011. Starting with the second half of the 19th century, especially after the entry of the Banat Mountains area into the Austro-Hungarian possession (1867), the latter colonized here skilled labor from different regions of the empire. With the infusion of new colonists, demographic changes in the ethnic and religious structure appeared.

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After the Great Union of 1918, the two demographic structures targeted by our study began to fluctuate. However, the fluctuations were not so important, a fact proven by maintaining an ethnic and confessional continuity until 2011. After 1918, ethnicities and denominations began to decline numerically, but not entirely, continuing to exist until the beginning of the 21st century. The five mining centers in the Banat Mountains are: Reșița, Oravița, Bocșa, Anina and Dognecea.

In general, the structure by ethnicity and religion has been a topic of interest for researchers (geographers, historians). Moreover, ethnicity and religion were the main topics of a study that addressed the two demographic structures on Crișana and Maramures regions, starting from the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century (Ilieș, 1998). This study was followed by two other papers, this time focusing on the Banat region (Crețan, 1999) and on the Transylvania geographic area (Bodocan, 2001), the time period analyzed covering the end of the 19th century and the entire twentieth century. Baroiu et al. (2005) conducted a very successful study on the religious dynamics of Transylvania between 1930-2002, while Stașac (2005) identified some ethnic and confessional particularities of the demographic component in the Crișurilor Plain' rural area between 1930-2002. Another important study on ethnicity and religion in Transylvania was carried out by Bocșan et al. (1994), the team of researchers providing historical evidence on ethnicity and religion in this area in the 13th-19th centuries. Ethnic coexistence was addressed in a study on the Secașelor Land, an area in southern Transylvania (Străuțiu, 2012). Another new study analyzed the ethnicity and religion in Harghita, Covasna and Mureș counties between 2008-2014 (Tofan, 2015). A similar paper was conducted by Lung (2019), who analyzed the ethnic and religious continuity and cyclicity in the Petroșani Depression for the period 1850-2011. Gosz (2012) analyzed the religious diversity of the demographic component of the Pomeranian Voivodeship in 2008.

METHODOLOGY

Statistical data from the 1880, 1900, 1930 and 2011 censuses were used to analyze demographic evolution, but especially the ethnic and religious structure of the population. The necessary statistical data were obtained from the specialized literature (Rotariu et al., 1997, 1999, 2011) and from the National Institute of Statistics website and other sources. These data has been processed in Microsoft Excel 2013, which generated graphs and tables for each ethnic and confessional structure from each census.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The demographic changes resulting from the colonization stages carried out by Habsburgs, but especially by Austro-Hungarians, are visible in the ethnic and religious structures of the population.

Demographic evolution of the five mining centers

From 1880 to 1900, the demographic evolution of the five administrative-units (Oravița, Dognecea, Bocșa, Reșița, Anina) was increasing. The most significant population growth was in Reșița, from 9,365 people to 14,935 people in just 20 years, which means a 59% percentage increase. Between 1930 and 2011 the Reșița population had a striking increase of 189%. The second in this hierarchy, Anina registered an increase of 48% between 1880-1900, but in the 1930 census the population decreased by 26%, this trend continuing until 2011.

Smaller population increase occurred in Bocşa (15%), Dognecea (6%), and Oraviţa (5%, the lowest recorded value). At the level of all five mining centers in the Banat Mountains, the population increase was 33% during the period 1880-1900.

In the first three decades of the 20th century, the population of Reşiţa increased by 69%, followed by Oraviţa with an increase of 64%. Bocşa town experienced a slightly increase compared to the other two mentioned above, by only 2%. Dognecea was depopulated by 6%, and Anina recorded the highest demographic decrease rate of 26%. The good organization of mining in Anina during the Austro-Hungarian period led to a demographic increase from 1880 until the beginning of the 20th century, but the World War I turmoil and the beginning and perpetuation of industrial reforms led to the persistent demographic decline in this town (Oprean, 2008). Population decrease was evident throughout the 20th century until the last census conducted in 2011. In a similar situation is Dognecea, which has recorded the largest decrease in the entire period considered. In the first 30 years of the twentieth century, the population decreased by 6%, but from 1930 to 2011, this demographic decline became more evident, reaching 39%. Between 1930-2011, Reşiţa was the most intensely populated, with an increase of 189%, in the second place being Bocşa with 108%. In the same time period, at the level of all administrative units, the population increase was 91%, and from 1880 to 2011, the dynamic component of the five units increased by 215% (table 1).

Numerical increases were due to the infusion of foreign workers brought to the mining areas around the five major mining centres.

Table 1. Demographic evolution of the five mining centres in the Banat Mountains between 1880-2011

(Source: data processed after the Rotariu et al., 1997; Rotariu et al., 1999; Rotariu et al., 2011, National Institute of Statistics; Ene and Popa, 2008)

Administrative unit	1880 Census	1900 Census	%	1930 Census	%	2011 Census	%
Dognecea	3.306	3.525	+6	3.308	-6	2.009	-39
Oraviţa	6.502	6.856	+5	11.248	+64	11.382	+1
Bocşa	6.426	7.428	+15	7.599	+2	15.842	+108
Anina	9.239	13.723	+48	10.080	-26	7.485	-25
Reşiţa	9.365	14.935	+59	25.307	+69	73.282	+189
Total	34.838	46.467	+33	57.542	+23	110.000	+91

Ethnic and confessional structure at the 1880 census

The ethnic structure at the 1880 census, recorded at the level of the five mining centers, highlights the dominance of the German ethnic groups (47%), followed by the Romanian ethnic groups with 38%. Other colonists were represented by Slovaks, with 8% and Hungarians with 3%. Lower weight had Croats / Serbs, respectively Ruthenians, which numbered only 41 people, their share in the total population being less than 1% (figure 1). In 1880, the ethnic structure was dominated by Germans ethnics in Anina and Reşiţa. Thus, the number of Germans from Anina and Reşiţa was 4,957 persons (69%) and 4,839 persons (54%) respectively. In Anina, the second ethnicity after the Germans was

the Slovak one, which numbered 1,720 people (24%), while Romanians represented only the third ethnicity in the unit (4%).

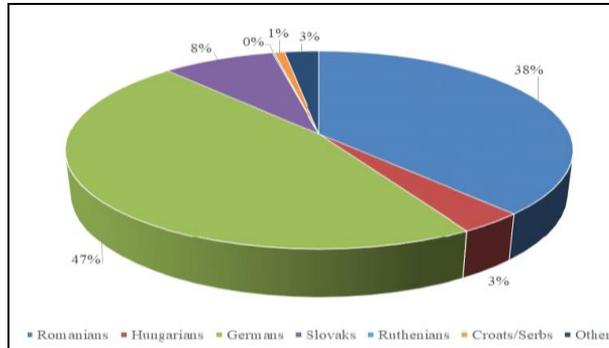


Figure 1. The ethnic structure of the five mining centers in the Banat Mountains in 1880 (Source: data processed after the Rotariu et al., 1997)

The majority confession of 1880 was the Roman Catholic one, with a weight of 60%. Roman Catholics dominated the confessional structure in three administrative units. Their highest numbers were in Anina (8,522), Reșița (6,569) and Oravița (2,960). This high proportion is supported by the German population, to which other ethnic groups (Hungarians, Romanians) also joined. A certainty that ethnic Romanians have identified themselves as Roman Catholics, is given by the fact that the number of Romanians was higher than the number of followers who declared themselves Orthodox. Similar case was the Slovaks and Hungarians who identified themselves as Roman Catholics. The second confession is the Orthodox one, which represents 34% of the total population, followed to a long distance by the Greek Catholic confession with only 3%. The Orthodox dominated only in Bocșa, the ethnic structure being modeled after the confessional one. In Dognecea, the share of Orthodox and Roman Catholics had close values. Moreover, in Dognecea the structure on religions was the most homogeneous, being registered followers for only three religions: Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Reformed.

Jews and Evangelicals had the lowest share of 1% and 2%, respectively. Of the six confessions, the Reformed one had only 200 followers, which confirms a weight of less than 1% (figure 2).

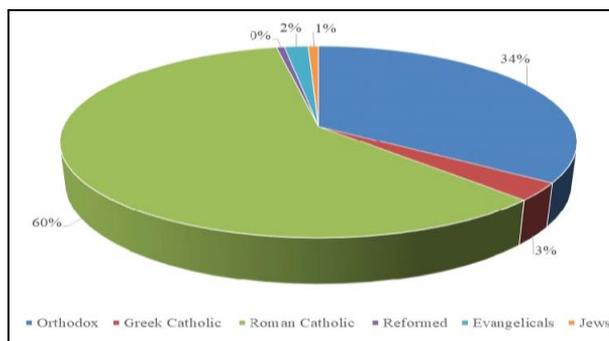


Figure 2. The confessional structure in the five mining centres in the Banat Mountains in 1880 (Source: data processed after the Rotariu et al., 1997)

Ethnic and confessional structure at the 1900 census

At the end of the 19th century, the ethnic structure of the five mining centers have changed compared to 1880. At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, in the studied area, the Germans had an ethnic majority with 52%, followed by Romanians with 33%. In the 20 years, the ethnic structure has changed visibly, with two ethnic groups having increased their share and others that have diminished it. The number of Germans increased by 5 percentage points compared to 1880, from 47% to 52%, which made the German ethnic majority. The Hungarian population was also increasing by 4 percentage points, from 3% to 7%. Worth noting is the share of Romanians who decreased from 38% to 33%, but this decrease was due to the infusion of new settlers. The most significant decrease was registered by ethnic Slovaks, who seem to have reached 4% in 1900 (figure 3). In the five cities, during the period 1880-1900, the Slovak population was the only one that decreased numerically from 2,651 to 1,867, representing a decrease of 29%. The Slovak population began to migrate to their places of origin. The Romanian population was also marginalized from certain points of view, the Germans and Hungarians being brought in as a skilled labor force, and the Romanians losing their jobs in favor of the newcomers. The most disproportionate ethnic structure was in Anina, where the German population represented 66% of the total population, increasing numerically in the 20 years by 83%, from 4,957 to 9,105 people. Following the German ethnic groups, the most numerous were the Czecho-Moravians and Poles: at the 1900 census no less than 1,882 persons belonging to the three nationalities, were registered (14%). The population of settlements with Polish and Czecho-Moravians resulted in the migration of the Slovak population, which decreased by 29%. In Dognecea, there was no confirmed Slovak ethnicity in 1900. If in 1880 there were only 244 Romanians in Anina, in 1900 their number increased by 320%, to 1,026 people. Another ethnic group that thrived in all the localities was the Hungarian one, the largest share being in Reșița with 9%, which means an increase of 171% compared to 1880.

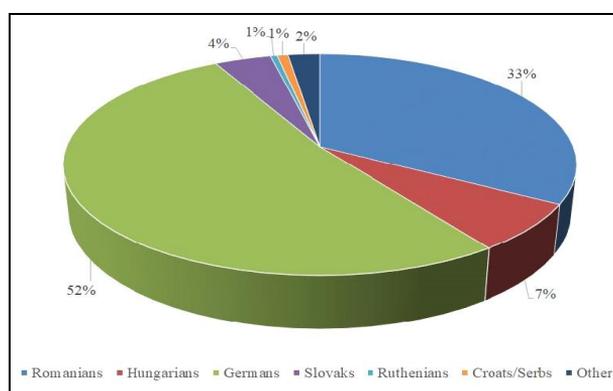


Figure 3. The ethnic structure of the five mining centers in the Banat Mountains in 1900
(Source: data processed after the Rotariu et al., 1999)

The confessional structure in 1900 was influenced by the new population contributions made by Austria-Hungary. All confessions recorded higher numerical values in 1900 compared to 1880. The confessional majority, 62%, is owned by Roman Catholics; Orthodox are in second place with 31%, and the rest

of the confessions have low values. At the level of the five localities, the highest numerical values were recorded by Roman Catholics, the number of followers increasing from 20,777 in 1880 to 28,932 in 1900. This means a significant increase of 39%. The number of Orthodox has increased from 11,948 to 14,265, which is 19%. Regarding the Reformed religion, in the 20 years, the number of its followers increased by 69%, being the highest increase recorded by all confessions in this period. The Unitarians had only 13 followers, their share being less than 1%, but increasing compared to 1880 when there was only one follower. At the local level, the dominance of Roman Catholic denominations in Reșița, Anina and Oravița is maintained. The largest increase in the number of Roman Catholics was recorded in Reșița, from 6,569 to 10,533, during the 20-year period, which means an increase of 60%, being the largest one within this confession. In Anina, Roman Catholics increased in number from 8,522 to 12,105, or 42%. In Oravița, the numerical values were somewhat lower, their increase being 9%. The Orthodox dominate the confessional structure in Dognecea and Bocșa, their increases being 8% and 9% respectively. As for the Greek Catholics, there were some dysfunctions in Anina, so that their number decreased by 15%, while in the other cities their number increased. The highest increase of Greek Catholics was recorded in Reșița, with 142% between 1880-1900. In Anina and Resita, the number of Evangelicals decreased by 4% and 3% respectively. The number of Jews has increased steadily in the 20 years, many of them being interested in trade. In the case of Anina, the number of Jews increased from 6 to 54 persons. The largest percentage increase of the Jewish population was in Reșița, of 206%. Jews avoided Dognecea, where 0 people have been registered in 1880 and one person 20 years later. In the Jews' preferences, were Anina and Reșița mining centers, where the biggest increases were registered, being the favorable places for the commercial activities. The most under-represented confession in the Banat Mountains mining centers was the Unitarian one, which increased in number of followers by 13 people compared to 1880. Only 14 people in the 20-year period declared themselves Unitarians, which puts the Unitarian confession on the last position between the six religions (figure 4).

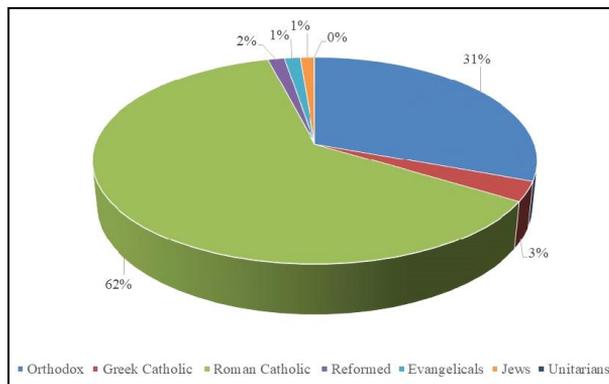


Figure 4. The confessional structure in the five mining centres in the Banat Mountains in 1900 (Source: data processed after the Rotariu et al., 1999)

Ethnic and confessional structure at the 1930 census

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, only the Romanian and German ethnic groups increased their number; in 1930, at the level of all mining

centers, there were 27,503 Romanians (increasing from 1900 by 87%) and 24,355 Germans (increasing from 1900 by 5%). At the level of the five mining centers, the Romanians represented 48%, followed by the Germans, with 43%. Hungarians were the third ethnicity with a share of 6%. At the 1930 census, two ethnic groups are noted, which until this census were not taken into account. Unfortunately, the dualist censuses do not fully reflect the ethnic and religious reality. In 1900, all those who identified themselves as Jews were included among the Hungarian population. Basically, the mosaic community was recorded, almost exclusively as Hungarian (Porumb-Ghiurco, 2018). There is a possibility that both Jews and Gypsies from the Austro-Hungarian censuses have declared themselves Hungarians to escape certain possible repression against them. The Gypsy population has existed in the mining centers area since the eighteenth century (Achim, 1998). At the first census conducted by the Romanian authorities after 1918, 689 Gypsy people and 33 Jews were identified. In Reșița and Anina the population of German ethnicity dominated, followed by the Romanian one; they are the only two municipalities in which the majority were owned by another ethnic group, to the detriment of the Romanians. The ethnic Gypsies were present in three localities, registering the highest number in Reșița (428 people). Their number was significantly lower in Oravița and especially in Bocșa, where there were 185 and 76 people respectively. The territorial distribution of the Jews is identical to that of the Gypsies, being present in three municipalities, with the maximum number in Reșița.

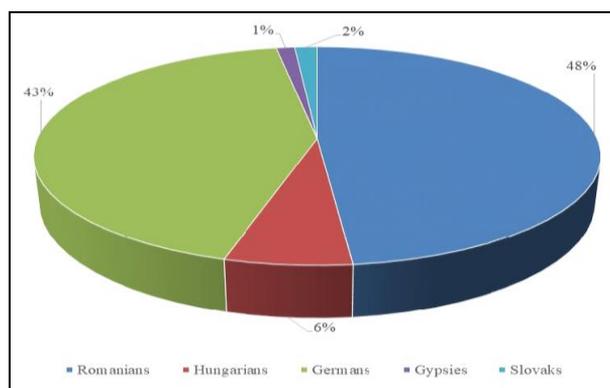


Figure 5. The ethnic structure of the five mining centers in the Banat Mountains in 1930
(Source: data processed after the Rotariu et al., 2011)

In 1930, the confessional structure was more balanced than ever, Roman Catholics representing 47% of the total population, and Orthodox 46%. They were the only two confessions that had such high weights, and the supremacy of the Roman Catholics was coming to an end. The continuity of the Roman-Catholic confession, dominant in the 19th century, especially in the second half of the century, began to crumble after 1918. The withdrawal of the Austro-Hungarians and the entry of the Banat mining area under the Romanian authority brought about significant changes from the ethno-confessional point of view. In only 30 years, the share of Roman Catholics decreased by 15 percentage points, and that of the Orthodox increased by 15 percentage points (figure 6). A new religion appeared in 1930, including Baptists, but they do not exceed 1%. The distribution of the Baptists in the five mining centers is more or less

homogeneous, their number being 384 persons. The largest number of Baptists was recorded at Oravița, 146 people. On the opposite side, the minimum number was registered in Bocșa, where only 11 Baptists lived.

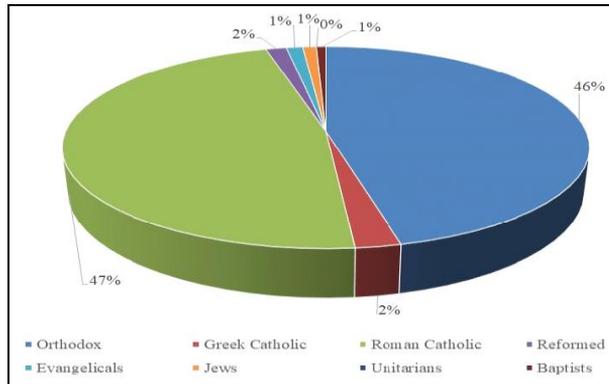


Figure 6. The confessional structure in the five mining centres in the Banat Mountains in 1930 (Source: data processed after the Rotariu et al., 2011)

Ethnic and confessional structure at the 2011 census

The ethnic structure of 2011 keeps traces of the continuity of ethnicities that have existed since 1880. The Romanian population is dominant, being present in a proportion of 93%, remaining the majority ethnicity for each of the five centers. The ethnic Gypsies experienced a considerable increase, becoming the second ethnic group in the five centers, after the Romanian one. The largest group of Rromi is in Reșița, 1,043 people and the less numerous in Dognecea, only 3 people. The Hungarian population registered a decrease by 43% compared to 1930, in 2011 being 2,024 Hungarians. In Reșița, where the highest number of Hungarians was recorded in 1930, their number decreased by 32% by 2011.

Table 2. Ethnic structure of the five mining centers in the Banat Mountains in 2011 (Source: data processed after the National Institute of Statistics)

Ethnicities	Reșița	%	Anina	%	Bocșa	%	Oravița	%	Dognecea	%	Total
Romanians	59.832	92,33	6.030	88,35	13.059	92,31	9.613	94,66	1.795	95,53	90.329
Hungarians	1.553	2,40	99	1,45	285	2,01	81	0,80	6	0,32	2.024
Gypsies	1.043	1,61	204	2,99	534	3,77	268	2,64	3	0,16	2.052
Ukrainians	231	0,36	16	0,23	24	0,17	12	0,12	-	-	283
Germans	1.255	1,94	423	6,20	166	1,17	96	0,95	68	3,62	2.008
Turks	7	0,01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Russians-Lipovans	7	0,01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Serbs	344	0,53	22	0,32	33	0,23	74	0,73	-	-	473
Slovaks	59	0,09	-	-	29	0,20	-	-	-	-	88
Bulgarians	13	0,02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
Croats	292	0,45	8	0,12	7	0,05	3	0,03	7	0,37	317
Greeks	3	0,00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Italians	12	0,02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Jews	23	0,04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
Czech	74	0,11	23	0,34	7	0,05	8	0,08	-	-	112
Poles	4	0,01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Chinese	3	0,00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Csango	4	0,01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Other	45	0,07	-	-	3	0,02	-	-	-	-	48

The Germans, who in 1930 were the second ethnic group after the Romanian one, reduced their number by 91%, from 24,355 people to only 2,008. From these data, it can be seen that the German population massively migrated

after 1930. The Slovak population was present in Reșița and Bocșa, totaling 88 people, well below the population of 1930, when there were 845. In Anina, in 1930 there were 440 Slovaks, and in 2011 there was no one of this ethnicity. After the mining industry restructuring in the 1990s, Slovaks, like the Germans, migrated to the places where they were colonized from. At the 2011 census, ethnic diversity is higher compared to 1930, with new ethnicities being registered as: Turks, Bulgarians, Chinese, Greeks (table 2) (Vlăsceanu and Ianoș, 1998; Ghinea, 2000; Erdeli and Cucu, 2007).

After 1989, the confessional structure was much diversified, due to the legal framework that allowed the inclusion of new religions in the census. Most of them represent less than 1%, but an exception can be identified: this is the case of the Pentecostal confession, which grew rapidly in a short time, in 2011 representing 4%. Confessional continuity has been preserved for over 100 years, a fact proven by the existence of religions from the second half of the 19th century until 2011.

Table 3. The confessional structure of the five mining centers in the Banat Mountains in 2011
(Source: data processed after the National Institute of Statistics)

Denominations	Reșița	%	Anina	%	Bocșa	%	Oravița	%	Dognecea	%	Total
Orthodox	56.009	86,65	5.223	75,76	10.972	77,95	8.946	88,27	1.429	76,29	82.579
Greek Catholic	543	0,84	9	0,13	112	0,80	111	1,10	-	-	775
Roman Catholic	3.967	6,14	867	12,58	695	4,94	407	4,02	113	6,03	6.049
Reformed	594	0,92	35	0,51	75	0,53	33	0,33	-	-	737
Evangelicals	52	0,08	28	0,41	20	0,14	-	-	-	-	100
Jews	23	0,04	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
Unitarians	3	0,00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Baptists	1.211	1,87	258	3,74	729	5,18	224	2,21	137	7,31	2.559
Pentecostals	1.480	2,29	401	5,82	1.360	9,66	285	2,81	194	10,36	3.720
Adventists	154	0,24	17	0,25	38	0,27	52	0,51	-	-	261
Muslim	17	0,03	-	-	-	-	3	0,03	-	-	20
Jehovah	125	0,19	-	-	6	0,04	19	0,19	-	-	150
Christian After Gospel	45	0,07	27	0,39	23	0,16	12	0,12	-	-	107
Christian of Rite Old	54	0,08	-	-	-	-	7	0,07	-	-	61
Orthodox Serbian	94	0,15	5	0,07	15	0,11	14	0,14	-	-	128
Evangelical of confession Augustana	21	0,03	8	0,12	4	0,03	-	-	-	-	33
Evangelist Lutherana	23	0,04	5	0,07	4	0,03	-	-	-	-	32
Atheists	98	0,15	8	0,12	6	0,04	11	0,11	-	-	123
Other	126	0,19	3	0,04	17	0,12	11	0,11	-	-	157

We refer to at least two major confessions (Orthodox and Roman Catholic) that dominated and prevailed in the mining areas of the Banat Mountains. After 1930, the confessional structure changed according to the ethnic structure, the dominant confession becoming the Orthodox one. In the post-war period, part of the colonized population began to migrate to their places of origin, leading to a confessional dysfunction. The major dysfunctions characterized the Roman Catholic and Greek-Catholic religion. The weight of the former was only 6% in 2011, while in 1880 it had a share of 60%, in 1900 62%, and in 1930 47%. For a

long time, Roman Catholics dominated the mining centers in the Banat Mountains, but the Austro-Hungarian withdrawal would lead to a decline in their numbers. The Orthodox confession was in the shadow of the Roman Catholic one until 1930, when the numerical decline of Roman Catholics and the ascension of the Orthodox began. In 2011, the Orthodox dominated the Banat Mountains mining area, representing 85%. In addition to the two major religions, the continuity of other religions that had lower weights (Greek-Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical, Unitarian, Mosaic or Jewish) should be remembered (table 3) (Vișan and Martin, 2014; Popescu, 2003; Bârsan, 1978; Ilinca, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

The religions and ethnicities highlighted in the 1880 census are also found in 2011. They maintained their continuity from the end of the 19th century to the first part of the 21st century. By 2011, different ethnicities and confessions had decreased compared to 1880-1900, but had not completely disappeared. The numerical decline was due to the periods of political instability and restructuring in the mining industry that led to the return of the colonized population to the place of origin. The departure of the colonized population began especially after the Great Union of 1918, when the Banat Mountains area, including the mining fields, came into the possession of the Romanian authorities. A certain part of the population has adapted well to the new living environment, which has led to the coexistence of several ethnic groups and confessions.

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Submitted:
December 14, 2019

Revised:
March 10, 2020

Accepted and published online:
April 30, 2020