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The changes of religion structure at Romanian cities – Case of Oradea

Key words: transformation, structure, religion, ethnic, Romania, cities, social structure

Summary:

Oradea during the period of the socialistic regime played a role of an important industrial and administrative centre. Nowadays, Oradea with its about 210 thousand citizens, can be a good example of the religion changes. The religion changes, which take place in Oradea, have had a typical run, characteristic for multi – ethnic cities. The border location of Oradea is conducive to intermingles the religion, ideas, people, capital and the western style of life, which makes the rate of the changes faster in comparison to the rest of Romanian cities of Banat, Crişana, Maramures and Transilvania. This article has presented analyse of changes at the ethnical and religions structures at the city, to show the process of changes social structures of Oradea, which is similar to many Romanian cities. The range of the changes together with the before existing process seems to deepen. For one, the process of Hungarian, German and Jewish minorities' migration is creally seen. And heavy influenced at the religion structure of the city. We cane observe growing role of new churches like: Adventist, Evangelic CA, Pentecostal, Baptist, and Evangelic PS., weakness of Roman-Catholic Church and even slowly degrees of Orthodox Church. There is a strong correlation between migration process, changing the ethnical structure and the process of changing the religion ones, especially at the case of Hungarians, Jewish and Germans minorities.

Abstrakt

Oradea, typowe rumuńskie miasto o charakterze industrialnym, jest dobrym przykładem przebiegu transformacji ustrojowej, ekonomicznej i społecznej. Miasto, zarówno pod względem wielkości, jak i innych cech jest reprezentatywne dla siedmiu ośrodków o znaczeniu ponad regionalnym, oraz dla zbioru siedemdziesięciu czterech miast z drugiego poziomu hierarchicznego. Procesy zachodzące w Oradea mają typowy dla multi-etnicznych miast dawnych Węgier przebieg. A dzięki położeniu miasta w regionie transgranicznym oraz dostępności transportowej zachodzą szczególnie silnie w porównaniu do innych miast Crisany i Siedmiogrodu.

Charakterystykę przemian struktury społecznej przeprowadzono analizując zmiany struktury etnicznej i religijnej. Starano się także wnikać w przyczyny zachodzących procesów. Przy tradycyjnym ujęciu zagadnienia przynależności religijnej w pewnym uproszczeniu przyjmuje się, iż zdecydowana większość ludności

etnicznie rumuńskiej jest wyznania prawosławnego lub greko-katolickiego, a ludność etnicznie węgierska i niemiecka najczęściej należą do kościoła rzymskokatolickiego lub kalwińskiego. Wśród sześciu kościołów przekraczających liczbę tysiąca wyznawców w 1992r., do których należały kościoły: prawosławny, kalwiński, rzymskokatolicki, Penticostal, greko-katolicki i baptyści, jedynie wspólnoty Penticostal i baptystów wzmocniły swoją pozycję.

Największe straty pod względem spadku liczby wyznawców poniosły kościoły kalwiński i rzymskokatolicki, których liczba wiernych zmalała w badanym okresie. Mniejsze straty poniosła wspólnota prawosławna. Z porównania procentowego udziału grup etnicznych i religijnych w 2002r. można z dużym prawdopodobieństwem wnosić, iż wyznawcy kościołów rzymskokatolickiego i kalwińskiego w znacznym stopniu odpowiadają procentowemu udziałowi mniejszości węgierskiej. Natomiast przy 70% udziale rumuńskich mieszkańców miasta, jedynie 62% mieszkańców zadeklarowało przynależność do prawosławnego lub greko-katolicki kościoła. W tym ostatnim przypadku, podobnie jak i kościoła prawosławnego wyraźnie widoczna jest działalność misyjna pozostałych kościołów, zwłaszcza kościołów Penticostal, ewangelików i adwentystów.

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Oradea is a city located on the west part of the Hungarian Lowland, in the ravine of the Crisul Repede River, at the Bihor Mountains. There has been situated metallurgy, machine and building industry. Oradea has been an administrative capitol of the Bihor province. Being a typical multi-ethnic city, Oradea can be a good example of the process of transformation religion, ethnical and social structure. Now Oradea has about 210 thousand citizens and is one of the biggest city centres. Considering the above information, either regarding the size or another features, the city is representative for the seven centres, which have over-regional meaning, like Brasow, Cluj-Napoca, Constanta, Craiova, Galati, Iasi and Timisoara. It is typical as well for the set of seventy-four cities from the second hierarchic level (Ianoş, Talanga 1994, Wendt 2003). Considering the various ethic structures, similar in four from the seven historical-geographical regions which the modern Romania consists of, we can present an analysis of religion structure's modification correlated to changes at ethnic structures (Pop 1991, Ilieş 1998).

The processes, which take place in Oradea, have a typical run, characteristic for multi – ethnical cities of former Hungary, which belong to Romania now. The border location of Oradea is conducive to intermingles the religions, ideas, people, capital and the western style of life, which makes the rate of the changes faster in comparison to the rest of Romanian cities of Crişana and Transilvania (Benedek, Nagy 2003).

Analysing the structure changes made the characteristic of social structure variations: ethnic and religion among the citizens of Oradea also trying to penetrate the reasons of the processes. The changes of the people structures in Oradea appear to have similar run, common for the most Romanian cities in Crişana, Transilvania, Maramureş and Banat region. However, it is noticed that there is a very special scale and rate of the changes which take

place in Oradea in comparison to the rest of the cities in North, West and Central Romania e.g.: in Baia Mare, Timisoara, Cluj-Napoca. The researched social structure changes, negative rate of birth, negative migration balance, re-emigration linked with the Hungarian capital stock have an influence on the row of phenomenon taking place in the cities of the mentioned regions.

The beginning of the city we can find in the X century. In X century, Biharia, which was in neighbourhood of Oradea, became a centrum of Menumoruta country, of course the citizens have been pagans. After the city started co-operation with Bizancjum, the citizens took Christianity in the Orthodox way. Then Oradea adopted Biharia functions in Hungarian Kingdom time, which at the end of XI century took the possession of the parts of present Romania; Crisana and part of Transilvania, making Oradea Roman-Catholic bishopric. The episcopate began an action to christianise the people in Roman-Catholic way.

The first written information about the city comes from 1113, when Varadinum (Latin name of Oradea) was presented as a largest settlement of the region, which succeeded the function of the main centre of being in ruin Biharia. At the beginning of the XIII century, in the Middle Ages, Oradea-located between Transilvania and ethnic areas of Hungarian Kingdom- became an important trade centre. Also a citadel was built there to protect the Oradea's citizens. The short period of Turkish regime in XVII century do not established any Muslims influence at the city. The Turkish regime ended by the Austro-Hungarian incorporation of the region, which brought a lot of changes to Oradea. Oradea after joining Hungary became the largest Catholic centre in present Romanian territory and was developing thanks to its convenient trade location.

The city had its best time of prosperity in XIX century together with a Jewish migration and settlement at the city. After this process at Hungarian Oradea there were not only Romanian minorities, but also Saxons and Jews. Every of this group established theirs religion and starts' building theirs churches. Since this time Oradea is known as a multi religions city. For the Habsburg Europe of that time, Oradea was a kind of a gate leading to the east, to the Black Sea, which led to established multi-religion mosaics at the city. After the First World War, Oradea became a part of the Romanian Kingdom, then for a very short time came back to Hungary before the Second World War ended. After the Second World War ended Oradea and Bihor region stay part of Romania. In socialistic time, until the Revolution of 1989, Oradea was an administrative centre of the Bihor region and was developing in a typical for socialistic cities way, with typical for socialism kind of religions life.

In 2003, Oradea had about 210 thousand citizens, which was one third of the județ (province) Bihor population and 72% population of the cities in the region. What is typical for the cities in such size, with dominant administrative, education and service functions, the rate of feminism is 110% while 52,4% is the participation of women in the whole number of citizens. The decrease of citizens in the social structure of the cities seems to be the most important change. In 2002, the number of birth was 2289, the number of death was 1875 and it appears

to have a decreased value equalled 414. Additionally, the balance of migration goes together with the decline of birth and high death rate.

Tab.1. Ethnical structure of Oradea 1992-2002

Ethnic groups	1992	2002	2002/1992 (%)
Total	222 741	206 527	92,7
Gypsies	2 137	2 466	115,4
Romanians	144 238	145 290	100,7
Slovaks	459	371	80,8
Hungarians	75 182	56 823	77,2
Bulgarian	38	25	65,8
Juifs	284	172	60,6
Germans	959	556	57,8
Others	556	824	148,2

Source: Own data based on Directia Judeteana de Statistica Bihor, 2002, Oradea

The phenomenon is connected with the great number of departures of Romanian Hungarians, Germans and Jewish, which of course change the religion structure of the city. However, the dominant influence on the migration has the Hungarian minority. In 2002, the number of refugees was 1909 people, while the number of emigrants was 1665 which gives a negative (minus) balance of migration equalled 244 people. In one year, together with the minus rate of birth, the population of Oradea declined at about 658 people which is 3,2% and during the examined period of time - which means the years 1992-2002 – declined at 17,3 thousand, which is 8%.

During the time of investigation, the amount of citizens was lessened from 223,8 thousand in 1992 to 206,5 thousand in 2002. The biggest changes in ethnical structure took place among the German, Jewish and Bulgarian minorities, what has clearly consequences at the religion structure. The Romanian Germans was the biggest minority considering the number of emigrants. From the whole amount of the German citizens, 40% left for Germany, mainly due to economical reasons (Benedek, Schreiber 2001). The same situations focus to the Romanian Jewish from Oradea who emigrated to Israel or the United States. Additionally it should be remembered that Oradea was the biggest centre of Romanian Jews and strong financial centre either. The past property we can still admire looking at the city architecture including the synagogue.

The migration process of the Romanian Hungarians runs in very similar way to that one mentioned above but on the larger scale and is particularly well observed among the youth and people with higher education. The last survey taken in Oradea and Cluj-Napoca showed that nearly 45% of Hungarian youth is going to leave Romania for Hungary for good or for the study time. However, the economical motivation-in this case-has a less meaning than in the Romanian Hungarians' case which differ them from the Romanian Germans. The

Romanian Hungarians put on the first place family connections which are very strong in this region making the adaptation process easier (Benedek, Nagy 2003).

Tab.2. Changes of ethnical structure at Oradea

Ethnical groups	1992 (%)	2002 (%)	2002/1992 (%)
Gypsies	0,95	1,19	125,26
Romanians	64,43	70,35	109,19
Slovaks	0,21	0,18	85,71
Hungarians	33,58	27,51	81,92
Germans	0,43	0,27	62,79
Jews	0,13	0,08	61,53
Bulgarian	0,02	0,01	50,00
Others	0,25	0,41	160,00

Source: Own calculations based on Directia Judeteana de Statistica Bihor, 2002, Oradea

The essential outflow of Hungarian and German population is balanced by the process of migration to Oradea, which includes mainly the Romanian people coming from rural regions and Gypsies. As we shall see in this moment, the percentage of Gypsies among the city population was enlarged at about 0.7% and 15.4% and enlarged the total amount of Oradea's people at about 1400. The significant influence on the city migration had the change of the city functions, which made Oradea – from dominant industrial and also military centre to the city of services with educational, tourist and medical character. We should emphasise the special educational function of the city, which has four universities. More than 30 thousand students attend to the largest of them, which is a state university. Many of the students come from lying far away from Oradea places. It is absolutely understood as the Oradea University plays over regional role encircling its influence on the North and Northwest country because the nearest universities are only in Cluj-Napoca and Timisoara.

The variations of the religion structure are a result of migration process where the dependence is proportional. However, when we compare the ethnic and religion modification we have to notice that the deepest changes took place in the religion sphere. Additionally we have to say that the pression of the system on the religion sphere was the strongest. When we look at the problem of religion attachment in a traditional way, after making some simplification, it can be said that, positively, the majority of Romanian ethnic people is Orthodox or Greek-Catholic (Damsa 1994), Hungarian and German ethnic people are Roman-catholic or Calvin (Zamfirescu 1992). According to the data presented in the above table, the deepest changes took place just in the three groups of religions.

Tab.3. Religion structure of Oradea 1992-2002

Religion groups	1992	2002	2002/1992 (%)
Total	222 741	206 527	92,7
Adventist	397	626	157,7

Evangelic CA	229	343	149,8
Penticostal	7 964	9 630	120,9
Atei (declared)	203	231	113,8
Baptist	6 799	7 390	108,7
Evangelic PS	268	288	107,5
Ortodox	123 161	121 725	98,8
Greek-Catholic	7 605	6 982	91,8
Roman-Catholic	29 723	23 258	78,2
Calvins	43 878	33 349	76,0
Unitarian	307	232	75,6
Mozaic	294	174	59,2
Others	750	376	50,1

Source: Own data based on Directia Judeteana de Statistica Bihor, 2002, Oradea

Among the six churches which has more than one thousand members in the year 1992 like Orthodox, Calvin, Roman-catholic, Pentecostal, Greek Catholic, Baptist, only the Pentecostal and Baptists consolidated their position. The Calvin and Roman-Catholic churches had the serious losses considering the number of churches' members, which was lessened from 10.5 thousand to 6.5 thousand in the examined time. In the comparison of the percentage participation of the ethnic group and religion group in 2002, we can possibly say, that the numbers of Roman-Catholic and Calvin church members is similar to the percentage of Hungarian minority. However, when we consider that there is 70% of Romanian in the city we have to notice that only 62% declared Orthodox and Greek-Catholic membership. In the last case- I mean considering the Greek-Catholic church – and similarly Orthodox Church, we should indicate that mission activities are very visible especially in Pentecostal, Evangelic CA and Adventist church.

Tab.4. Changes of religion structure at Oradea

Religion groups	1992 (%)	2002 (%)	2002/1992 (%)
Evangelic CA	0,10	0,17	170,00
Adventist	0,18	0,30	167,67
Pentecostal	3,56	4,66	130,90
Atheism (declared)	0,09	0,11	122,22
Baptist	3,04	3,58	117,76
Evangelic PS	0,12	0,14	116,67
Orthodox	55,02	58,94	107,12
Greek-catholic	3,40	3,38	99,41
Roman-catholic	13,28	11,26	84,79
Calvin	19,60	16,15	82,40
Unitarian	0,14	0,11	78,57
Mozaic	0,13	0,08	61,54
Others	1,34	1,12	83,58

Source: Own calculations based on Directia Judeteana de Statistica Bihor, 2002, Oradea

Even so, looking at the weakening Orthodox Church we can notice a kind of development of young in Romania, churches, like: Adventist, Evangelic CA, Pentecostal, Baptist, and Evangelic PS. Each of the mentioned churches strengthened its number of members in the described time at about 7% of Evangelic PS, to even 50% of Adventist. Truly speaking, when we overlook the churches of Pentecostal and Baptists we cope with the groups counting less than one thousand members and we have to add that the number of conversion can be alarming in the Orthodox Church.

When we consider the changes in the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic churches we will notice that the changes in Roman-Catholic and Calvin churches are easier to explain. The decrease of worshippers is strictly linked with the emigration processes of Hungarian and German origin people and unfavourable demographic and ethnic structure of those groups. It is observed that only young people usually emigrate and the old ones alternatively limit the number of worshippers, what is- besides the migration processes- connected with the natural process of human changes.

Regarding the correlation between the ethnic groups and the religion declared by among Romanian, Hungarian and German citizens we have to say that the researches made for the Gypsies seem to be very interesting. In general, the Gypsies declare to belong to the religion community, which dominates on the given region they live. For instance the Gypsies, who live among the Romanians very often declare to be Orthodox and they, who live among the Hungarians declare to be Roman-Catholic (Zamfir, Zamfir 1993). Such situation may be connected, with the strong attempt how to avoid possibilities of any conflicts which could eventually come from a classic relation; we – the strangers. The situation of the Gypsies, who live in a sub-standard district of the city, is different. They mainly described themselves as a people without any religion.

In the scientific researches of Oradea social structure it can be noticed that some crucial changes of ethnic and religion structures took place in the city. The range of the changes together with the before existing process seems to deepen. For one, the process of Hungarian, German and Jewish minorities' migration is clearly seen. The negative rate of birth and the negative balance of exterior migration only in a little way equalise the internal migration, which in this case includes mainly the Romanians and the Gypsies. When we take into the account the multi-ethnic city societies we can find out a confirmation of the changes which are the modification tendencies of religion structure.

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