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## Ethnicity and politics in the Romanian space. The case of northwestern Transylvania<sup>1</sup>

Mircea Brie

**Abstract.** *The ethnic structure of this region has been heavily influenced by the evolution of the various historico-geographical factors and policies. Most of this structure, however, is linked to the evolution of the denominational structure. Ethnicity in this case is closely related to religion. The political reality, the events with political overtones that occurred during these centuries had a direct influence regarding the conduct of processes and phenomena related to the ethno-confessional evolution of the area subject to our research. In this period the region is part of the Austrian state (before 1867), Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867 to 1918), Hungary (1940-1944) and Romania (1918-1940, 1944 - present). This space is located in the western area and it is mainly inhabited by Romanians. The continuous presence of Romanians here is documented ever since its formation. The ethnic group of Romanians has been facing a considerable demographic pressure that came from the Hungarians (the neighbouring ethnic group) or from groups or immigrants settled in this space (we refer in this case mainly to the Germans, Slovaks, Gypsies and Jews).*

*Major geopolitical changes of the twentieth century and political decisions, especially extremist dictatorial regimes (Horthyist-Hungarian and communist-Romanian) led to significant changes in the ethnic structure of the region northwest Transylvania. Policy decisions, especially those taken during the dictatorial political and extremist regimes during the twentieth century were able to seriously affect ethno-religious realities of the Romanian space, especially in Transylvania. Be it the Hungarian or Romanian authorities during the two world wars or the communist dictatorship, decisions were taken that changed the ethnic map of the Romanian space. Suffice it to recall the drama of the Jewish community of the Second World War or the „sale” of the Germans and the Jews by the Communists in the postwar period.*

**Keywords:** ethnicity, Transylvania, diversity, Romanians, Hungarians, political decisions

The ethnic structure of this region has been heavily influenced by the evolution of the various historico-geographical factors and policies. Most of this structure, however, is linked to the evolution of the denominational structure. Ethnicity in this case is closely related to religion.

Some of the ethnic groups present in the area of Bihor or Sătmar are older, others have settled here more recently. What is characteristic and noteworthy is that the ethnic composition is very mosaic. The geographic position at the boundary between the two ethnic groups of the Romanians and the Hungarians offers the region a very diverse ethnic structure, where various ethnic groups live together. Beside Romanians and Hungarians there are also Gypsies, Slovaks, Germans and Jews. Other ethnic groups are numerically insignificant.<sup>2</sup>

Methodologically, to give the clearest picture possible, we used a more complex analysis that indicates the demographic realities in their evolution since the second half of the nineteenth century. This approach is required to enter into discussion both the demographic background and the changes that occurred during the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> The paper *Ethnicity and politics in the Romanian space. The case of northwestern Transylvania* was published in Sorin Şipoş, Gabriel Moisa, Dan Octavian Cepraga, Mircea Brie, Teodor Mateoc (coord.), *From Periphery to Centre. The Image of Europe at the Eastern Border of Europe*, Editura Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p. 158-170.

<sup>2</sup> Mircea Brie, *Căsătoria în nord-vestul Transilvaniei (a doua jumătate a secolului XIX - începutul secolului XX). Condiționări exterioare și strategii maritale*, Editura Universității din Oradea, Oradea, 2009.

Under these conditions we used the data from the censuses conducted by the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian states in this period<sup>3</sup>. Such censuses were conducted in 1850, 1857, 1869, 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1910<sup>4</sup>. In addition to these, the Romanian state held censuses in 1930, 1941, 1948, 1956, 1966, 1977, 1992, 2002 and 2011.

The ethno-religious structure of this period is influenced by local realities and socio-economic situation of the entire Transylvania or by the changes occurred in the geopolitics of the region. Satmar From a demographic point of view, Bihor and Sătmar had a population structure that followed the overall evolution of the phenomenon in the whole of Transylvania<sup>5</sup>.

**1. Political context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as determiner in the evolution of the ethnic structure.** The political reality, the events with political overtones that occurred during these centuries had a direct influence regarding the conduct of processes and phenomena related to the ethno-confessional evolution of the area subject to our research. In this period the region is part of the Austrian state (before 1867), Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867 to 1918), Hungary (1940-1944) and Romania (1918-1940, 1944 - present).<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, in the first half of the twentieth century there were three changes in the border line between Romania and Hungary. These changes, in conjunction with the issuance of laws in this regard had the effect and purpose to change the ethnic structure of the region.

The first big event of the nineteenth century, which influenced the Habsburg policy on ethnic issues, was the revolution of 1848. This revolutionary year highlights ethnic and religious conflicts between Romanians and Hungarians living Bihor and Sătmar area. Both ethnic groups were attached to the values expressed in that year by their own people. Among the most important claims we highlight those that Romanian Orthodox Church in Banat and Crișana had on national rights and autonomy of the church.

The second half of the nineteenth century meant a very tense period during which this region was strongly affected by the political measures. The Imperial Constitution of 1849 granted freedom to all the inhabitants of the monarchy.

At the beginning of the 7th decade of the nineteenth century, Romanians and other ethnic groups are provided political and religious rights. In 1865, however, the Transylvanian Diet from Cluj meets and further to their works the incorporation of Transylvania to Hungary is accepted. On this occasion, the principality's autonomy was abolished, the problems and concerns of this territory will be discussed and decided by the Diet in Budapest.

The Austrian state encountering deep crisis due to internal and external pressure will yield to Hungary, and in 1867 will create the dual Austro-Hungarian Empire. As a result of this agreement, Hungary was able to keep Transylvania. In the period that followed until the First World War, the population of ethnicity other than Hungarian underwent a process of Magyarization. This policy was supported by a series of laws designed for this purpose or by the abrogation of some favorable to non-Magyar population, especially Romanian.

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<sup>3</sup>We used the data from the published works of Traian Rotaru on the censuses of 1880, 1900 și 1910, but not only these (we also had the works Romanians in Hungary published in 1904 by Ioan Russu Șireanu, which is an analysis of the census from 1900, etc.

<sup>4</sup>The information referring to these censuses were gathered from the work Traian Rotariu (coord.), Maria Semeniuc, Mezei Elemér, *Recensământul din 1910 Transilvania*, București, 1999, p. 693-712.

<sup>5</sup>*Izvoare de demografie istorică*, volumul II, București, 1987, p. 117

<sup>6</sup>Mircea Brie, *Familie și societate în nord-vestul Transilvaniei (a doua jumătate a secolului XIX – începutul secolului XX)*, Editura Universității din Oradea, Oradea, 2008.

1 December 1918 brought the unification of Transylvania, Banat, Crisana and Maramures with Romania. The Romanian state guarantees by the constitution of 1923 individual and collective freedoms of all its citizens, regardless of nationality or religion.

The Religion Law of 1928 guarantees freedom and protection for all the denominations. The new Romanian administration thus favoured religious freedom for all nationalities found within its borders.

The period 1940-1944 accounted for Romanians from Bihor and Satu Mare a return to the difficult situation in ethno-confessional terms before the First World War. This period also knows the outbreak of the Second World War. This event will bring a profound change in the ethnic and religious structure. Most Jews were deported and exterminated in the concentration camps. This fact has most important connotations because this ethnic group had been a major ethnic and religious community in the region.

The liquidation of political pluralism with the communist regime at the lead introduced significant disturbances in the ethnic and religious structure. The communist state tried to create the same system in this area, as well. They attempted the homogenization of the population. They made decisions to ban churches – like the Greek Catholic or protestant communities. At the same time, with the state's approval the most part of the Hebrew, German and Hungarian ethnics migrated, considerably reducing their number in the region.

The post communist period brought a restoration of democratic principles and values. The fall of communism meant the end of the deprivation of religious rights in Romania. This led to profound changes in the confessional structure.

The recognition of the right to freedom of religious practice for 23 denominations and religious associations prepared a new period of religious transformation within the Romanian State. The Greek Catholic Church was reopened and the emergence of a large number of other denominations are important events for this region.

These events, the opening of the borders, in conjunction with political acts made Romania enter into a much broader process of integration in a world open to intercultural values.

Bihor and Satu Mare Counties provide a picture of multiculturalism that combines into interculturalism through their geographical position and cultural influences, together with the ethnic and religious structure and by the traditional cross-border communication.

Without any reservations we find that political events, both national and international, are very important in determining the ethnic composition. Not only politics but this structure are influencing factors. We identified other factors among which we mention the social, economic, cultural, geographic etc. factors.<sup>7</sup>

**2. Evolution in the population ethnic structure.** This space is located in the western area and it is mainly inhabited by Romanians. The continuous presence of Romanians here is documented ever since its formation. The ethnic group of Romanians has been facing a considerable demographic pressure that came from the Hungarians (the neighbouring ethnic group) or from groups or immigrants settled in this space (we refer in this case mainly to the Germans, Slovaks, Gypsies and Jews).

***Ethnic structure until the 1918 Unification with Romania.*** According to a census run by the Hungarian state in 1880 in ***Bihor County***<sup>8</sup>, according to the spoken language, lived 446,777 inhabitants, of which 192,843 were Romanians (43.16%), 241,369 were

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<sup>7</sup>Mircea Brie, Sorin Şipoş, Ioan Horga (coord.), *Ethno-Confessional Realities in the Romanian Area: Historical Perspectives (XVIII-XX Centuries)*, Editura Universităţii din Oradea, Oradea, 2011.

<sup>8</sup>Teritoriul Comitatului Bihor cuprindea un spaţiu mai extins comparativ cu cel al actualului judeţ Bihor. În componenţa acestuia intrând şi localităţi care astăzi fac parte din statul maghiar.

Hungarians (54.02%), 482 Ruthenians (0,1%) 4,458 Germans (1%), 4,715 Slovaks (1.05%), 2,910 individuals were of other ethnicity (0.65%)<sup>9</sup>.

In the period 1839-1880 the population growth in Bihor County was uneven ethnically. The most significant growth is registered in the German community, in this case the increase was 146.1%. Hungarians in 1880 were 6.4% more than in 1839 and Romanians 26.9%.

The settlements of the current county, in 1880, according to the official census, recorded a number of 314,607 people. Of these 167,034 were Romanians, 125,996 were Hungarians, 3,665 were Germans, 4,805 were Slovaks, Ruthenians 396, 53 were Croats and Serbs, 567 foreign, 1,728 other nationalities, and other 10,363 people are listed in official census conducted by the Hungarian state as speaking an unknown language.<sup>10</sup>

The large share of Hungarians in Bihor County is easily explained by the fact that the county had a long extension to the west of the current limit of Bihor County. Also, we find that the ethnic Hungarian border is pushed from the plains to the hills where the Romanians were the majority. This process is due to the incorporation of Transylvania into Hungary, especially after 1867, when Magyarization becomes the official policy of the Hungarian state. Another aspect is related to the massive colonization of the Slovak population in the entire region of Crisana. Regarding 1900, the available data meets our requirements for determining the ethnic structure of the Bihor region. This time as well we used the same criterion for the delimitation of nationalities, ethnic groups, namely language. But this criterion is less relevant given that the Hungarian language was imposed as the official language, and in these conditions many of those who were part of the census declared themselves as speaking Hungarian.<sup>11</sup>

In 1900, the year in which another census is conducted in the rural Bihar of today, there records showing 418,816 inhabitants. Of these 217,025 spoke Romanian as their mother tongue, 188,601 Hungarian, 3341 German, 7809 Slovakian, 82 Ruthenian, 134 Croatian, 28 Serbian and 1,796 other languages<sup>12</sup>. In Bihor county from the category of two major ethnic groups lived 204,515 Hungarians, i.e. 43.6% and 232,572 Romanians, i.e. 49.6% of the total. Of all Romanians, in 1900 only about 1.8% percent lived in urban areas, 28.4% of Hungarians residing in urban areas. This situation is largely due to the privileges enjoyed by the Magyars from the Hungarian state. These privileges resulted in the award of the most important public or state administration positions.<sup>13</sup>

The population census conducted by Hungary in 1880, recorded in *Satu Mare* county the existence of a population of 194,326 inhabitants, of which 76,668 spoke Romanian as their mother tongue, 95,681 were Hungarians, 13,449 were German, 396 were Slovaks, 578 were Ruthenians, 169 were Croats and Serbs, and 1,592 were of other nationalities.

In 1900, the same settlements numbered 245,855 inhabitants, of which 93,591 were Romanians, 138,086 were Hungarians, 12,165 were German, 455 were Slovaks, 643 were Ruthenians, 219 were Croats and Serbs, 695 were of other nationalities.

To understand what happens in the ethnic structure of Bihor County, we believe it is very beneficial to look at the same phenomenon, but in relation to the whole of

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<sup>9</sup>Alexandru Ilieș, *Etnie, confesiune și comportament electoral în Crișana și Maramureș*, Cluj-Napoca, 1998, p. 154-156

<sup>10</sup>Traian Rotariu, *Recensământului din 1880; Transilvania*, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, p. 361

<sup>11</sup>Mircea Brie, *Compoziția etnică a Bihorului*, *Analele Universității din Oradea*, Fascicula Istorie, 2003, p. 145 – 147.

<sup>12</sup>Idem, *Recensământului din 1900, Transilvania*, București, 1999, p. 614-615

<sup>13</sup>Mircea Brie, *Etnie și confesiune în nord-vestul României (sec. XIX). Referințe metodologice*, *Analele Universității din Oradea*, Fascicula Istorie, 2002, p. 99 – 110

Transylvania. We will briefly report the evolution of the main ethnic groups in Transylvania in the period 1880 – 1910<sup>14</sup>.

Romanians, in 1880, accounted for 55.07% of the population of Transylvania, their share will fall to 54.98% in 1900 and 53.74% in 1910. All this, however, in terms of population growth rate of Romanians of 27.1%, with a real increase of 2,224,336 (1880) to 2,827,419 (1910).

Hungarians in the same period knew a reverse development from the Romanians. Their share increased from 25.05% (1880) to 29.54% (1900) and 31.6% (1910). In absolute figures, the increase was from 1,012,154 (1880) to 1,662,180 (1910).

German-born population increased numbers from 485,917 in 1880 to 564,559 in 1910. Percentage-wise, in the same period the German population knew a decline from 12.03% to 10.73%.

Other ethnic groups, less significant in number, evolved similarly to other non-Hungarian ethnic groups.

The ethnic composition of Transylvania, the evolution of this structure, is able to highlight what happens in Bihor County.

#### ***Evolution of ethnic structure after the unification with Romania in 1918.***

Romania enters World War I in 1916 on the Entente side, the latter pledging Romanian State full support for obtaining all Romanian territories inhabited by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Territorial losses were only temporary, they will be restored in 1919 at the Versailles Peace Conference where decisions from Chisinau and Alba Iulia are recognized, and in addition Bukovina is recognized as an entry to the Romanian state. The only areas that are not recognized are several villages on the Hungarian-Romanian border (which will be returned in 1920) and also in the Banat area (which will feed into the Serbia). At the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary, Romania regained villages given to Hungary in 1919.

Bihor was directly influenced by these changes. It will be divided in accordance with the Treaties of Paris between the Romanian and Hungarian states. As a demarcation line is taken the ethnic boundary.

Changes that occur after World War influenced the demographic structure of the Romanian state. The reunification of Romania was accompanied by significant changes in terms of ethno – confessional structure.

An important effect was an increase in the population of Romania; it almost doubled. Another demographic effect was an increase in the population of other ethnic groups (non-Romanian) and other religions (other than orthodox). Within the borders of the Romanian state, according to the 1930 census, lived about 5 million people belonging to various nationalities (28.1 % of the population). This percentage varies from one region to another. The share of the Romanian community in Transylvania was 57.6%, in 60.7 % Crișana - Maramures, Banat 54.4 %, 58.2 % Bessarabia, Bukovina 44.5 % and in Dobrogea 44.2 %<sup>15</sup>.

Other important events, which we determined to have influenced the territorial and the demographic structure were those related to the transformations after the Second World War. In the summer of 1940, Romania will lose much of its territory (100,000 km<sup>2</sup>), which only in part will be able to recover after the war.

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<sup>14</sup>Ioan Bolovan, *Transilvania la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea și începutul secolului XX. Relități etno-confesionale și politici demografice*, Cluj-Napoca, 2000, p. 14

<sup>15</sup>Cornelia Mureșan, *Evoluția demografică a României. Tendințe vechi, schimbări recente, perspective. (1870-2030)*, Cluj-Napoca, 1999, p.50

Changes occurring in the population of North-Western Romania after 1918 can only be seen if searching the census conducted by the Romanian government in 1930<sup>16</sup>. This highlights its first recording instances of Hebrew and Gypsy population.

We can see many changes taking place compared to the previous period. These changes have two important causes, they can be real changes or only changes in the census data. The latter are determined by a different methodology for population registration.

Among the factors contributing to these changes include:

- beforehow ethnicity was reviewed was based on the spoken language, but in 1930 the census introduced the nation. Under these conditions the population belonging to certain ethnic groups, other than Hungarians, rose in parallel with the decrease of Hungarians (the decrease was due the changes in Hungarian speakers with a nationality other than Hungarian).

- the Romanian government replaces the Hungarian one in 1918, this will result in a change of attitude towards ethnic groups.

- at the regional level there is a migration of the Hungarians to Hungary; this process is accompanied by Jewish immigration to the region.

The change in the ethnic structure is clearly visible at both areas, but especially in the urban area. The ethnic structure of Oradea, for example, changed a lot. Important is the emergence of the Jewish ethnic group, and also the increasing ethnic group of Romanians. Both are combined with the decrease in the share of Hungarians.

Across the region of Crișana-Maramures<sup>17</sup>, Romanians represented 61.4%. The most important minority was represented by Hungarians, with 24.9 percent; they were followed by Hebrew (6.3%) and German (3.1%) populations, etc.

What is interesting in terms of ethnicity is the structure of the population on environments, urban or rural. Hungarians are the most numerous inhabitants of the urban area of Crișana-Maramures region, with 45.6%, followed by Romanians with 30.8% and Jews with 18.9% - interesting is that the Jews are the only ethnic group living mainly in urban areas (53.2% of all Jews). In general, in towns, we find a relative balance between people of Hungarian, Romanian and Hebrew descent.

In the rural areas the majority is formed by the Romanian population, with 66.7%; this ensures the predominance of ethnic Romanians in the region<sup>18</sup> (at that time 84.1% of the population of this region lived in rural areas).

From a demographic perspective, the aftermath meant a substantial increase in population. By the next census significant changes take place in the ethnic structure of the region. The increasing population in numbers during the interwar period was followed by a demographic disaster with the outbreak of the Second World War. This World War brought significant demographic imbalances ranging from population decline (phenomenon due to high mortality, and low birth rates, due to marriage or emigration).

Most affected ethnically were the Jews. Their number in the counties of Bihor and Satu Mare decreased considerably due to concentration and extermination camps and their emigration to regions where Hitler-Horthyst terror was not felt so strongly. At a rate of 6.3%, as represented the Jewish ethnic group (in the region Crișana - Maramures) in 1930, in 1948 it was only 0.7 %<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup>*Recensământul general al populației din 29 decembrie 1930*, Institutul Central de Statistică, București, 1938.

<sup>17</sup>Alexandru Ilieș, *op.cit.*, p.161

<sup>18</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 163

<sup>19</sup>*Ibidem*

In 1966<sup>20</sup>, Bihor county population amounted to 586,460 inhabitants. Of these 377,837 were Romanian nationals, 192,948 were Hungarians, Germans were in 1106, 3678 were Gypsies, Ukrainians and Ruthenians were 63, 114 were Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, 147 were Russians, 1798 were Hebrew, 7813 were Slovaks, 85 were Bulgarians, 581 were Greek, the rest of the population either have undeclared nationality or other nationalities were included but in small numbers. Among other ethnic groups represented: Tatars, Turks, Czechs, Poles, Armenians etc.

1992 was the year when another census was conducted by the Romanian state. During the communist period there were significant demographic changes. We record ethnically massive emigration (which was helped more or less by the political authorities of the Romanian state), especially the representatives of certain ethnic groups. Here is to remind especially the Germans, Jews and Hungarians.

Opening the borders after 1989 led to intensification of emigration. And this time it is more intense among ethnic minorities.

This process is general, applicable to the whole of a Romania. In the region of Crișana-Maramureș the Romanian population share rose to 70.6%. The Romanian population increased by 52.2% since 1930<sup>21</sup>. The Hungarian population in the same region in 1992, representing 22.8%, in this case the increase was only 21.1% compared to 1930. The highest increase will be with the Gypsies, 176.8% (with 2.6% of the total population); they were followed by Ukrainians, an increase of 58.0% (in 1992 represented 1.9% of the total population Crișana-Maramures –they were mainly living in Maramures).

Other major ethnic groups, namely the Germans, Slovaks and Jews experienced a sharp decline in numerical terms. Germans fell by 51.1 % compared to 1930, Slovaks by 64.1 %, Jews fell by 99.0 %.

The ethnic changes that occur in the second half of the twentieth century are obvious. These demographic changes and mutations are from various causes, among them an important place is taken by political, economic, cultural, social or demographic decision taken by the communist state of Romania during this period.

These changes are due, not least, to the rapprochement of the Hungarian state. In the border area the effects of these changes are more obvious. The border region appears as an area of mixed ethnic groups; also in this region we notice enclaves of ethnic communities that have a different character from that of the surrounding population. This situation has made it almost impossible to separate states, boundaries or borders, the borderline being possible only if taking account the ethnicity criterion.

The new European trends, the subverting results of certain national-chauvinist policies, the need for cross-border cooperation, or intercultural communication required a different vision on ethnic angle at the late twentieth century and early nineteenth century. Regardless of the current trends we intend to establish relationships between various demographic structures in terms of ethnic or religious approaches.

We believe that what was once an obstacle, namely the ethnic diversity of a country, now it can turn into an advantage, namely that of the diversity, of cultures and of building a common culture.

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<sup>20</sup>\*\*\*, *Recensământul populației și locuințelor din 15 martie 1966*, Institutul Național de Statistică, București, 1968, p. 153

<sup>21</sup>Alexandru Ilieș, *op.cit.*, p. 165



## Evolution in numbers of main ethnic groups in Bihor and Satu Mare counties

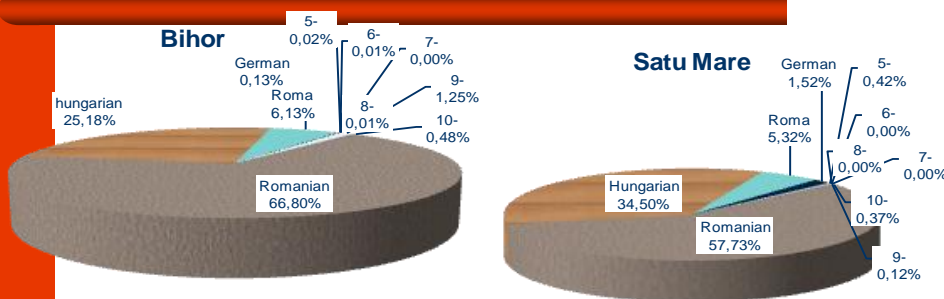
| County           | Year        | Total Population | Romanians      | Hungarians     | Roma          |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>BIHOR</b>     |             |                  |                |                |               |
|                  | 1930        | 527216           | 308478         | 171907         | 6211          |
|                  | 1956        | 574488           | 362345         | 194883         | 3333          |
|                  | 1966        | 586460           | 377837         | 192948         | 3678          |
|                  | 1977        | 633094           | 409770         | 199615         | 12014         |
|                  | 1992        | 638863           | 425097         | 181703         | 21796         |
|                  | 2002        | 600246           | 404468         | 155829         | 30089         |
|                  | <b>2011</b> | <b>549.752</b>   | <b>367.221</b> | <b>138.441</b> | <b>33.697</b> |
| <b>SATU MARE</b> |             |                  |                |                |               |
|                  | 1930        | 301105           | 147135         | 95104          | 4787          |
|                  | 1956        | 337351           | 180930         | 145880         | 2283          |
|                  | 1966        | 359393           | 203780         | 147594         | 1750          |
|                  | 1977        | 393840           | 227630         | 152738         | 5256          |
|                  | 1992        | 400789           | 234541         | 140392         | 9823          |
|                  | 2002        | 367281           | 216085         | 129258         | 13478         |
|                  | <b>2011</b> | <b>329.079</b>   | <b>189.991</b> | <b>113.541</b> | <b>17.513</b> |

Source: Institutul Național de Statistică  
(see: <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/RPL2002INS/vol4/tabele/t1.pdf>)

The last census conducted by the Romanian state to date was conducted in 2011. We intend to highlight what happened in the ethnic structure, so to be able to see which were the trends during the new democracy that has taken place in Romania. We believe that this census is able to respond to these issues better than the one done in 1992, just a few years from the communist regime change.

According to this census, the ethnic composition of Bihor and Satu Mare counties is as follows:

## Ethnic realities in Bihor and Satu Mare (2011)



| Counties         | Total stable population | Romanian     | Hungarian    | Roma        | German      | Ukrainian   | Turkish     | Tatar       | Russians-<br>lipovcians | Other<br>ethnicities | Undeclared<br>ethnicity |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
|                  |                         | 1            | 2            | 3           | 4           | 5           | 6           | 7           | 8                       | 9                    | 10                      |
| <b>Bihor</b>     | 549752                  | 367221       | 138441       | 33697       | 710         | 105         | 47          |             | 29                      | 6862                 | 2638                    |
|                  | %                       | <b>66,80</b> | <b>25,18</b> | <b>6,13</b> | <b>0,13</b> | <b>0,02</b> | <b>0,01</b> | <b>0,00</b> | <b>0,01</b>             | <b>1,25</b>          | <b>0,48</b>             |
| <b>Satu Mare</b> | 329079                  | 189991       | 113541       | 17513       | 4986        | 1397        | 7           |             | 7                       | 405                  | 1232                    |
|                  | %                       | <b>34,56</b> | <b>20,65</b> | <b>3,19</b> | <b>0,91</b> | <b>0,25</b> | <b>0,00</b> | <b>0,00</b> | <b>0,00</b>             | <b>0,07</b>          | <b>0,22</b>             |

Sursă: <http://www.recensamantromania.ro>

What can be seen is a significant increase in the percentage that the Roma population has in the region. This increase is mainly due to two cases, namely: on the one hand, this phenomenon is due to a high birth rate of the Roma ethnic population, and on the other hand, to a new approach and attitudes towards the registration of the population. Even now, according to opinion polls ethnic Roma have not fully declared their ethnicity.

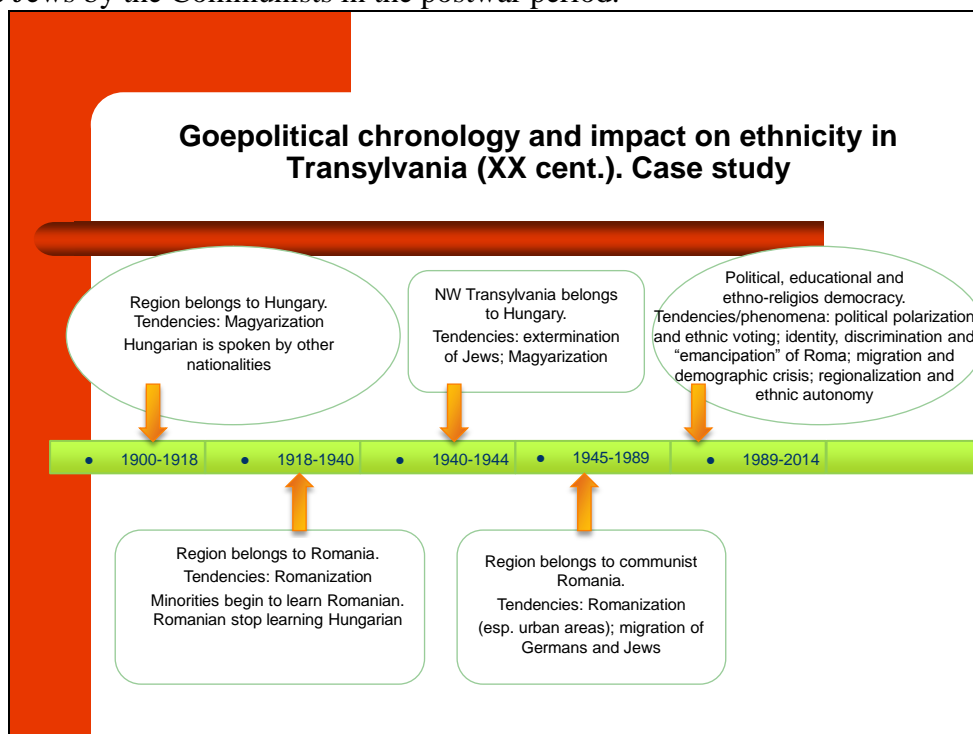
Another aspect is related to the disappearance of almost all communities of ethnic Germans and Jews.

The visible trend is ethnic uniformity, by shaping of two groups towards others migrate, namely: Romanians and Hungarians. A single case deviates from this trend and this is the Roma. The latter are, however, largely magyarised in the Bihor and Satu Mare counties.

### 3. Tendencies and major changes

Major geopolitical changes of the twentieth century and political decisions, especially extremist dictatorial regimes (Horthyist-Hungarian and communist-Romanian) led to significant changes in the ethnic structure of the region northwest Transylvania.

Policy decisions, especially those taken during the dictatorial political and extremist regimes during the twentieth century were able to seriously affect ethno-religious realities of the Romanian space, especially in Transylvania<sup>22</sup>. Be it the Hungarian or Romanian authorities during the two world wars or the communist dictatorship, decisions were taken that changed the ethnic map of the Romanian space.<sup>23</sup> Suffice it to recall the drama of the Jewish community of the Second World War or the „sale” of the Germans and the Jews by the Communists in the postwar period.



<sup>22</sup>Mircea Brie, Cosmin Adrian Pop, Istvan Polgar, *Interculturality and Ethnodiversity in Post-Comunist Romania*, în *Analele Universității din Oradea, Seria Relații Internaționale și Studii Europene*, 2012, p. 111-121.

<sup>23</sup> Mircea Brie, Ioan Horga, Sorin Șipoș (coord.), *Ethnicity, Confession and Intercultural Dialogue at the European Union's East Border*, Editura Universității din Debrecen/Editura Universității din Oradea, Debrecen/Oradea, 2011.

On the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, on ethno-linguistic composition of the population in this region we recorded the following:

- The disappearance of almost absolute majority of Jews and Germans
- The Romanization, especially of the urban settlements (the phenomenon began in the interwar period with the establishment of the Romanian government in cities that needed a true and Romanian-speaking elite)
- Continuous magyarization of Swabians, Slovaks and Roma (the phenomenon is favored by religious affinities, and language - mostly these communities were Magyarized before 1918)
- From a linguistic point of view, after nearly a century, the major change is given by the following fact: in 1918 Hungarian was known by most Romanians, a small share of Hungarians knowing Romanian; in 2014 Romanian is known by most Hungarians and only a small proportion of Romanians speak Hungarian.
- Education and religion appear to be exponents of Hungarian ethnic identity. This process is achieved through the traditional Calvinist Protestant Church (Reformed) and recently more and more by the Roman Catholic Church (the latter in the area of Oradea was seen by Protestant Hungarian nobility in the eighteenth century as an Habsburg imperialist tool, later, however, in order to attract the Hungarian community, it entered into competition with the Hungarian Protestant churches taking the Hungarian ethno-cultural message and identity).
- Discrimination and stigmatization of the Roma. These took effect as 'reducing' the community in official documents due to self-identification with other ethnic groups. The effect of this phenomenon is not just recording a smaller number of Roma in official documents, but also artificially raising the numbers of Hungarians in documents (in the area of Bihor - Satu Mare Roma identify themselves with other ethnic groups and choose to first declare their ethnicity as being Hungarian). This was at a larger scale during the communist period but it began to decrease during the last two decades.
- Increasing the Roma community both in number and as a percentage of the population. Underlying this trend: high birth rates among this community (however, the phenomenon is associated with other demographic realities: high mortality and low life expectancy in the community) and a higher percentage of those who identify themselves with their ethnic group. This latter aspect is related to strengthening communities, their identity consciousness, the formation of an own elite more present in public sphere, and not least reducing discrimination and stigma effects which are still present.