

The Confessional Landscape of Roma Communities in Post-Socialist Romania

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Introduction

THE NEWLY found freedom of expression regarding the ethnic and confessional affiliation in post-communist Romania (after 1990) triggered a set of spatial and structural reconfigurations of the Roma communities. These changes are relevant not only in terms of population growth, but also at local and regional level, where social, cultural and demographic dynamics were observed (Muntele 1998; Preda 2002; Zamfir and Preda 2002; Ghețau 2007; Crețan et al. 2008; Vasile and Dobre 2015; Ghețau et al. 2016). Research shows that Roma communities in Romania form a specific ethno-confessional landscape shaped by the national, regional or local particularities of each religion (Rotar and Hodor 1993; Crețan 1999; Bodocan 2001; Nicoară 2006; Pop and Bolovan 2013), by the relationship with the majority ethnic group, and by environmental and social conditions (Sandu 2003; Frunză 2004; Healey 2006; Ilieș et al. 2020).

The main objective of this study is to analyze the evolution and features of the Roma communities in Romania, in order to outline the spatial distribution of confessional groups. Therefore, the research looks at the demographics of the Roma minority in Romania, considering the official censuses from 1992, 2002 and 2011 at county level.

The last census (in 2011) revealed that a total number of 621,573 inhabitants had declared themselves as part of the Roma community, with a large variety of religious beliefs, from the traditional religions and denominations (Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Protestant) to the neo-Protestant ones (Pentecostal, Baptist, Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Church of the Gospel/Plymouth Brethren, and the Romanian Evangelical Church). Compared to the previous censuses, confessional structural changes had occurred, with an increasing trend for the latter. At county level, the Roma minority accounts for less than 10% of the general population, but at local scale, communities are relatively compact, which favored the diffusion of newer religious practices, more successful than the traditional churches in adapting their rites to the cultural and social

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specificities of the Roma. This contributed to the complex confessional landscape of the Roma communities, with a specific focus on the neo-Protestant religions. Unlike the other ethnic minorities in Romania, where a less complicated confessional structure is dominant, with one or two main religions, and with a homogenous spatial distribution, the confessional mosaic of Roma supports the social role of the church.

Methodology

CONFESSIONAL STRUCTURES are usually approached within the concept of confessional space or landscape, with data grouped by religion. Therefore, the religious community classes are derived from the guide developed by the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs (2018) and from the scientific literature on the types of existing ethno-confessional combinations (Bolovan and Bolovan 2010; Preutu and Enache 2018). First, the confessional structure of the Roma communities was analyzed using two major groups: traditional and neo-Protestant. Then, each group was broken down into specific religions, resulting six classes, and ultimately compared against the general population data for the territory of reference.

The census data with ethnicity and confession entries was processed using spatial analysis algorithms, mostly treated in GIS environment (Gartner and Huang 2016; Robinson et al. 2017). For optimal visualization, statistical mapping techniques were applied (Ilieș et al. 2010; O'Brien and Cheshire 2015; Ilieș et al. 2016; Griffin et al. 2017). The input data resolution was at the specific Romanian nomenclature of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), at level NUTS 3 (counties), for each of the post-socialist censuses (1992, 2002, and 2011).

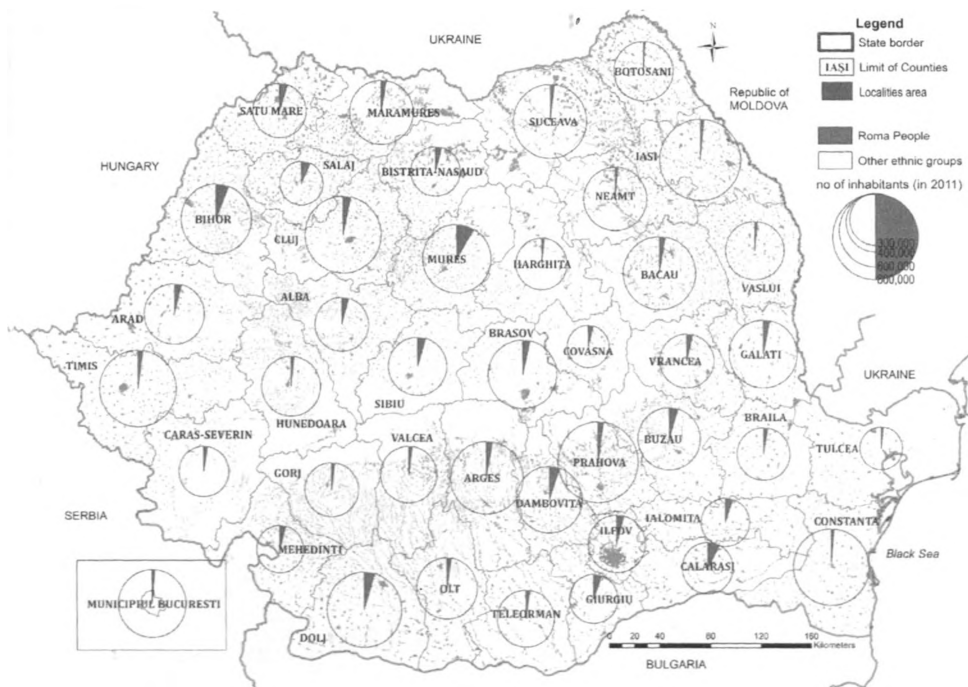
Current Demographic Features of the Roma Communities in Romania

ROMA COMMUNITIES are one of the important ethnic minorities in Romania, accounting for 621,573 inhabitants and 3.1% of the total population of Romania (in 2011), characterized by a high growth rate (+55% within the 1992–2011 period), contrary to the negative trend (–11,8%) of the population at national level. These communities live mostly in rural areas (63%). Our and other research shows several social features related with the demographic patterns: poor economic background, low standard of living (Ilie 2002), poor access to education and health services (Surdu 2002), young age for first birth and marriages (Sima 2002), as well as discrimination and acceptance issues (Voicu and Șerban 2002; Sandu 2005; Crețan and O'Brien 2019). Therefore, the adherence of the Roma population to the general religious practices of the rural communities in which they lived was the norm. After 1990 this challenging social status created a favorable environment for the new religions, more sensitive to the

customs and cultural traditions of the Roma communities, especially the neo-Protestant churches.

Explaining to a large extent the religious affiliation and the confessional diversity of the Roma communities, specific particularities are observable across the historical provinces, counties, ethnographic areas, and localities on the Romanian territory. The spatial distribution in 2011 outlines a territorial mosaic with the most important communities in the following counties (figs. 1 and 3): Mureș 46,947 (8.5%); Bihor 34,640 (6%); Dolj 29,893 (4.5%); Dâmbovița 27,355 (5.3%); Călărași 22,939 (7.5%); Cluj 22,531 (3.3%); Buzău 20,376 (4.5%); as well as in the city of Bucharest 23,973 (1.3%), etc. On the other hand, Tulcea 3,423 (1.6%) and Botoșani 4,155 (1%) are the counties with the smallest Roma communities.

FIG 1. SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ROMA COMMUNITIES IN ROMANIA, AT COUNTY LEVEL, IN 2011



SOURCE: Secretariatul de Stat pentru Culte. 2018. *Statul și cultele religioase*, 2nd edition, rev. and enl. Bucharest: n.p. [Litera]. Accessed 3 February 2020. <http://culte.gov.ro>.

At the scale of the administrative territorial units (municipalities, cities and communes), Roma communities do not form majorities, reaching at most 10% of the general population, with a diffuse presence in marginal districts and neighborhoods (Sandu 2005, 5, 43), with modest, small dwellings, chaotically displayed and without an initial urban planning, also present within informal settlements.

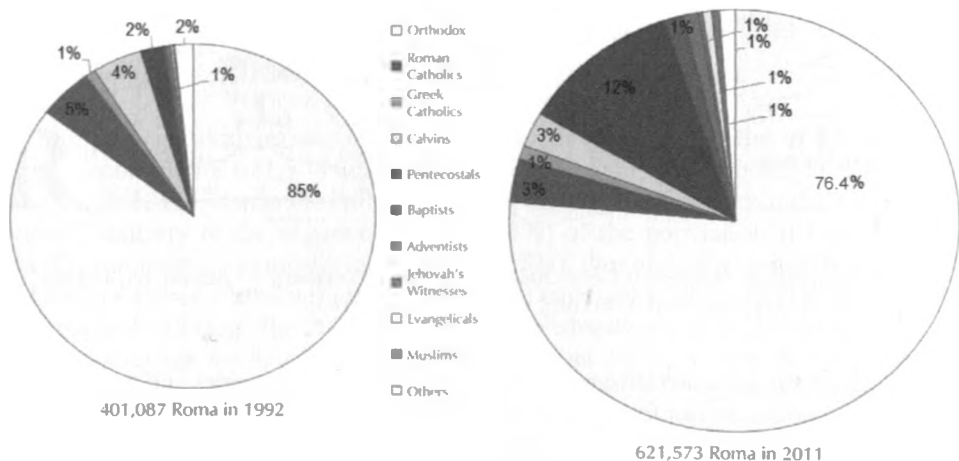
Dynamics of the Confessional Structure of Roma Communities

THE FREEDOM of religious expression of the population in post-socialist Romania has generated a competition between the traditional churches and the new neo-Protestant ones, both with self-preservation strategies, attracting or maintaining as many parishioners as possible from the country's population. The Roma were the most targeted ethnic group, now almost entirely religiously converted, especially through family affiliation and a sense of "clan." Nevertheless, there is still a small and constant number of atheists, people without religion and people with no declared religion (less than 1%).

The structural changes in the confessional landscape are obvious at national level (tab. 1). In 1992, census data shows that the 401,087 Roma were mostly affiliated to the traditional churches (Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Protestant)—96%, and only 2.8% declared their belonging to the neo-Protestant churches (fig. 2a). Looking at the traditional churches, 85% were Orthodox, 5% Roman Catholic and 4% Calvinist. Two decades later, in 2011, the proselytizing success of the latter narrowed the gap against the traditional churches, involving up to 15% of the Roma population. The spectacular increase in numbers is also due to the social and dogmatic support offered by the neo-Protestant communities to young families with traditional Roma values and with a specific cultural behavior, encouraging large families and fostering harsh family planning/antiabortion practices.

In 2011, the confessional structure of the Roma ethnic group was more diversified (fig. 2b): Orthodox (76.4%), neo-Protestant (14.9%), Catholic (4.4%), Protestant (2.7%), and Muslim (0.14%). Also, the group without religious options reached 0.8%.

FIG. 2. THE CONFESSATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ROMA POPULATION IN ROMANIA, IN 1992 (A) AND 2011 (B)



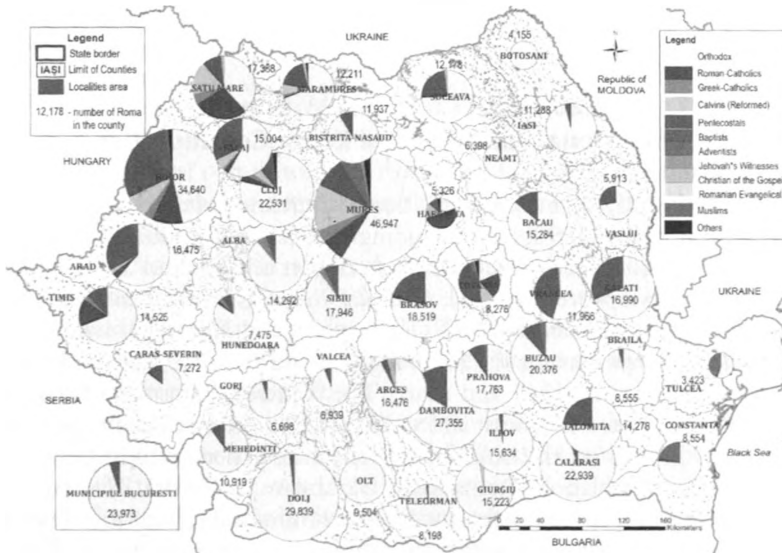
SOURCE: *Statul și cultele religioase*, <http://culte.gov.ro>.

TABLE 1. ROMA ETHNO-CONFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES IN ROMANIA

Religious affiliation	Year						% of Roma in ethnic structure of the confession			Growth rate (%)
	1992		2002		2011		1992	2002	2011	1992-2011
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	%	%	%	
Orthodox	342,130	85.3	438,162	81.88	474,603	76.36	1.73	2.33	2.91	38.7
Catholics	22,844	5.7	26,458	4.94	27,332	4.4	1.65	2.17	2.68	19.6
Roman Catholics	19,275	4.81	20,310	3.80	20,821	3.35	1.66	1.98	2.39	8.0
Greek Catholics	3,569	0.89	6,148	1.15	6,511	1.05	1.60	3.21	4.32	82.4
Reformed	17,598	4.39	16,385	3.06	16,487	2.65	2.19	2.34	2.74	-6.3
Muslims	583	0.15	805	0.15	3,356	0.54	1.04	1.20	5.22	475.6
Neo-Protestants	11,465	2.86	46,449	8.68	92,532	14.89	2.50	7.65	13.94	707.1
Pentecostals	7,919	1.97	34,449	6.44	71,262	11.46	3.59	10.62	19.67	799.9
Baptists	932	0.23	4,749	0.89	8,815	1.42	0.85	3.75	7.81	845.8
Seventh-day Adventists	1,694	0.42	4,622	0.86	6,793	1.09	2.18	4.93	8.39	301.0
Jehovah's Witnesses	—	—	—	—	1,818	0.29	—	—	3.65	—
Christians of the Gospel	920	0.23	2,029	0.38	2,973	0.48	1.84	4.56	7.00	223.2
Romanian Evangelicals	—	—	600	0.11	871	0.14	—	3.30	5.61	45.2
Without religion	3,438	0.86	1,902	0.36	2,223	0.36	0.87	2.99	1.47	-35.5
Others	2,294	0.57	3,587	0.67	7,263	1.17	9.92	8.90	5.61	216.6
TOTAL ROMA	401,087	100.0	535,140	100.0	621,573	100.0				55.0
% of TOTAL population		1.76		2.47		3.09				

SOURCE: *Statul și cultele religioase*, <http://culte.gov.ro>.

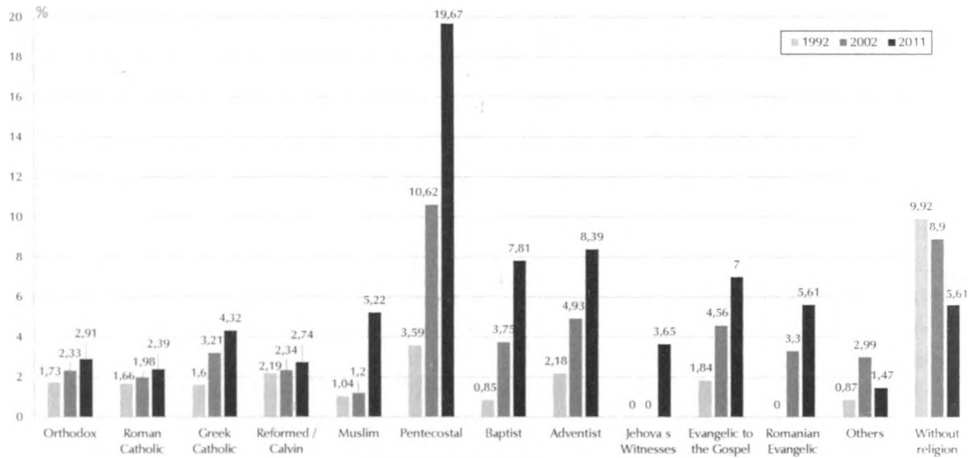
FIG. 3. NUMBER AND CONFESSIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ROMA POPULATION IN ROMANIA BY COUNTIES, IN 2011



SOURCE: *Statul și cultele religioase*, <http://culte.gov.ro>.

The confessional mosaic is relevant at county level (fig. 3). The 2011 data shows that there are relatively homogenous areas in the southern and eastern counties, with a dominant Orthodox and neo-Protestant combination. Interesting is the Muslim Roma community in Dobruja. In the central, western, and northern parts of Romania, the confessional landscape is very complicated, with large shares of neo-Protestant population.

FIG. 4. THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROMA ETHNIC GROUP IN ROMANIA, SHARES IN THE ETHNIC STRUCTURE OF THE DENOMINATIONS



SOURCE: *Statul și cultele religioase*, <http://culte.gov.ro>.

Traditional Churches Within the Confessional Landscape of Roma Communities

THE PRESENT study defines the traditional churches as religious groups officially recognized before 1990, also including the Greek Catholic church, which has historical significance for the northwestern part of Romania. In this respect, four ethno-confessional groups were defined: *Orthodox Roma*, *Catholic Roma* (Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic), *Protestant Roma* (Reformed), and *Muslim Roma*.

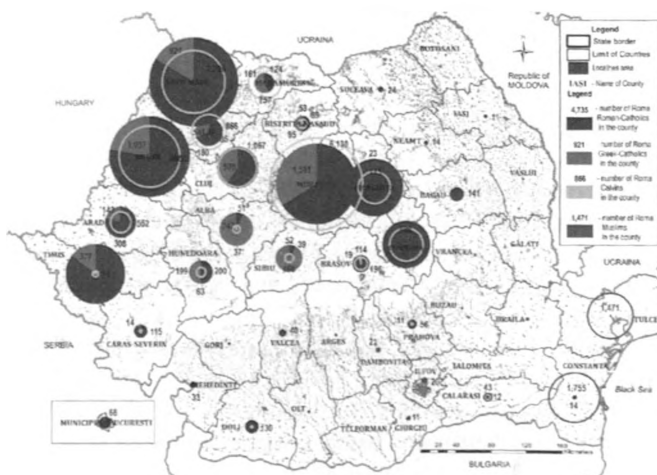
The Orthodox Church remains the first religious option of the Roma ethnics according to tradition, history, number, and share. The confessional group of the Orthodox Roma is widely distributed in almost all localities within the Romanian space. They live in homogeneous groups on the outskirts of localities, generally having the same religion as the majority population (Romanians, Ukrainians, or Serbs). The spatial analysis shows that the most important Orthodox Roma communities, in terms of number and share in the confessional structure within the ethnic group, were in (fig. 5): Dolj 28,736 (96.3%), Mureș 26,879 (57.3%), Dâmbovița 27,355 (82.1%), Bucharest 22,304

The Catholic community consists of two confessional groups: *Roman Catholic Roma* and *Greek Catholic Roma*, parishioners of the two traditional churches, both groups with a specific spatial regional distribution (fig. 6). With a growth rate of 19.6%, Catholic Roma parishioners (27,322) accounted for 4.4% of the confessional structure of the ethnic group (in 2011).

The Roman Catholic Church, in just two decades, dropped from the second position as a religious option for the Roma in 1992 (19,275) to the third position in 2011 (20,821 parishioners). Amid the negative demographic trend of the general Roman Catholic community (-25%), the modest growth rate of the Roman Catholic Roma population (8.0%) is more accentuated in urban area (15.1%) and lower in the countryside (2.5%). Data shows a more abrupt decrease within the Roma community, from 4.8% to 2.7%, than within the general Roman Catholic community, from 4.8% to 3.4% (fig. 4). Regarding the rural-urban distribution, there is an ascendant trend in urban areas, from 43.8% to 46.6% of Roman Catholic Roma, in spite of the high rural percentage (53.4% in 2011).

The distribution of the Roman Catholic Roma is a regional one, due to their living space overlapping with one of the other minorities, in localities in Banat, Crișana, Transylvania, and Moldavia, where they live alongside Roman Catholic Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks, Croats, Romanians etc. Six counties concentrate 85% of the Roman-Catholic Roma (fig. 6): Satu Mare 4,735 (22.7% of the Roman Catholic Roma in the country and 27.2% of the Roma in the county, in villages shared with Hungarians and Germans); Bihor 3,642 (17.5% and 10.5% in villages with Hungarians and Slovaks); Mureș 3,104 (14.9% and 6.6% in villages with Hungarians); Harghita 2,365 (11.4% and 44.4% in villages with Hungarians), Timiș 2,208 (10.6% and 15.2% in villages with Hungarians, Germans, Croats, etc.), and Covasna 1,634 (7.9% and 19.8% in villages with Hungarians).

FIG. 6. TOTAL NUMBER AND CONFESSIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT AND MUSLIM ROMA POPULATION IN ROMANIA, BY COUNTIES, IN 2011



SOURCE: *Statul și cultele religioase*, <http://culte.gov.ro>.

The Greek Catholic Church, banned during the communist period and restored after 1990, had registered the largest number of parishioners in 1992 through the “return” of the traditional ones, but also through new followers. From this ‘peak’ until 2011, the Greek Catholic community in Romania recorded a continuous decline in number (-32.5%). In 1992, with 3,569 parishioners, it was the fourth religious option for the Roma community (0.9%). Against the general regressive background in the period 1992–2011, the Greek Catholic Roma recorded a growth rate of 82.4%, higher than that of the ethnic group, more significant during the first decade (72.26%) and lower during the second one (5.9%), and the highest among traditional churches, being surpassed only by the neo-Protestants. In this situation, the Greek Catholic Roma community reached 6,511 parishioners, but regressed to the seventh position in the confessional structure of the Roma ethnic group, where, however, as a share, it increased slightly from 0.9% to 1.1% (figs. 1, 2 and 6). Likewise, within the ethnic structure of the Greek Catholic Church, given their higher growth rate compared with other ethnic groups, it increased in share from 1.6% to 4.3% (fig. 4).

In general, the Greek Catholic Roma population is a predominantly rural community, with declining trends, from 60% to 58.6%, an evolution specific to the Catholic community. The “urbanization” trend is supported by the growth rate, higher in urban areas (+88.9%), also reflected in the positive evolution of the share of Roma population in the urban Greek Catholic community, from 2.6% to 6.5%. In rural areas, with a lower growth rate (+78.1%), the migration from the countryside is also reflected in the share of the Greek Catholic rural environment, oscillating from 0.9% in 1992 to 1.1% in 2010 and 0.98% in 2011.

Greek Catholic Roma have a regionally shaped residential area, dominant in Transylvania, in homogeneous groups and in localities where there are important communities of Romanian ethnics (majority), or Hungarians, Ukrainians, and Germans of the same religion. They are present in 19 counties, of which 3 concentrate 55%: Mureș 1,581 (24.3% of the country and 3.4% of the Roma in the county), Bihor 1,037 (16% and 3.0%), and Satu Mare 921 (14.2% and 5.3%) (figs. 3, 6).

The Protestant community, identifying with the *Reformed/Calvinist Church*, officially recognized in Transylvania in the second half of the 16th century, is the third religious option of the Roma population in Romania in 1992. It was gradually overtaken by the Pentecostals, losing one position in 2011. The negative evolution of the entire Reformed community (-25.1%) is found, to a lesser extent (-6.3%), also at the level of the Reformed Roma population. They are the only ethno-confessional community belonging to the Roma population with a negative demographic trend and a decrease of the share in the confessional structure of the ethnic group, from 4.4% to 2.6% (figs. 2 and 3). However, this negative growth rate, lower than that of the Reformed Hungarians, usually the majority in the joint living habitat, has contributed to an increase of the Roma share in the ethnic structure of the Reformed religious structure (predominantly Hungarian), from 2.2% to 2.7% (fig. 4).

The Reformed Roma community is predominantly rural (76.3%), with an upward trend. In explaining this trend, even if the general one is regressive, the deficit is lower in rural areas (-1.2%) than in urban areas (-19.7%).

The spatial analysis is reflected at the level of counties in terms of evolution, number and share within a regionally defined residential area, usually in localities with a Reformed

Hungarian majority (figs. 3 and 6): Mureș 6,130 parishioners (13.1% of the Roma in the county and 37.2% of the Reformed Roma in the country), Satu Mare 2,796 (16.1% and 16.9%), Bihor 2,660 (7.7% and 16.1%), Cluj 1,067 (4.7% and 6.5%) etc.

The Muslim community, established on the current territory of Romania since the 14th–15th centuries, with a well-defined area in Dobruja, had only 583 Roma parishioners in 1992, representing 0.14% in the confessional structure of the ethnic group (figs. 2 and 3) and 1.04% in the Muslim community (fig. 4). With a growth rate of 475%, the Muslim Roma reached 3,356 parishioners in 2011, representing 0.54% of the Roma population and 5.22% of the Muslim community.

Unlike other confessional communities, Muslim Roma live predominantly in cities, where the trend is regressive, from 80.6% in 1992 to 65.8% in 2011. This trend is supported by the high and differentiated growth rate on environments (+296% urban and +362% rural), especially in the period 2002–2011. In 2011 (figs. 3 and 6), in the confessional structure of the Roma ethnic group by counties, the Muslim Roma represented 20.7% in Constanța (1,775) and 43% in Tulcea (1,471).

Neo-Protestant Churches Within the Confessional Landscape of Roma Communities

THE *NEO-PROTESTANT community* started to be present on the Romanian territory with the second wave of Protestantism, specific to the nineteenth century, through the following churches: *Pentecostal, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christians of the Gospel (Plymouth Brethren)* and *the Romanian Evangelical Church*. Banned during the communist period, they were gradually officially recognized after 1990. After two years of democracy and freedom of religion, the six neo-Protestant churches had 457,985 parishioners (2% of the total population) in Romania, with a large distribution at national level (figs. 2, 3 and 6) and usually without dominant majorities at the level of localities. Of these, only 11,465 were Roma, representing 2.86%.

Compared to the traditional churches, there are many similarities between the demographic behavior of the neo-Protestant communities across the world and the Roma communities: high natural growth and high birth rates, many young families with early age at first birth and marriage (14–16 years), the average number of children exceeding 3–4. To these is added the 'migration' of a large contingent of parishioners, especially in rural areas, from traditional churches to neo-Protestant ones, promoting families with many children and banning abortion.

In contrast to the accentuated demographic regression of the Romanian population (–11.8%), both communities, neo-Protestant and Roma, are on an upward trend. The differences in growth rate and demographic behavior between the neo-Protestant ethno-confessional communities are also reflected in the evolution of the confessional structure of the Roma ethnic group.

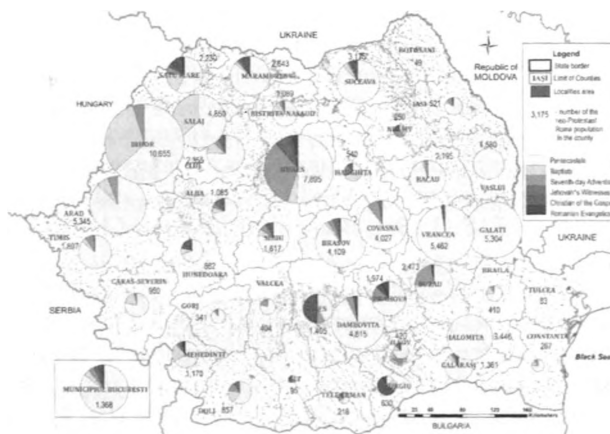
The neo-Protestant Roma, with the highest growth rate in the analyzed period (+707.1%), reached, in 2011, 92,532 parishioners, representing 14.9% in the confessional structure of the Roma ethnic group.

The parishioners of the *Pentecostal Church* were first recorded in 1922 in the village of Păuliș, in Arad County. During 1992–2011, Pentecostal Roma were the most important in terms of number (from 7,919 to 71,262), share (from 69.1% to 77%) and growth rate (800%) in the neo-Protestant group, and the fourth option in the confessional structure of the Roma ethnic group in 1992 (fig. 2). As their growth rate is clearly higher than that of the Pentecostal community (64.1%), the share of Roma population has increased dramatically, from 3.6% to 19.7%, in the ethnic structure of the Pentecostal Church. Increasing its share in the confessional structure of the ethnic group from 3.6% in 1992 to 11.5% in 2011 (fig. 4), the Pentecostal Church became the second religious option, after the Orthodox one (figs. 2 and 3).

At national scale, the Pentecostal Roma community remained predominantly rural, increasing to 73% in 2011. During the same year, within the confessional structure of the Roma population in the countryside, Pentecostals accounted for 13.3% and only for 8.4% in urban areas.

In general, Pentecostal communities are ethnically homogeneous. They are spread over the entire territory of Romania and usually without majorities at the level of localities, which are mostly inhabited by Romanians. For the majority of them, there may be several such churches grouped according to “families,” in which pastors preach in Romanian or Romani. The most important communities are in the northwest (figs. 3 and 6): Bihor 6,714 (19.4% of the Roma in the county) representing 9.5% of the Pentecostal Roma in Romania, Arad 4,694 (28.5%), Sălaj 3,007 (20.1%), Maramureș 2,253 (18.5%), Satu Mare 1,274 (7.3%); in eastern Transylvania: Mureș 4,007 (8.5%), Brașov 3,664 (19.8%), Covasna 3,549 (42.95) etc.; in the south of Moldavia: Vrancea 5,278 (44.1%), Galați 5,258 (31%), Bacău 2,057 (13.5%), Vaslui 1,553 (26.3%); Dâmbovița 4,437 (16.2%), Ialomița 3,401 (23.8%), Suceava 2,771 (22.8%) etc.

FIG. 7. TOTAL NUMBER AND CONFESSATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE NEO-PROTESTANT ROMA POPULATION IN ROMANIA, BY COUNTIES, IN 2011



SOURCE: *Statul și cultele religioase*, <http://culte.gov.ro>.

The Baptist Church appeared for the first time in Romania in Bucharest, in 1856. In 2011, it was second in number and share (9.6%) within the neo-Protestant Roma community (fig. 2). Compared to the year 1992, when it was the sixth confessional option for the ethnic group (0.23%), the Baptist Roma population recorded the highest growth rate, of 845%, during 1992–2011. By means of this trend, they exceeded in number the Adventist Roma population, reaching 8,815 parishioners in 2011, representing 1.4% and the fifth option in the confessional structure of the ethnic group. A spectacular increase, within the same interval, was experienced by the Roma individuals in the ethnic structure of the Baptist community, from 0.8% to 7.8% (fig. 4).

At national level, this is a dominantly rural community, experiencing a decline from 73% in 2002 to 66.8% in 2011, with tendencies of “urbanization.” The living area is regional, in localities with a low ratio, usually where there are other Baptist ethnic groups (especially Hungarians and Romanians). The most important communities are in the counties situated in the west and northwest of the country (figs. 3 and 6): Bihor with 3,384 (9.8%) parishioners, representing 38.4% of the Baptist Roma in the country, Sălaj 1,733 (11.6%), 19.7% by county; Satu Mare 416 (2.4%), Arad 373 (2.3%) etc.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially recognized in 1925. Given its growth rate during 1992–2011 (301%), its number (6,793) and share (from 0.4% to 1.1%) in the confessional structure of the ethnic group (fig. 2), it surpassed only by the Baptists, becoming the sixth religious option in 2011. Gradually, the Adventist Roma increased in share, both within the ethnic structure of the Adventist community—from 2.2% to 8.4% (fig. 4)—and in the neo-Protestant religious structure, from 8.1% to 9.5%.

During the same interval, it remained a mainly rural community (57.6% in 2011), but with a downward trend in favor of the urban environment, whose share increased from 41.4% to 42.4%. Scattered throughout the country, the most important of these otherwise small communities are in the counties (figs. 3 and 6) Mureș 2,630 (5.6% of the Roma), Buzău 563 (2.8%), Bihor 506 (1.5%), Arad 321 (1.9%), Covasna 296 (3.6%), Prahova 278 (1.6%), etc.

Jehovah's Witnesses, although they also functioned “illegally” during the socialist period, with an official status in Romania recognized only later 2003,² were included in the census for the first time in 2011. With a contingent of 1,818 Roma parishioners, this church accounts for 0.29% of the confessional structure of the ethnic group (fig. 2), meaning 3.65% in the ethnic structure of Jehovah's Witnesses in Romania (fig. 4) and 1.98% in the neo-Protestant Roma community. It is a confessional group with a share of 56% in rural areas. They were not registered in 7 counties, and the most numerous are in (figs. 3 and 6): Mureș 528 (1.1%), Brașov 140 (0.8%), Cluj 124 (0.6%), Covasna 127 (1.5%), etc.

The Christian Church of the Gospel (Plymouth Brethren), officially recognized in 1933, had in the 1992 census 49,393 parishioners of which only 1.8% were Roma (920). With a lower growth rate within the Roma community compared to other religions (223%), it had 2,973 parishioners in 2011. The same positive trend is registered as a share in the confessional structure of the ethnicity, from 0.23% to 0.48% (fig. 4). Instead, their ratio decreased from 8.0% to 3.2% in the neo-Protestant Roma community. Similarly to the

other neo-Protestant Roma communities, the growing rural community is dominant, with a share of 71.6% in 2011. In Romania (figs. 3 and 6), they are missing in 5 counties, while the most important communities are in the southern counties: Argeş 632 (3.8% in the ethnic structure), Giurgiu 358 (2.4%); in Suceava 213 (1.7%) and in the northwest: Satu Mare 253 (1.5%) and Maramureş 215 (1.8%), etc.

The Romanian Evangelical Church broke away in 1990 (officially since 1992) from the Christian Church of the Gospel, and the first parishioners were registered during the 2002 census. With a growth rate of 45%, it currently has a small number of Roma parishioners, only 871 in 2011, locally grouped and representing 0.14% of the confessional structure of the Roma community (fig. 2). With a dominant residential area in the countryside (67%) and with tendencies of “urbanization,” at the level of the neo-Protestant community they represented 1% and 0.14% of the Evangelical community in Romania (fig. 4), the most numerous being in Mureş 216 (0.5%) and Prahova 162 (0.9%) (figs. 3 and 6).

In 2011, *Roma belonging to other religions* represented 0.4% of the Roma community (2,425 persons) compared to 1992, when they were 0.6% (2,294).

Within the confessional structure of the ethnic group, a special category is represented by the *Roma population without a declared religious preference*, a category which registered a decrease from 4,173 (1.0% of the Roma people) in 1992 to 2,633 (0.78%) in 2011, of which 285 were atheists and 1,938 had no religion (figs. 2 and 3).

Conclusions

IN POST-SOCIALIST Romania, against an obvious demographic decline, the neo-Protestants and the Roma communities are on a positive trend, due to their social and religious practices triggering a certain demographic behavior. Structural changes could be observed at regional and county level, outlining the confessional landscape of the Roma communities.

The twelve confessional groups have their own particularities differentiated according to: (1) the trend towards a positive growth rate, with a wide gap, between 845% for the Baptist Roma, 800% for the Pentecostal Roma and 8% for the Roman Catholic Roma, the only community with a negative trend being the Reformed Roma (–16%); (2) the living environment: dominant in the rural area (between 53.3% Roman Catholic Roma and 72.9% Pentecostal Roma), the only majority urban community being that of the Muslim Roma (65.8%).

First and foremost, an interesting phenomenon is the “urbanization” trend in seven rural communities and the opposing accentuated ruralization in other four rural communities. Second, the structural shift towards the neo-Protestant churches at the expenses of the traditional churches—Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Calvinist—, offset by growth in nine smaller communities. Third, the share of Roma within the structure of the confessions is on an upward trend in all communities due to the higher growth rate compared

to other ethnic groups, except for the Roman Catholics (in this case being overtaken by other ethnic groups such as Slovaks, Croats etc.).

The most heterogeneous structures of the Roma ethnic group (fig. 3) are in the counties of Mureș, Bihor, Satu Mare, Sălaj, Arad, Covasna, Harghita, etc., and the most homogeneous communities, predominantly Orthodox and Pentecostal, are in the southern part of the country and in Dobruja (Orthodox and Muslims).

Although the data shows a spatial distribution of this ethnic group in almost all administrative territorial units of Romania, the ethno-confessional landscape is complicated. Regional ethno-confessional homogeneity is correlated with an obvious homogeneity with the Roma community as well, while complex ethnic melting pots favored a heterogeneous confessional structure of the Roma communities.

□

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Abstract

The Confessional Landscape of Roma Communities in Post-Socialist Romania

Post-socialist Romania is experiencing increasing religious tolerance, leading to the diversification of religious choices. Gradually, the banned religions were officially recognized, restructuring the confessional landscape with several ethnically-related specificities. Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyze the evolution and features of the Roma communities in Romania, in order to outline the spatial distribution of ethno-confessional groups. Data provided by the official censuses from 1992, 2002 and 2011, processed using spatial analysis at county level, show a certain adherence of Roma communities to the newer churches (especially neo-Protestant rites such as Pentecostal, Baptist, Adventist), alongside the traditional ones (Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Protestant), outlining a confessional landscape with a specific social, cultural and demographic behavior.

Keywords

ethno-confessional landscape, confessional structure, ethnicity, Roma communities, neo-Protestantism, traditional churches, Romania