

# Mixed Marriages Performed in the District of Ceica from the County of Bihor (1871–1890)\*

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**I**N THE second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the European society was undergoing a series of evident transformations in what regards the issue of marriage. The cultural and social emancipation of all ethnicities from the Empire, having its foundation in the reaction towards the conservative groups of the nobility and some ecclesiastical traditions, made a mark in the lives of individuals in such a manner, that mixed marriages began appearing ever more commonly in the parochial statistics and registries.

The present study outlines the demographical coordinates of the phenomenon of mixed marriages in the district of Ceica in the period 1871-1890, maintaining the significance of the confessional particularity of the area, which has its roots in the preponderance of the Roman-Catholic faith and in the rather isolate position of isolation of the local community.

The Ceica district (Magyar-Cseké), as an administrative structure of the Bihor county, was situated to the South-East of Oradea and comprised of a hill area, covered in woods and arable grounds—to a smaller coverage as the forest areas. The vast majority of the locals were forest workers, cultivators of grain and vegetables and animal farmers. According to the data provided by Sándor K. Nagy, in 1886, from the total number of 21,755 inhabitants, 20,112 were Romanian, 595 Hungarian, 173 of Ukrainian origin, living in the Empire, 117 German and 64 Slovakian. The most of them were Orthodox, with a number of 16,909 faithful (78%), followed by 4065 (18%) Greek-Catholics, 387 Israelites (2%), 265 Roman-Catholics and 108 were members of the Reformed Church. In what regards the literacy level (writing, reading), in 1886, the named district was situated between the last ranking districts in the county: from the 21,755 inhabitants only 828 could write and read, i.e. 26% of the districts population.<sup>1</sup>

The Ceica locality had become the seat town of the homonymous district, having a judicial office, postal office, a doctor and a recruiting center. In 1886, it had 658 inhabitants, of whom 454 were Romanian, 145 Hungarian, and 41 Slovakian. From these, 410 were of Orthodox faith, 98 were Roman-Catholic, 82 were Greek-Catholic, 40

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Israelites and 26 followed the teachings of the Reformed Church. The number of those who could write and read was 112. The main occupation of the inhabitants was agriculture.<sup>2</sup> In the vicinity there were two confessional schools: one Orthodox and the other Roman-Catholic; moreover, there were two churches: one where the Roman-Catholic confession was practiced (this had been a Reformed church up until 1737) and one belonging to the Orthodox faith (renovated in 1805).<sup>3</sup>

The Ceica community took part in the three censuses from 1880, 1890 and respectively 1900 in the following manner: the faiths that registered a growth in percentage were the Roman-Catholic belief (constant growth from 15% in 1880 to 16% in 1890 and 19% in 1900, with a leap of 4% over 20 years) and the Reformed faith (growth from 4% in 1880 to 5% in 1890 and 12% in 1900, with a leap of 8% over 20 years); the followers of the Greek-Catholic church had demonstrated a relative stability, maintaining the same level of 12% in the censuses held in 1880 and 1890, only so that there percentage should undergo a decrease to 10% of the total population. The Orthodox faithful were also undergoing an accelerated decline in numbers: from 63% in 1880, their number had reached a value of 61% in 1890 and 53% in 1900.<sup>4</sup>

## Mixed Marriage – a Material, Sentimental or Religious Choice within the Ceica Parish?

**W**ITHOUT MAKING any deflection from the social and political events that had directly and indirectly influenced the relationships between the citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a significant increase of mixed marriages appears evident in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period when the Church started losing ground in the favour of the civil law, that imposed itself ever more significantly up until the turn of the century.

A reflection of this increasingly relevant phenomenon was comprised in the parish registries. An example in this respect is to be found in the marriage registry of the Roman-Catholic parish in Ceica (Magyar-Cseké) which, during the period of 1871–1890, had registered 64 marriages, of which more than a half, more precisely a number of 36, was mixed.<sup>5</sup> The large number of registered mixed marriages within the parish was determined by the isolation of the Roman-Catholic community, as this particular religious community was surrounded by Romanian communities, of predominantly Orthodox and Greek-Catholic faith.<sup>6</sup>

In the first period (1871–1880)<sup>7</sup> a number of 36 marriages were registered, out of which 20 were mixed liaisons. Amongst these, the marriage between the Greek-Catholics and Roman-Catholics ranked first, with a number of nine marriages, comprising 45%, a fact which finds its explanation in the fact that in the choosing of one's lifetime partner the factor of religious belief was more important than the ethnical factor, which occupied a secondary relevance.

Ranking second in the same period, between 1871 and 1880, the mixed marriages between the Reformed faithful and Roman-Catholics reached a number of 5 liaisons and

a percentage of 25% from the total of mixed marriages. The marriages between the Orthodox and Roman-Catholics reached an equal number of 5 such connections, a fact which may point out the issue that in these cases, the ethnical component and even the religious factor had come to be of secondary relevance, making way for another factor (material, social, a.s.o.).<sup>8</sup>

The third place was attributed to the one marriage, representing 1%, uniting an officer, Fabricziucz Dezsöb, aged 33, of Evangelical faith, with the young Korda Hedvig, aged 23, of Roman-Catholic faith.<sup>9</sup>

In the next period (1881–1890), out of 28 marriages concluded, 16 were concluded between partners of different denominations. Therefore, compared to the first period there is a decrease in the number of marriages from the same church (36 to 28), and in the mixed marriages as well (20 to 16). If the first period, was dominated by mixed marriages between partners of different ethnicities from the same Catholic Church (Roman-Catholics/Greek-Catholics), between 1881–1890, their number decreases, achieving 4 marriages and a percentage of 25%. Therefore, this leaves room for mixed marriages to conclude between Reformed faith and Roman-Catholic partners, which ended in 7 marriages and a percentage of 44% from the total of mixed marriages registered during the period. This means an outmatch for the religious option from the same church, in favor of the ethnical component. It is well known that majority partners of Roman-Catholic confession were either Hungarian or Slovakian. Ethnic affinity proved to be stronger on the Roman-Catholics and Greek-Catholics line, especially since the Reformed community was lower numerically.<sup>10</sup> On second place were marriages between Orthodox and Roman-Catholics, number and percentage that remained unchanged from the previous period (5 marriages and a percentage of 31% from the total of marriages). Only the third place, the marriages between Roman-Catholics and Greek-Catholics, presented a spectacular decline, registering during the period 1881–1890, a total of 4 marriages and a percentage of 25% from the total of mixed marriages. The comparison between the two periods, made on two levels, religious and ethnic, gives an answer to the 1871–1890 period regarding mixed marriages.

### Religious belief versus profession and a better financial situation

**O**N THE religious level, if in the first period, marriages between Roman-Catholic and Greek-Catholic partners held a share a percentage of 45%, in the second period, they decreased by almost half percent, reaching a percentage of 25%. Between 1871 and 1880, from the option to marry a partner within the same church to an other denomination or an other ethnic group, in the next period 1881–1890, it can be seen a significant fall of percentage to almost at half from the previous period. What caused this massive decline? Poor catechesis of the couple? The option for a partner with a better financial situation, especially since in the future couple, the woman was Roman-Catholic?<sup>11</sup>

Regarding the religious component of the first period (1871–1880), within mixed marriages between Roman-Catholic and Greek-Catholic partners, it is interesting to find an answer, at least statistically that, after religious affinity, which could be the next aspect taken into account for a marriage between a Roman and Greek-Catholic? What occupation had the groom?

According to the registries of marital status, the marital option regarding the groom choice, was related to agriculture. Thus, 90% of grooms from the Greek-Catholic Church were young farmers. This was the case of 32 years old Mihnea Basil, Greek-Catholic from Ceica, who married a 24 years old Kalita Maria, Roman-Catholic from Bucium. The marriage ceremony was celebrated on 26 November, 1871.<sup>12</sup>

### **Ethnic component versus profession and a better financial situation**

**I**N TERMS of ethnicity, the second period analyzed (1881–1890) emphasizes the primacy of mixed marriages concluded between completely different denominations spouses (Roman-Catholic and Reformed faith partners). These had a percentage of 44% and are concluded on the basis of an obvious ethnic affinities, for partners of the same ethnicity.

From the financial perspective, in the second period 1880–1890, raking first are those who had a job in administration (railway inspector, districtual notary,<sup>13</sup> a.s.o.); they are followed by young people who had a handicraft occupation (shoemakers, blacksmiths, etc.).

The occupational differences between the grooms meant a better or less good financial situation to the future family.

The registries of marital status indicates the percentage of each type of occupation or field of activity in which the grooms had concluded a mixed marriage in the Ceica Parish during 1871–1890. On the first place were the “farmers” with a percentage of 44%, followed by those with an administration job at a percentage of 22%. On the third place, with 17% were the “craftsmen” grooms, followed by unlisted professions with a percentage of 8%. “Other professions” have a percentage of 6% and “landowner” grooms were only at 3% rate.

According to the registries, among the Romanian believers it can be observed the prevalence of two areas: agriculture and administration for Greek-Catholics, agriculture and handicrafts for the Orthodox.

In terms of percentage, 82% of Greek-Catholics grooms were farmers and 18% worked in administration; 60% of Orthodox grooms were farmers, 20% were craftsmen, and 20% were not registered with any particular occupation. Thus, the high percentage of Romanian farmer grooms, does not necessarily meant to be a target for Roman-Catholic brides. The quantitative dimension of this type of representation among young Romanian, was related to the high number and the percentage of this majority ethnic group in this area of Bihor county.

Professions diversification can be strongly observed among Hungarian and German grooms, represented by the Roman-Catholic and Reformed denominations. From the total of 7 Roman-Catholic people who had contracted a mixed marriage, there is an obvious diversity of areas of activity in which they were employed. A high percentage was held by craftsmen with a percentage of 29%, followed by those in the administrative area, also with a percentage of 29%. Agriculture was in fourth place with a percentage of 14%, at tie with other activities and not mentioned professions.

For Reformed faith grooms (7 persons) who contracted a mixed marriage in Ceica Parish, a percentage of 43% occupied a place in the administration, followed by craftsmen and landowners with 29%; those with other occupations had a percentage of 14% each.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Austro-Hungarian state administration censuses, recorded a gradual increase of mixed marriages in all the Hungarian space. For Bihar County, despite a population decline recorded between 1880–1900, the number of mixed marriages gradually increased: 265 in 1877, 305 in 1880, 403 in 1885, 497 in 1892. In 1897 it was registered a slightly decrease of mixed marriages (484).<sup>14</sup> Of the total of 1954 mixed marriages registered during 1877–1897 in Bihar County, the largest share was held by Roman-Catholic and Reformed faith couples, with a total of 686 marriages and a percentage of 35%. This was immediately followed by the Greek-Catholic and Orthodox denomination couples with a total of 673 marriages and a percentage of 34%. Ranking third, stood marriages between Roman-Catholics and Greek-Catholics, with 147 marriages and a percentage of 8%.

Extrapolating religious dimension and involving the ethnical dimension, mixed marriages in the above mentioned period, first, were concluded under the influence of ethnical component; Hungarian matrimony between Roman-Catholic and Reformed confession (686 marriages). In terms of number, it was a tight competition with the Romanian matrimony between Greek-Catholics and Orthodox (673 marriages). There are not negligible the marriages between Roman-Catholics and Greek-Catholics, with a total of 147 marriages and a small percentage of 8%, but an important ethnical barrier broker in favor of religious component. We can say almost the same thing about marriages concluded between Greek-Catholics and Reformed (133), between Orthodox and Reformed (128), Orthodox and Roman-Catholic (102).

Regarding the religious belief *versus* the professional component and a better financial situation, revealed other details that influenced mixed marriages in Ceica Parish. The groom's profession was an important component, because the wealth allowed a smooth running of family life. Ranking first were the "farmer" grooms with a percentage of 44%, followed by those with jobs in the administration (22%). Ranking third with a percentage of 17%, were the "craftsmen" grooms, followed by the "unlisted professions" with a percentage of 8%. The last places were occupied by "other professions" (6%) and "landowners" grooms with only 3%. The study also revealed the percentage and number of occupations by ethnicity and religions. In the case of Romanians, the Greek-Catholics grooms were 82% farmers and the rest of 18% worked in administration. The Orthodox grooms were 60% farmers, 20% craftsmen and 20% were not registered with any particular job. In the case of Hungarian and German grooms it

can be seen a diversity of professions. The Roman-Catholic grooms 29% were handicrafts, followed by the same percentage in the administration. Agriculture was in fourth place with 14%, at tie with other industries and not mentioned professions. The Reformed faith grooms 43% occupied a place in the administration, followed by craftsmen with a percentage of 29% ; landowners and those with other occupations had 14% each.

Finally, with statistical research, the analysis of the mixed marriages phenomenon in Bihor County, in the Roman-Catholic parish in Ceica, proved that young couples were key players in a changing world. Made in the light of confession and ethnicity, mixed marriage in Ceica Parish revealed several mechanisms that have proven that each of these elements (ethnicity, confession, profession, age, gender, place of residence) had influenced it modern becoming.



## Notes

1. Sándor K. Nagy, *Bihar vármegye földrajza* (Nagyvárad: Tanszermúzeum, 1886), 126–127.
2. *Ibid.*, 127.
3. Kálmán Tisza, *Bihar vármegye és Nagyvárad* (Budapest: Apollo, 1901), 111.
4. The data provided by the Episcopal mapping from 1900 indicate 345 individuals of Orthodox faith, 41 Israelites and 124 Greek-Catholics, 195 Roman-Catholics, 17 Evangelists and 21 Reformed Christians. See *Schematismus cleri gr. cath. Varadinensis* (Magno-Varadini: Typis Samuelis Berger, 1900), 209.
5. For the analysis of the marital phenomenon in the Ceica parish for the years between 1860 and 1880, confer the book of Mircea Brie, *Familie și societate în nord-vestul Transilvaniei: A doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea și începutul secolului XX* (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2008), 163-166, but also Sorina Paula Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan, “Căsătoriile mixte în Transilvania la sfârșitul epocii moderne: Considerații demografice”, in *Căsătoriile mixte în Transilvania: Secolul al XIX-lea și începutul secolului XX*, ed. Corneliu Pădurean, Ioan Bolovan (Arad: Editura Universității “Aurel Vlaicu”, 2005), 295-299.
6. We must mention the opinion of Mircea Brie, which confirms the elevated level of the belief alteration within the isolated Roman-Catholic communities: Ceica with 58,62% and Tileagd with 57% (Mircea Brie, *Căsătoria în nord-vestul Transilvaniei: Condiționări exterioare și strategii maritale* (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2009), 374.
7. In the present study, we have considered that for the sake of using the comparative method, it is necessary to divide the time period that is under analysis in two periods, considering the time spans 1871-1880 and 1881-1890.
8. We view the idea of Mircea Brie as being remarkable, as it confirms the elevated percentage—for the considered period—of the mixed marriages performed between Greek-Catholics and Roman-Catholics, “marriages with partners of Greek Catholic faith can be categorized as the tendencies, confirmed within other parishes as well, of spiritual and communitarian closeness between the RC and the GC” (Brie, *Familie și societate*, 164).
9. ANSJ Bihor, Collection of Registries of Marital Status: Rom.-Cath. Parish Ceica, sheet 5.
10. Brie, *Familie și societate*, 164. The town had 658 inhabitants in 1886 from which: 454 Romanians, 145 Hungarians, 41 Slovaks; in terms of denominational, they were 410 Orthodox, 98 Roman-Catholics, 82 Greek-Catholics, 40 Israelites and 28 Reformed (Sándor K. Nagy, *Bihar vármegye*, 127).

11. From the 36 women whom concluded a mixed marriage in the Roman-Catholic parish, 28 were Roman-Catholic, 2 Greek-Catholic and 5 Reformed. Collection of Registries of Marital Status. Rom.-Cath. Parish Ceica, sheet 1-10.
12. Collection of Registries of Marital Status: Rom.-Cath. Parish Ceica, sheet 1.
13. There was only one mixed marriage in which the groom was Roman-Catholic and the bride Reformed. He is Klosz Antal, 34 years old, district notary, who married 26 years old Egethő Ilona. The marriage was officiated on 11 January, 1885. Collection of Registries of Marital Status. Rom.-Cath. Parish Ceica, sheet 7.
14. For the years 1877, 1880 and 1885 see Annex no. 3 from Bolovan, *Căsătorile mixte*, 105.

### Abstract

#### Mixed Marriages Performed in the District of Ceica from the County of Bihar (1871–1890)

Difficulty implied approach to mixed marriages in the Bihar county lies not only in that it is quite hard to surprise the mentality, attitudes, feelings from the past in the face of life's major moments such as baptism, marriage and death, but is also hard to determine how religious and state laws regarding intermarriage governed everyday life. For Bihar county, mixed marriages were an obvious reality in the 19th century, born from a colorful ethnic and religious cohabitation. Analyzing the phenomenon of mixed marriages in the Bihar county, using statistical research in the Roman-Catholic parish of Ceica, showed that the young brides and grooms were the main actors of a changing world. Made in light of confession and ethnic affiliation, mixed marriages in the Bihar county revealed several mechanisms that have proved that each of them (ethnicity, religious confession, profession, age, sex, place of residence) influenced her modern becoming.

### Keywords

Statistics, ethnicity, confessions, quantitative dimension, religious option