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Mara Vasile¹, Peteley Attila¹, Adrian Nița¹

¹ Faculty of Geography, Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania

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INHABITING EVOLUTION IN THE REGIONAL SYSTEM GIURGEU-CIUC

Mara Vasile¹, Peteley Attila², Nița Adrian³

Abstract. The configuration and the physical-geographic structure of our country influenced in a considerable manner the social-historic evolution of the population within the Intra-Carpathian regional system Giurgeu-Ciuc. The inhabiting of the Giurgeu-Ciuc depressions was mostly favored due to the orographic barrier aspect of the landscape, the shelterlike conditions within the Eastern-Carpathians for centuries, but mostly by the favorable geographic environment of our times. Considering a series of social, economic and political events, the numerical evolution of the population presents wide variety considering both in time and space, determining differentiated patterns within the studied areas.

Keywords: regional system, Giurgeu-Ciuc depression, social-economic evolution, demographic structure, natural growth

Introduction

The natural landscape of our country influenced in a considerable way the social-historic evolution of the population in the inner Carpathian regional system of Giurgeu-Ciuc. The natural landscape here forms a harmonious territorial unit, with a well-founded structure which reflects and justifies the presence of the people who inhabit this land. Consequently the population of these lands, just like the rest of Transylvania shows continuity during history.

The inhabiting of the two depressions Giurgeu and Ciuc was favored mostly by the orographic barrier of relief, the sheltering conditions offered by the Eastern Carpathians proved decisive in historical times, but mostly due to the favorable geographic environment in our times.

Archeological studies have revealed proofs of settlements in the two depressions even before our era. The oldest settlements were found at Sineu, Remetea parish and Gheorgheni, which date back to the Bronze Era; and from the transitional era towards the Iron Era. The continuity of the inhabiting during the first millennia in our era is proven by some documents mentioning the *daco-getic* tribes (in Lăzarea, Ciumani, Cetatea Bot Castle - near Gheorgheni, Toplița, Subcetate etc., in the Giurgeu Depression and in Sâncrăieni, Jigodin-Băi, Mădăraș, Tomești etc., in the Ciuc Depression) and the *daco-roman* tribes (in Valea Strâmbă, Toplița, the cult at Cerneahova-Sântana in the first depression and similar ones were found in the second one as well.

¹ Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Geography Univ.Ext. Gheorgheni, maravasile@yahoo.com

² Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Geography Univ.Ext. Gheorgheni, peteley_attila@yahoo.com

³ Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Faculty of Geography Univ.Ext. Gheorgheni, nitaadrian@hotmail.com

The archeological discoveries have proven the inhabiting continuity for the following centuries as well, proofs of the existence of German settlements were found in Toplița, Lăzarea, Gheorgheni, Sâncrăieni, Miercurea-Ciuc, Racu, Delnița, Păuleni-Ciuc between the 7th and 9th centuries, and near Racu, Sâncrăieni and Gheorgheni there were found evidences of permanent inhabiting even between the 11th and 13th centuries. Later appear the first written documents as well.

The colonization of the Szeklers in the 13th century can be interpreted as a forced migration of this ethnic group in the south-eastern parts of Transilvania for well-established politico-military purposes. The arriving szeklers found in the west of the Calimani-Gurghiu-Harghita volcanic mountain chain a sedentary Romanian local population, who were mainly practicing agriculture. In the chronicles of the Hungarian Simon de Geza, written between 1282-1285 shows, that “they, the Szeklers, haven’t lived in the Pannonia lowlands, but in the mountains at the margins, together with the Romanians from who they learned their way of writing” (non tamen in plano Pannoniae, sed cum Blackis, commixti literis ipsorum uti perhibentur)⁴.

The numerical evolution of the population in this territory shows slow but steady increase, during historic times of relative peace. This region has dense forests, swampy areas, reasons why it was even omitted by the migratory waves of tribes from the beginning of the Medieval Period. These communities evolved as an enclosed system for a long time, the numerical increase of the population is mostly due to the ever slightly positive natural growth.

Together with the founding of the first permanent settlements we can talk about the systematic and well managed exploitation of the natural resources from the vicinity of the settlements, which had positive effects on the natural growth, on the development of the settlements, even establishing a hierarchy between these from as early as the 16th-17th centuries. The numeric increase of the population is more substantial in the second half of the 18th century, and its increase is closely linked to the appearance of the first signs of the industrial revolution beginning with the second half of the 19th century. By this time the majority of the settlements already exist, and along the main rivers: the Mures and Olt riverbeds, and along their main tributaries water-saws and mills were established and in their vicinity firstly temporary homes were built which became either permanent settlements later like between Remetea and Toplița or were abandoned⁵.

Demographic evolution during the Medieval Age.

Considering a series of events of economic, social and political nature, the medieval period is not characterized by a steady numeric growth considering the population of the region. Regarding the numeric order of the population of the Giurgeu-Ciuc depressions we have written documents only since the first half of the 14th century, in papal registries (religious documents). From these documents we can find information regarding the social stratification of the region. The horsemen had higher military status in comparison with the foot soldiers. The front line soldiers are mentioned in these documents for the first time as well. Their status determined the first agricultural distribution of the land within a settlement: the regular foot soldiers were given one lot, the horsemen were given two lots and the

⁴ C. C. Giurescu, D. C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor din cele mai vechi timpuri până astăzi*, București, 1971, p. 155.

⁵ M. Seer, *Așezările și organizarea spațiului geografic în Depresiunea Giurgeului*, Teza de doctorat (manuscris), Cluj-Napoca, 2004, p. 161.

frontline soldiers were given more than the horsemen.

This social stratification considering the military rankings can't be separated from the feudal influence, which became ever more dominant not just west of the Eastern Carpathians but in their middle as well. At the end of the 15th century the free peasants are mentioned who didn't own any land, and they were settled on the land of the noblemen. After one century the documents mention the "iobagi" with a selfdom status, although the dependent peasant's number before the Szekler's riot of 1562 was relatively reduced.

In the Ciuc Depression the Szekler's social stratification is much more evolved than in the Giurgeiu Depression. The evolution of the social structure was based on so called "tria genera siculorum" was in close relations with the military obligations of the Szeklers, along the ever more significant presence of the soldiers from the two depressions in the military campaigns of the age on all Transylvanian fronts.

The diplomas accorded by Mihai Viteazul to the Szeklers in the year 1600 gave them liberty and freed them from being chained to the noblemen. This situation is overwritten by the 1602 conspiracy, carried out by the orders of Giorgio Basta, the commander of the Austrian troops from Transylvania. The conspiracy is not a complete success, which proves the withdrawal of the people from the two depressions from the next demographic survey.

According to data from that era the structure of the population in the two depressions presents the following values: from the top five main social categories the front line soldiers were the fewest (16), the "iobagi" peasants (139), guards (191), horsemen (547) and the most of the population were the free peasants (885). The registered population at that date in 8 settlements in the Giurgeiu depression numbered a total population of 246 and in the Ciuc depression in 36 settlements the total people's count was of 1573. The two depressions numbered 1819 evidenced resident population. An interesting fact was registered, because only one front line soldier was registered in the Giurgeiu depression and one "iobag" in comparison with the Ciuc depression where there were 15 front line soldiers, 138 "iobagi". The free peasants have the highest counts in both depressions: 184 in the first one and 701 in the second one.

At a settlement level the highest numbers of registered inhabitants were numbered in Gheorgheni (57), Joseni (51), Suseni (48), Tuşnad (71), Cozmeni (69), Nădejdea (68), Sâncrăieni (66). In Miercurea Ciuc are registered in 1602 only 18 inhabitants, all of them being free peasants.

A much better view of the social structure of the population we have from 1614, when by the order of the prince Gabriel Bethlen the majority of the families are registered from the two depressions, thus the 1614 census shows a much clearer man count. We can notice significant demographic increase in the two depressions, on one hand due to natural growth and because there is a positive immigration: families come and settle here from other regions.

The military registry from 1614 clearly shows a numeric increase of the registered population from 1602; from 1819 in both depressions in 1614 there were registered 4197 soldiers (719 in the Giurgeiu and 3478 in the Ciuc depression). Along the above mentioned social structures appear new ones like "jelerii", the employed peasants without land; the servants and the eagle huntsmen. This time the horsemen exceed the number of free peasants (989 to 954), although only in the Ciuc depression they have higher numbers than the other social rankings of the region (909), while in the Giurgeiu depression they just numbered 80 individuals. At that moment even the jeleri have higher registered numbers than the free peasants (967) and the frontline soldiers still remain with the lowest registered numbers 17 (1 in the Giurgeiu and 16 in the Ciuc depression).

The situation per settlement in the Giurgeu Depression looks like this: Gheorgheni (209), Valea Strâmbă (126), Joseni (104), Lăzarea (89) and in the Ciuc depression Ciucsângeorgiu (207), Sântimbru (166), Nădejdea (164) and Sâncrăieni (138) stand out.

The period 1662 - 1681 presents two decades of relative calmness, the Prince of Transylvania was not involved in any military campaigns, thus it did not need to use military force provided by the population of the two depressions. As a result very few are the families whose members receive military promotion, meaning changes in the social status are very few (promotions to the ranking of horsemen or front line soldiers).

To a better understanding of the demographic and social structure from the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century we need to examine the fiscal conscriptions from 1703. If on a general scale we can notice a numeric decrease of the population in the two depressions from 4197 in 1614 to 3847 inhabitants in 1703, although if we carefully examine the two compartments separately the global image changes somewhat. While in the Ciuc depression the population decreases from 3478 to 2628 in the Giurgeu depression there is a population growth from 719 to 1219.

Although the community was dominated by the free peasants (2434 individuals), their majority had military obligations; and the servants were in significant numbers as well (1430). Among the most intensively populated settlements in 1703 we can mention Gheorgheni (277 inhabitants), Lăzarea (189), Joseni (179), Ditrău (150), Suseni (121), Sântimbru (140), Tușnad (135), Frumoasa (108), Cozmeni (99), Sânmartin (97)⁶.

Although in the 17th and 18th centuries the living conditions were troubled by natural calamities and devastating wars, the people of these lands with their creative power, and by their way of organizing their social-economic life, managed to create not just existential and survivable living conditions but an acceptable, decent way of living regardless of the harshness of that period.

Demographic evolution in the Modern Era

Considering a series of social, economic and political events, the numeric evolution of the population in the Giurgeu-Ciuc Depressions presents significant variations beginning with the second half of the 19th century considering the time and space frames which determined important differences within the studied regions. Considering the characteristic demographic processes in the 1850-2002 interval we differentiate eight evolutionary stages: 1850-1910, 1910-1930, 1930-1941, 1941-1956, 1956-1966, 1966-1977, 1977-1992 și 1992-2012.

The 1850 - 1910 stage is characterized by a steady demographic evolution with uniform increase of the population in several settlements within the region. After the end of the 1848 revolution, which took part in several countries in Europe, the social and political aspects return to normal, and the economically, the region shows significant improvements in the Giurgeu-Ciuc depressions mainly based on forest exploitation, woodworks and log-rafting. The natural growth and economic prosperity are the main reasons for the demographic increase, while immigration is almost irrelevant for this stage.

A noticeable increase has produced between 1850 from 83,929 inhabitants to 130,587 inhabitants in 1910, considering the 60 year interval there is a 55.6% (46,648) population growth with an average annual increase of 0.9 (778) inhabitant/year. A specific situation can be observed in the two compartment: in the Ciuc Depression the numeric increase is ell under

⁶ B.G. Dezsö, *Mediul geografic și evoluția socio-demografică în Bazinul Giurgeului și Ciucului în secolele XVI-XVII*, Miercurea-Ciuc, 1997.

the combined rith, showing 40.3% increase with an average annual growth of 0.67%; while in the Giurgeu Depression the growth exceeds the regional average showing an increase rate of 79.2% meaning an annual average of 1.3%; meaning that the northern compartment had a much more significant natural growth then the southern compartment. When we study the evolution of the administrative units we can observe spectacular numeric evolutions with some settlements, where Toplița showed a growth of 215.4%, Miercurea-Ciuc with 84.9% growth and Gheorgheni with 66% increase of its population. Other settlements show substantial demographic growth, mainly the settlements along the Olt and Mureș Rivers, where the population's main occupation was linked to woodworks and log-rafting (Remetea, Ditrău, Lăzarea, Joseni, Suseni, Sândominic, Cârța, Frumoasa etc.).

The 1910 - 1930 stage the regions population shows a numeric decrease due to the heavy losses in World War One and the drastic decrease in birth rate which was caused by the big number of fertile male inhabitants leaving the region during the war. On average, for the 20 years of this stage we can announce a 2.6% decrease in the population of the two compartments, meaning 3,465 less registered inhabitants, which on annual average is expressed by a -0.1% (-173 inhabitants/year). Studying the two compartments separately we notice significant differences between them: while in the Ciuc compartment the general trend shows negative values of 8,348 (-11.7%) less inhabitants, meaning an annual rhythm of -0.6%; in the Giurgeu compartment w have positive demographic indicators, showing an increase with 4,883 inhabitants (8.3%) meaning a positive annual rhythm of 0.4%. For a negative example we have to point out Miercurea-Ciuc, which registered for the 20 year interval a population decrease of 2042, meaning -25.4% loss of population with an average annual rhythm of -1.3%.

The 1930 – 1941stage despite the fact that covers only eleven years, is characterized by a sturdy demographic increase for the two compartments from 127,122 inhabitants in 1930 to 145,061 inhabitants in 1941, which means that in the two regions there is an increase of 17,939 inhabitants (14.1%) with an average annual growth rate of 1.3% (1631 inhabitants/year). At this time the Ciuc compartment shows superior values in demographic increase with 14,070 inhabitants more, meaning 22.3% increase and an annual average of 2% in comparison with the Giurgeu compartment which shows a relatively steady increase of 3,869 inhabitants more (6%) at an annual average rhythm of 0.5%. we can say that the demographic boom was realized by the very high natural growth indicators (more then 20‰) to which contributes a significant immigration wave into the region. These demographic factors are stimulated by a steadily sustained economic growth.

The 1941 – 1956 stage is influenced by the events of the Second World War and a series of natural disasters: droughts, hunger, the instauration of the communist regime, the beginning of the collectivization era. All these have a significant negative effect on the population of the Giurgeu-Ciuc regional system with a decrease from 140,038 in 1941 to 135,015 in 1956. In the 15 years of this stage the absolute demographic indicators show negative values: a decrease of 5023 inhabitants (-3.5%), with an annual average rhythm of -335 inhabitants less (-0.2%). Thus in the Giurgeu Depression we have a decrease of 635 individuals (-0.9%) with an annual average f -0.06%; while in the Ciuc Depression the decrease is with 4,388 inhabitants (-5.7%), with a negative annual rhythm of -0.4%. as we can notice from these values in the Ciuc compartment there was a 83% higher decrease in the population in the Ciuc compartment then in the Giurgeu compartment.

The 1956 – 1966 stage is characterized by a normalization of the demographic indicators not just in the studied region but in the whole country as well. The increase of the population is sustained by the positive natural growth and the increased immigration into the two depressions. We have high immigration values especially in the important

settlements like Miercurea-Ciuc, Gheorgheni and Toplița, where the population increase is motivated by the increase in the labor-force departments, while in the rural areas with just a small number of exceptions we see positive figures. For the two depressions in the 1956 – 1966 interval there is an increase of 7,916 inhabitants (5.6%), which shows an average annual growth of 792 at an annual rhythm of 0.6%. at a compartment level in the Giurgeu Depression there is an increase of 2,851 inhabitants (4.2%), and an annual rhythm of 0.4%; while in the Ciuc Depression we have 5,065 more inhabitants (6.9%) and an annual rhythm of 0.7%. In this ten year interval we can notice that in the Ciuc compartment the demographic growth is double in comparison with the Giurgeu compartment, which come as compensation to the previous stage.

The 1966 – 1977 stage is characterized by a series of negative demographic indicators. As a result of promoting faulty economic and political laws enforced after the instauration of the communist regime, in this era are adopted some very destructive demographic processes on the long term for our country and implicitly for the Giurgeu-Ciuc regional system as well. The stage is began by the implementation of the renowned abortion law, when the birth rate become uncontrollable, fallowed by the forced industrial development, resulting in the exodus from the rural areas towards the three main cities in the county, which in the next stage 1977 – 1992 have as a consequence hard social-economic crisis (the depopulation of some rural areas, the lack of labor-force in the rural areas, the construction of residential districts in the main towns lacking descent living conditions, etc). Thus the demographic indicators fallow the trends of the other social and economic indicators in the two depressions. On average we can notice a significant increase in the number of the population of the two depressions in this stage with 29,701 inhabitants in 11 years (20%) and an annual growth with 2,700 inhabitants, meaning 1.8%. in the two depressions the situation is the fallowing: in the Giurgeu compartment the population increases by 9,349 (13.3%), having an annual rhythm of 1.2%; and in the Ciuc compartment by 20,352 inhabitants (26%), more then double in comparison with the previous compartment showing an annual rhythm of 2.8%.

The 1977 – 1992 stage registers an absolute demographic evolution by 13,312 inhabitants for the two depressions, meaning a growth by 7.5% with an annual average of 887 inhabitants and an annual rhythm of 0.5%. Analyzing the two depressions separately, we notice that in the Giurgeu Depression the population increased by 4,432 inhabitants (5.6%), at an annual growth rate of 295 inhabitants (0.4%); while in the Ciuc Depression with 8,880 inhabitants (7.5%) and an annual average of 592 inhabitants (0.6%). The demographic increase fallows the pattern set in the previous stage. Although, due to the events that took place by the end of the stage, in 1989, and the effects on the national economy and society are changing starting from this stage and continue in the next one, considering the evolution of the population on a general level is initiated a descendent curve.

In *the 1992 – 2012 stage* appears the so called demographic erosion process, which has effects over all demographic and social indicators of the country. The radical social changes that occurred nationwide were determined by a series of factors such as: the closing of several industrial units, negative natural growth, the intensifying of aging of the population, the drastic decrease of the active population, unemployment, poverty, morbidity, reduction in average life expectancy, etc. all these factors resulted in a significant decrease in the number of the population for the two regions, which is sustained by a significant emigration to foreign countries, a decrease in the birth rate and increase in mortality, leading to a growth rate with negative values -7...-10‰, to which we can add the return from the urban areas of the labor force formerly engaged in industry

to the rural areas. After 2000 we notice stability in the demographic structures, even though the number of the population still decreases but in reasonable limits. The population of the two depressions decreases by -11,695 inhabitants (-6.1%), meaning an annual average of -1,169 inhabitants (-0.6%). Taking then on compartment level: in the Giurgeu compartment decreased by -5,784 inhabitants (-6.9%) at an annual rate of -591 inhabitants (-0.7%); and in the Ciuc compartment by -5,911 inhabitants (-5.5%) at an annual value of -591 inhabitants per year (-0.6%) (see Figure 1).

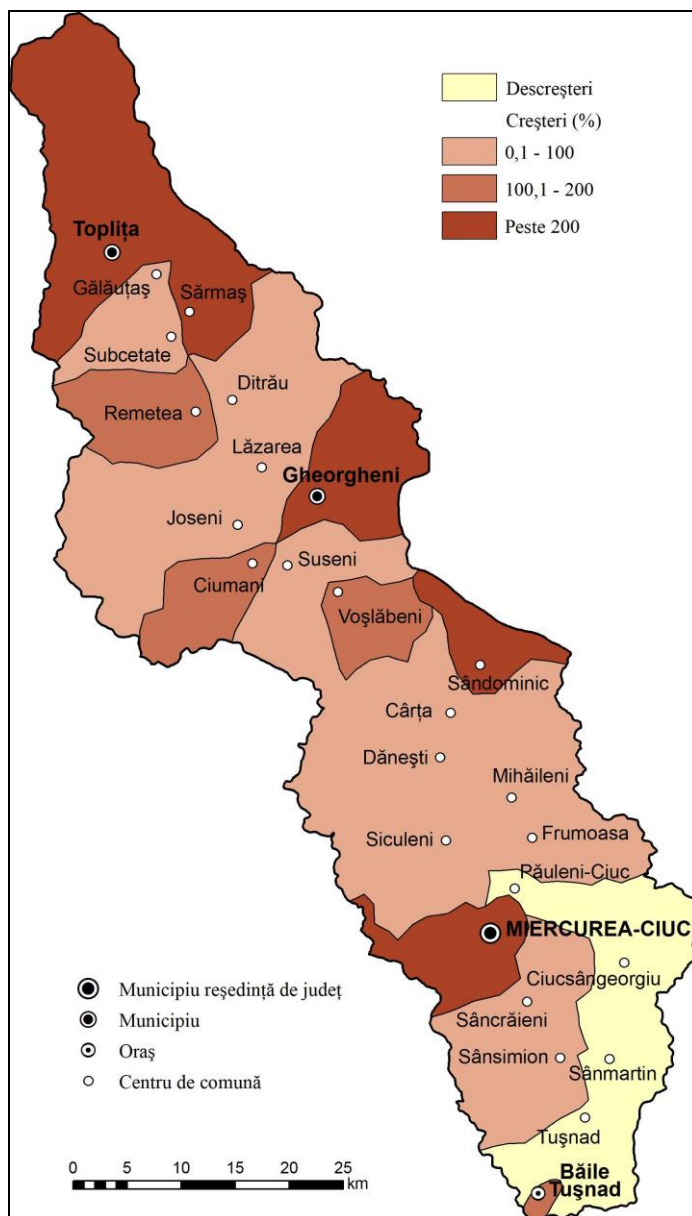


Figure. 1. The average annual evolution of the population in the Giurgeu-Ciuc Depressions between 1850 and 2012

Conclusions

Analyzing the evolution of the population in the Giurgeu-Ciuc Depressions in these 162 years between 1850 and 2012 we can draw the following conclusions:

- On a general scale we can notice a population increase of an effective 95,343 people (114%) with an annual average growth by 627 inhabitants and an annual average rate of 0.75%;

- Analyzing the two compartment separately we can conclude that the Giurgeu Depression's population increased by 45,084 inhabitants (137%), with an annual average growth of 297 inhabitants and an annual average rhythm of 0.9%; while in the Ciuc Depression the population increased by 50,259 inhabitants (99%), meaning an annual average growth of 331 inhabitants and an annual average rhythm of 0.65%.

- If we study the map in Figure 1, we can notice that among the settlements there are four which show negative annual average evolution: Tușnad (-15%), Păuleni-Ciuc (-11%), Ciucsângeorgiu (-9%) and Sânmartin (-8%), all of them are part of the Ciuc Depression; most of the settlements (15) show values between 0.1 – 100% and are located in both compartments; the highest increase values are registered in the four major urban settlements in both compartments: Miercurea-Ciuc (866%), Toplița (578%), Gheorgheni (273%) and Băile Tușnad (139%), to which we can add the rural settlements of Sărmaș (380%), Sândominic (209%), Voșlobeni (172%), Ciumani (116%) and Remetea (107%).

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