

THE RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION STRUCTURE OF THE VILLAGES FROM ROMANIA¹

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Abstract: *This article aims to sketch some typologies of Romanian communes from the perspective of religious affiliation of the population. All data used comes from the last population and housing census (2002) from which information is available. The main new element refers to the village level approach according to the historical regions they belong to. The most heterogeneous communes are the ones from Transylvania while the ones from Oltenia, Muntenia and Moldova are on the opposite side.*

Key words: *religious affiliation; villages; Romania; religious structure*

Introduction

The rural area in Romania is divided in almost 2700 administrative units which are called „communes”. These units, in accordance with the existing regulations in Eurostat² are situated at the lowest level on the administrative units hierarchy: LAU2 (Locale Administrative Units 2). Until July 2003 the LAU2 level has been called NUTS5³. Here we will analyze inferior settlements named villages⁴. In 2002, in Romania there were 12.591 villages. We aim to distinguish some typologies which are present in the villages of Romania from the religious affiliation point of view self-declared at the census. The start premise is that there are differentiations between the villages of Romania according to their former historical regions. In this context, we consider that the most heterogeneous villages will be

located, mainly in the historical regions of Transylvania and Banat while the communes located in the former regions of Moldova, Muntenia and Oltenia will be the most homogenous from an religious point of view. Due to the fact that the territorial division in eight development regions (NUTS2) is currently used, we have opted for this version detrimental to historical regions.

Methodology and data sources

The main statistical information source used in this article is the one obtained from the 18th March 2002 population and housing census. It is obvious that the affiliation to a religious denomination, according to the census rules, has been established on a free statement basis. In terms of statistical methodology, descriptive statistics methodology is mainly used. Where relevant⁵ the option was for association testing using the χ^2 test and the associated coefficients (Pearson's ϕ or Crammer's V). In terms of specialized software the option was SPSS.

Data Analysis

In 2002 the villages from Romania were, in terms of population, very diverse. Very small villages were registered (for example: Geamana village from Lupsa commune from Alba county which was registered as having only 1 – one – inhabitant) to very large communes⁶ (Voluntari village/ commune from Ilfov county was registered with over 30 000 inhabitants). The average level of the population of a village from Romania was in 2002 a level a bit bigger than 800 inhabitants while median was located near 500 inhabitants. In the next table the villages' distribution by the population amount on development regions at the 2002 population and housing census is presented.

Table 1. The villages' distribution by size on development regions (%)

Size Region	under 150 inh	151-300 inh	301-500 inh	501-800 inh	801-1400 inh	over 1400 inh
North East	11,0	15,4	15,9	18,6	19,3	19,7
South East	15,1	14,8	15,8	17,3	18,4	18,5
South	10,0	13,2	14,8	17,2	21,6	23,3
South West	16,5	18,8	22,4	18,1	14,2	10,0
West	25,0	21,3	16,4	14,2	12,6	10,5
North West	14,2	17,5	18,7	19,4	18,1	12,2
Center	32,8	15,6	14,9	14,0	11,2	11,4
Bucharest - Ilfov	5,0	6,0	9,0	13,0	16,0	51,0
National	16,9	16,4	17,0	17,2	16,8	15,7

Source of data: Own processing of statistical information from RPL2002.

Firstly it is ascertained that Bucharest-Ilfov region strikes an extremely discordant note compared to the other development regions. A portion of 51% of villages from this region had over 1400 inhabitants and there was only 11% of villages having under 300 inhabitants. Due to the fact that, practically, a lot of villages from this region are in the metropolitan zone of Bucharest⁷, this high density is normal. Due to the fact that the

geographically so called “dispersed village”⁸ is mainly encountered in the mountain area (especially in Apuseni mountains) the development regions with a higher share of small villages are the ones from the South Transylvania (Center Region) and the East part of Banat (West Region). In these two regions the share of villages under 150 inhabitants is 32,8% respectively 25%. Over 23% of the villages from South Region and almost 20% of North-East Region has over 1400 inhabitants which illustrates that in these regions the predominant settlements are the ones which are sized some more than the national average. These differences between the distribution of villages by size which are observed among the different development regions are statistically significant (after performing the χ^2 test) with a probability of more than 99,99%, the association coefficients (Pearson's φ and Cramer's V) values being 0,27 and 0,12 which points out a moderate intensity between the development region and the size of the communes.

In 2002 a percent of 10,25 millions of inhabitants (which represents 47,26% out of the total inhabitants number) was living in the rural area. Out of this percent, without major differentiations compared to urban area, 86,31% said they are Eastern Orthodox, 4,93% Roman Catholics, 3,34% Reformed, 1,9% Pentecostals, 0,71% Greek Catholics, 0,59% Seventh Day Adventists, 0,57% Baptists and the rest of 1,64% opted out for another situation. Although the Eastern Orthodox Church dominance is categorical, in Figure 1 we tried to capture the situation of one religion dominance by the size of the village.

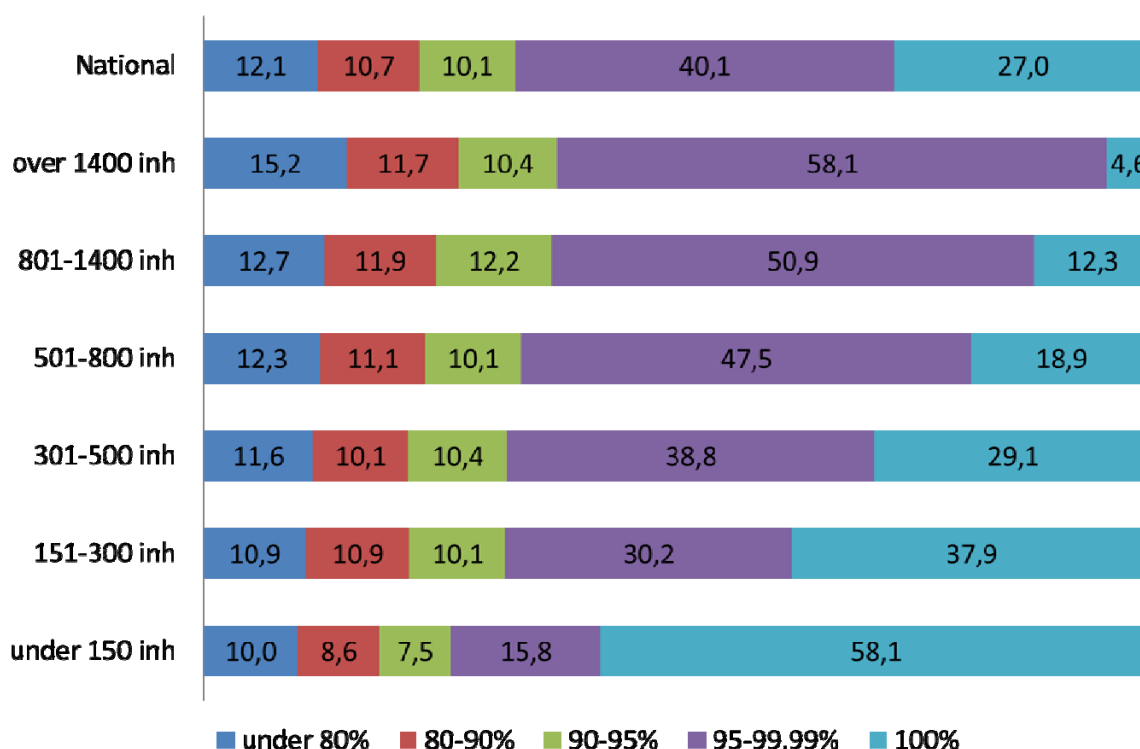


Figure 1. Maximum share from religious affiliation viewpoint by different villages' size

Firstly it is worth to mention the fact that in 92,5% of the villages, the Eastern Orthodox Church is the one which has the maximum value of the share a religion could have. Out of the 7,5% (945) villages in which the dominant religion is not the Orthodox one, the majority (476) are localized in the Center Region, while the next positions are occupied

by the North West Region (274 villages) and North East Region (114 villages). The “one religion” villages are the 99,4% ones where the dominant religion is Eastern Orthodox. The other 0,6% (19 villages) are located mainly in Transylvania (most of them in Harghita county) being Roman Catholics (16 villages) and, the balances, being Reformed (3 villages). It is found as well that with the increase of the size of a village, the chance that a village is mono-religious decreases significantly (from 58,1% in the case of a village under 150 inhabitants) to 4,6% (in the case of a village over 1400 inhabitants). These differentiations visible in figure 1 are significant from a statistical viewpoint with a probability higher than 99,99% (after performing the χ^2 test) Pearson's association coefficient ϕ being 0,41 while Crammer's V had the value of 0,21.

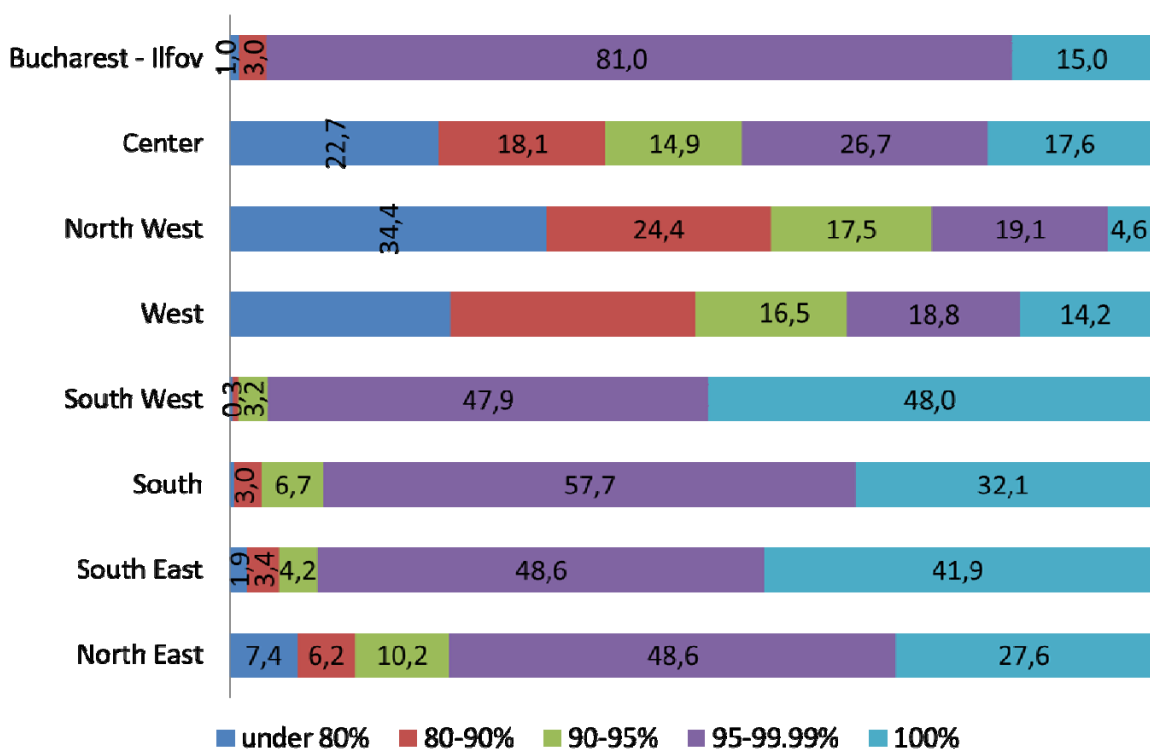


Figure 2. Maximum share from religious affiliation viewpoint by regions

From the maximum share of a religion distribution way by development regions, figure 2 shows us that there are a number of four development regions (South-West, Bucharest-Ilfov, South and South-East) where the dominant religion of a village has values, most often, over the 95% level. In the four previous mentioned development regions the probability that in a village the dominant religion share is over 95% has the next levels: Bucharest-Ilfov 96%, South-West 95,9%, South-East 90,5% and South 89,8%. The development regions from the historical areas of Banat and Transylvania have the most heterogeneous communes. Thus the probability not to have a dominant religion's share bigger than 90% in one of these villages is 598,8% in North-West, 50,6% in West and 40,8% in Center. All these differences are significant from a statistical point of view with a probability over 99,99% (after performing χ^2 test). The intensity of the association,

measured with the Pearson's coefficient φ has a quite strong level (0,62) while Crammer's V has the value of 0,31.

In the next stage of the statistical analysis we measured the heterogeneity of the villages from Romania from a religious affiliation viewpoint by simple metering (without taking the shares in consideration) of the present denominations. The grouping was realized in Figure 3 considering the size of the village.

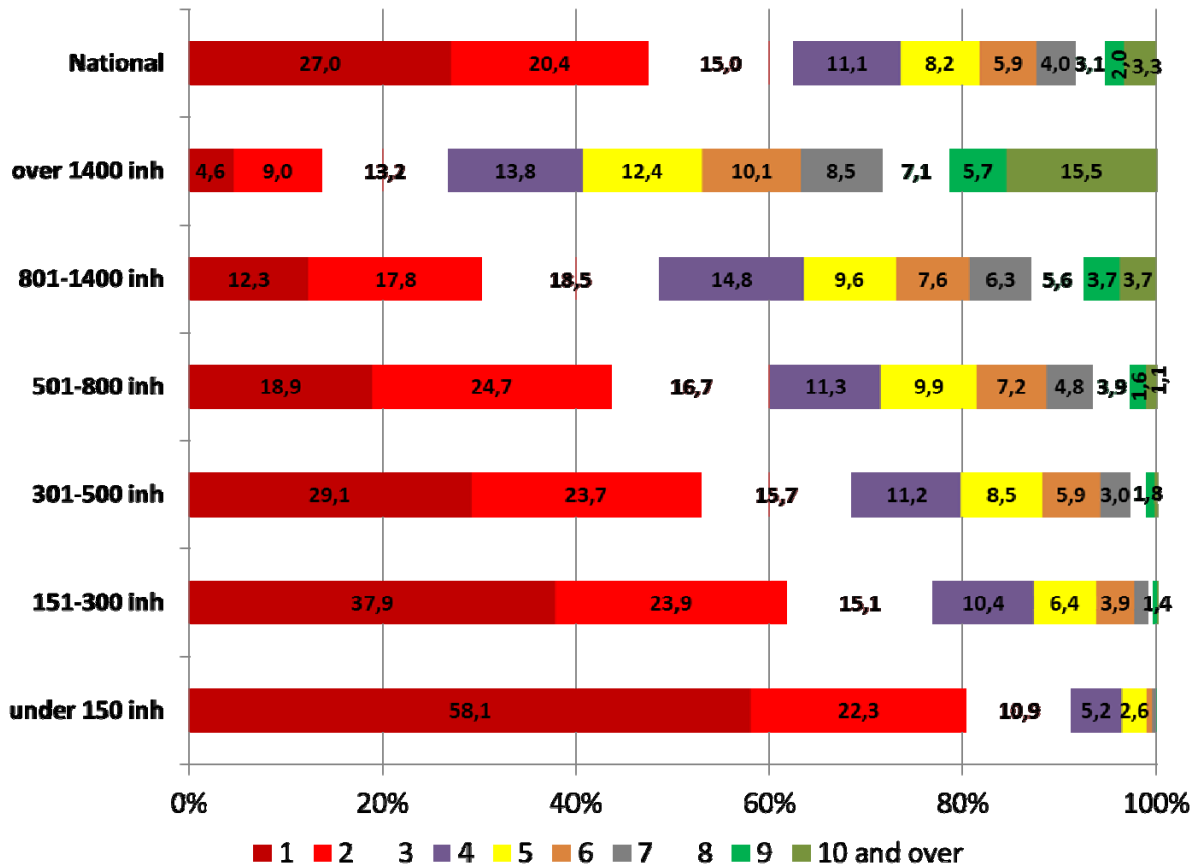


Figure 3. Number of denominations by villages' size

As expected we could notice that there is a direct proportionally connection between the two variables. Thus, while the size of the village increases, the number of its religions tends to increase. The probability for a village under 150 inhabitants to have 6 denominations is 1% but it is constantly increasing with the population volume to a level of 46,9% for a village over 1400 inhabitants. The differences are significant from a statistical viewpoint with a probability bigger than 99,99% (χ^2) even if the Pearson's φ coefficient (0,56) and Crammer's V (0,25) are pointing an average intensity association.

A last approach targeted the number of denominations by the village's region. The outcomes for this grouping are available in Figure 4.

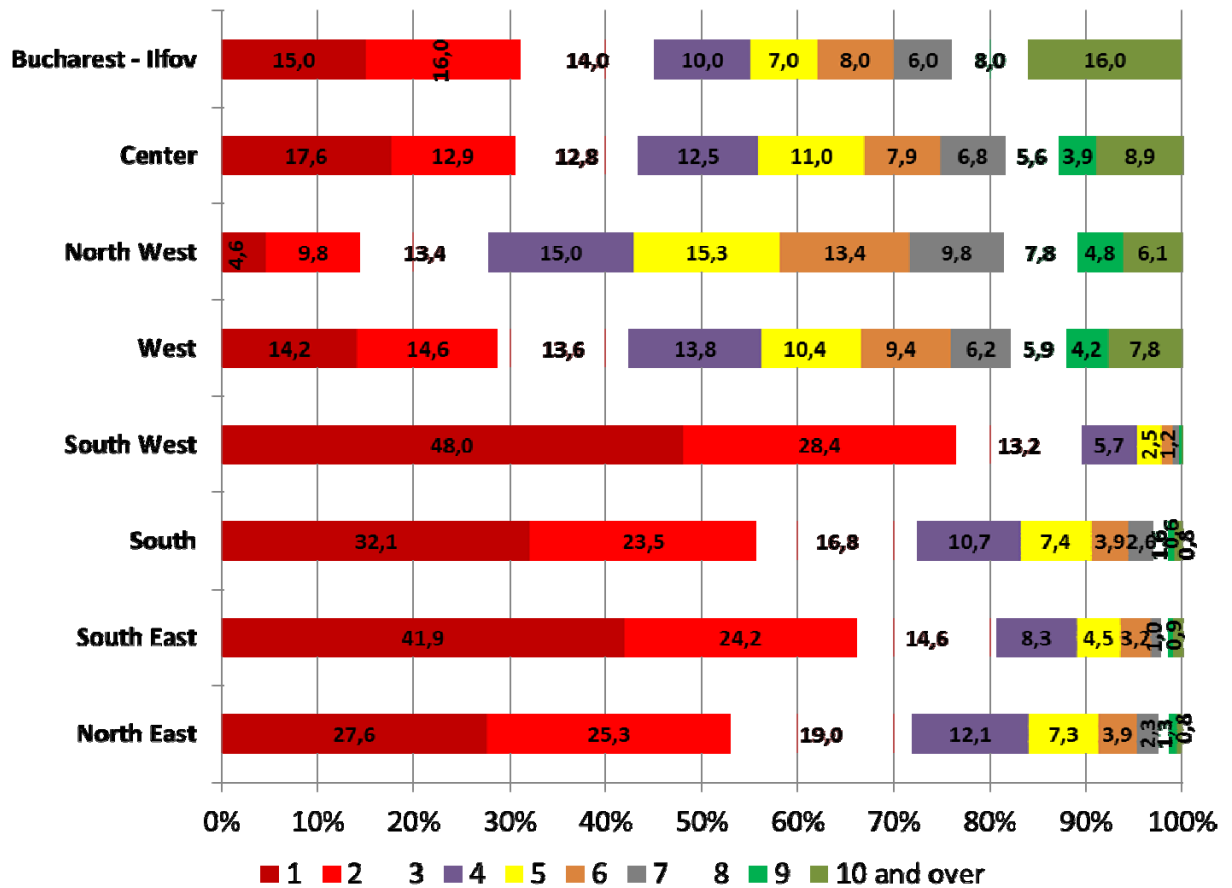


Figure 4. Number of denominations in a village by regions

The differentiations between the development regions are persistent in this case as well. Thus, in the group of the regions with small religious diversity, the probability to meet at most three denominations in a village has a level of 89,6% in South West, 80,7% in South-East and 72,43% in South and 71,84% in North-East. Although from the viewpoint of the domination of one religion the Bucharest-Ilfov region was in the same group, following the proximity to Bucharest, the probability of maximum three denominations in a commune from this region is not bigger than 45%. This level is, rather close to the level of regions with multi-religious tradition. Indeed, the probability of maximum three denominations in a commune has a level of 27,8% for the North West Region, 42,32% for the West Region and 43,35% for Center Region. Moreover, for the last four enumerated regions, the probability of at least 7 denominations in a village is around 25%.

Conclusions

In conclusion we could assess the fact that the preliminary assumptions have been confirmed. Thereby in the villages from outside the Carpathian Arch it is recorded a higher homogeneity from the religious affiliation viewpoint. The villages from Banat and Transylvania (now re-labeled as Center, West and North West regions) have the highest

heterogeneity from a religious viewpoint. This heterogeneity is inducted by the ethnic diversity as well, diversity more pronounced in this geographical area. Another factor which has a positive influence to a village's denominational heterogeneity is the size of the population. Naturally, the villagees with a bigger population have more chances to record more religious groups. However, overall, the religious diversity in the rural area is quite low¹⁰. The Orthodox Church categorically dominates the religious spectrum in the rural area, in almost 92,5% out of the total number of the communes being the main religion. If we ignore the share of each denomination and we simply count the presence of a denomination in a village, the religious effervescence seems to increase. Knowing that the hardest thing is to enter a market, there is the possibility that in a big period of time, the structural mutations of the population, from the religious affiliation point of view, to be more profound and for us to be in front of a painting with different nuances than the present ones.

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² http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/nuts_nomenclature/local_administrative_units

³ Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) in Romania it has the following levels: NUTS1 – Macrorregions, NUTS2 – Development Regions, NUTS3 – Counties. Lower levels are LAU1 (former NUTS4) without a correspondence in Romanian administrative system and LAU2 – communes.

⁴ In Romania, a village cluster forms a commune (having a city hall and one mayor). There are villages directly subordinated to town/cities next located to. Our paper included only rural villages.

⁵ Crosstab statistical groups.

⁶ Many of them are now towns. Knowing the fact that the legal limit of population for starting the transformation process from commune to town is 10 000 inhabitants.

⁷ This process is publicly being debated but has not yet been legislative concretized.

⁸ A village specific for mountain areas where the households are at a considerably distance from one another.

⁹ It almost reaches 30% in Bucharest-Ilfov Region.

¹⁰ In fact, the same specific is present in the urban areas as well.