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The Ethnic and Religious Structure of the Population of the Present-Day Territory of Transcarpathia in 1851

ABSTRACT

In the present study we attempted to ascertain the ethnic and religious structure of the population which in 1851 lived on the territory that is now known as Transcarpathia, based on data from the book by Elek Fényes (*The Geographic Dictionary of Hungary... / Magyarország geographiai szótára...*) published in the same year. According to the results of our research, we can state that the dominant ethnic community of the region at that time were the Rusyns (in Elek Fényes's wording Russians), who lived predominantly in the mountainous territories. An important role in the ethnic structure was also played by Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks and Vlachs (Romanians). As to the religious composition, the most important denomination was that of Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians, who formed an absolute majority in the region, their settlement area showing a close relationship with the location of the Rusyns.

Keywords: Ethnic and religious structure, Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians, Hungarians, Rusyns, Transcarpathia

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INTRODUCTION

Our region, Transcarpathia, is a multiethnic territory. By accepting this fact, we can assume that the religious structure of the area is also varied. Indeed, the territory of today's Transcarpathia is shared among four major and numerous small religious denominations.

Several publications have dealt with the alteration of population numbers in the present-day area of Transcarpathia, as well as with the changes of the ethnic structure in the region. Among them it is important to mention the joint and individual processes of research conducted by József Molnár and István D. Molnár (Molnár & Molnár, 2005; Molnár, 2009; Molnár, 2018), as a result of which extensive analyses were completed regarding the population geography and demographic state of the region. The primary research areas of these investigations were the peculiarities of spatial distribution of the population in general and that of separate ethnic groups in particular. At the same time, information concerning the religious structure of the region's population is much more restricted, which was an important inspiring factor for starting the present research, too. Within the latter topic we have to note the investigational achievements of academician Károly Kocsis (Kocsis, 2016), who has performed and keeps pursuing extensive research dealing with the ethnic and religious structure of the whole Carpathian Basin. Among other recent studies a special position belongs to the results of Patrik Tátrai, József Molnár, Katalin Kovály, and Ágnes Erőss based on the Summa 2017 survey (Tátrai et al., 2017), which provide valuable data about the demographic features of the Transcarpathian Hungarian community (even though these results cannot be extrapolated to the entire population of the present-day county). Furthermore, on the initial stages of the present research we had the opportunity to get acquainted with achievements of other scientific workshops (Pete, 2008; Pap & Tóth, 2008; Zagyi, 2009), which have also inspired us in our investigations.

Authentic data concerning the religious structure of the population that lives in the territory of present-day Transcarpathia are not available since 1941, as in the spirit of the Soviet authorities' atheist policy there was no demand to assess the religious affiliation of the population. Unfortunately, information with regard to the latter was not included in the forms during the only all-Ukrainian population census (2001) so far (though the ethnic / native language affiliation was inquired about). Thus, being short of appropriate and genuine contemporary data, the reconstruction of past-time conditions could provide us with certain reference points on the topic.

Accordingly, the basic aim of our research was to identify the 1851 religious structure of the settlements located in the territory of present-day Transcarpathia and, based on these data, estimate the ethnic composition of the area's population. Our biggest help in this effort was the work *The Geographic Dictionary of Hungary... (Magyarország geographiai szótára...)* by Elek Fényes published in 1851, in which numerical contemporary data are provided regarding the ethnic structure of the population in each settlement, as well as designation(s) of the major ethnic group(s) in them. This four-volume work is the result of the author's previous data-collecting campaign between 1831 and 1835, augmented with the latest data and published in the form of a gazetteer. In addition, Fényes, apart from his own achievements, included various other sources in the gazetteer, for instance, the data collected by Lajos Nagy in 1820 or the numbers of ecclesiastic schematisms from 1830 to 1839-

40. Moreover, the results of the 1850-51 official census (Benda, 1981) are also represented in the work. As in his 1851 writing Elek Fényes did not indicate which of the above mentioned sources had been utilized in the case of a given settlement, we can presume the existence of numerous correlations between these sources (Szaszskóné Sin, 1998), which may serve as a base for another segment of scientific research. Nevertheless, we considered it important to summarize the data from this source for the whole present-day territory of Transcarpathia, as it in itself can significantly extend our knowledge about the contemporary population's geographic situation in the area. The source's data constituting population numbers were systematized by the Microsoft Excel table editor software, on settlement level. Based on the existing databases and with the help of the ArcGIS 10.1 geospatial software, thematic maps of the latter were also created.

METHODS

In the course of our research we were able to collect data about altogether 523 settlements located in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia. As in the source these spatial units were sorted alphabetically, not territorially, in the initial stage of our work we also applied the Hungarian Central Statistical Office's (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, KSH) publication entitled "Data on the religion of Transcarpathia's settlements, 1880–1941" („Kárpátalja településeinek vallási adatai, 1880–1941"). In it, data of the censuses between 1880 and 1941 concerning the religious composition of the population of Transcarpathia's settlement network were summarized. This stage was followed by a thorough piece of literary research, as in the latter source only the currently existing settlements are represented (among them the ones unified in the twentieth century). Thus, the rest of the localities and their respective data had to be searched "manually," one by one. At this stage a remarkable amount of help was provided for us by a work of Sebestény (2020) entitled "Place-names of Transcarpathia" („Kárpátalja helységnevei"), in which the author reviewed the historical settlement structures of the present-day territory of Transcarpathia, among others the one regarding the year 1851.

In Elek Fényes's work published in 1851 the ethnic data of the settlements are restricted to revealing the dominant ethnic group or groups without specifying their numbers. However, as we are in possession of numeric religious composition data of each locality and aware of their major ethnic group(s), we attempted to more precisely determine the contemporary ethnic structure of the investigated settlements. Creating this estimation, we followed these main guidelines:

- the data of Judaists were also separated in terms of nationality;
- members of the Rusyn (consistently called Russians by Elek Fényes) and the Romanian (Vlach) ethnic groups were typically considered Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians, while there were Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians among Hungarians, too;
- of the investigated ethnic groups Calvinism is characteristic exclusively of Hungarians, thus, the entire number of Calvinists (or Reformed people) was classified as Hungarian ethnicity;
- regarding data separation the biggest problems arose in connection with the Roman Catholic denomination:

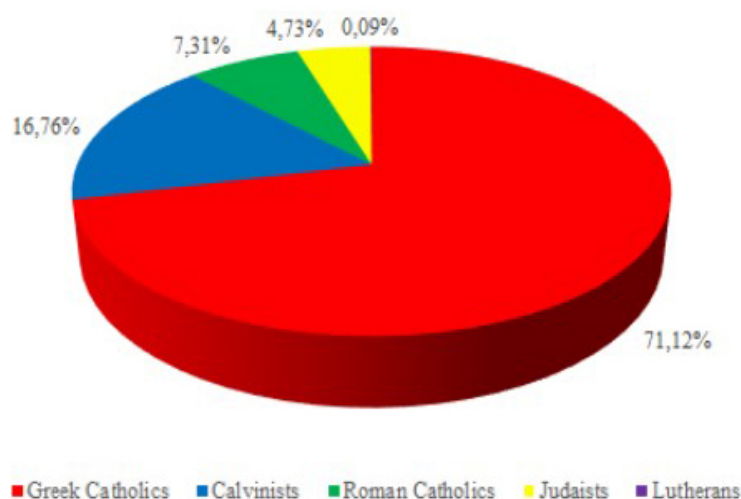
- in the settlements with a German majority Roman Catholics were rated as Germans;
- in the settlements with a Slovak majority we classified them as Slovaks;
- in the settlements with a Hungarian majority they were attributed as Hungarians;
- in cases when in a single settlement two dominant ethnic groups were mentioned in the source, the above principles couldn't help in the denominational division of the population; in such cases we divided the population number according to the order of designation in the 2:1 ratio (for example, Elek Fényes defined Nyzhnia Apsha as a Roman–Rusyn settlement inhabited predominantly by Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox believers, thus, we rated the village as being populated in 2/3 part by Romanians).

RESULTS

General indicators of the ethnic and religious composition of the population

According to the data from 1851 the population of the present-day territory of Transcarpathia came up to 237 337 people. As to the religious composition, Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians were in absolute majority in the region; their ratio exceeded 71 per cent of the total population (Figure 1). Among the other three denominations the most outstanding were Calvinists (about 16.8 per cent), whose share was higher than that of Roman Catholics (7.3 per cent) and Judaists (4.7 per cent) put together.

Figure 1. Distribution of the population in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia by religions in 1851



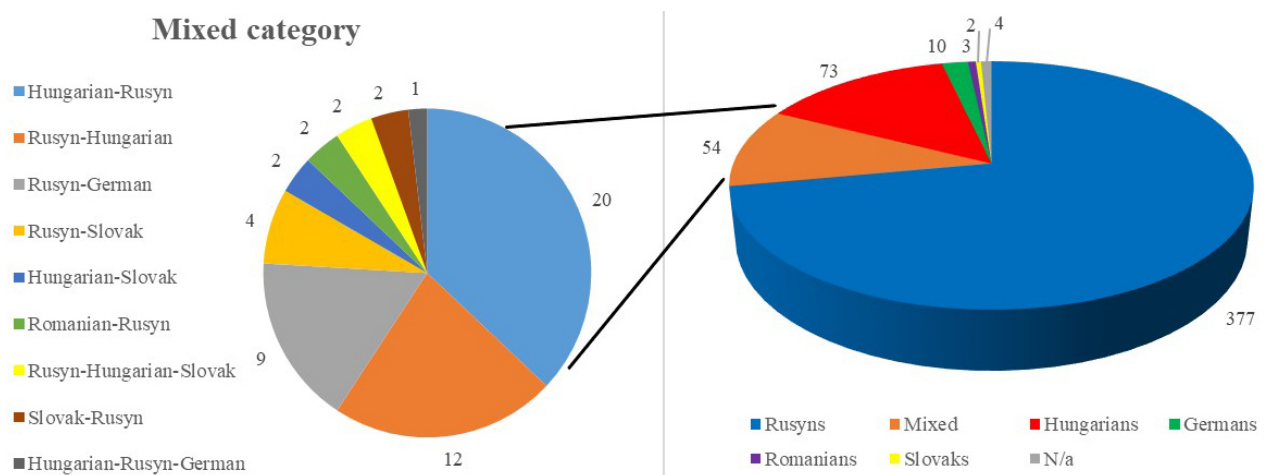
Source: based on Fényes, E., 1851; own edition.

The aggregated data on the designations of dominant ethnic group(s) by settlements are shown in Figure 2. Likewise, as in the case of religious distribution, we can also observe a dominant group in terms of nationalities – the Rusyns. They made up the majority of the population in 377 settlements altogether, which consist 72 per cent of the total number of localities. Meanwhile, a remarkable geographic correlation is detectable between the settlements with a Rusyn majority and the followers of the

Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox religion. What is more, if taking into account the so-called mixed localities, partly inhabited by Rusyns, their number increases to 429, representing 82 per cent of the region's settlement network. According to the data on ethnic composition, second place was taken up by localities with a Hungarian majority (73 altogether), aggregating 14 per cent of all settlements of Transcarpathia. The joint number of localities with other ethnic groups' (Germans, Romanians, Slovaks) majority was evanescent (only 15).

Of particular interest is the so-called mixed category, in which we classified settlements where Elek Fényes specified more than one dominant ethnic group. Altogether 54 localities fell in this category, taking up nearly 10 per cent of the total examined settlement network. A substantial part of these mixed localities was made up by settlements with Rusyn and Hungarian dominance, their integrated number coming up to 32 (regardless of the designation order).

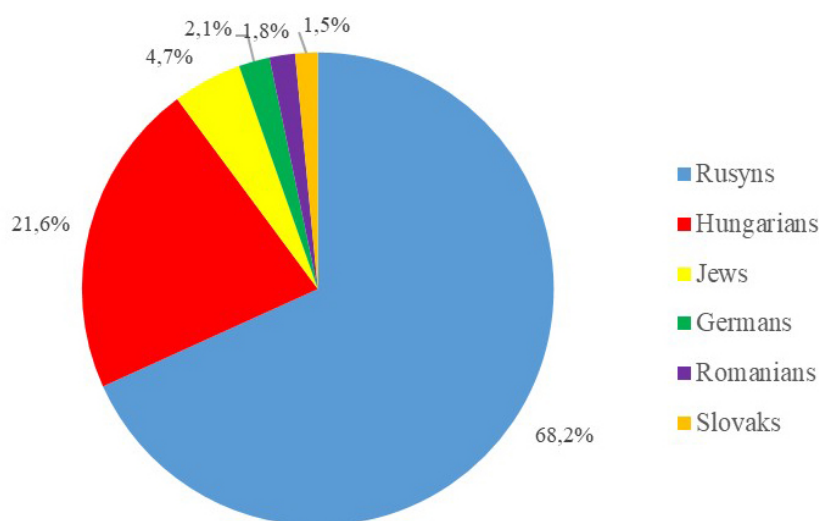
Figure 2. Major ethnic groups of the settlements in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia in 1851



Source: based on Fényes, E., 1851; own edition.

Based on the previously described method, the estimated ethnic composition of the population that lived in the territory of present-day Transcarpathia is depicted in Figure 3. According to it, the examined settlements had altogether 184 862 inhabitants of Rusyn nationality, which corresponds to 68.2 per cent of the total population (i.e., the strong geographic correlation between the Rusyn-majority settlements and the spread of the Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox religion reveals itself again). It is presumable that the biggest concentration of the Rusyn population was characteristic of the city of Ungvár (present-day Uzhhorod). The estimated number of the Hungarian population came up to 58 504 (21.6 per cent), creating its biggest community in the town of Beregszász (Berehove). The number of Jews in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia reached about 12 860 in 1851 (4.7 per cent). The number of German inhabitants, at the same time, was as high as 5742 (2.1 per cent), a significant part of which concentrated in Munkács (Mukachevo) and the neighboring villages, as well as in Kőrösmező (Yasinia) and Nagybecskó (Velykyi Bychkiv). The number of Romanians equaled to 4753 (1.8 per cent – in and around Alsóapsa [Nyzhnia Apsha], Felsőapsa [Verkhnie Vodiane] and Közéapsa [Serednie Vodiane]), while that of the Slovaks came up to 4183 (1.5 per cent – the former Ung county).

Figure 3. Estimated ethnic composition of the present-day territory of Transcarpathia in 1851



Source: based on Fényes, E., 1851; own edition.

Spatial characteristics of the population's religious and ethnic composition

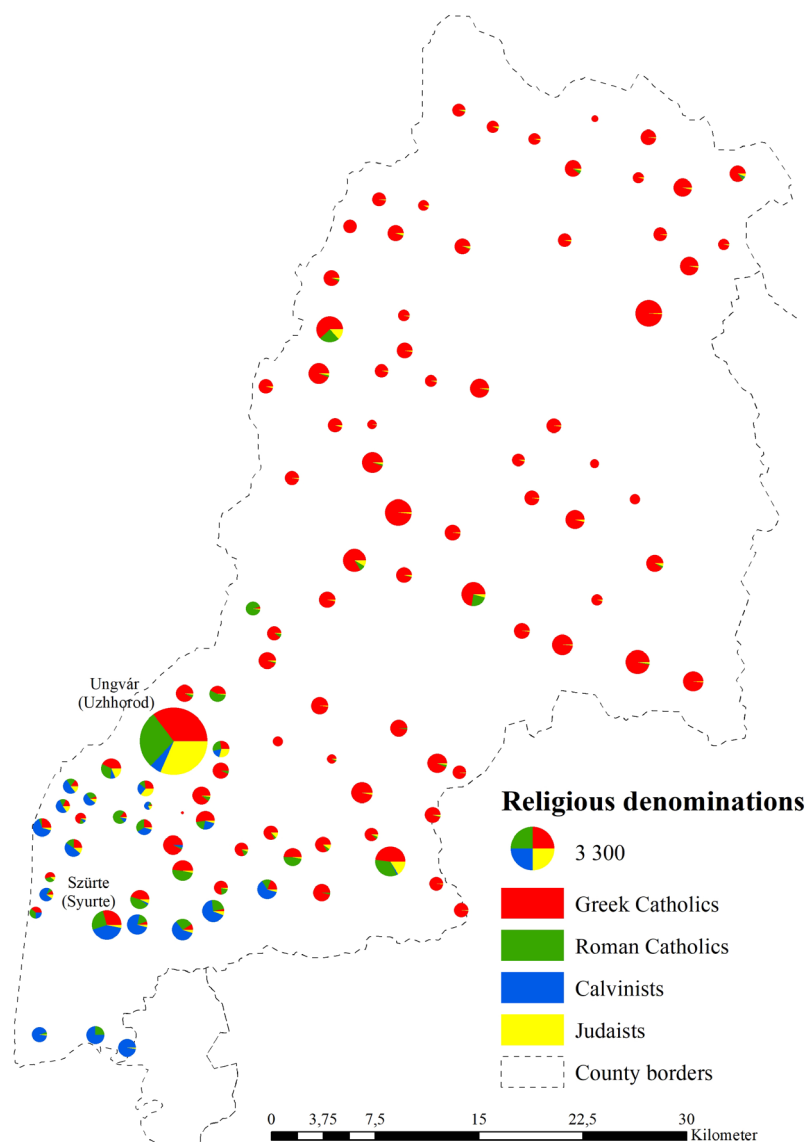
For the sake of a more thorough analysis of the religious and ethnic structure of the region's population, we examined Transcarpathia in a division based on its four former counties.

Ung county

The aggregated population number of the settlements now belonging to Transcarpathia in one-time Ung county made up 60 089 in 1851. According to contemporary administration, we could detect altogether 110 localities within the area (Figure 4), a significant part of which concentrated around the central unit of the settlement network, Ungvár (with 8015 inhabitants at that time), mainly south of the county center (to the north of Ungvár this network considerably rarefied). Examining the distribution of the most important religious denominations we can claim that in 1851 the absolute majority in Ung county belonged to the Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians, who had a proportion of 65 per cent of the total population (39 325 believers). They were followed by the Roman Catholics constituting 14 per cent (8418 members) of inhabitants in the examined territory. It is important to note that the latter indicator's value is well above the all-Transcarpathian average, as the Ung part concentrated 2/5 of all the Roman Catholics living in the region. The share of the Calvinists in Transcarpathia reached as high as 11 per cent (6637 believers), while that of the Judaists equaled to 8.5 per cent (5133 members), which is also above the all-region average (nearly 40 per cent of the Transcarpathian Jews were centered in Ung, of which almost 20 per cent concentrated in the city of Ungvár).

The central role of Ungvár was even more underlined by the fact that it gave place to the largest Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox Christian (2800), Jewish (2500), and Roman Catholic (2214) communities regarding not just Ung county but the entirety of Transcarpathia. The most populous Calvinist fellowship in the county was formed in the village of Szürte (Syrurte, 628 members).

Figure 4. Religious structure of the settlements in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia that belonged to one-time Ung county (1851)



Source: based on Fényes, E., 1851; own edition.

Concerning the estimated distribution of particular ethnic groups it became clear that 64.6 per cent (38 816 people) of the examined population belonged to the Rusyns, 18.2 per cent (10 928) were Hungarians, 8.5 per cent Jews,⁴ and 6.7 per cent (3941) Slovaks. The central role of Ungvár from the ethnic point of view is obvious, too, as the regional center concentrated the largest Rusyn (2800) and Jewish communities in Transcarpathia, as well as the most populous Hungarian one (1547) in Ung county and the most populous Slovak fellowship (1107) in the whole region.

⁴ As in the process of estimation the Jews were separated from both the ethnic and the religious aspect, to avoid recurrences their numeric data will not be designated again at their further mentions in the text

Bereg county

From the territory of one-time Bereg county we could map 241 localities that met the criteria of our research, making up nearly half of the examined settlement network (Figure 5). In 1851 the aggregated population of these localities equaled to 92 179, i.e., this former county of Hungary concentrated 1/3 of the total population of the whole investigation area.

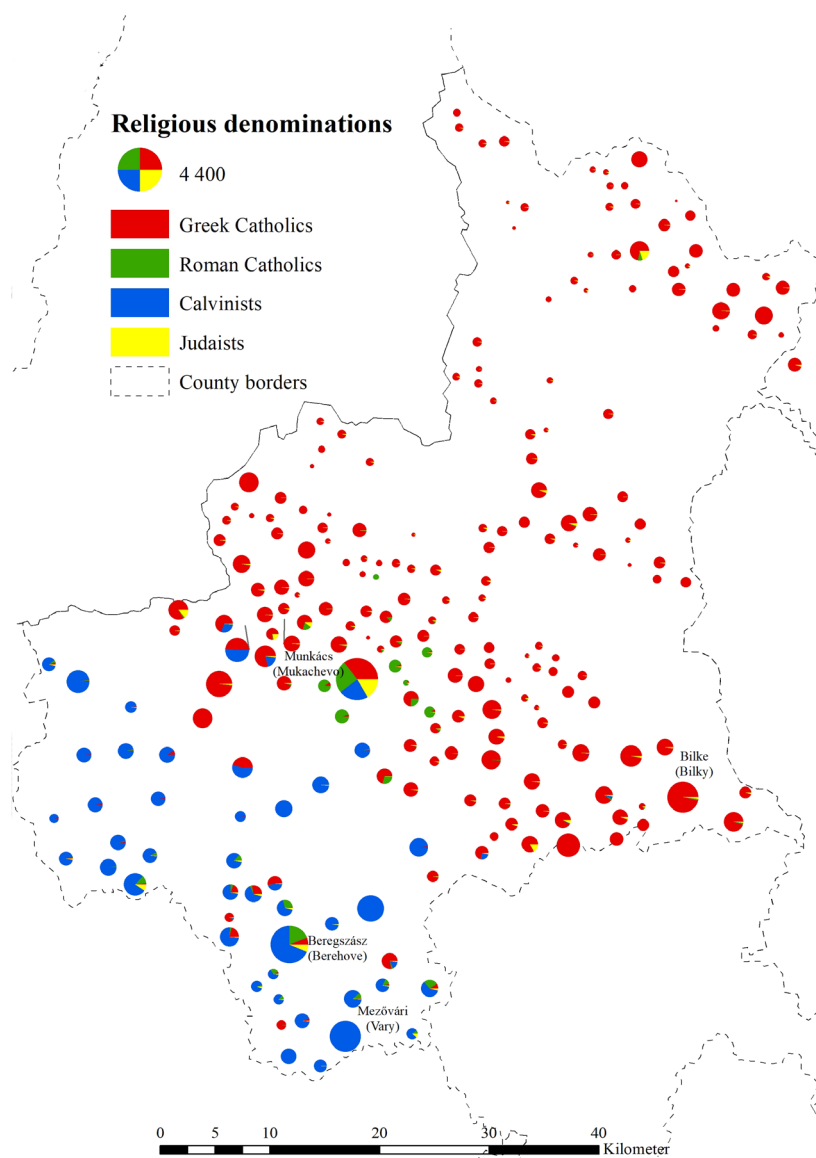
On the top of Bereg county's settlement network were the cities of Munkács (4000) and Beregszász (3184). Regarding the spatial structure of the localities, we have to note that territories with the largest settlement density were located in the broader neighborhood of Munkács: the number of localities was significant both in the northeast and in the southwest direction from the city. To the south of this area, the density of settlements reduced considerably, while moving northward it became sparse.

According to the aggregated denominational composition, Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians also formed the majority in Bereg county, their share reaching as high as 63.1 per cent (or 58 193 believers). The second largest proportion of 25.9 per cent (25 673) belonged to Calvinists, meaning that this former county concentrated 56 per cent of all the Calvinists in Transcarpathia. Roman Catholics made up 5.6 per cent (5221) of the believers, while Judaists 3.2 per cent (2940). Considering the spatial location of particular denominations one can observe substantial differences, as the territory to the south of the line of Munkács is characterized by settlements with a Calvinist majority, while to the north of this line we find localities with the dominance of Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians. At the same time, near Munkács we found a Roman Catholic population array of 6 localities (Pósaháza / present-day Pavshyno, Németkucsova / Kuchava, Felsőkerepecz / Verkhniy Koropets', Alsóschönborn / Shenborn, Zsófiafalva / Sofiia and Nyírhalom / Berezynka), indicating the main settlement area of the ethnic Germans in the region as well.

In 1851, the most populous Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox religious community was located in Bilke / Bilky (2105 believers). Munkács possessed the largest Roman Catholic (980) and Judaist (651) fellowships, while the role of the most important Calvinist center was shared by Beregszász (2175) and Mezővári / Vary (2140).

Regarding the estimated ethnic structure of the population, the general features applied to this area as well: Rusyns were the major ethnic group with a share of 63 per cent (58 122 people), whose most populous community lived in the already mentioned Bilke. The Rusyns were followed by Hungarians with a proportion and number of the latter high above the regional average (30.2 per cent, 27 879 people). The ratio of Jews (2940) and Germans (2918) within the total population is nearly equal (3.2 per cent each). It is important to note that in 1851 one-time Bereg county concentrated more than half of both the Hungarians and Germans who lived in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia. Beregszász was the settlement with the largest Hungarian community (2782 people), while the most populous Jewish and German (980) ethnic groups were found in Munkács.

Figure 5. Religious structure of the settlements in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia that belonged to one-time Bereg county (1851)



Source: based on Fényes, E., 1851; own edition.

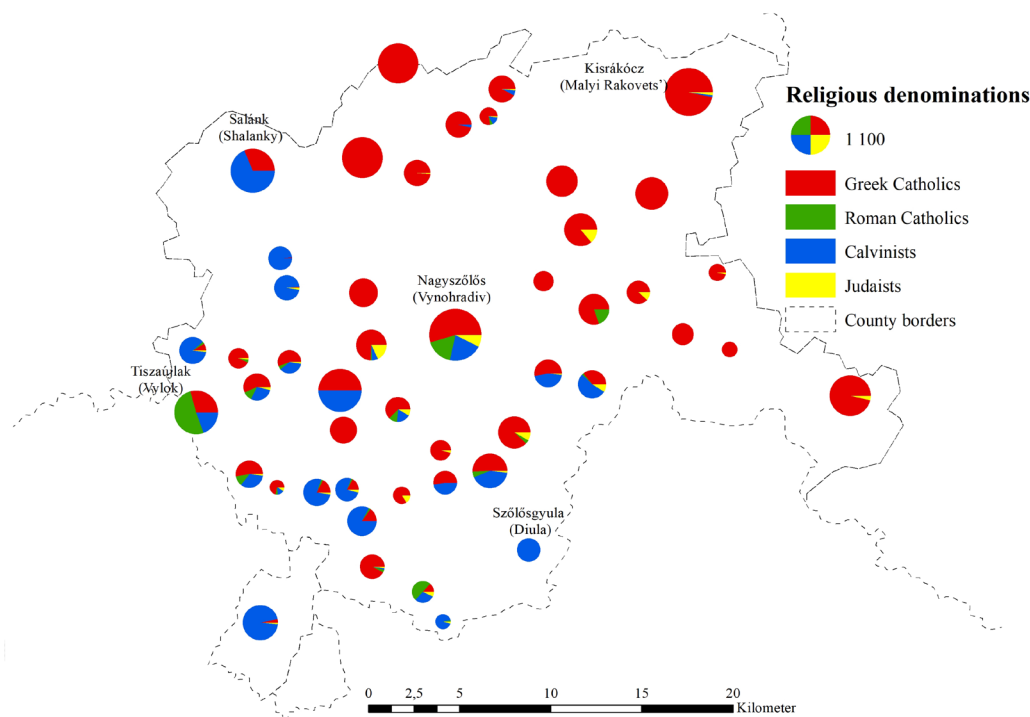
Ugocsa county

From the territory of former Ugocsa county altogether 50 settlements met the criteria of our research (Figure 6), with a total population of 31 803 in 1851. Consequently, Ugocsa possessed the lowest locality and population numbers among all the examined historical spatial units of Transcarpathia. The most populous settlement in the area was Nagyszőlős / Vynohradiv (with 2018 inhabitants), belonging to the group of the so-called country towns.

In the case of the religious structure the proportions we discovered were quite similar to those of Bereg county. The dominant religion here was Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox (65.4 per cent, 20 819 believers) as well, while Calvinists' share came up to 26.6 per cent (6637). The ratios of the Roman Catholic (5.8 per cent, 1859 members) and Judaist (3.0 per cent, 972 members) denominations are close to the regional average.

Concerning the spatial features we need to note a hypothetical fault-line one can draw between the settlements of Salánk (Shalanky) and Szőlősgyula (Diula). Northeast of it we usually met localities with a Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox majority and with population numbers above the average, while southwest of this line small villages with a predominantly Calvinist majority fell into rank.

Figure 6. Religious structure of the settlements in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia that belonged to one-time Ugocsa county (1851)



Source: based on Fényes, E., 1851; own edition.

In 1851, the most populous Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox community in the area was found at Kistrákócz / Malyi Rakovets' (1621 believers). Tiszaújlak (Vylok) gave place to the largest Roman Catholic parish (725 members), whereas the highest number of Calvinists lived in Salánk (987 believers), and the most Jews concentrated in Nagyszőlös (150).

As to the estimated ethnic structure of one-time Ugocsa county we can state that it significantly differs from that of the previously analyzed spatial units. Though the majority here was also formed by Rusyns (55.3 per cent, 17 597 people), their share proved to be 13 per cent below the all-Transcarpathian average. Not surprisingly, the settlement with the largest Rusyn community was Kistrákócz (1621). The proportion of Hungarians equaled to 40.3 per cent (12 824) within the total population, which is nearly twice the regional average. The most populous Hungarian community lived in Salánk (1451) in 1851. The ratio of the Jews coincided with the data of the previously reported religious composition.

Máramaros county

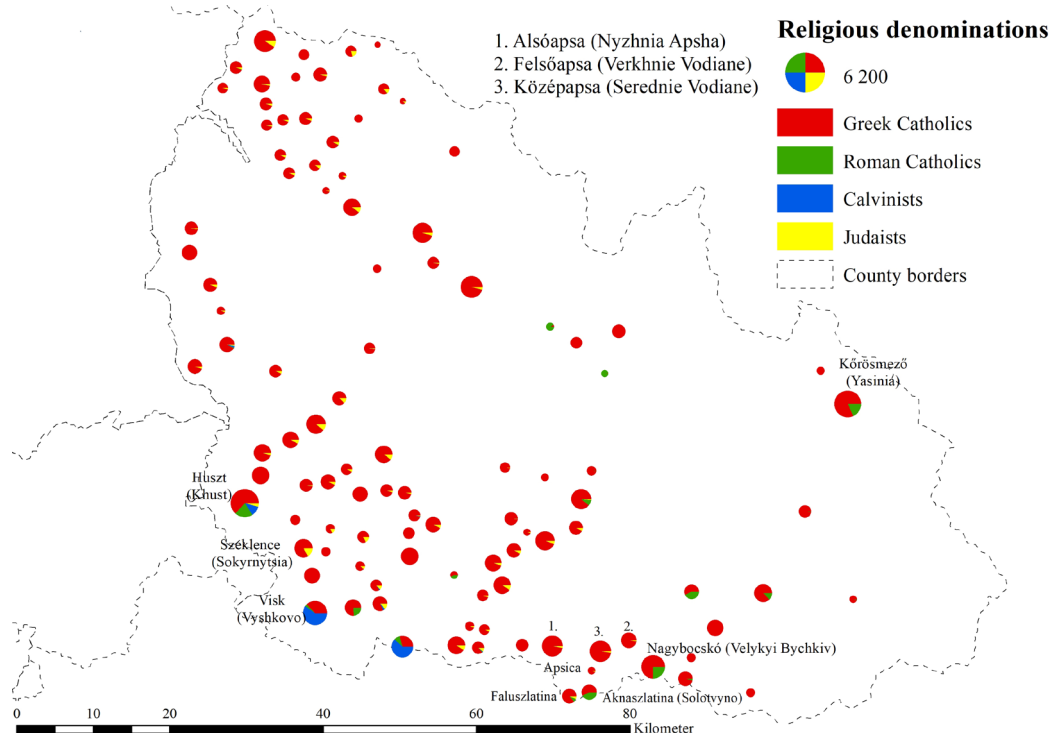
From the territory of former Máramaros county that now belongs to Transcarpathia we examined 117 settlements (Figure 7). Their joint population number is 86 850, that is, the average population

of the localities proved to be the highest here (742 people per settlement). The largest locality in 1851 was Huszt (Khust), with 3101 inhabitants. Most of the villages are located at the lower course of the Tisza (Tysa) River and its tributaries (Tarac / Teresva, Talabor / Tereblia, and Nagyág / Rika), though one can observe a settlement aggregation on the Verkhovyna (mountainous part of the area) as well. Localities belonging to the latter can be characterized by much lower population numbers.

Compared to the previously discussed spatial units, the religious structure of one-time Máramaros county was much more homogeneous, as the share of Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians in the area exceeded 87 per cent (75 641 believers). In other words, 40 per cent of present-day Transcarpathia's Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox population lived in Máramaros. Thereof, ratios of Roman Catholics (5.1 per cent, 4406 believers), Judaists (4.3 per cent, 3799 members), and Calvinists (3.4 per cent, 2981 believers) were much lower than in the cases of all the other former counties.

In 1851 the most populous Greek Catholic/Eastern Orthodox community was found in Kőrösmező (with 2264 believers), while the largest Calvinist congregation functioned in Visk / Vyshkovo (1374 members). In the case of Roman Catholics indices of Huszt stood out (640 believers), as, regarding the number of Judaist inhabitants, Szeklence / Sokyrnytsia (230 members) possessed the number one spot.

Figure 7. Religious structure of the settlements in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia that belonged to one-time Máramaros county (1851)



Source: based on Fényes, E., 1851; own edition.

In fact, the 1851 ethnic structure of Máramaros county's population can be viewed as full of controversies: paradoxically enough, it was homogenous and heterogeneous at the same time. Although Rusyns' proportion of more than 81 per cent (70 083 people) is somewhat lower than that of Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians, it is still well above the average. However, the presence of

the biggest number of “other” nationalities was also detected in Máramaros. For instance, the second largest ethnic group was made up by Romanians (5.5 per cent, 4753 people), who lived in six localities (Alsóapsa, Közéapsa, Felsőapsa, Aknaszlatina / Solotvyno, Faluszlátina, Apsica) altogether. The third place was possessed by Hungarians (5.3 per cent, 4563 people), one-third of whom concentrated in Visk (1446). The share of Germans was as high as 3.3 per cent (2824 people), more than half of which dwelt in Nagybocskó (1627).

CONCLUSIONS

In this study we made an attempt to identify the contemporary ethnic and religious structure of the population of settlements in the present-day territory of Transcarpathia, based on available data from the book by Elek Fényes, *The Geographic Dictionary of Hungary...*, published in 1851.

Considering the results of our research we can state that in those times the dominant ethnic group of the region was that of Rusyns, who lived mainly in the highland areas. Apart from them, important roles in the ethnic composition belonged to Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks, Romanians, and Jews, too.

Regarding the religious structure, the leading denomination were Greek Catholics/Eastern Orthodox Christians, who formed an absolute majority in the region, their settlement area showing a close relation with the location of the Rusyn ethnic group. In the cases of the other examined denominations we found out that, for instance, the decisive majority of Calvinists concentrated on the lowland overlapping the settlement area of Hungarians. The main part of Roman Catholics, in turn, inhabited former Ung county, while a noteworthy proportion of Judaists lived in the bigger cities of the region. Consequently, further research could prove quite beneficial in an attempt to address the following questions:

1. Investigation and utilization of the geographic and demographic dataset from the book by András Vályi *Description of the Hungarian Country (Magyar országnak leírása)*, published in 1796.
2. Improvement and optimization of the estimation method used in the present study.
3. Comparison of the results with the available ecclesiastic (congregational) sources (Fodor et al., 2018).

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