

THE ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS VARIETY OF ARAD CITY – A HISTORICAL INHERITANCE

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Abstract. *The ethnic and religious variety of Arad city – a historical inheritance.* The urbanization necessitates in integrating size owing to the fact that it requires a certain order regarding the population, the activities and the spaces. Being involved in an endless process of organization, the town becomes a ‘melting pot’ for diverse ethnic and social groups. In its history, Arad has been the space in which the integration and assimilation dominated social life. The colonizations as well as the immigrations always constituted the specific phenomena of the urban environment of Arad. Another time the process of integration was supported by the politics of segregation, with specific quarters and administrations each ethnic group. “Integration through segregation”, though paradoxical, was possible because of the politics of the Austrian authority, concerned to ensure social peace – an essential condition of the economic prosperity. While living together in distinct communities, the ethnies were retaining their specific conduct while the process of integration-assimilation required dramatic approaches as it separated within a long time. From a quantitative account the ethnic minorities are in a lower and lower number (in 2002 there are: Romanians 82.7%, Hungarians 13.0%, Germans 1.3%, Serbians 0.5%, as compared with 1930, when there were: Romanians 39.3%, Hungarians 38.8%, Germans 7.9%, Serbians 1.7% etc.). The process of integration or assimilation centered upon the newcomers from other areas of Romania, within the last thirty years a result of the socialism affecting ethnicity, religion and social practices regarding urban conduct and behaviour

Rezumat. *Diversitatea etnică și religioasă a orașului Arad – o moștenire istorică.* Urbanizarea presupune o dimensiune integratoare prin însăși esența sa, în sensul că presupune o ordonare a populației, activităților și a spațiului. Fiind rezultatul unui interminabil proces de organizare, orașul constituie un adevărat labirint social, loc al imigrării, al dezrădăcinării și al afilierii, al dezintegrării și



legăturilor sociale, spațiul unei extreme eterogenități sociale și culturale. Orașul Arad, de-a lungul istoriei sale, a fost spațiul în care integrarea și asimilarea au constituit dimensiuni de prim ordin ale vieții sociale. Colonizările precum și imigrările au fost întotdeauna un fenomen specific mediului urban al orașului Arad. Un anumit timp procesul integrării a fost supus unei anumite politici de segregare, etniile locuind în cartiere distincte administrate separat. „Integrarea prin segregare” deși pare paradoxală a fost posibilă datorită politicii administrației austriece interesată în asigurarea păcii sociale, condiție esențială a prosperității economice. Conviețuind în comunități distincte, etniile își păstrau specificul, iar procesul integrării era lipsit de abordări dramatice, fiind sedimentat într-un timp îndelungat. Din punct de vedere cantitativ minoritățile etnice au evoluat spre o pondere din ce în ce mai redusă (în 2002, români 82,7%, maghiari 13,0%, germani 1,3%, sârbi 0,5% față de anul 1930 când se înregistrau 39,3% - români, 38,8% - maghiari, 7,9% - germani, 1,7% - sârbi etc.). Procesul integrării și asimilării noilor veniți din alte zone ale României nu mai are legătură cu dimensiunea etnică sau religioasă însă diversitatea, mult mai complexă, se ascunde în la nivelul automatismelor și comportamentelor sociale.

Key-words: *urban space, ethnies, religious, integration, assimilation, Arad.*

Cuvinte cheie: *spațiu urban, etnie, religie, integrare, asimilare, Arad.*

1. GENERAL APPRECIATIONS

Placed at the interpenetration of the central European area with the Balkan one, Romania is characterized by an outstanding cultural variety. The Romanian specific nature may thus be approximated as like a “*fluid synthesis*”¹ by various features. During the recent epoch, the great social reorganizations, as well as the operation that was exerted by the national authority on its constitutive elements did not cease to model and remodel the Romanians. The issue is especially dealt with from a social point of view. The city, as a size of the Romanian civilization, necessitates certain nuances regarding the evolution and features of its present day countenance. The towns in Transylvania and Banat especially, which were greatly inhabited for a long time by other ethnical peoples, except Romanians (the Hungarians and Germans) flummox the schemes of the Romanian town – planning environment’s peculiarity.

Unlike the rural area which is much more homogeneous, the Romanian town environment represented a multi-shaped reality for a long time the spot of an extreme social and cultural dissimilarity. The *cosmopolitan city*, which was so typical for the Romanian area years ago, was the sphere of some ample processes of communication, integrate and findly the so-called agreement of one another and by means of this, the variety on the whole. Setted down in the city, the strangers have discharge economic and social positions for a long time, while the Romanians, either peasants or noblemers could not take them but to a certain extent.

The cosmopolitan city thus joined to the predominantly rural structure of the Romanian society, obviously taking part to the Romanian synthesis, but in a specific way whose approach is quite complex.

¹ *According to Lucian Boia, 1997*

2. THE ETHNICAL AND RELIGIOUS INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

From the statistical point of view, the ethnical and religious variety was a quite obvious reality of Arad until 1950. More than ten years after the setting up of the “Great Romania”, the ethnical space of the town was inhabited almost equally by Romanians and Hungarians, each of these ones with one third from the entire population. This was the natural result of the political and social determinations which influenced the city during the past years.

Being considered until the 19th century an important town for the Austro-Hungarian crown, Arad was the spot foredoomed to the strategical and political concerns of the Habsburg’s society. The mercenary spirit and the colonizations were the essential issues of the Austro-Hungarian’s policy in Banat and Arad areas. Although large in number’s the colonizations could not change the entire Romanian structure of Banat region, but they had great implications within the economic and social development of the region. Other new jobs were added to the traditional ones, especially of manufacturing or industrial type while the old ones were adapted to the new requirements. The town was subjected to some great systematizing and modernizing projects, at the end of which Arad became an European city both from a urban and social point of view.

The historical fairness, based on long and honest investigations compels everyone to ascertain the important part played by the House of Habsburg on the complex development of Banat and Arad as a present day reality and not like a counter weight to the current misunderstandings or even the earlier ones between the Romanians and Hungarians.

From the social point of view, the policy of the Austrian administration meant for Arad a copious practice of historical, religious and peaceful life together. Thus, the process of integration meant all this time the first / class size of the social life. The four main ethnical civilizations of the city (Germans, Romanians, Hungarians, Serbians) were living in separate districts, each of them being led by distinct administrations.

“*The integration through segregation*”, although it seems to be paradoxical, could appear owing to the policy of the Austrian administration, that was interested in the safeguard of the social peace, as prerequisite of the economic flowering. Living together in separate communities, the ethnical civilization kept their specific nature, but the process of integration, being sedimented within a long period of time, was deprived of dramatic approaches.

The process of integration continued until 1867 when it began to acquire signs of assimilation, first from the Hungarians (Arad would belong to the Hungarian kingdom of a national type) and since 1918, from the Romanians. The responsibility of such evolutions devolved upon the *national state*, which becomes an obvious reality of Europe at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Everywhere the national state proved to be assimilable. Inside the Romanian borders, the lawful rule operate to the Romanians’ advantage, while outside the frontiers, according to the same logical thing, it operated against them.²

² L. Boia, 1997, p. 217

Facing with the problem of ethnical integration and assimilation in the city of Arad and being concerned with the present day situation from a statistical point of view no one express categorical conclusions. One estimate however that now, from this standpoint, the ethnical variety is no longer one of the major social background of Timisoara (e.g. 2002: 82.7% Romanians, 13.0% Hungarians, 2.3% Germans, 1.3% Serbians...). Beginning with 1851, after numerical increase between 1851-1930, the Hungarian ethnical minority maintained on a constant position. The same thing may be also said as regards the Serbian ethnical group. The most drastic decrease happened to the German ethnical (a diminution of more than twice between 1977-1992) determined by the departure of the above – mentioned to Germany after 1989, (Table 1).

Table 1. Ethnical structure evolution of Arad population

Year	Romanians		Hungarians		Germans		Serbians		All ethnies		Total population
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	
1880	9.401	20,7	20.710	45,8	10.803	23,9	1.722	3,8	2.563	5,8	45.199
1900	13.810	19,9	40.413	58,3	12.843	18,5	1.430	2,0	811	1,3	69.307
1910	14.949	19,3	48.761	62,9	11.320	14,6	1.885	2,4	627	0,8	77.542
1930	30.370	39,3	29.971	38,8	6.130	7,9 ³	1.323	1,7	9.387	12,3 ⁴	77.181
1941	41.925	44,4	27.518	29,1	13.487	14,2	?	?	11.490	12,1	94.420
1966	82.546	65,6	27.557	21,9	8.305	6,6	881	0,7	6.543	5,2	125.832
1977	124.799	72,9	30.644	17,9	8.217	4,8	514	0,3	7.019	4,1	171.193
1992	151.143	79,7	29.797	15,7	4.126	2,2	997	0,5	3.763	1,9 ⁵	190.114
2002	1142.969	82,7	22.492	13,0	2.247	1,3	605	0,4	4.515	2,6 ⁶	172.827

Source: *Census of population 1880-2002*

With such assessments, a clear cut discussion concerning the variety of the ethnical groups and their role inside the town area of Arad cannot take place nowadays any longer from the central – European position typical for the past century. Today's cultural townscape of Arad gives birth to an ethnical variety perceived only as an *inheritance*, in the architectural area and in the behavioural manner of a limited group from the population of the city.

The linguistic variety demonstrated by the cognition of at least three languages (Romanian, German, Hungarian) is nowadays rare enough and the literary and artistic creation of the four ethnical groups of the city has only an intracommunitarian spreading. But the prestige of the education of German kind is kept (being considered a vigrous and of principle), thus lots of Romanian parents or another ethnical group wishing their children's joining to the schools where German language is taught. There are local newspapers as well as radio and television broadcasts in the national minorities' language but their impact on the Romanian majority is reduced enough. The cultural approach of the important ethnical groups in Timisoara is more like a maintenance than an affirmation.

For the ethnical groups from Arad "the dilemma":⁷ a cooperation with the nation of majority accompanied by the custody of its own autonomy, or the desertion of its historical

³ Not included quarters: *Aradul Nou, Mureşel and Sânnicolaul Mic*

⁴ Inklusiv 9.1% Hebrews

⁵ Inklusiv 1,1% gipsies

⁶ Inklusiv 1,7% gipsies

identity in an assimilation's advantage that is more or less grievous concerning the majority seems to be solved for the latter's advantage.

As regards the religious variety, in Arad the situation was similar to a certain extent to that of the ethnical groups until the second half of our century. The weight of the four more important religious creeds in 2002 – the Orthodoxes 72.7%, the Roman-Catholics 12.1%, the Reformats 3.1%, the Greek-Catholics – proves us highly about their part played in the town planning past of Arad. Until 1918 the Roman-Catholic religion was predominant in Arad from the institutional standpoint, an obvious thing especially, through the sizes of the worship establishments. The Romanian orthodox people though more numerous, were found until 1918 under the hegemony of the Serbian Orthodox Church. After the setting up of the Romanian integrated National State the affirmation of the Romanian orthodoxism also took place as a religion of the national majority and this continued until the middle of the 20th century, (Table 2).

Table 2. Religious structure evolution of Arad population

Denomination	1880		1930		1992		2002	
	Abs. val.	%	Abs. val.	%	Abs. val.	%	Abs. val.	%
Orthodox	11.494	25,4	26.066	33,8	136.403	71,7	125.645	72,7
Greek-catholic	627	1,3	3.081	4,0	2.121	1,1	1.730	1,0
Romano-catholic	24.394	54,0	29.695	38,5	27.838	14,6	20.912	12,1
Reformat	3.166	7,0	7.661	9,9	7.216	3,7	5.358	3,1
Evangelical	992	2,2	2.033	2,6	546	0,3	691	0,4
Unitarian	15	0,1	84	0,1	109	0,1	346	0,2
Baptist	-	-	505	0,7	7.487	3,9	7.777	4,5
Penticostal	-	-	-	-	5.449	2,9	7.604	4,4
Mosaic	4.480	9,9	7.801	10,1	289	0,2	176	0,1
All denomination	31	0,1	255	0,3	2.656	1,5	2.588	1,5
Total population	<i>45.199</i>	100	<i>77.181</i>	100	<i>190.114</i>	100	<i>172.827</i>	100

Source: *Census of population (1880, 1930, 1992, 2002)*

Passing through the general phenomenon of the social standardization during the communist epoch, the religious variety cannot make up a major size any more nowadays. However, one can notice the singular position of the metropolitan church in Banat within Romanian Orthodox Church an obvious peculiarity especially by giving up the jingoistic discourse, then the elasticity concerning the problem of the retrocession of the cultured establishments belonging to the Greek-Catholics, the promotion of certain ecumenical principles in close relationship with other denominations.

Beyond the fact that in Arad there is a genuine reciprocal tolerance among the denominations, the general note is given, however, by a certain isolation of each denomination within its own structure and an absence of communication between them.

⁷ A. Corbea, 1997

3. THE SOCIAL SPACE OF THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

The urbane town scape of contemporary city of Arad still keeps the appearances of a central-European city with its backgrounds vigorously geometrical and dominated by cathedrals, with its architectural style with a quitedynamic cultural life. Yet the social town scape fades away from this central-European vision. During the last four centuries it was subjected to the socialist outlook of town – planning development. From the social standpoint, the city of Arad underwent changes of the same stadardization like all the cities in Romania.

The ethos of Arad is still mistaken to the western-European one bazed on the protestant etics of people’s individualism, on the justification of the human existance by work, achievements, self-discipline, moral and material perfectibility. As a matter of fact, as V. Nemoianu⁸ has also stated (1997), the central-European ethos (from which the one of Arad also derives) is based entirely on another orientation marked by the way in which the relationship between the local interests and the general ones. From the way how this relation between the private interests and the community are conceived or the relation between the local interests and the collective ones are solved within the city results what “its standard of civilization” is called in general. As a heirsch of a federalist tradition in which the harmonization of the peculiar entities was in view under the supervizion of a general interest, Arad appears more town planning and “civilized” seen in comparison with other cities especially in the former “Old Kingdom”.

In fact, otherwise, the social organization of the present day city of Timisoara does not keep community spirit but only in a small scale. Being concerned with a massive immigration, especially during the last two decades, from the least urbanized areas of Romania (namely Moldavia, Oltenia, Maramures, The Apuseni Mountains), the social state authority underwent profound changes. That divizion into fragments “on a horizontal line” of the social organization of Arad that was essential until the 1950s, was replaced by a breaking up, not “**vertically**”, as it typical for the advanced societies, but “**on an underground line**” at the standard of the peoples outlooks and behaviours.

The question, here, in this spirit is in what measure the people who setted in what measure the people who setted in Arad as a result of the massive immigrations during the last three decades succeeded in fitting in the town environment characteristic to the city. From the assimilation standpoint for the considerable groups of strangers who came, Arad proved to be welcoming enough. The people’s outlook from Arad is not reserved at the life together with the strangers. Arad was always a wide open city, having ceaselessly fluctuations of population. Therefore, although as a component element, the difference between the inhabitants and non-inhabitants from bant still persists in the people’s consciousness in the city, the strangers are not regarded with hostility and distrust. The city has never had a rather close community, so that the massive migrations might cause a certain rection of defence, hostility or delimitation.

The historical evolution of the city of Arad generated a greater number of town nucleus which have developed independently for a long time. At present, from the point of view of the town behavioral civilization, we could make a clear - cut distinction only between the inhabitants of these above – mentioned nucleuss (historical quarters) and the

⁸ V. Nemoianu in „Europa Centrală. Nevroze, dileme, utopii”, 1997

newly built districts after 1944. Even though there is not a well - defined town behaviour on the basis of the direct long watching, at least the following social groups can be identified in Arad:

1. A group of the “*ancient inhabitants of Arad*” who were well – placed into the historical reality of the city, with the town values’consciousness, with a conspicuous civil and political enthusiasm and endeavour.

2. The group of the “*inhabitants from Crişana and Banat*”, the natives from the rural area of Banat and Crişana, settled down in Arad, during the last two to four decades with a noteworthy sense of property, having a certain kind of selfishness, but unplaced to the urbane and civil sizes of the city.

3. The group of the “*inhabitants from the outside of Banat and Crişana*” includes the large number of those who came in the city from other parts of Western Romania after 1965 and it is divided into two subgroups:

- a. the *intellectuals*’one, that is easily fitted in the system of the city’s civil and town-planning values, but heterogeneous from the social and political options standpoint, being an enough limited group;

- b. the group of “*workers peasants*”, natives from the deeply areas of Romania, that are not adapted to the exigencies of the town life yet, without the consciousness of the civil values of the city, idle from the political point of view and with important social claims.

Having no certainly for exact delimitations, the “ancient settlers of Arad” live especially in the historical districts (Centru, “Drăgăşani”, Pârneava), then the “settlers from Crişana and Banat” have private estates chiefly in the suburban quarters of the city (Gai, Aradul Nou, Sânnicolaul Mic, Bujac), the “inhabitants of the outside area of Banat and Crişana” (including the intellectuals) in the workers’newly built quarters (Micălaca, Aurel Vlaicu, Alfa etc.).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the integration and assimilation in the town space of Arad assumes multiple and vast inscape approaches. From everything that was mentioned above, we could infer that from the ethnical and religious point of view the integration cleared space gradually to the Romanian assimilation. But the city already maintained a cultural multi-ethnical inheritance which still proves to be intense especially concerning the architecture and the observance of unspoiling within the social relationship. As regards the behavioral integration and assimilation of the newcomers after 1945, the situation is still ambiguous. Several town nucleuss persist on (the historical districts) and are involved, however, in a considerable number of “slum” quarters (even though they are inside a changed background, that of the blocks of flats), each of these entites having its own spirital, cultural and behavioural configuration. These elements may offer even “ideal patterns” of social typology, but only provided that they should foresee that inside these models the variety also lasts.

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