

## THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS MIGRATIONS IN THE EVOLUTION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE BANAT MOUNTAINS (II)

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**Abstract:** *The Role of Religious Migrations in the Evolution of Local Communities in the Banat Mountains (II).* Religious migration is a specific type of migration, one of the oldest that exist, and is directly or indirectly connected to the development of a religious system in a given territory. Religious migration takes into account the amount of population movements in a territory, from religious reasons, such as: missionaryism, religious persecutions, pilgrimages etc. On the other hand, indirectly speaking, migrations with religious character also mean the movements of populations with different religions from one territory to another, fact that leads to substantial modifying of demographical structure. Religious migrations had and still have an important role in the evolution of the religious phenomenon all over the world, ensuring a dynamic character to major and minor religions. Religious missions, which are a specific form of confessional migration represent a complex historical and geographical phenomenon, that is worth being carefully studied, as it illustrates a series of aspects regarding the geographical dimension of a religion. Therefore, the geographical analysis of the missionary movement offers a series of clues regarding the development of religious communities, the impact that a newly appeared belief can generate on the mental and social space, with all the consequences that this fact can have in the system of values, in the demographical structure or in the inter-confessional relationships. From the analysis of the *missionary journeys* that took place in time, one can notice that the paths these journeys followed have been influenced by relief configuration, especially by valleys and mountain ravines, by the direction of travel axes, as well as by missionary centres (of emission) and work spots (of reception). At times, there were junction points or ports of call, under the circumstances in which the report between time and distance was highly different from the one known to us today.



**Rezumat:** *Rolul migrațiilor religioase în evoluția comunităților locale din Munții Banatului (II).* Migrația religioasă este un tip specific de migrație, una dintre cele mai vechi, de altfel, legată direct sau indirect de dezvoltarea unui sistem religios, într-un teritoriu dat. Migrația religioasă are în vedere totalitatea deplasărilor populației în teritoriu, din considerente legate de religie, cum ar fi: misionarismul, persecuțiile religioase, pelerinajele etc. În mod indirect, migrațiile cu caracter religios sunt și deplasările de populații cu religii diferite, dintr-un teritoriu într-altul, având ca rezultat modificarea substanțială a structurii demo-religioase. Migrațiile religioase au avut și încă au un rol major în evoluția fenomenului religios pe glob, asigurând religiilor majore și minore, un caracter dinamic. Misiunile religioase se, formă specifică de migrație confesională, constituie ca un fenomen istorico-geografic complex, care merită a fi studiat cu mare atenție, deoarece acestea ilustrează o serie de aspecte privind dimensiunea geografică a unei religii. În acest sens, analiza geografică a mișcării misionare oferă o serie de indicii referitoare la dezvoltarea comunităților religioase, impactul pe care o convingere nou apărută îl poate avea asupra spațiului mental și social, cu toate repercusiunile generate în planul valoric, structura demografică, relațiile interconfesionale etc. Din analiza "călătoriilor misionare" care au avut loc în Munții Banatului, de-a lungul timpului, se poate observa că traseele acestora au fost influențate de configurația reliefului, în special văile și trecătorile montane, direcția axelor de circulație, precum și centrele misionare (de emisie), respectiv punctele de lucru (de recepție), existând uneori și puncte nodale sau localități de escală, în condițiile în care raportul durată / distanță era mult diferit de cel actual .

**Key words:** *religious migration, population, mission, confession, religious community.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *migrații religioase, populație, misiune, confesiune, comunitate religioasă.*

## 1. TYPES AND FORMS OF RELIGIOUS MISSION IN THE BANAT MOUNTAINS

We will present further mainstream forms of missionary activity and specific religious communities working in the Banat Mountains area, namely their impact on space. Before this, we must point out that the very concept of mission has different connotations from one denomination to another. Thus, for historical religions, the mission is understood as any form of religious activity aimed at the manifestation of faith in public (humanitarian, cultural, religious, ecclesiastical visits), while the neo-cults, refers exclusively to propagation of religious beliefs outside of that community rather than church visits, with a more pronounced spatial character, making it more obvious the character of territorial mobility of the religious population. Conceptual differences have an impact on specific missionary, some are local, while others are regional, national or even international, also vary the degree of organization and number of people actually involved. The historical religions, secular missionary committed parishioners, while the neo-cults, there is not a clear distinction, though in some cases "missionaries ordained" by "churches - the mother" for the action of "planting" churches in so-called "unreached areas". Religious missions, of course, is the "spearhead" of a confession, the element that ensures vitality and meaning in social, dynamics and force in contact with the tendency of secularism of society, hence the expression "a church that does not work, resign", she loses relevance and purpose to exist.

Before the Great Schism (1054), missionary activities had a Christian character, with specific elements of the East and West, aiming to spread the teachings of Christ in the lands from the north of the Danube, to Scythia Minor, as shown by archaeological finds

(Orsova, Baile Herculane, Dubova, Garnic, etc.). The first Christian missionary with great activity in the Banat region is considered Nicetas of Remisiana, who lived around the years 340-415, he wrote to his friend Paulinus of Nola, two poems (letters) on preaching the new faith "in the five Dacia" so in this area too (ID Suci, 1977). In antiquity, there were other bishops held responsible for Christian mission in the Banat, the Singidunum and Sirmium, supported perhaps by the bishops of Remisiana.

Between 535-731, Justina Prima Archdiocese coordinate missionary activity to the left of the Danube, on the present territory of Banat, as the eleventh century to enable center of Eastern Rite church Tibiscum - Jupa. Missionary activity becomes more complex, with obvious conflicting accents once with the separation of Rome to Constantinople, missionaries of both sides are meeting in the Banat region, the interference of political powers of the time in winning adherents from among the local population, having a major role Episcopal monastic establishments and centers (Mehadia, Caransebes, Vrsac, Cenad Maidan, Orsova, Varadi, Timisoara). One of the most intense missionary propaganda of Catholicism was initiated by establishing juvenile monks at Caransebes, in 1372, reflected by the degree of Sigismund of Luxembourg on December 5, 1428, at which point they stop missionary activities and religious center of the Mehadia (ID Suci, 1977).

An important impact on ethno-religious structure of the population of Banat Serbs had immigration, identifying historians in this respect, several stages beginning with the XIV century, under Louis I and ends with the wave of 1737, under the leadership of Arsenie Ianovici Şakabent, giving them rights to build churches and monasteries, such as those in Bazias, Ogradena and Zlata, the Danube Gorge.

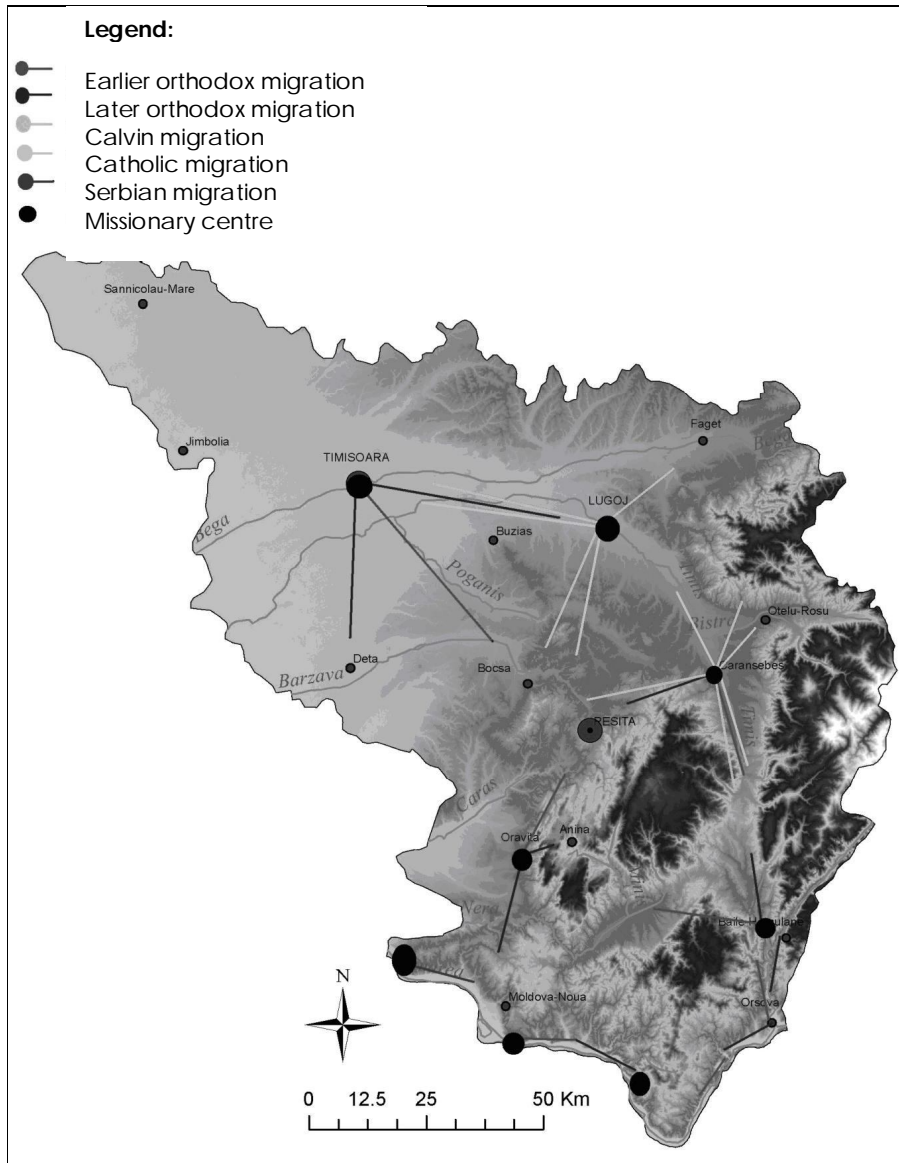
In the sixteenth century are following the migration with missionary character of the Reformation, especially Hussite and Calvin, who came to the Caransebes-Lugoj during Zapolya John Sigismund. Calvinist preachers are mentioned known as Stephen Herce, Pestisel Moses, Stephen Fogarasi.

The analysis of "missionary journeys" that took place in the Banat Mountains, over time, we can see that their paths were influenced by landscape configuration, especially the valleys and mountain passes, the direction of axes of movement, as well as missionary centers (emission) and workstations (receiver), sometimes there are nodal points or places of call, while the report length / distance was much different from today (Figure 1). In this way, we note the role of missionary axis whom had valleys Timis, Caras, Nera, Cerna, Danube Gorge and the Țărova, Domasnea, Steierdorf, the spread of religious beliefs, especially by mid-century twentieth century, when it began development of road infrastructure. A contributing factor for the central-western Banat Mountains had build the first railway in Romania, Anina-Oravita - Baziaş which was exploited for the diffusion of religions emerged in the mid nineteenth century and mid twentieth century. Subsequently, forms and types have diversified religious mission, new means and methods appearing in spreading beliefs so that we can distinguish between the traditional and the modern type.

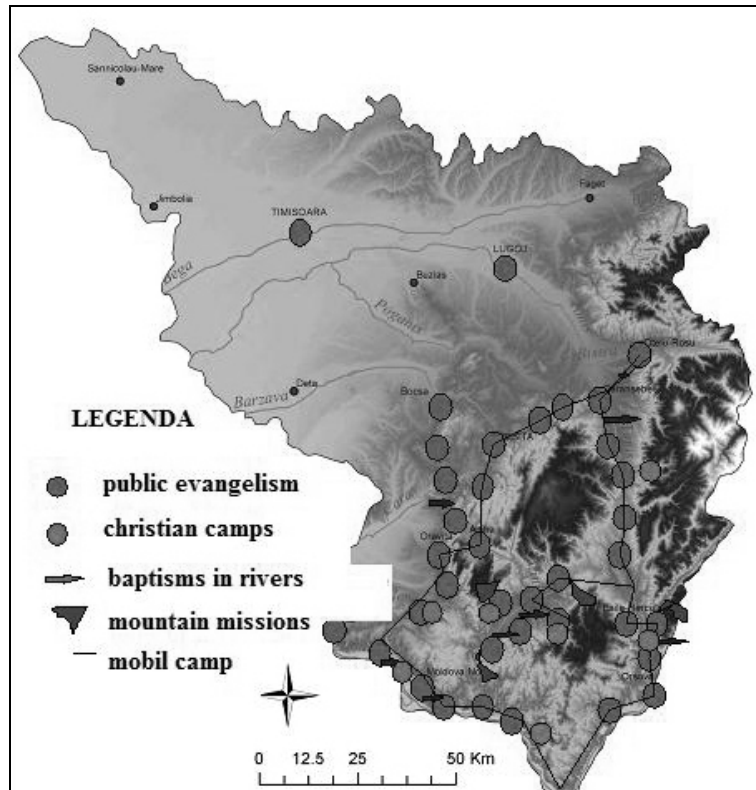
- Traditional methods: from human to human conversation (on the street or market), home visits, debates in the workplace (particularly in mining and in agriculture or timber harvesting), the series of evangelistic "occasional events (baptisms, church weddings, funeral services, celebrations, ordinary pastoral etc.);

- Modern methods: broadcasting religious programs (including satellite), evangelization in theaters, cultural centers or stadiums, Christian camps and missionary conferences (Figure 2), on-line dialogues and web-site of churches or religious organizations (Figure 3).

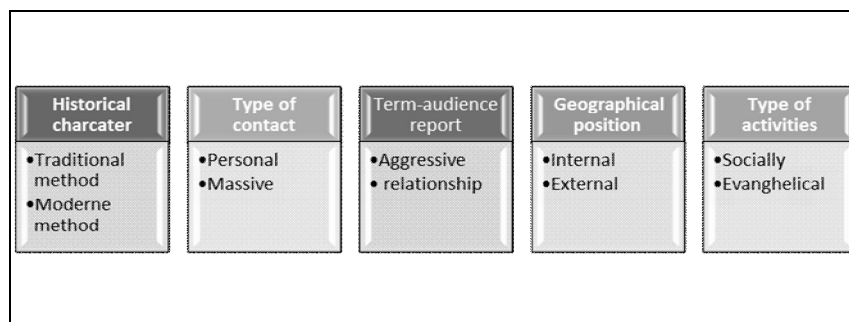
By type of contact with potential converts, evangelism is personal, person to person (considered the most efficient in terms of cost-benefit) and massive evangelization or public character, inside churches or outside.



*Figure 1: Religious migrations in The Banat Mountains*



*Figure 2: Missionary activities in the Banat Mountains after 1990*

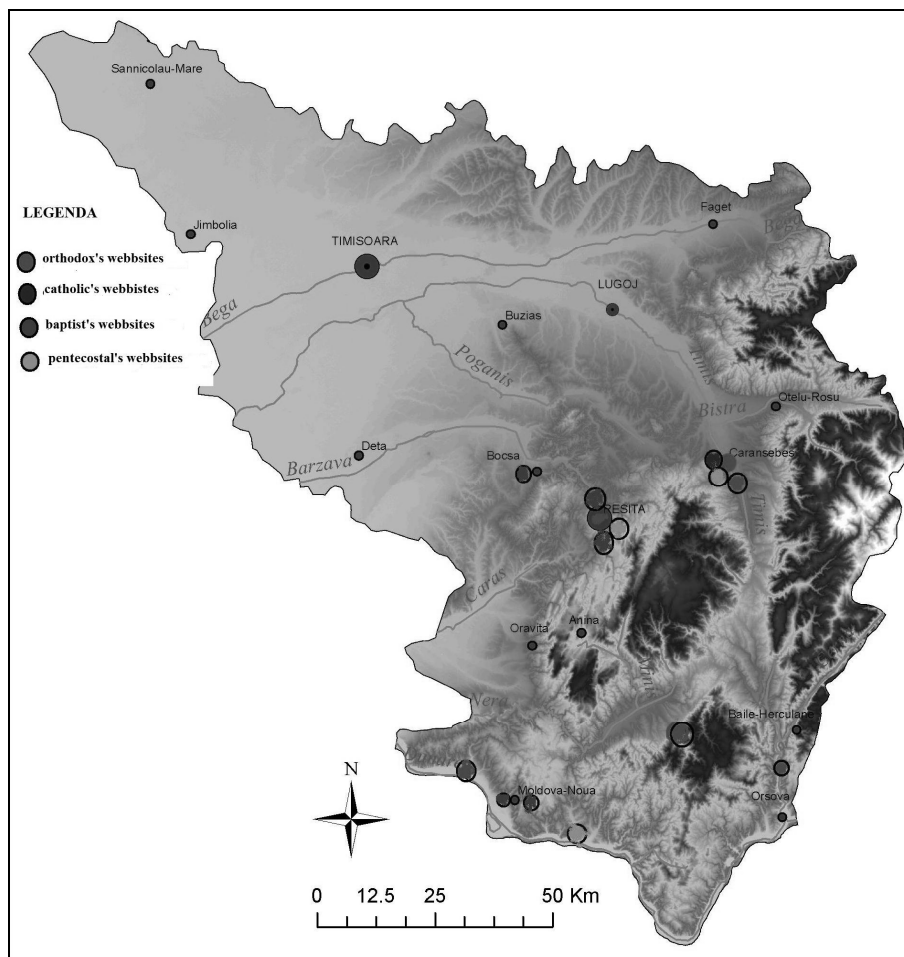


*Figure 3: Classification of religious missions*

After term-audience report in missiology we distinguish between aggressive evangelism (shortened and numerous audience) and "evangelism through relationships"

based on a period of time allocated to a few people (considered more efficient, in terms of stability for the new converts). In the first case, there are numerous conversions, but formal psychological factor is determinative for the attraction of "listeners".

Depending on the position, there are different domestic tasks (local, regional, national) of the foreign or international, with much higher costs, specialized training of missionaries (intercultural courses, foreign language, apologetic, survival techniques, international law etc.), (Figure 4). There are, in this regard, departments of internal mission and outreach that borders, U.S. and Britain are countries with the largest number of foreign missionaries, including Romania.



*Figure 4: Spreading of religious webb-sites in the Banat Mountains*

Currently, the historic confessions are performing activities with more social character, less theological, being relatively stable in terms of population dynamics, while the neo are more active in missionary terms. Having regard to religion - people - land, by using the concepts of evangelism and that saturated areas / unsaturated zones to describe the degree of dissemination of a religious faith, and answer of the "listeners", "friends" and supporters at the "call" to commit to God and fulfill His Word.

Thus, if for the Orthodox denomination, the Banat Mountains is considered "evangelized" since St. Andrew's time (less the Catholic from the Czech-German rural communities) for neo-cults, those spaces are considered unreached areas where there is no community this kind, while unsaturated zones are those where the number of adherents is below 10% and partially saturated weight are considered the evangelical Christian (Baptist, Pentecostal, Christian Gospel) is below 25%.

## **2. ORTHODOX MISSIONS**

In the Diocese of Caransebes, missionary activity is coordinated by the Department of Social Welfare, with, in this regard, numerous projects developed or under implementation. With the reestablishment of Caransebes Diocese in 1994, he felt increasingly urgent need for setting up a department responsible for social problems in communities throughout the county of Caras-Severin. This was imposed as a result of requests by the number of increasingly large family and persons that accused serious social problems and natural church involvement in solving their crisis. In this way, in 1997, following the decision of the Holy Synod, the Diocese Caransebes, started a social sector, as part of the diocesan administration.

According to the rules of organization and functioning of the social assistance system in the Romanian Orthodox Church in each diocese, the strategic objectives of the department of social work in the Diocese Caransebes are: social development programs of a preventive nature, aimed at early school domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, addiction, organization and development of social services at Community and at home, for some categories of persons disadvantaged in social risk: elderly, disabled, families in difficulty ; establishment and organization of new types of social institutions as alternatives to traditional residential institutions, state, and counseling and information centers, social research on social phenomena, living standards, marginalization and dependency social printing materials to educate and raise awareness on social issues, cooperation with both public services, specialized ministries and decentralized local and county councils and social care units of public and private, non-governmental organizations engaged activity. The main concerns of the Department of Social Services is the detection and in helping people with low living standards, due to very low or no income, by giving them material and financial aid to overcome the crisis they are. Beneficiaries of these actions are in particular: people with disabilities, children from large families, broken or single parent, children infected with HIV, the elderly, etc.

Social-missionary activity takes place in organized day care center for children "Emanuel" in Caransebes, where they take out 22 children from families at social risk. At the same purpose was inaugurated "Care Center for Mother and Child". The main target of the project is to create a prevention service, a partnership based on local authority - the Church - civil society, to serve certain categories of population in social risk situations.

Future social center will work in collaboration with the Municipality of Caransebes, Organization "For each child a family" - Resita, Municipal Hospital Department of Neonatology- Caransebes, Orthodox Women Association - Caransebes. Social Department - Missionary Diocese of Caransebes concluded several cooperation agreements with associations and foundations in the social-philanthropic. We mention a few: Organization "For each child a family"-Resita; Company "Orthodox Women" - Caransebes; Association "Pro vitam" - Resita, "Association for Quality of Life" - Timisoara, Center for prevention, evaluation and counseling, Resita, Social Services County and Child Protection - Resita. Episcopal Social sector regularly organizes various collections (consisting of goods, food, money) for helping communities or groups of users that have suffered from natural disasters or challenging situations damages, or for support (with food) social centers. Since September 2006, the Department of Social Services has been accredited by the Commission of Accreditation of Providers of Social Services within the Department of Labor, Solidarity and Family - Resita. Following this decision, Bishop of Caransebes is authorized to provide specialized social services. In addition Diocese Caransebes, is activating a non-governmental Association, "John Popasu" with social-philanthropic character and cultural missionary.

### **3. CATHOLIC MISSIONS**

On the territory of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Timisoara, which includes Caras-Severin operates 14 orders and religious congregations, including the Order of Minor Conventuali Friars, Divine Savior Society, Sisters of Notre Dame, Benedictine Sisters, Franciscan Sisters. Social assistance is organized by Caritas centers. In its work, the Greek Catholic Church was supported by associations of laity. In 1928 was founded the General Association of Romanians Kingdom (AGRU). Greek Catholic Students Association founded the United Transylvanian Romanian Students (ASTRU), and women - Romanian Women's United Association (AFRU). Currently are operating over 25 religious orders and congregations, of which the most important are: the Order of St. Basil the Great, the Society of Jesus, the Order of Asumptionist monks , Order of Minor Conventuali Friars, Asumptionist Sisters' Congregation, Congregation of the Immaculate Heart.

### **4. PROTESTANT MISSIONS**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church, deacons work and social units is coordinated by the "Lutheran Diaconia", having the headquarter in Brasov, founded in 1998. Augustana Evangelical Church currently has intense connections with the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), especially with helping organizations like "Werk der EKD Diakonisches", "Gustav Adolf Werk" and "Martin Luther Bund".

### **5. BAPTIST MISSIONS**

The first manifestations of the Baptist phenomenon in Banat took place in 1878, once with the migration to Timisoara, of a Bible merchant of German origin named J. Flor, who worked mainly among ethnic Germans, under the direction of Heinrich Meyer German

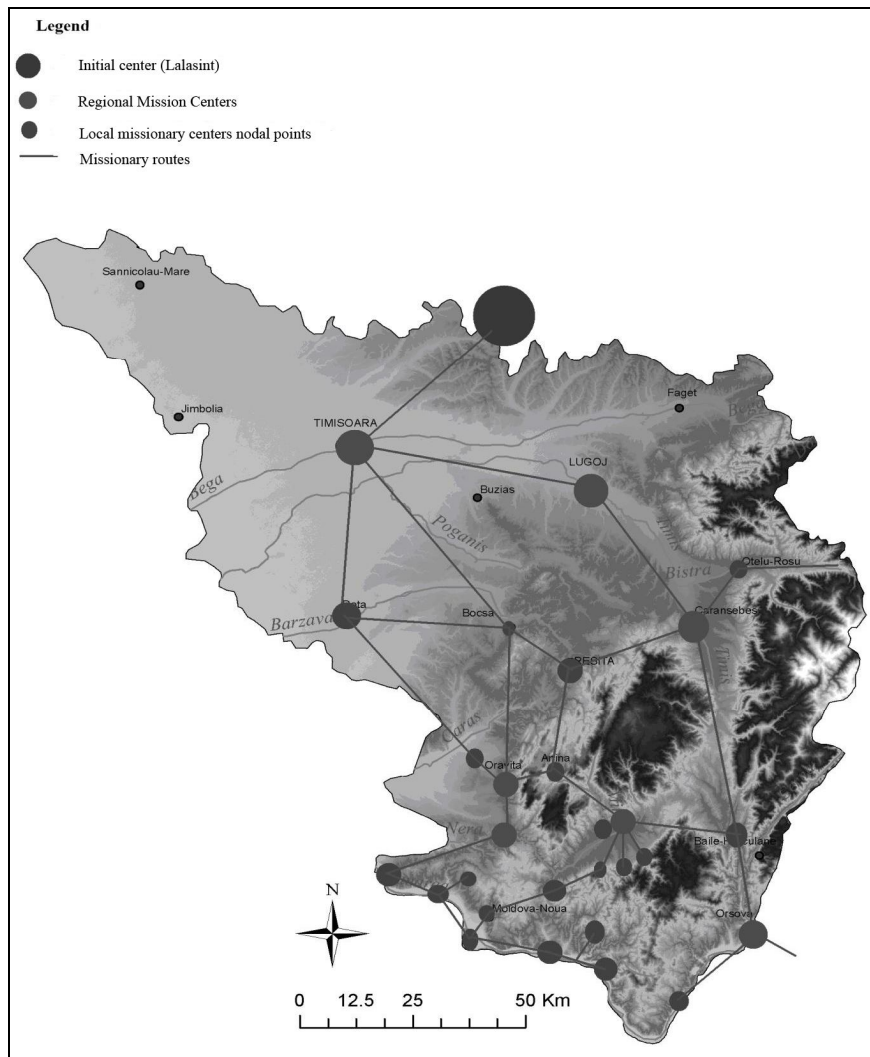


missionary in Budapest. As regards the Romanian population, the spread of Baptist beliefs took place in an independent multiethnic context. It notes the important role that they had religious migration as missionary work, so in 1879, appearing first converted to the new faith among German ethnic, some acts of baptism are performed by Romanian and collaborated with the German mission of Budapest (Michael Cornea, Louis Bodoki, G. Gerwich) and Theological Seminary in Hamburg (Max F. Kuss, G. Szabo, G. Pokorny, F. Massier, I. Peter, P. Pfoff, M. Toth, I. Bertelmann). German Church in Timisoara has established branches in other cities, such as Parta, Otelec, Jebel, Timis County, and in some communes of the Novi Sad. For a time, membership was mixed (German-Hungarian-Romanian), and later to establish a Romanian Baptist church in 1922, and a Hungarian in 1923. In northern Banat, the most intense activity existed in Lalaşinţ circle, led by Stephen Ignea, which carry out missionary activities in areas like Radna, Lupeni, Timisoara, Orsova, Sibiu. In Severin County, the oldest Baptist church was in Lugoj, coordinated by Paul Bandur, from Curtici, which has enabled White Cris Valley and Timis-Cerna corridor (Caransebes-Orsova). In Caras, stands in the town of Anina early Baptist faith, in connection with labor migration in coal mines, including Baptists believers from Curtea, Socolari and Potoc. In addition to verbal testimony, a great impact in converting people had moral and civic conduct and religious literature translated from different languages ("The Gospel and the fire", "Human heart"). Hence, missionary activity expanded in Almaj Valley in 1911, first settlements where faith was infiltrated were Rudaria (Eftimie Murgu) and Prilipeţ. Other Baptist churches and branches established before 1913 were at Ciclova Romana and Răcăşdia where an important role was played by some migrants from the U.S.. The seven churches from Caras were important missionary centers for the expansion of baptist phenomenon before the Greater Union Baptist in following locations: Slatina Nera Bogovici, Lapusnicu Mare (1915), Ciclova Montana, Cuptoare, Rafnic, Fârliug (1916), Bogodiniţi, Ştinăpari, Brebu, Naidăş, Carbunari, Ezeriş, Moniom, Bania, Garbovat, Sopotu Vechi, Prigor, Borlovenii Vechi (1917).

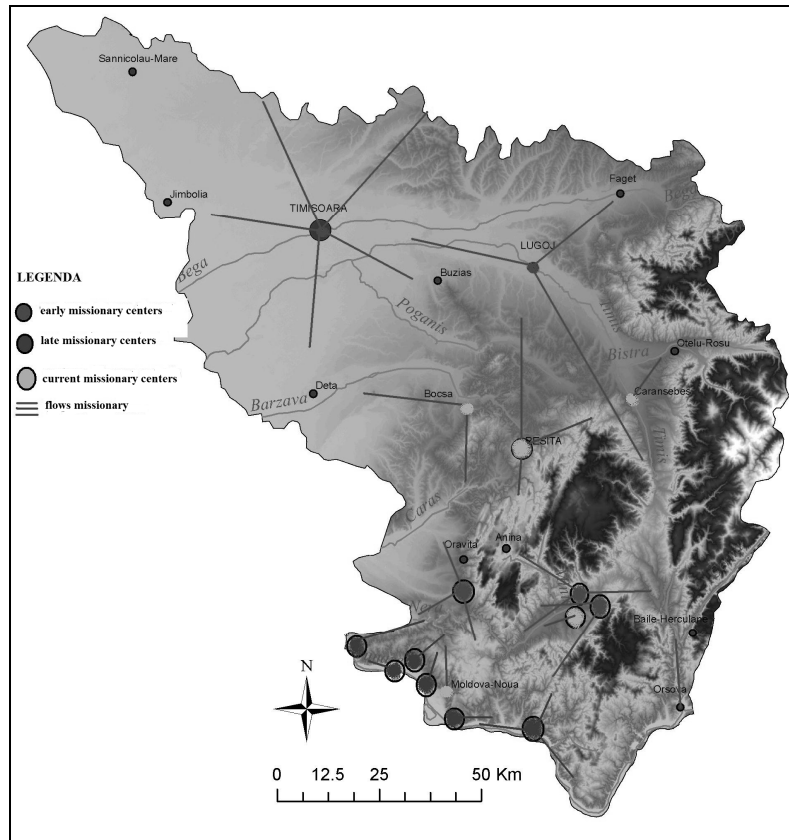
Missionary activity was based on outstanding adequate knowledge through intense study of Bible principles, developing their own religious culture and original, in the opponents' debate showing that they are best apologists in their beliefs. Were observed, thus, several leaders: Dumitru Dragila and John Şuveţ of Prilipeţ, Vasile Enaşcu (Potoc) Vichentie Percea (Ciclova Romana) Peter Abraham (Socolari), Peter Andrew (Curtea), (Figure 5). In the Danube Gorge, Baptist faith is related to migration of people from town Vereşvar (Budapest), who came to work in coal mines in the area Moldova Noua, so that the first churches were established in Moldova Noua and Coronini, followed by those from Sicheviţa, Şuşcă, Socol, Campia, Saint Helena, Gornea and Pojejena. They had close links with churches in the area Oravita and the Almaj Valley, ecclesiastical cooperation is an important factor in strengthening and expanding newly established churches.

Missions with social character consist of various projects in the framework of non-governmental foundations or organizations with humanitarian character, in collaboration with local churches, such as Foundation Humanitas Pro Deo of Otelu Rosu, Resita and Bocsă House "Timothy", Resita Baptist Association charity "Dorca's House", Association "Tact", both of Prilipeţ, day care centers and placement, social activities and support for the elderly (Caransebes) etc. (Figure 6). Pentecostal missions have known intense activity in the second half of the twentieth century, generating a strong dynamic in the number of followers throughout the country (the largest evangelical denomination), with important missionary centers in urban areas (Resita, Caransebes Anina, Moldova Noua) and rural

(Buchin, Păltiniș, Slatina Timis Dognecea, Ezeriș, Ocna de Fier, Socol). Missions Evangelical Christians are more local in character, sometimes supported by the largest churches in surrounding counties (Timisoara, Lugoj), with major centers in Resita, Bocsa, Caransebes, Baile Herculane. Adventist missions were initially coordinated and conducted by Polish missionaries, Germans and Hungarians, then convert those coming from Romanian.



*Figure 5: Banat Mountains Baptist faith Penetration - missionary routes in the early twentieth century*



**Figure 6:** Migration Baptist missionary in the Banat Mountains

The most important missionary centers are urban (Resita, Caransebes, Oravița, Anina), with the emergence of small mission points in some large localities (Bozovici). Jehovah's Witness Missions are coordinated by four major centers - Resita, Anina and Orsova, Saint Helena - among ethnic Czechs (Coronini), religious activity spreading was particularly intense to other cities and in rural areas, with the forms specific home visits, distribution of religious literature in the streets and markets, by addressing people directly and postal mail. Other forms of their religious mission are: radio-TV broadcasts, web-site pages, evangelistic camps, cultural programs and religious events or celebrations occasioned by sacred religious literature distribution, evangelism, stadiums, gyms, community centers, halls entertainment, home visits, distribution of tracts, from human to human conversations, sports competitions, conferences and mission trips, etc.

These forms require impressive financial and logistical resources, personnel equipped with communication skills and genuine theological, religious communities and institutions promoting such beliefs massive call management and marketing elements. The

diversity of religious migration reflects, on the one hand, the potential available to a religious system, and on the other hand, is a mode of action of the sacred to the possibilities of space, bringing to its level, constant flow, temporary or intermittent / occasional, generated by personal decision and collective actors. The impact of religion on mental collective migration is considerable, the number of individuals involved, logistics, financial and material resources, the degree of organization, media impact, the ability of persuasion on followers of other faiths, duration, skills etc.

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