

PETER ŠOLTÉS, *Tolerance Before the Patent of Tolerance? Interdenominational Communication and Transconfessionalism in Northeastern Hungary in the 18th Century*

Abstract: In the north-east periphery of the Kingdom of Hungary a kind of overlapping zone had emerged in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries that were characterized by an extraordinary intensity of communication between its religious denominations and its ethnic communities. The local communities that were often composed of three or more religious communities of a relatively comparable size seriously challenged the policy of re-catholicisation and the prevailing position of the Catholic denomination in the religious life. Moreover, specific demographic conditions determined a kind of permeability between the denominations. When restoring the settlement structure of the region, a consequent approach of keeping a distance between the “original” and the “new” population was untenable. The depopulation of the region caused a disintegration of the family and neighbour relations, as well as of the other social networks of the community. Thus, the natural advantage of the original population, which is a socially closed and mutually bound group, against a usually heterogeneous mass of the newcomers was considerably weakened.

In most of the territory of north-eastern Hungary, the state administration was not able to enforce the respect for and sanctioning of the re-catholicisation measures. The scope of solutions applied to various situations of quotidian communication between the denominations was very broad. It was considerably determined by the ability of the Protestant original population, in view of their economic and symbolic potential, to exercise their dominance against the Greek Catholic members of the community. The pastoral activities and the social prestige of the local priests as well as the social and economic capital of their spouses played an important role in that communication.

Establishing of the new Greek-Catholic communities was deeply influenced by the communication between the religious denominations of the region. While in communities typical of two denominations the social standards had a tendency toward a religious homogenisation or exclusion, the development in the vast territory of north-eastern Hungary took a different direction. Conclusion of marriages of different denominations, frequent breaches of the “reverse” obligation, common use of church bells, cemeteries and other forms of inter-faith communication that contradicted the church law as well as the state prescribed standards, shaped an environment of religious plurality. Such strategies considerably minimised the conflict potential and emergence of misunderstandings based on religious differences.

Keywords: confessional pluralism, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Protestantism, Zemplin County, Saros County.