

## POPULATION - A CRITICAL FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF THE REGIONAL SYSTEM OF THE LAND OF THE MOȚI

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**ABSTRACT** – “*The Land of the Moți*” is a regional geographical entity where the impact of the anthropic component is essential. If, for a long period, the population has been a cohesion factor in the birth of this regional system, at present, by means of the negative features of the demographical indicators, the population stands out by inducing several elements of high risk. The massive emigration of the population, especially from the areas of high altitude, the gentrification process, the low degree of economic development, are all serious problems which must be on the agenda of the decision-making political factors.

**Keywords:** population, critical factor, regional system, the Land of the Moți.

### GENERAL ISSUES

The main objectives the present study aims at are the following: the specification of the aspects related to the territorial framing of the Land of the Moți within the Apuseni Mountains; the emphasis of the impact the demographic component has upon the regional system; the synthetic emphasis of the main demographic indicators in the region; the emphasis of the fluctuating aspects induced by the population’s evolution in time.

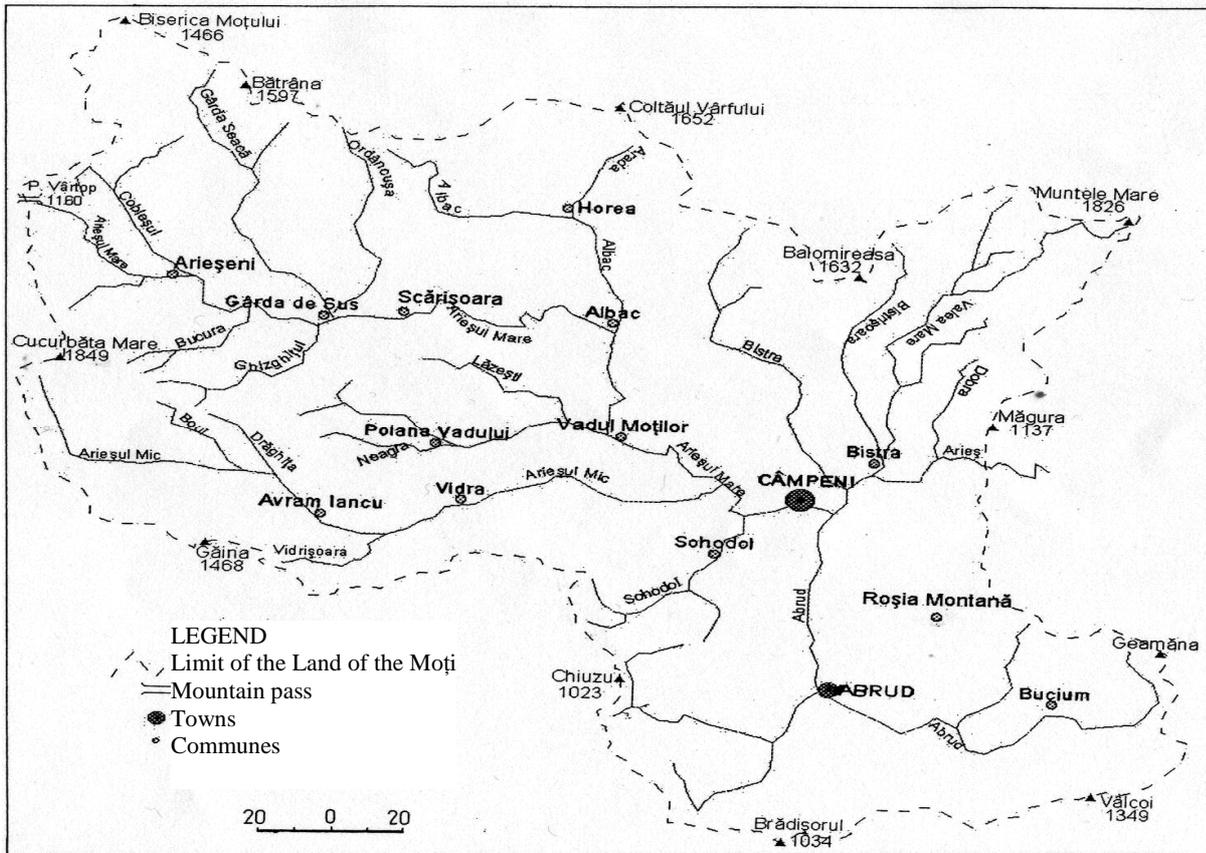
The geographical space, which is the subject of this scientific approach, is characterized by a great variety of individual features (language particularities, physiognomic and behavioural features, elements of toponymy and ethnography, economic activities, manner of constructing and placing the households, morphology of the relief, aspects related to the tumultuous historical past, etc.), all these having a decisive contribution to the creation of a personal ethos for the region in cause.

Spatially delimited on the basis of some rigorously-chosen criteria (*auto-identification, specificity of the economic activities, ethnographical elements, social-historical evolution, density of the rural settlements, morphology of the relief*), the Land of the Moți asserts itself as a regional entity of the “land” type, situated in the central part of the Apuseni Mountains. It is inserted in the upper part of the Arieș river basin, having a main centre in Câmpeni, and a secondary one in Abrud, all the mass, energy and information fluxes from the region being oriented towards these two localities. The limits of the Land of the Moți present a sinuous trajectory, which mainly follows the line of the great heights of the surrounding mountainous massifs: in the south-western, western and north-western part, the limit follows the highest peaks of the Găina and the Bihor massifs (e.g. Găina, Bihor, Biharia, etc.); in the northern, north-eastern and eastern part, the limit crosses the Gilău and the Muntele Mare massifs, on the alignment given by a series of peaks such as: Bătrâna, Petreasa, Balomireasa, Muntele Mare, etc., crossing afterwards south of the Arieș valley, following the interfluve between the Ștefanca and the Mușcanilor valleys, continuing afterwards on the alignment of the Vârșii Mari and the Geamăna peaks, while southwards, the limit follows the route given by other peaks (Petriceaua, Brădișoru, Vulcan, etc.), enclosing south-west in Răchita and Știubei peaks.

Between these limits, the Land of the Moți includes two urban settlements (Câmpeni and Abrud) and 14 communes, together with their villages: Albac, Arieșeni, Avram Iancu, Bistra, Bucium, Ciuruleasa, Gârda de Sus, Horea, Poiana Vadului, Roșia Montană, Scărișoara, Sohodol, Vadu Moților, Bistra.

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**Figure 1.** *The Land of the Moți. General Map.*  
(Source: Boțan, C. N., 2005)

The territorial system of this regional geographic unit within the centre of the Apuseni Mountains includes, in its turn, two subsystems close in order and importance: *the forestry subsystem*, situated on the upper courses of the Arieșul Mare, Arieșul Mic, Albac, Gârda Seacă, Bistra, etc. rivers, of a relatively greater importance, due to the vehiculation of a greater volume of mass and energy within the main system, and *the mining subsystem*, centred exclusively on the Abrud river basin, found in a certain regress nowadays, but whose share may increase a lot in the future through the revitalization of the gold exploitations, a fact which implies a serious contribution of autochthonous or allochthonous financial capital.

The Land of the Moți represents an open geographic system, with important exchanges of mass, energy, and information with the neighbouring regions, as well as with farther ones.

### **THE ROLE OF THE ANTHROPIC COMPONENT IN THE FORMATION OF THE REGIONAL SYSTEM**

Unlike the other entities of the “land” type, where the priority in the formation of the regional system belongs to the physical-geographical components, in this case, it is the population that has a special role. The impact of the anthropic factor in defining the regional system can be revealed at the level of two coordinates: *a qualitative impact* (given by the manner of creating the name of the region, by the origin and the features of the Moți, by their past and present behaviour, etc.), and *a quantitative one* (related to the numeric evolution of the population, the values of the main current demographic indicators, their consequences in the present and the future vitality of the system in cause, etc.).

From the very beginning, it must be mentioned that, if in the past, the population of the Land of the Moți was the forte element in the vitality of the regional system (through the attachment to the

## POPULATION - A CRITICAL FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF THE REGIONAL SYSTEM OF THE LAND OF THE MOȚI

values of the region, the manner of reaction in front of the external negative influences, the high values of natality and implicitly of the natural increase, through the extremely reduced number of those who left the mountainous space, etc.), nowadays, the anthropic component induces major risks, seriously attempting on the vitality of the region, a situation which must be stopped rapidly.

### 1. The Qualitative Impact

As far as the qualitative implications of the human component are concerned, these support only partially the present study, but they have their importance in explaining the quantitative ones. A first idea is related to the way in which the anthropic component has contributed to the formation of the region's name. If in the case of the other "lands", the genesis of the name is based on a local toponym, a place, related especially to the physical-geographical framework, in this case, the human component has imposed the identification of its name with that of the "land". For example, the Land of Făgăraș, the Land of Năsăud, the Land of Hațeg, the Land of Maramureș, etc., have their name based on a local toponym, while the Land of the Moți refers exactly to a region that is inhabited exclusively by the Moți. The singularity of the origin of this name certifies the priority of the anthropic component in the manner of forming the regional system.

The origin of the Moți, which explains many of the peculiarities of this human entity as concerns the type of behaviour, mentality, physical features, etc., has arisen numerous debates. However, three major ideas can be identified, trying to explain their origin: *Alan origin* (hypothesis sustained by the historian Ovidiu Densușianu, which, at a more careful analysis, is liable to many criticisms); *the hypothesis of total resemblance with the Istro-Romanians* (according to Tache Papahagi), and *the hypothesis according to which the Moți represent Romanized Dacian remainders* (having in view that in the immediate proximity of these places, the capital of Dacia, Sarmisegetuza Regia, was situated).

The psychic peculiarity of the Moți, acquired especially as a result of the unfavourable historical and social conditionings, represents an element of restrictiveness in the new present conditions, from the viewpoint that they often refuse the collaboration with strangers, which brings them great dissatisfactions in the economic development field. The low level of welfare state and the lack of personal funds make absolutely necessary the presence of foreign investors, but with few exceptions, they lack, one of the arguments being the population's reticent manner of collaboration. Of course, the situation of hardly entering a discussion and not accepting the exterior interventions is a perfectly motivated one, having in view the tragedy of the deeds occurred in the lengthways of time.

### 2. The Quantitative Impact

The quantitative values referring to the population of the Land of the Moți, which will be presented further on, have the mission of indicating that this important component of the system suffers a series of essential transformations, the vectors of change being oriented towards finalities with at least critical attributes.

The historical, archaeological, sociological, economic, biological, ethnographical, linguistic, and anthropological researches concerning the Land of the Moți have underlined very clearly that this mountainous area has been, since ancient times, an environment of human habitation, whose continuity cannot be denied.

Among the demographical phenomena of great resonance on the Romanian territory, a special place is occupied by the massive increase in population registered over time in the Apuseni Mountains; afterwards, this increase was absorbed by the regions with demographical deficit, such as Banat, the settlements of the Transylvanian Saxons, the Western Plain, where, even settlements with toponymy taken from the Apuseni have appeared, such as Albacul Nou, Scărișoara Nouă, or by other industrialized settlements, where labour force was needed.

The analysis of the phenomenon regarding the evolution of the number of inhabitants in the Land of the Moți, for the period 1850-2002, emphasizes a series of aspects such as: at the level of the entire region an increase in the number of inhabitants can be remarked, from 37,881 (in 1850) to the maximum value of 58,578 inhabitants (in 1956). Afterwards, the value decreased up to 44,008

inhabitants in 2002. The increase from the period 1850-1956 is mostly due to some permanently positive natural increases, which had high values. However, during that period of time, a decrease in the number of inhabitants also appeared (1910-1956) because of the two world wars, which determined the disintegration of numerous families and, from this point, a series of negative consequences.

**Table 1.** *The evolution of population in the Land of the Moți (1850-2002).*

Locality	1850	1880	1900	1910	1930	1956	1966	1992	2002
Abrud*	4233	7462	<b>8318</b>	7749	2468	4411	5150	<b>6729</b>	6195
Câmpeni	2941	3469	3826	4186	4535	6348	7170	<b>8878</b>	<b>8080</b>
Albac**	2764	5155	5805	<b>6519</b>	3099	<b>3640</b>	3539	2403	<b>2220</b>
Arieșeni	-	-	-	-	2020	2668	<b>2990</b>	2017	<b>1921</b>
Avram Iancu	1955	2758	3112	3612	3880	<b>4164</b>	4020	2217	<b>1865</b>
Bistra	3133	3582	3755	4117	4501	5212	<b>5576</b>	5361	5066
Bucium	3571	3846	<b>4634</b>	4066	3496	3394	2888	2115	<b>1792</b>
Ciuruleasa	1836	-	-	-	<b>3576</b>	2332	2134	1599	<b>1368</b>
Gârda de Sus	-	-	-	-	-	<b>3809</b>	3226	2130	<b>1865</b>
Horea	-	-	-	-	3460	<b>3799</b>	3705	2336	<b>2371</b>
Poiana Vadului	1874	2733	2798	<b>3056</b>	2984	2184	2137	1466	<b>1304</b>
Roșia Montană	<b>5770</b>	5640	5665	5165	4362	4169	4591	4146	<b>3872</b>
Scărișoara***	3485	5153	5632	<b>6275</b>	5252	3995	3617	2187	<b>1850</b>
Sohodol	3284	3948	4642	4713	<b>4793</b>	3804	3396	2371	<b>2085</b>
Vadu Moților	1335	1795	1845	1967	1968	<b>2340</b>	2226	1634	<b>1558</b>
Vidra	3536	4141	4426	4546	<b>4683</b>	4641	4199	2444	<b>1964</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>37881</b>	<b>49682</b>	<b>54458</b>	<b>55971</b>	<b>51501</b>	<b>58578</b>	<b>58430</b>	<b>48434</b>	<b>44008</b>

After 1956, the population of the Land of the Moți began to decrease drastically from the viewpoint of two negative coordinates: more and more reduced natural increases and massive departures of population. Thus, the data from the above table indicate that nowadays, the population of the region represents only two thirds from the population registered in 1956.

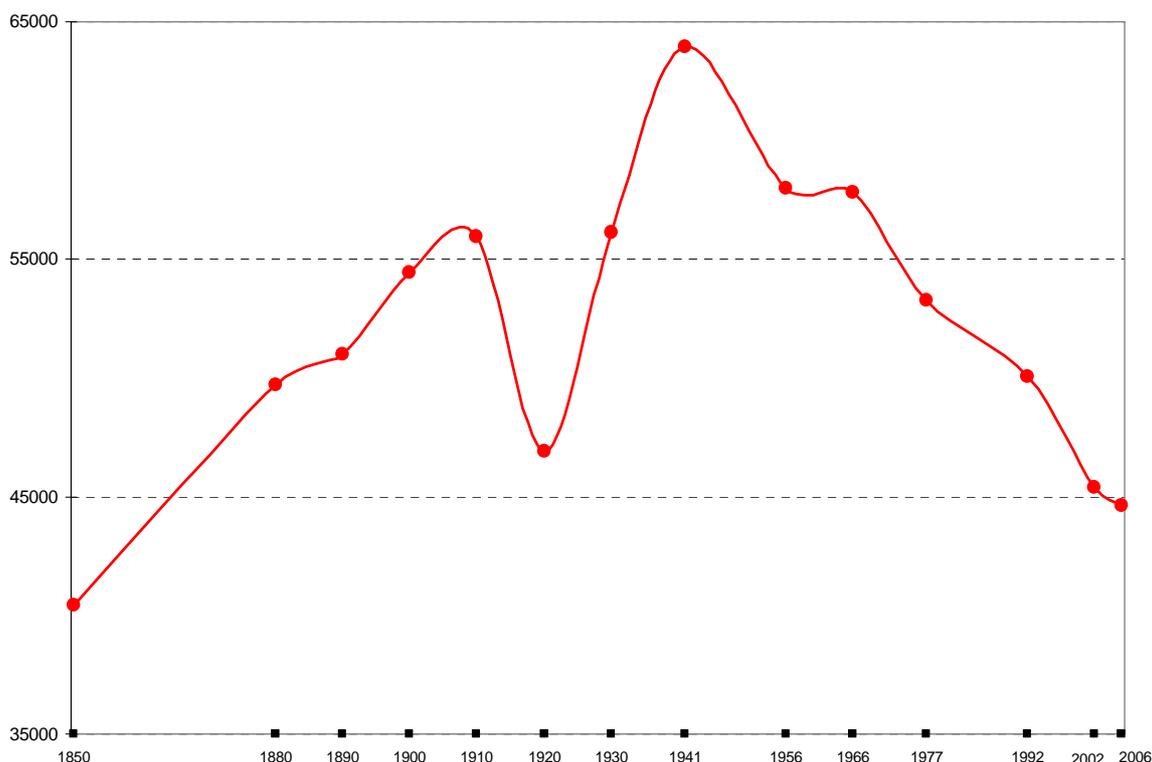
The process of leaving the mountainous space of the Moți is the result of several causes: the low productive potential of land given the new requests of the communities; the harsh climatic conditions; precariousness or even lack of ways or means of communication; morphology of the relief, with direct negative implications in work efficiency and in the possibility of using some technical means - all these determining a very low living standard. Therefore, the depopulation of the mountainous space is a mass phenomenon, which, firstly, consists in the departure of the youth to schools or other working places, in environments that offer better living conditions. The most intense depopulation of the Land of the Moți took place after the 1980's, when the number of inhabitants decreased with about 6,000. The demographic events that modify the values of the population (natality, mortality, natural increase migration, etc.) developed during these years against the background of a continuous worsening of the material and spiritual living conditions, as well as of the existence of restrictive measures regarding induced abortion (Decree no. 779/ October 1966).

\* the villages of Iacobești, Ignătești, Bălmoșești, Blidești, Turina belonged to Abrud until 1956. The village of Gura Cornei belonged to Roșia Montană until 1956.

\*\* the current Horea commune was known under the name of Arada until 1930, and belonged to Albac commune.

\*\*\* until 1930, it included a complex of villages that, nowadays, form the current commune of Arieșeni, and until 1956, the complex of localities that form the commune of Gârda de Sus.

## POPULATION - A CRITICAL FACTOR IN THE FORMATION OF THE REGIONAL SYSTEM OF THE LAND OF THE MOȚI



**Figure 2.** *The numeric evolution of population in the Land of the Moți.*  
(Source: Boțan, C. N., 2008)

In the last period, the depopulation flagellum has reached alarming proportions in the highest sub-zone and this, for the time being, exclusively through migration. The rhythm of depopulation from the entire region, and especially from the highest areas, has all chances to continue to get worse, unless urgent measures for motivating the population to remain in the mountainous space are taken.

As far as the behaviour of the population from the Land of the Moți is concerned, beginning with the 1990's, some alarming conclusions, even dramatic, can be drawn: the natural increase has been permanently negative at 400-1,000 m high and permanently positive at over 800 m (due to a more accented isolation), but the situation has changed in the past 5 years, even for this group; emigration has started to become much more intense in the higher areas, an aspect which will firmly affect also the natural increase, as it is known that emigrants are generally young persons; the harder the living conditions in the new coordinates, as well as the limited chance to leave the mountain until present, the stronger the increase of the emigration phenomenon after 1990.

### CONCLUSIONS

The negative attribute of the main demographical indicators of the population from the Land of the Moți consists in the fact that they determine the drastic decrease in the number of inhabitants (the decrease in population phenomenon is quasi-generalized at the level of the entire country), especially within the young component.

The selective loss through migration, generally of the young population, affects natality and leads to the amplification of the demographic ageing phenomenon, eventually influencing mortality. Thus, a regional dynamics appears, typical for disfavoured regions, which could be called "*the vicious circle of underdevelopment*" (M. Bassand, *Dynamique regionale et identite*, in *Les Regions de montagne en mutation*, Bern, 1984, p. 485) and which articulates the social-economic and political aspects of a synthetic cultural dimension: the erosion of regional identity.

The departure of the inhabitants from the Land of the Moți has, beyond a certain level, a great impact over time on the cultural and social life of the region, on the architectural patrimony and on the landscape, which tends to become common in the places where the phenomenon is intense. Given this background, it can be appreciated that *the critical point* is reached in the moment in which general school is lost, and especially primary school (due to a lack of teaching staff or of pupils), primary school being considered as a last fortress that allows the local community to live the life style it is attached to. This situation appears frequently in the villages of the Land of the Moți, and a possible return to the previous conditions is hard to believe (the existence of a primary school in each village) in the current demographic and economic coordinates. The depopulation phenomenon of the mountainous villages of the Land of the Moți is mainly generated by a financial motivation, in spite of the specific attachment to the native village.

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