

PÉCS, A HISTORICALLY CHANGING MULTICULTURAL CITY PEČUH, POVIJESNE PROMJENE MULTIKULTURNOG GRADA

Dr. sc. Zoltán Hajdú

Centre for Regional Studies
of Hungarian Scientific Academy, Pécs
hajdu@rkk.hu

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SUMMARY

The two-thousand-year history of Pécs is in many respects the history of the change of the political power, and also the history of the co-existence and interaction, sometimes opposition of the (ethnic, linguistic and religious) differences. Pécs has its »multi-character« in its past, which can be a basis on which the town can successfully join in the globalization and European unionalisation process.

Key words: Pécs, multicultural city, geography, political power, history

Ključne riječi: Pečuh, multikulturni grad, geografija, politička moć, povijest

INTRODUCTION

Among all Hungarian cities, Pécs has one of the most versatile physical geographical environments. The city is situated at the meeting point of three physical geographical units (the Mecsek Mountains, the Pécs Plain and the Baranya Hill Ridge). The built-in area of Pécs is located between 120 and 400 metres above sea level. The highest elevations of its administrative area are the Tubes (612 m) and the Misina peaks (534 m).

Pécs, one of the oldest settlements in Hungary, was born and evolved in this versatile, dynamic geographical environment. The archaeological researches have revealed a six-thousand-year, almost uninterrupted history of settlement. The »urban history« of Pécs goes back to approximately 2 000 years.

Multiculturalism is one of the most complex social science categories, its interpretation is varied in content. In our opinion, multiculturalism at settlement level can be interpreted as the experience of the differences of other groups that live in the town and show different (ethnic, linguistic, religious, residential, cultural) characteristic features. Also, beyond the experience of these differences, multiculturalism can be comprehended as a kind of definition and acceptance of a certain unit of a community.

During the changing historical times of Hungary, a characteristic feature of Pécs was the fact that in the longest periods of the history of the city, the population was versatile ethnically, and the different ethnic groups carried and created special economic, settlement and cultural characters.

In course of history, several attempts were made to »homogenise« the population of Pécs, but the success of these attempts was relative, Pécs succeeded in preserving its historical character, the universal and surviving multicultural features.

The city is facing new challenges now, and these challenges assess its historical characteristics and its possibilities in a different way. Pécs is a multicultural European city not only in its past but also in its present, and this European character is expected to strengthen in the future.

A TWO-THOUSAND-YEAR OLD CITY, WITH MANY DIFFERENT NAMES

The name of the town has changed several times during the storms of history. The first known name, Sopianae was given by the Romans (who probably took it over from the Celtic name *Su-pia, Sopia*), and since then Pécs has been one of the Hungarian towns with the largest number of names in the course of history. Even today, Pécs has four known names.

In Pécs and its surroundings, the different cultures left behind special archaeological findings. From the Bronze Age (2 000 B.C.), Thracians, Illyrians and Celts (Pannons) inhabited this region. The Celtic settlement, which was constructed of wood, gradually became the region of the high culture after the Roman conquest (1st century A.D.). The city became the administrative, economic, cultic and cultural centre of the Roman province. Infrastructure was fairly developed in the town and its surroundings: paved roads, water pipes, floor heating. In this period Pécs became one of the early centres of Christianity in Central Europe.

Starting from the 4th century A.D., the city of Pécs was exposed to external attacks. In 433, the Huns acquired Pécs and its surroundings, and the major part of the Roman population left the city, together with the receding legions. In the period of the Great Invasions, several peoples left their marks on the history of the city. In 453, the Gepidas (who have Germanic origins) took over the reign from the Huns. Later the Eastern Goths and the Longobards ruled in this region. In 568-796, Pécs belonged to the Avars, whose rule was broken by Charles the Great.

The Slavic prince called Pribina annexed Pécs to the Primateship of Salzburg. In the official documents the town had the names *Quinque Basilicae, Quinque Aecclesiae*, its Slavic name was *Pet Crkve*.

During the Hungarian Conquest (896), the city was conquered by the Hungarians in 899. After the foundation of the Hungarian State, the city became one of the ten episcopal sees. The episcopal cathedral was practically built on top of the ancient Christian churches and crypts. The landlord of the city was the bishop for centuries. The Southern border of Pécs Episcopate reached Sava river.

In a document from 1093, the first Hungarian name of the city can be read: *Peuche*. After several modifications (*Pechy, Peech, Pecz*), later the present version, *Pécs* became constant. The construction of the city walls was started in 1241, after the Tartar Invasion. The area of the medieval Pécs within the city walls was one of the biggest in Hungary.

In 1367, Louis the Great founded the first Hungarian university in Pécs, with the permission of Pope Urban. The university was organised on the Bolognese example, and the text of the founding document was almost the same as that of the University of Vienna. Researchers assume that the university functioned until the 1460's. Pécs was one of the intellectual capitals of the medieval Hungary, and it was awarded the title »*urbs insignior*«. Pécs became the »citadel« of the Hungarian humanism. The first public library of Hungary was opened here in 1440.

For the end on classical medieval epoch Pécs turned to be the economic, cultural, religious and partly administrative centre of South Transdanubia. It was the biggest city in the wider region of Drava Valley.

In 1544, the Turks occupied the city, and this occupation lasted for 143 years. The most important remains of the Turkish architecture in Hungary can be found in Pécs. This was the first time when Pécs became a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural city for a longer period of time. Besides the Turkish troops, different ethnic groups from the Balkan Peninsula moved in Pécs (Serbs, Bosnians, Croats). The number and proportion of the Hungarian population decreased to a large extent. The population of the Turkish Pécs in its heyday ranged from 6 000 to 10 000 people, according to estimates based on different registers.

During the Turkish rule, the reformation of the Hungarian population took place. The Presbyterian, Evangelical and Unitarian religions all appeared in Pécs. Sharp oppositions took place both within the Protestant churches, and between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics.

The coalition led by the Habsburgs (who were also the rulers of Hungary) reoccupied the city from the Turks in 1686. After the reoccupation, 4 000 inhabitants, who were considered as Turks, were allowed to move to the Turkish territories, and 800 of them became war prisoners. Despite this fact, the registrations later still mentioned a considerable number of Mohammedan population in the city of Pécs.

After the reconquest, Germans started to settle down in Pécs, and their settling down was consciously promoted. Pécs became a Catholic town with a German majority for a short while, under the name »*Fünfkirchen*«. In 1692, the Bishop swore the citizens of Pécs that they would not let anybody who is not Catholic by religion settle down within the city walls. (Later the strive for a Catholic homogeneity became less severe, but Pécs continued to be a town with Roman Catholic majority.) In 1694, the Jesuits opened a grammar school in Pécs, and the reorganisation of the Church institutions began.

Pécs was supervised by the Austrian military government for a long time, later by the Royal Chamber. In 1703, the old landlord, the bishop of Pécs took over. The public administration of Pécs was managed in three languages (Hungarian, German, Croatian) for a century. In 1780 Pécs became a free royal town, which meant a direct connection to the central administration, creating the possibilities of an independent development.

During the 18th century, the inner parts of Pécs became a genuine baroque town, as a consequence of the significant church and civil constructions. The city was divided into three parts which were relatively well separated on ethnic grounds (Hungarian, German and Croatian district). Among the geographical names of the city of Pécs we still find a large number of live German and Croatian specifications.

In 1770, the large-scale mining of black coal was started in the village called Vasas, now part of the administrative area of Pécs. In the following 200 years, coal mining was one of the determining bases of the development and socio-economic transformation of Pécs and its surroundings. In connection with the mining, a large number of Czech, Moravian and German ethnic groups settled down in Pécs and its environs.

In 1816, Pécs was completely Roman Catholic by religion (99.3%), ethnically it had a triple division (Hungarians 37.3%, Croats 31.7% and Germans 31%). It was natural among the citizens of Pécs to speak all three languages.

A theatre began to work in German language in 1800, by the foundation of a German language theatrical company. Gradually the possibility of theatre performances in Hungarian language became a reality, too. The first Pécs theatre constructed of stone was built in 1839. The last performance in German language took place in 1876, then the council of Pécs made a decision that theatre performances in the city could only be made in Hungarian language.

In 1848, the first German language daily newspaper, the »*Fünfkirchen Zeitung*« was published in Pécs. The newspaper had a short annex in Hungarian language. Hungarian language

gradually became the press language. From the 1870's, daily papers were only published in Hungarian in Pécs, but the publishing of books and religious services still took place in German language too.

By the 1870's, Hungarian language became dominant in Pécs and its environs, also, the leadership of the city (some of whom were German by ethnic origin) pressed the official use of the Hungarian language. Nevertheless Pécs never became a completely monolingual town in the later periods of time, either.

Based on the coal mining around Pécs, from the middle of the 19th century, a significant, modern industrial area with different sectors of economy was built on the Eastern and Southern edge of the city. Because of the large number of immigrating workers, the rate of those who had been born in Pécs fell back to 50%. The special districts, colonies of the craftsmen and the less qualified workers appeared.

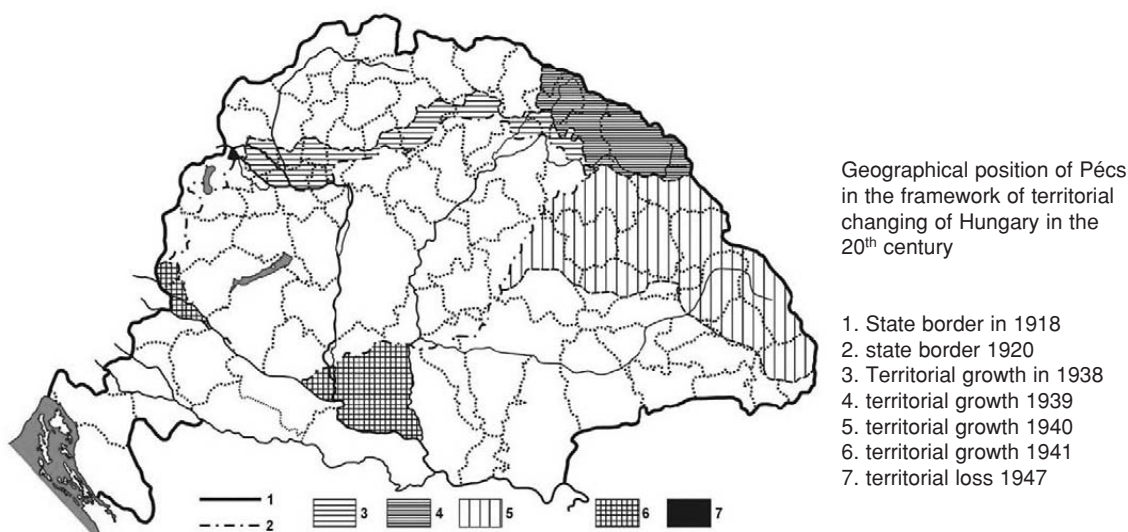
THE TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF PÉCS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

In the beginning of the century Pécs was one of the dynamically developing Hungarian towns. In the territorial structure of the Historical Hungary (Fig. 1.) Pécs was one of the cities focusing for Croatian connection.

In 1900, 43 982 people lived in the 71 km² administrative area of Pécs. (The administrative area of Pécs gradually increased, 10 surrounding villages were annexed to the town, making the present 162 km² territory.) The overwhelming majority of the population was Hungarian by mother tongue (33 000), the most significant ethnic group were the Germans (7 200 people), the number of Croats was 644. The number of foreign citizens living in Pécs exceeded 2 000.

The religious breakdown of the city was characterised by a Roman Catholic majority (33 000 people), the second largest congregation were the Israelites (3 911 persons). The different Protestant churches did not play a significant role in the life of Pécs.

Pécs was among those Hungarian towns that were small in area and had a high population density. The density of the population was just over 502 persons per km². From 1892, the water supply of the city was built out and the construction of the sewerage system in the inner city started, too. In 1913, the network of tram lines was constructed in Pécs and new factories were founded (a tobacco factory and a brewery). In other words, Pécs was modernised in all respects.





Geographical sketch of Pécs

In the circle of the citizens of Pécs, a special differentiation between »us« (with the local expression, the so-called »tüke«) and »them« (the immigrants) appeared. Those citizens were considered as »tüke« who had been born within the city and had their own vineyards on the side of the mountain. The local civil self-consciousness and mentality strengthened, and simultaneously, the differences among the districts of the town according to the income levels of the different layers appeared (rich and poor districts).

The external connections of Pécs were strongly orientated towards the South. In the early 20th century serious economic and cultural political debates went on about the vocation of Pécs to civilise the Balkans. The economy of the town was strongly connected to the markets in Croatia, and in a wider sense for the Balkan Peninsula.

After the defeat in World War I, Pécs was occupied by Serb troops. The Serb invaders attempted to annex Pécs and its environs to the Serb-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom or to make it an independent state. Only in August 1921 became Pécs subject to Hungarian supervision again.

In the period between the two world wars, the dynamism of the former economic development stopped. The new country borders cut Pécs from its traditional markets, and most of the cultural connections ceased to exist, too. The immigration to the city increased, however, and in 1930 only 36% of the population of Pécs were born in the town.

In 1923 Pécs became a university town again, by giving home to the fleeing University of Pozsony (the now Bratislava). The cultural institutions of Pécs developed more rapidly in this period than any other sector. It was set as an objective of the cultural policy that Pécs should become the »Hungarian Heidelberg«.

In the second half of the 1930, the relationship between a minor, but very aggressive part of the German ethnic population of Pécs (the Volksbund), and the Hungarian population and the city became very tense. The majority of the Germans remained loyal to the Hungarian state, in fact, some of them were active participants in the movement called »Loyalty to the Motherland«, which resisted fascism and the imperial German efforts.

At the census of 1941, the population of Pécs was 73 000 people. The ethnic composition of the town was dominated by the Hungarians, 68000 people considered themselves Hungarian and 3 600 German. The absolute majority of the Roman Catholics continued (61 000 persons). The biggest change in the breakdown by religion was the fact that the Reformats became the second largest ethnic community (5 041 people), while the Israelites were only the third in the order with their congregation of 3 500 believers. The territorial separation of the ethnic and religious groups in the city continued.

The Soviet and Bulgarian armies took over Pécs without fights in the autumn of 1944. Pécs suffered practically no material damages during the war, but the human resources of the town were significantly changed and destroyed by the war. The Jewish population of Pécs was transported by the Germans and the majority of them were annihilated (by 1949, only 711 persons were Jewish by religion in Pécs), and after the war, the major part of the German ethnic population was deported to Germany.

Following the Communist turn in 1947, the civil society of Pécs was completely destroyed by the nationalisations and deportations. From the very beginning of the state socialist era, the intensive development of coal mining started, as did industrialisation built on coal and the large scale construction of flats and housing estates in the part of the town called Meszes. The social composition of Pécs changed to an extent never experienced before. The economic and political decisions and the direct political interventions slowly turned Pécs into a »socialist town«, the town of the immigrant industrial workers, especially after uranium mining was started in the mid-1950's.

On the Western edge of the town, the district called »Uranium City« was built from the late 1950's, as a housing estate mostly for miners. Later, from the early 1970's, the so-called »Garden City« was built in the Southern territory of Pécs. The social composition of the latter was less homogeneous.

MULTICULTURALISM IN PÉCS IN THE PERIOD OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE

On 1st January 1990, the administrative area of Pécs was 162 km², its population 170 000 people. The population of the town has been decreasing, population of the city in 2005 was 157 000. In the administrative area of Pécs, built up areas are dominant, although the traces of the former administrative unifications can still be seen, there are still several separate districts which have not integrated into the town yet (Fig. 2.).

The districts of different character (inner city - suburbs, industrialised parts - agrarian parts, densely built up housing estates - one-family house zones, poor districts - well-off areas etc.) represent different lifestyles, although it is much too early to talk about a complete homogenisation within the individual parts of Pécs. Especially in the Eastern districts of Pécs, in the former coal mining areas, the concentration of the Gypsy ethnic population has accelerated, and in some blocks of flats the segregation of the poor, partly unemployed, backward layers has started.

The former economic structure of the town got into a crisis at the time of the systemic change, coal mines were closed down (with the exception of the opencast mines), uranium mining was also stopped. The town had to get used to mass unemployment. After the reductions in the former socialist large-scale industry, the university became the largest employer in Pécs. The University of Pécs may play a significant role not only in the employment but also in shaping the future prospects and opportunities of Pécs.

Pécs has not lost its ethnic traditions, ethnic groups have not disappeared completely. In compliance with the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities, passed in 1993, ethnic self-governments could be organised. In 1997, the following ethnic minorities had sub-municipal self-governments in Pécs: the Bulgarians, the Gypsies, the Croats, the Germans and the Serbs.

The largest ethnic minority in Pécs are still the Gypsies. As the belonging to any ethnic minority is a private affair, there are no »absolutely official data concerning the number of Gypsies living in Pécs«. Different organs talk about different numbers (5 000 - 12 000 people). During the researches on the ethnic minorities, the number of Gypsies living in Pécs has not been defined in a way accepted by the society.

Pécs is the educational and cultural centre of the German population of South Transdanubia. The Regional and Ethnic Minority Editorial of the Hungarian Radio Company operates here, where regional and national programmes are made by the staff of the editorial who are German ethnically, and so does the Regional Studio of the Hungarian Television Company, which also makes and broadcasts German ethnic minority programmes. The Lenau House is the cultural and educational centre of the German ethnic population in the region. Honorary consulates of Germany and Austria work in the town.

Pécs is also the centre of the Croatian minority living in South Transdanubia. A considerable part of the educational, cultural and political institutions of the Croatian minority work in Pécs. The central radio and television operates a regional Croatian editorial and broadcasts programmes in Croatian language. One of the cultural characteristics of Pécs is the independent, Croatian speaking theatre. The Republic of Croatia has a consulate in Pécs.

SAŽETAK

Dvije tisuće godina povijesti Pečuha u mnogočemu predstavlja povijest promjena političkih snaga, ali i povijest suživota i interakcije, ponekad i suprotstavljanja (u nacionalnom, jezičnom i religijskom smislu) tih različitosti. Pečuh u svojoj prošlosti ima »višestruki karakter«, što može biti osnova na kojoj grad može uspješno ući u procese globalizacije i europskog ujedinjenja.

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