

# Culture, Language and Globalization among the Moldavian Csángós Today



EDITED BY  
MAGDOLNA KOVÁCS,  
PETTERI LAIHONEN &  
HANNA SNELLMAN

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This book examines an enigmatic group of people, the Moldavian Csángós, whose very existence as a group has been debated since the 19th century. The Csángós form a historical minority consisting of Roman Catholics that speak a Hungarian vernacular and live in an overwhelmingly Orthodox region of Moldavia in North-East Romania. Perceptions of and research on the Csángós often depict them as worthy of study due to their archaic culture and language or due to their socio-political and minority rights status as a contested group with perspective to their origins.

This volume takes a new look at the Csángós, in the era of globalization, and examines perspectives on traditional culture and bilingualism in light of postmodern and transnational opportunities and challenges. The articles in this volume include new perspectives on qualitative research of minority groups through the presentation of in-depth research on Csángós based on extensive fieldwork and first-hand accounts of contemporary conditions. This text will be of interest to scholars in cultural studies, anthropology and applied linguistics with interests in minority communities.

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AMONG THE MOLDAVIAN CSÁNGÓS TODAY

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PETTERI LAIHONEN,  
MAGDOLNA KOVÁCS &  
HANNA SNELLMAN

## In Search of New Perspectives on the Moldavian Csángós

### 1. Introduction

Who are the Moldavian Csángós?<sup>1</sup> Without dispute, they are a historical *minority* consisting of Roman Catholics that live in an overwhelmingly Eastern Orthodox region in the eastern side of the Carpathians (see Map 1 and 2, pp. 20–21).<sup>2</sup> These Roman Catholics migrated or fled to Moldavia mostly from Transylvania beginning in the middle ages.

The Moldavian Csángós are the only historical Hungarian minority group that has never lived inside the borders of the Hungarian Kingdom. There are two small subgroups of Hungarians (Szeklers) living in the eastern part of Transylvania that are called Csángós, too. One group is the Catholic Csángós of the Ghimes area (*gyimesi csángók*

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1. According to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the pronunciation of the Csángó is [tʃa: ŋgo:]. Following English pronunciation, the first letter of the word Csángó is like *ch* in the word *child*, the second is a long *a* like in *father*, the *ng* is like in the word *long* but the *g* is pronounced clearly, and the last letter is a long *o*, like in *go* or *flow*.

2. Place names that have both Hungarian and Romanian equivalents are presented in both languages. Place names are given first in Hungarian, following the practice of authors in this volume. Only place names mentioned in the book are displayed in the map. Also other groups of Csángós have been placed in Map 1. and, other place names in Romania which have been mentioned by the authors but are not located in the living area of the Csángós (such like Zabola/Zăbala, Csikszereda/Miercurea Ciuc) as well.

in Hungarian, and *ceangăii ghimeșeni* in Romanian) in the Western part of the Carpathians. The other group is the Csángós of Barcaság/Țara Bârsei, which is often referred to with the term of their main group, the *hétfalusi csángók* ‘Seven village-Csángós’ in Hungarian. They live in the south-eastern part of Barcaság/Țara Bârsei County, north-west and south-east from the formerly Saxon city of Brassó/Brașov/Kronstadt. (See Map 1, p. 20.) This book concentrates only on the group of Moldavian Csángós and we use the term “Csángó” as shorthand for Moldavian Csángós (see also Map 1, p. 20). The other groups should not be confused with the Moldavian Csángós, since the other groups reside in Transylvania and have a history of being part of a Hungarian state, for instance in the 19th century, during a period of Hungarian language reform.

Due to different regions of origin and time of migration, the Catholic minority in Moldavia has been heterogeneous, at times communication even between neighboring Csángó villages has been minimal. The Moldavian Csángós have lived in relative isolation, partly because the Catholic Church of Transylvania lost its influence in Moldavia following the reformation and the Turkish wars weakened the Catholic Church in this region in the 16th–17th centuries. In the 17th–19th centuries the Vatican sent missionaries to Moldavia, without knowledge of the Csángós’ mother tongue, Hungarian. The institutions of the Catholic Church were reestablished on a local basis towards the end of the 19th century in the time of the “national awakening” in this part of Europe. (For an overview of the history and current situation of Csángós, see e.g. Tánczos 2011a and Peti & Tánczos 2012.)

At the turn of the 20th century, the existence of a Catholic Church with Hungarian speaking believers in the Eastern Orthodox and Romanian heartlands was called into question. As a solution, the idea of a Roman Catholic Church with Romanian character was constructed. By the end of the 19th century, state institutions, such as public education had reached Moldavia and they aimed to integrate the Csángós into the emerging Romanian nation state. The Csángós also fought on the Romanian side in both World Wars. In brief, the Moldavian Catholics have a long history as part of Moldavia and as Tánczos has

emphasized (2012: 84), the loyalty of the Moldavian Csángós towards the Romanian state is strong.

The Moldavian Csángós have spoken a Hungarian vernacular amongst themselves and used Romanian in contact with the state institutions and Orthodox majority population in the region. Due to the different settlement times, the Csángós have been linguistically divided into Northern Csángós, Southern Csángós and Szekler Csángós (e.g. Sándor 2005). The Northern Csángós migrated to Moldavia in the middle ages and have undergone almost complete language shift to Romanian, whereas the Southern Csángós and especially the Szekler Csángós still use the local Hungarian variety, alongside Romanian.

The community of bilingual Catholics in Moldavia that still use a Hungarian vernacular and Romanian have been estimated to consist of 48 000 persons by Tánczos (2011b) in 2010 which is a radical drop of ca. 13 500 persons (22 %) compared to Tánczos’ estimation in 1996. In the Romanian census, the Csángós rarely claim Csángó or Hungarian ethnicity or mother tongue. According to the results of the most recent Romanian census in 2011, circa 3500 inhabitants in Moldavia claimed Csángó (1500) or Hungarian (2000) ethnicity (Lehel Peti, pc.). Because of the fact that Moldavian Csángós have never been a part of a Hungarian state and despite recent Hungarian efforts (see Tánczos 2012), the Csángós often express distance between themselves and their language (“Csángó”), and the Hungarians of Transylvania (Romania) and the Hungarian language spoken in Hungary or Transylvania. The Csángó ethnicity or linguistic identity in turn is not a regular category in the census and it has been in general stigmatized as a “mixed” ethnic identity (nationality) and language, or as “neither Romanian nor Hungarian” and thus only the above mentioned circa 1500 claimed Csángó ethnicity in the last census. To claim a Csángó ethnicity or language, one had to write this in under the category of “other” (ethnicity/language).

For the 2011 Romanian Census, the category of Csángó ethnicity and mother tongue could have been easily introduced by the Hungarian minority representatives in the Romanian government. However, Hungarian intellectuals in Transylvania advised the representatives – perhaps ill-advisedly – against introducing such a category, since they considered it would be “a mistake to promote the consciousness that

a distinct Csángó language, different from Hungarian, exists” (Tánczos 2012: 87). In any case, according to Tánczos, most of the 48 000 Csángós (Tánczos 2011b) that still speak the local vernacular have internalized the idea that they should claim Romanian ethnicity and mother tongue in the censuses, despite the efforts of some pro-minority census takers in the 2011 census (Tánczos 2012).

The Moldavian Csángós have been called the most enigmatic minority in Europe (Baker 1997). Their sheer existence has been constantly questioned since the 19th century. Even today, they have not been recognized as a minority by the state of Romania. From the Hungarian mainstream point of view, the Csángós are not a separate minority either, rather they are a splinter community of the ca. 1.3 million Hungarians in Romania.

Historically speaking, the Csángós are among “those ethnic groups and traditional communities of Eastern and Central Europe which have not been integrated by modern civil and national movements, and which have not actively participated in the nation-building or state-building processes that shaped modern Europe” (Peti & Barszczewska 2011: 7). The Csángó minority was brought to international attention by the European Council Recommendation 1521 (REC 2001). This recommendation requested the recognition of the Csángó minority’s right to e.g. learn its language at school and to use it in religious life. Language shift among the Csángós continues to this day (e.g. Bodó 2012).

## 2. Approaches to the study of the Moldavian Csángós

The Council of Europe recommended launching new, international research on the Csángós. Primarily Romanian and Hungarian researchers have studied the current state of the Csángó. Some recent valuable research, for instance on the sociolinguistic situation of the Csángós has appeared in Hungarian, but so far not much on the Csángós has been published in English (but see, Tánczos 2011a, 2011b, Bodó 2012, Heltai 2012). Future sociolinguistic research should take even more into account the ideological and identity factors that help in

understanding language practices, language identifications and language labeling choices. That is, in the current field of sociolinguistics taking a critical perspective (e.g. Blommaert 2010, Pennycook 2012), multiple layers of analysis can shed light on the often contradictory analyses of Csángó or Csángó Hungarian identity and language.

Previous Hungarian and Romanian research has often revolved around the ‘pernicious’ question of the ethnicity or nationality of the Csángós. That is, there has been a vigorous somewhat polemical debate between Hungarian researchers who claim a historical, inherited Hungarian national identity of the Csángós in direct opposition to Romanian researchers who claim with equal vigor that Csángós are of original Romanian ancestry. The authors of this volume, mostly younger generation Hungarian researchers, no longer concentrate on the national paradigm in their works.

Taking into account the very special nature of the group, the Moldavian Csángós, it is really surprising how little they are present in current international ethnological literature. So far those who may have heard of the Moldavian Csángós are professionals interested in ethnological issues of Eastern Europe, its history (generally the ones having an interest in Hungarian or Romanian medieval and modern history) or language. Basic information these researchers may be aware of include that the Moldavian Csángós are Roman Catholics and of Hungarian origin. In addition, they may be aware of the debate on the Csángós’ origin (Hungarian or Romanian), or they might recognize them as a group possessing a culture imbued with many archaic elements. This stereotypical picture of the Csángó people of today is very common, and applies to most international research as well. Of course, there are some exceptions, but the Csángós undoubtedly present an under-researched group for international ethnology. It is time to recognize them not as a group with archaic traditions, but as people worth studying. Research on the Csángós would have a lot to offer to international European Ethnology in general. This volume aims to open windows into this research area.

The future of the Csángó Ethnological Studies could be in two main fields: migration studies and applied ethnology. Migration studies is a rapidly growing field where the people who have migrated could be studied from different perspectives. For example, why Csángó

people – having multiple cultural and language ties (Romanian and Hungarian) – mostly migrate to Italy and Spain instead of Hungary, while the Hungarians in Transylvania – another part of Romania – migrate to Hungary first? In addition to these migration patterns, transnational practices would be an excellent field of research. One example of such research would be studies on transnational marriage practices and transnational parenting and grandparenting (see Carling & Menjivar 2012). Many mothers leave their children at home in Moldavia, because women can get jobs more easily than men in Western Europe. Typical migrant occupations for women are domestic work, childcare and cleaning. When both parents get a job abroad, children are often left in grandparents' care while parents stay in Western Europe. Also, criminalization of the Romanian migrants in the media and its effects on the everyday life of Romanians in West European industrial cities with a large Csángó population, such as Turin, Italy, is of interest here. People working in the factories and their children encounter the stigma (re)produced by the media. Gender questions, the second and third generations, return migration and tourism are also topics discussed in migration research. Some of the questions are touched upon by Hungarian researchers but the research has rarely reached the international public (e.g. Turai 2011).

Migration studies apply both to the ones who have left and the ones who have stayed: the ones who have migrated many times send money back home which in turn means modern appliances for the ones who have stayed home. Migrants also buy land and they have summerhouses “back home”. Ethnological research on the Post Second World War labour immigrants on groups such as Turkish migrants in Austria and Germany, Portuguese migrants in France and migrants from former Yugoslavia and Finland in Sweden have touched upon these questions (e.g. Snellman 2015).

New methodological approaches can also be applied: *multi-sited ethnography* studies at the micro- and macro-level simultaneously, including field research in both places of arrival and destination – or even on the way, at the in-between stations, before they arrive to their planned destination (e.g. Hirvi and Snellman 2012). Another current methodological trend also important for multi-sited ethnography is *netnography*, doing research on the internet (e.g. Kozinets 2010). That

can include for example analysing Facebook groups, blog entries, or parenting and grandparenting via Skype. Netnography opens up totally new fieldwork possibilities and spheres and is also a very economical way of doing fieldwork.

The applied perspective is the second one that the Csángó research can offer to international European ethnology in general. However, this perspective has not been implemented in practice yet in international research on the Csángós. The Moldavian communities could be a suitable ground for applied ethnology since the Hungarian aid industry has already been in operation in this area. For example, research might examine the government funding the Hungarian teaching program in Csángó villages; offering scholarships for studying in Hungarian institutions of higher education; the primary and secondary schools offering twin-city agreements for children studying Hungarian in Csángó villages. These projects are mainly focused on establishing and reinforcing Hungarian language usage and forming a Hungarian national identity or affiliation as well as planting knowledge of important Hungarian historical events and cultural figures (e.g. Zakariás 2014). We would need research on what kind of impact they have on Csángós' lives.

There is little discussion about the everyday living conditions and social problems in Csángó villages today, such as infrastructure (no or not enough running water, problems with the drainage system or having no such system at all, bad road conditions, lack of/difficulties with transportation, etc.), social problems (youngsters migrating abroad leaving the elders behind, small children left with their fathers or their grandmothers – changing gender roles, etc.), agriculture (families not having enough money to buy machinery to build a successful agrarian enterprise and not having the necessary knowledge to become an entrepreneur, people regarding the land as something sacred and an assurance for the future if bad things happen – as the peasantry used to see the land in many places), high rate of unemployment (for example, how to make use of the knowledge acquired in a foreign country following the return to the family at home). The problems are similar to the ones encountered in most Eastern European countries after the fall of the communism. Even though, among the Csángós, such processes have been particularly abrupt, these problems are generally not

reflected upon and not associated with the Csángós' everyday conditions in Hungarian research. One of the authors of the current volume, Veronika Lajos's recent post-doctoral project at the University of Helsinki shows that there is plenty of space and urgent need for applying ethnological knowledge to examine and offer some solutions to the sociocultural problems in the Csángó villages.

The Council of Europe report has emphasized the value of the Csángós for Europe as an archaic relic. For instance: "This ethnic group is a relic from the Middle Ages that has survived in Moldavia, in the eastern part of the Romanian Carpathians. Csangos speak an early form of Hungarian and are associated with ancient traditions [...] which is of exceptional value for Europe" (REC 2001). The report displays well the romantic image of the Csángós, where their distance to the western world and modernity is emphasized, as is also underlined by the so far only international account on the current situation published by the *National Geographic* (Viviano & Tomaszewski 2005). However, according to recent studies, transnationalism and modernization characterize the Csángó villages today. That is, all elements of "global modern life" have appeared among the Csángós, side by side with "ancient" elements. The EC Recommendation (REC 2001) has enacted changes in this direction, too. Most importantly, the teaching of Hungarian in state schools and outside the schools began after the EC Recommendation. Volunteer teachers from Hungary and Transylvania, paid mainly by Hungary, are teaching ca. 2200 children in 25 locations. Building on the EC initiative on international research and recognizing the shortcomings of previous "national" research and the paradoxes of the western romantic view, an international project is planned to carry out fieldwork and engage in multidisciplinary research on the Csángós. The Csángó Seminar at the University of Jyväskylä (6–7 March 2012) and this volume are first steps towards such a multidisciplinary project.<sup>3</sup>

The Csángós present a European historical minority that has not participated in the national projects, such as the standardization of the

3. The seminar was funded by the Faculty of Humanities and the Department of History and Ethnology at the University of Jyväskylä, the current volume was supported by the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Jyväskylä and the University of Helsinki.

language. Basic concepts, often taken for granted in European contexts, such as language and ethnic identity can be re-evaluated through the study of the Csángós. Thus possible research questions include: How do the Csángós negotiate their identity? In what ways and to whom in what contexts and forms do they express or declare their identity?

The Csángós present an intriguing case for the study of transnational relationships. What are the opportunities modernization and transnational culture bring to the Csángós? How are traditional culture and the Csángó bilingualism adjusted to modern and transnational contexts? Further, how does globalization effect the local communities? What kinds of globalization processes take place in the Csángó villages?

In the study of the Csángós the position of the researchers can be critically investigated. Is it possible to carry out research that might improve the situation or the self-image of the Csángós? What is the impact of research that aims to record the "ancient" characteristics of the culture before they are forgotten, or that aims to "interfere" with the language shift taking place (cf. Heltai 2012).

Even though a leading Hungarian linguist, Jenő Kiss, considers the Moldavian Csángó group to be "a true goldmine especially from the ethnographical and linguistic points of view" (Kiss 2012: 111), the Csángó language variety, an archaic form of Hungarian with lexical borrowing from Romanian, often has a devalued and stigmatized image as a hybrid and a non-standard, "non-language". This image is constructed by the Catholic Church, the Hungarians in Hungary and Transylvania (especially by the neighboring Szeklers) in contact with the Csángós, and it is held by most of the Csángós themselves. Also the name "Csángó"<sup>4</sup> is not an endonym, rather for the Moldavian Catholics it points to the "deviances" of their language and "confused" ethnic identity (cf. Sándor 2005). That is, the ethics and practices of naming languages, and naming groups can be reconsidered in light of discourses gathered through fieldwork.

Furthermore, the consequences of standardization could be investigated in connection with the teaching of Hungarian among the

4. According to historical linguistics, the word *Csángó* is derived from the verb *csang/csáng* 'wander, stroll, ramble, rove' etc. (EWUng 1993.)

Csángós that has begun since the EC Recommendation. The language taught is close to standard Hungarian and has a considerable distance from the language still spoken by the elderly in the community (see Heltai 2006). As Sándor (2000, cf. Heltai 2006) has warned, the language revitalization among the Csángós, if based solely on teaching the standard Hungarian as spoken west to the Carpathians, might be characterized as “killing the language in order to save it” (Gal 2006: 171), which has already happened to e.g. German varieties in Hungary (Gal 1995). However, a task of the fieldwork is to see whether a positive Csángó self-identity can be constructed and whether the parents’ and grandparents’ language could be part of the identity (cf. Vaattovaara 2012). Following Maître & Matthey (2007), if no positive value is attached to a language variety, should it be saved, even against the will of its speakers? At the same time, the EC recommendation (REC 2001) insists on the distinct status of the Csángó language as a precondition of its international protection (Kontra 2012).

Isohookana-Asunmaa (2011) genuinely believes that the Csángós would best be recognized and protected as a distinct Finno-Ugric culture and language, such as the Meänkieli<sup>5</sup> speakers in Sweden. However, she manages to mention just a handful of Csángó intellectuals, most of whom no longer live in Moldavia, and few of whom consider the Csángó as a distinct culture. Rather, it is seen as an attachment to the Hungarian national culture. Further, as she notes, most practical support for the Csángós has come from Hungary or from the Hungarians in Transylvania.

The Moldavian Csángós have faced serious oppression, especially in the Ceaușescu era of “national communism”, when the use of their vernacular was strictly forbidden in all institutional contexts. After 1989 the Csángós have looked to Hungarians in Hungary and Transylvania for support, and for the source of norms of a language variety to be used in liturgical contexts. Hungarians in general are motivated to help the *Hungarians* in Moldavia, not a separate Finno-Ugric culture and language. That is, a Csángó revival is not in sight.

5. *Meänkieli* ‘Our language’ is a language variety closely associated to Finnish in northern Sweden, which has been recognized as an independent minority language by Sweden in 2000 (Huss 2006).

In the Hungarian government-sponsored Csángó educational program, teachers from Hungary and Transylvania are recruited to become educators in the Csángó villages. According to the long time coordinator of the program, Attila Hegyeli (2010), the teachers are often devoted intellectuals from Budapest. Furthermore, the current funder states in its homepage that “there is no shortage of volunteers” (<www.csango.eu>). In the documents describing the program, conceptions aiming to integrate the language spoken by the Csángós to the standard metropolitan Hungarian and to teach Hungarian majority culture and history to Csángó children are recurrent (e.g. Hegyeli 2010, for a critical discussion, see Heltai 2012). At the same time, the Moldavian Csángós are the only significant historical Hungarian associated minority group that has always been located beyond the borders of the Hungarian Kingdom. As Ilyés (2011: 605) formulated it in connection to language: “They do not look back at the period of linguistic renewal and national awakening as being decisive to their national identity.” Thus, the cultural and especially linguistic identity of the Moldavian Csángós bear little resemblance to those ca. 2.5 million minority Hungarians living in the countries surrounding Hungary (Sándor 2000). It has been argued, that the main motivation for parents to request the teaching of Hungarian has been economic contacts with the Hungarians from Hungary or Transylvania. In such contacts, the local vernacular used by the Moldavian Csángós is believed to be of no value.

Modern Finno-Ugric studies and projects have paid a lot of attention in the field of research on endangered minority languages. However, in traditional Finno-Ugric studies, the Csángó has been considered a dialect of Hungarian and therefore it has not been considered as an independent target of research.<sup>6</sup> A critical re-evaluation of this position in the case of Csángós could be carried out, with an aim to see whether the Csángó could be elevated and accepted in the group of minor Finno-Ugric languages, as the Council of Europe

6. It is however noteworthy, that the material of the first large dictionary of the Csángó dialects, was collected by a renowned Finnish scholar in Finno-Ugric studies, Yrjö Wichmann already in 1906–07 on his five month stay among Csángós, and published two decades later as posthumous dictionary by Bálint Csúry and Artturi Kannisto (Wichmann Y. 1936). (Wichman I. 2010.)

suggests (see Isohookana-Asunmaa 2011). The *Uralica Helsingiensia* series hereby takes a step towards recognizing the importance of the research on Csángó minority by publishing this volume.

### 3. Structure of the present volume

This volume seeks to provide a forum mainly for those young researchers, who have recent first-hand knowledge on the Moldavian Csángós on the basis of extensive fieldwork. With the aim to plan an international fieldwork research project in the future, the editors of the book hold important that scholars, who carry out contemporary Csángó research, analyze their fieldwork experience and share it. Furthermore, four researchers (Peti, Lajos, Kinda and Iancu) have recently defended their PhD thesis on the topic. In addition, Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa, the rapporteur of the Recommendation 1521 (REC 2001), provides the perspective of international cooperation to this volume as well.

The first article by Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa and Outi Tánzos approaches the situation of the Csángós through the lens of the Council of Europe Recommendation 1521 (REC 2001) on the Csángós and its impact. The first author, whose report was the basis of the recommendation, relates her personal experience among the Csángós before and after her report was accepted by the general assembly of the Council.

The article on Recommendation 1521 (REC 2001) is followed by eight other articles. Four of them describe different Csángó ethnological issues and four articles deal with questions about carrying out fieldwork among the Csángós.

Lehel Peti's first paper is a summary of the current situation of the Csángós and their identity questions. With a critical tone, he describes the activities of the Hungarian schools and other institutions, the role of the Catholic Church, politicians and folklore collectors and their impact on the local communities.

In his second account, Peti touches on methodological questions of fieldwork: the role of the center and periphery of the Csángó village as sites for collecting ethnological material, the advantages of short-term fieldwork, the disadvantages caused by ethnic stereotypes

and the (dis)advantages of being an outsider who may be seen as associated with the state.

In her first article, Veronika Lajos analyzes her experiences being an outsider teacher of Hungarian in a Csángó village. The multiple cultural and linguistic ties of the local Csángó community formed a challenge for teaching. The author emphasizes the importance and value of the present transcultural social space the Csángós embody, and expresses her concern of a possible shift from dialogic to monologic social conditions.

In her second article, a case study of an elderly woman, Veronika Lajos describes the main results of her fieldwork, applying a narrative biographical method to data from her long-term stay among the Csángós. She investigates the modernization processes, the transition of the traditional values into modern practices and the clashes between them through the example of a bathroom. She demonstrates the capability to adapt to modern values by the peasant society.

In her article, Laura Iancu describes the multiple identities of Csángó children by the help of her childhood memories from the 1980s. She reveals the negative aspects of identities (“Csángó”, “Hungarian”) that were proposed by others to her and used by other groups, due to their stigmatizing and exclusionary nature. Especially the “Csángó” identity was something to get rid of – e.g. by transferring it to people from other villages. She underlines the positive effect of being “among us”. That a construction of identity among children, where the “real” identity (Hungarian, Catholic etc.) was not to be demonstrated by words but rather lived through everyday practices.

Laura Iancu's and Magdolna Kovács' article is based on Laura Iancu's fieldwork among the Csángós and deals with the position of the fieldworker. The authors describe the advantages of being an insider when conducting fieldwork on religious material (e.g. possibility for long stay, access to local network, knowledge of the local dialect and trust by the members of the community). They also address the blurring boundaries of the positions insider, outsider and ‘in-between’.

In his first article, István Kinda describes the establishment, the expositions (pottery, home culture, traditional clothing) and the activities of the Csángó Museum in Zabola. This is the only existing Csángó museum, however, it is situated outside the Moldavian Csángós' living

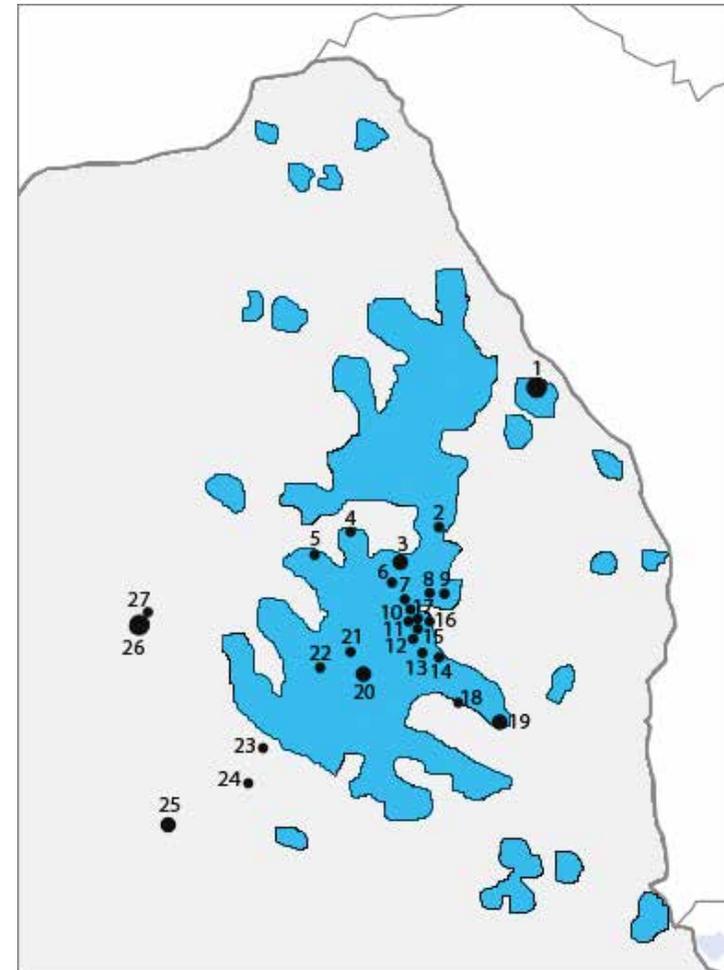
area. He underlines the importance of the documentation of traditional Csángó culture as a European minority cultural heritage on the one hand, and the symbolic value and function of cultural items in identity building on the other hand.

In the second article, István Kinda analyzes his fieldwork among the Csángós gathering material on the forms social control takes in traditional, religious Moldavian Csángó communities. He discusses the difficulties and the solutions of an outsider fieldworker when studying the sensitive issue of social control, seen in the forms of traditional community control and the adaptability of community rules in everyday life. Kinda underlines the importance of local networking – that is getting a bit closer to the position of the insider – by doing extensive and frequent fieldwork in chosen communities.

The volume closes with Juliet Langman’s commentary. She reflects on the work of the ethnographers in the Csángó territories, in particular focusing on issues related to the researchers’ stance towards the researched, and the degree of self-reflexivity in their analyses.



Map 1. The area inhabited by Moldavian Csángós in blue, the Ghimes Csángó area in yellow and Hétfalusi Csángó (“Seven-village Csángó”) area in purple.



Map 2. Villages and towns mentioned in the volume.

1. Jászvásár/Iași, 2. Nagypatak/Valea Mare, 3. Bákó/Bacău, 4. Lészped/Lespezi,
5. Puzstina/Pustiana, 6. Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra, 7. Forrófalva/Fărăoani,
8. Trunk/Galbeni, 9. Lábnyik/Vladnic, 10. Klézse/Cleja, 11. Somoska/Șomușca,
12. Csík/Ciucani, 13. Szászcut/Sascut, 14. Bogdánfalva/Valea Seacă, 15. Dózsa/Gheorghe Doja,
16. Magyarfalva/Arini, 17. Pokolpatak/Valea Rea, 18. Ploszkócény/Ploscuteni,
19. Egyedhalm/Adjud, 20. Ónfalva/Onești, 21. Diószén/Gioseni,
22. Gorzafalva/Grozești, 23. Bereck/Brețcu, 24. Zabola/Zăbola, 25. Sepsiszentgyörgy/Sfântu Gheorghe,
26. Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc, 27. Csíksomlyó/Șumuleu Ciuc.

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TYTTI ISOHOOKANA-ASUNMAA &  
OUTI TÁNCZOS

## Endeavors for a Living Csángó Language: Role of the European Council Recommendation 1521 in Maintaining Csángó Language and Culture

### Abstract

In 2001 Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa, a member of the Finnish parliament, drafted a report on Csángó minority culture in Romania for the Council of Europe. Following the report, Recommendation 1521 (Csango minority culture in Romania) was adopted at the Assembly of the Council. Since that time, progress has taken place especially in the field of education, and the local authorities show more support towards using Csángó. Even the Catholic Church has shown small signs of reconciliation, although the issue of the language of the mass has not yet been resolved. The situation of the Csángós requires constant monitoring of their rights. However, they have been recognized at the European level, which has been a source of inspiration and support especially for the people involved in language and culture maintenance.

## 1. Introduction

In 2001 the plenary of the Council of Europe adopted a report on the Csángó minority in Romania and Recommendation 1521, which urged Romania to promote the language and culture of the Csángós. This small Finno-Ugric minority language, often also classified as a dialect of Hungarian, is one of the many endangered languages of the world. The number of speakers is estimated to be approximately only 62 000, although the number of those who may be identified as Csángó on the basis of Roman Catholic religion, tradition etc. is larger, approximately 230 000 (Tánczos, V. 2011: 105). The Csángós do not enjoy any official minority status in their homeland Romania. However, they have been recognized at the European level, which means that they are known as a minority outside Romania. The Csángós are still fairly isolated in the Romanian region of Moldavia and their standard of living is considerably lower than that of Romanians or Transylvanian Hungarians of the western part of Romania.

The first author of this article, Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa, has been active in promoting minority rights since the 1990s. She was Member of the Finnish Parliament between 1983 and 2003, and Minister of Culture 1991–1995. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Finnish government approved, on her initiative, a special aid program for Finno-Ugrians living in Russia. She was also member of the Council of Europe between 1995–1999 and 1999–2003, and took her interest towards minority issues to the European level, bringing up the issues of the Finno-Ugrians in Russia and the Csángós in Romania. This article is partly based on Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa's personal experiences from the work of the Council of Europe and from visits to the Csángó areas, and also reflects her views of minority rights in politics. Outi Tánczos is a doctoral student at the University of Helsinki. She was responsible for providing sociolinguistic background and incorporating recent scientific research on the topic.

## 2. Multicultural Europe and minorities

The Council of Europe and the afterwards established European Union are organizations that Europeans have put a lot of hope in after the war and also today. Both organizations are alliances between states and their ultimate aim has been to strengthen co-operation and peace between European countries.

The most important tasks of the Council of Europe are to strengthen human rights and democracy, respect the mother tongue and promote multiculturalism. In this work drafting reports, recommendations and international agreements, such as the European Charter for Minority or Regional Languages (1992), plays a central role. It is not always easy to implement the recommendations of the Council in all countries. First cultural barriers have to be broken down. The Council also supervises the implementation of accepted agreements. However, the lack of resources remains a problem.

Europe has not always been a continent formed by nation states. Only some hundred years ago Europe was fragmented in small parts, principalities and small states. Later established nation states had their own features, as well as cultural, economic and military differences. Globalization has undermined the nation states, but not made them disappear, even though some may wish. Globalization, however, has forced the citizens to think globally, nationally and locally. Citizens are able to solve problems and participate and develop our communities on a local level. The local level is not, however, able to maintain essential elements and structures of welfare alone. States and also supra-national cooperation is needed in the globalizing world. The Europe of today is multicultural, and in modern Europe homogeneous culture should not even be the goal. The grim consequences of strict nationalism are all too well known. The European Union and the Council of Europe give all their support to maintain diversity and honor cultural diversity and multiculturalism in Europe.

There are numerous minorities in Europe that can be grouped in many ways. The so-called old minorities are mostly linguistic, ethnic and religious groups that have long resided in the territory of a state, whereas new minorities have their roots in recent immigration and refuge, and are growing fast. Most of the old minorities enjoy basic

minority rights. There are some basic principles that have been included in several significant international minority rights documents (see e.g. *European Charter; Framework Convention; The Hague Recommendations*) and must be fulfilled in every balanced multicultural country. These include

1. the opportunity to learn national language or main language of the state and be integrated into society;
2. the opportunity to maintain one's own culture and language;
3. the right to choose one's own identity;
4. a common understanding that different cultures are complementary to each other.

Certain European minorities, however, do not have access to some or all of these basic rights. The Csángós is one of these minorities. For this reason the Council of Europe has taken up the Csángó issue. The discussions on the Csángós show that the Council of Europe is sensitive to the everyday concerns of small and forgotten people.

### 3. Report on the Csángós for the Council of Europe

The Csángós are a relatively poorly known group. Although Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa has promoted the linguistic and cultural rights of the Csángós on an international level, it was actually not until 1999 that she had her first encounter with the Csángó culture. She had previously spoken up for the rights of other Finno-Ugric minorities in Finland and abroad, but had never even heard of the Csángós until József Komlóssy, who was deputy head of the Federal Union of European Nationalities, contacted her. She learnt that one of the leading figures of Csángó research in the beginning of the 20th century was in fact a Finn, Yrjö Wichmann. She was fascinated by Wichmann's materials on the Csángós, and learnt that already Wichmann had reported of the Csángós being under the threat of language shift. Later, however, the Csángós seemed to have been forgotten by the Finns. One reason for the poor international visibility of the Csángós is that in the past decades the Csángó research has often remained only inside

the Hungarian language area. In more recent years the research has taken a more international form. Isohookana-Asunmaa was assisted by Hungarian Csángó specialists, who offered lots of help in the drafting of the report and in organizing the tours in the Csángó areas. The information received from these specialists made her set out to the Csángós and start drafting a report for the Council of Europe, and, consequently, recommendations to the Romanian state<sup>1</sup>. A Recommendation is a tool used by the Council of Europe in its work for human rights. It contains proposals addressed to the Committee of Ministers of the Council, the implementation of which is within the competence of governments. The Council of Europe has adopted recommendations on general linguistic and minority rights issues as well as recommendations focusing on the empowerment of small or otherwise fragile minorities such as Yiddish speakers, Aromanians or the Roma (*Council Recommendations*).

The position of the Csángós is an issue raising controversy. The majority of the researchers is unanimous that they are of Hungarian origin. Nevertheless, in the Romanian history written in the 20th century the Hungarian origin was disputed and the Csángós were regarded as magyarized Romanians (for details and critique see Benő 2012: 22–23). This view on their origin explains why the Csángós have not been considered a national or ethnic minority by the Romanian government. Linguistically the language they speak can be considered a descendant or an archaic form of Hungarian. However, its long history in relative isolation from other Hungarian varieties has led to Csángó carrying distinct features that clearly differ from modern Hungarian, and therefore some consider it a separate language (Kontra 2012: 10). In this article we do not wish to take a stand on the linguistic position of Csángó, even though the issue has great significance when it comes to the practical consequences it may have. Labeling Csángó as a dialect of Hungarian may limit its possibilities for independent development and protection. Therefore in the international arenas Isohookana-Asunmaa has stressed the autonomous and indigenous nature of the Csángó ethnicity, culture and language.

1. For more information on the trips and the Csángós see Isohookana-Asunmaa 2011.

The prestige of the language spoken by the Csángós is low in Romania and its sphere of use very limited, and this is thought to be one of the key factors in the language shift taking place among the Csángós (Tánczos, V. 2012: 206). At the time of drafting the report Csángó was not taught in the Csángó villages, nor was standard Hungarian. The Romanian government, the regional authorities and the Roman Catholic Church ignored the Csángós' demands for education in their mother tongue.

One of the most influential actors in shaping the linguistic networks in the Csángó villages is the Roman Catholic Church. The opposition of the priests to the use of Csángó in the church has been powerful for centuries. The attitude of the priests is of utmost significance in these deeply religious communities and should be taken into account as a factor feeding language shift. On her trips to Csángó villages Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa took up the issue with village priests. For instance in 2003 in the village of Frumósza/Frumoasa she met a priest who had called Hungarian "the language of Satan" and Hungarian teaching in private homes "Satanic activity". The attitudes were so appalling that Isohookana-Asunmaa contacted the Secretary General of the World Council of Churches about the church's language policy, but this action had no immediate result (Isohookana-Asunmaa 2011: 115–116).

The negative attitude of the authorities rendered the drafting of the report more difficult. The clashes between minority policies of different countries showed even in the Council of Europe. Isohookana-Asunmaa recalls that the Romanians were against the writing of the report, and they got backing from the French. Presumably the support from the French was due to the French language policy and their problematic relationship with the Charter for Minority or Regional languages, which has proven difficult to harmonize with the underlying principle of French legislation that (also linguistic) uniformity is a prerequisite for equality (Määttä 2005: 177). Despite the resistance the report was finally accepted in spring 2001. The Romanian delegation left their dissenting opinion, stating among others that the majority of the Csángós are originally Romanians, and, with reference to census numbers, the number of speakers of Csángó dialect is merely 150

people and not 60 000 –70 000 as estimated in the Recommendation (*Report 2001*).

The report underlines the huge impact the lack of education and religious ceremonies in Csángó has for the language community. It mentions the Roman Catholic faith and "their own language, a Hungarian dialect" as the central elements of the Csángó identity (*Report 2001*). Following the report, the recommendation 1521 was adopted by the Council on 23 May 2001. It defines the Csángós in the following way:

*The Csangos (Ceangăi in Romanian) are a non-homogeneous group of Roman Catholic people. This ethnic group is a relic from the Middle Ages that has survived in Moldavia, in the eastern part of the Romanian Carpathians. Csangos speak an early form of Hungarian and are associated with ancient traditions, and a great diversity of folk art and culture, which is of exceptional value for Europe.*

The recommendation expresses concern for the situation of the Csángós and especially the decline in the number of speakers. It mentions the absence of the Csángó language in education and the church and contrasts it with the education available in other minority languages. According to the recommendation the Csángós should be recognized as a distinct culture. Furthermore, the Csángós should be recognized as a minority in the Romanian census. Romania should be encouraged to ratify and implement the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages and to support the Csángós, particularly in the spheres of mother tongue instruction, religious services in Csángó, Csángó media, societal activity and raising the level of awareness about the Csángós among the majority population (*Recommendation 1521*).

#### 4. Expectations and reactions to the Recommendation

The Council of Europe Recommendation 1203 on Roma protection, adopted in 1993, and the preceding report are considered landmarks that laid the foundation for new activities and studies (Thornberry & Martín Estébanez 2004: 176). It was justified to expect that also Recommendation 1521 would benefit the Csángó community.

In the first years of the 21st century the legislation regarding the Csángós would have provided possibilities for a more favorable linguistic status quo, but the activities of local officials prevented the rights from being fulfilled. Observers from Romanian human rights organizations pointed out that the Csángós had active representatives, but mentioned also the complexity and ambiguity of identity and language issues as well as a doubt about whether the majority of the Csángó community was committed to preserving their language and culture (Andreescu & Enache 2011a: 100–121).

One of the achievements of the Recommendation was that it attracted international attention to the Csángós. It also raised hopes among the Csángó Hungarian activists and can be considered a step towards empowerment of the community. A prominent Csángó artist, folk singer and teacher Ilona Nyisztor recalls the effect the Recommendation had on community activism and the teaching of Hungarian:

*The Csángó Hungarian Association organized a conference, and we discussed the points of the Recommendation in all teacher meetings, and thought about what we could do to put it to practice. The chair of the association at the time, Attila Hegyeli, went to the prefect of Bákó (Bacău) with the Recommendation, but the prefect pointed out that the Recommendation was not binding. We encouraged the parents on the basis of the Recommendation, and the RMDSZ (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania) helped as well, and even though the local authorities did not support it, Hungarian mother tongue teaching was initiated officially in two villages, Pusztina (Pustiana) and Klézse (Cleja). (...) I think that the Recommendation contributed greatly to this.<sup>2</sup>*

2. Personal email from Ilona Nyisztor, 10 February 2014, translated from Hungarian by O.T.

The status of the language has significant symbolic meaning for the minority language community. Often the symbolic impact is indeed the main impact of the officialization of a language (Zamyatin 2014: 113). Even though Csángó has not gained an official status in Romania, the attention it received from the Council of Europe is very likely to have had a similar effect in raising the prestige of the language and fostering concepts of Csángó ethnic identity.

#### 5. Development after the adoption of the Recommendation

What has happened to the Csángós in Romania since the report was published? A period of ten years should be long enough to look at results and answer the question of whether the Council of Europe has any influence on the lives of people in the member states.

The review presented here is based on close observation of the situation, a few further visits to the Csángó areas in the early 2000s and 2010 by Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa, reports from colleagues and specialists, above all Vilmos Tánczos, and recent studies on the subject. The review focuses on the key points of the Recommendation.

##### 5.1. Use of Csángó in central domains outside of the home

The Recommendation mentioned the right to attend religious service in one's mother tongue. The violation of this right has been obvious in the case of the Csángós, who have repeatedly asked for religious services in Csángó, in vain (Sándor 1999: 317). The priests continue using Romanian in ceremonies and in interaction with their congregation. Due to the long tradition of using Romanian the idea of using Csángó in ceremonies may be alien even to those priests who have Csángó background (Isohookana-Asunmaa 2011: 143). The biggest problem is that the international conventions and agreements do not bind the church, however great its influence on the linguistic behavior of a community (Szilágyi N. 2012: 197–199). Following the publication of the recommendation, in 2003 after several petitions,

the Archbishop Jean-Claude Parrisier Apostolic Nuncio in Bucharest promised religious service to be organized in Hungarian in the Csángó villages, but the promise crashed into the unclear linguistic status of the Csángó. In the interpretation of the Episcopate of Jászvásár/Iași the Csángós were promised worship in their mother tongue, which is not Hungarian but Csángó, and therefore Hungarian liturgy cannot be used, but the liturgy should be translated into Csángó, which naturally would take a very long time, considering the fact that the Csángó does not have a standardized written form. (Szilágyi N. 2012: 200.) Nevertheless, there are encouraging reports of small-scale yet important changes in the atmosphere. According to the locals there are fewer incidents of humiliating the believers for using their language. In some villages there have even been weddings, funerals and masses in Hungarian by a priest from Hungary. This change has been achieved through changes in nationality policy, international attention and petitions from the community (Andreescu & Enache 2011b: 137–138).

The most notable progress has taken place in the field of education, where the starting point was indeed not easy. As little as ten years ago one could be sued for teaching the language at home, and the discriminatory practices of the authorities caught the attention of the EU Committee as well. After the Report was adopted, there was news about the dubious behavior of the Romanian Ministry of Education. The Ministry brought charges against the Hungarian Csángós' Association of Moldavia for organizing education at home and for paying the teachers' salaries. The Ministry finally lost the case, but many parents are still afraid of asking for mother tongue education for their children. During her trips to Moldavia Isohookana-Asunmaa witnessed widespread prejudice against teaching Csángó their mother tongue by head teachers and local education officials.

The European Commission progress report (*Report 2003*) on Romania on 5 November 2003 noted improvement: the Csángós could finally receive some education in Hungarian. Since then, the situation has improved slowly but steadily. The mother tongue is now being taught in more than twenty Csángó villages, even though education is not yet available in all public schools. In the beginning it was organized in the form of an extracurricular activity, but in recent years it has also been possible to teach Hungarian as a subject called “mother

tongue” (3 lessons per week). For this the parents must request the teaching in the previous year, in writing. (Csángó 2012; R. Kiss 2013; Simon 2012: 185–186.) Therefore the availability of mother tongue instruction depends very much on the activity of the community. A short while ago the first course in teacher training was arranged. However, it still is a long way to go before Hungarian is taught in all villages. The instruction organized at school does not necessarily have any contacts with the extracurricular classes. In some villages the parents favor the extracurricular classes because of, for example, the dilapidated teaching rooms the schools offer. (Andreescu & Enache 2011b: 135.) The teaching often takes place in cultural centers that have been established in Csángó villages as a result of community activity. These are operated by Csángó organizations. Besides language the children are also taught folk dances and songs. The funding for the extracurricular teaching comes mostly from the Hungarian state and private people (Andreescu & Enache 2011b: 139). This may raise suspicion, and also makes the teaching invisible for the national curriculum. Those teaching Hungarian at schools are usually not given a permanent position. The teaching is still very much dependent on the attitudes of the local officials. The attitude of an individual principal or even mayor may be crucial. Sometimes the teaching of Hungarian has been prevented by referring to resistance from other parents. The attitudes vary between villages, but generally it can be said that the attitudes of school personnel have become more peaceful and supporting. Also numbers show development: in 2001 Hungarian was not taught in any state schools, but in 2010 already in 17 schools. The number of private Hungarian teaching institutions was 24. (Andreescu & Enache 2011b: 134–138.) Development in this sphere is especially significant, since for several language minorities education has been the most powerful means for assimilation (Tsunoda 2005: 62). Therefore all progress in education is to be greeted with joy. However, it is difficult to predict how the teaching in standard Hungarian will affect the Csángó vernacular.

To sum up, steps have been taken in the direction indicated by the Recommendation, but the goal has not been reached yet. Too much relies on the awareness and activity of the parents and the community, which luckily have increased in the past years. The active support from the state remains on a low level. The language shift has been

rapid and especially strong among the younger generations (Tánczos, V. 2011: 107–109). Compared to that the number of lessons per week in the state schools is low, but it is certainly a beginning and an important gesture that may affect the society at large.

## 5.2. Issues of identity and empowerment

One point of assessment is the self-identification of the Csángós. According to Vilmos Tánczos (2012b: 91) the Csángós have a notion of themselves as a people, but not as a nation in a similar sense as many other peoples in Europe. It has also been claimed that the Csángós take the language shift as a neutral step in their modernization process, and do not regard the language as an important component in national or ethnic self-identification (Tánczos, V. 2011: 110–111). This is a factor that must be taken into account when assessing the part of the Recommendation that Csángó should be made a category of ethnicity in the Romanian censuses. This has not been realized in such a form that “Csángó” could be chosen from a list, but the respondent has the possibility to declare any ethnicity in an open field. Vilmos Tánczos (2012b) describes the difficulties in the use of such concepts as “ethnicity” and “mother tongue” among the Csángós. These concepts are often either unknown to the Csángós or do not have any relevance to them. A concept of a Csángó (or Hungarian) ethnicity has not developed among them, and often they define themselves rather through religion or citizenship. This results in many Csángós defining themselves as “Roman Catholics” or “Romanians”. Similarly the concept of mother tongue has proven problematic in a multilingual community, in which the language has not become a conscious marker of community identity. Also in the analysis of the information the answer “Csángó” does not have a separate language code, but it is included in the group of “other languages”. These factors make the results of the census rather unreliable (Tánczos, V. 2012b: 87). Vilmos Tánczos (2012b: 89), however, notes a clear tendency in the connection between language skills and defining ethnicity: people who do not speak Csángó usually do not claim Csángó ethnicity. The practical consequence of this would be the parallel decline of the number of ethnic Csángós with the number of Csángó speakers.

Language teaching has brought the Csángós in closer co-operation with the Hungarians, who have been actively helping in organizing the teaching. The Romanian authorities have suspected Hungarian nationalism behind these actions (Tánczos, V. 2012: 210), albeit the Csángós have not formed a part of the Hungarian community for centuries, and most of them do not identify as Hungarians. They do not share the history, the common memory of the Hungarians, but their sense of belonging is directed towards their land, their villages. Of course the massive migrations of these times affect the Csángó communities as well, and it remains to be seen what the emigrating Csángós will take with them when they leave. The Romanian state should take measures to balance this phenomenon, establish vocational schools and create jobs in these economically depressed areas, as was suggested in the Recommendation. Although the Csángós are often regarded as people of history and tradition, they too take part in the modernization processes that affect all spheres of life. Csángó language and culture should find its position in this new environment in order not to fade away with the disappearing way of life. At the moment culture seems to be the sphere in which the Csángós feel it the most natural to fulfill themselves. There are young writers, musicians etc. who draw from the Csángó tradition. At least these young Csángós today are no longer ashamed of their background.

## 5.3. Changes in language policy

The Recommendation stated that Romania should be encouraged to ratify and implement the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages and to support the Csángós accordingly. The European charter for regional or minority languages, compiled by the Council of Europe, has been a powerful tool in creating a more minority-friendly atmosphere and legal framework in Europe (see e.g. Määttä 2005: 168). An example of this are the Kvens in Norway, who in many respects seem parallel to the Csángós. They, too, are a small minority that is historically related to a larger neighboring nation (the Finns), but have spent several hundreds of years in relative isolation from the Finnish cultural sphere and the Finnish state. They, like the Csángós, have experienced negative attitudes and policies from the majority,

and their language has been considered a primitive hybrid without any prestige. Norway signed the Charter in 1992, and Kven (although considered a Finnish dialect by most linguists at the time) was granted protection. In 2005 Kven was recognized as a language, and thus entered a higher level of protection. The new status has played a central part in the reevaluation of the Kven language both by the community and the surrounding society. Moreover, the status of Kven as an independent language has not segregated it from the Finnish contact, but, for example, the modern assets of speaking Kven can be found in business connections with Finland. (Lane 2010: 66, 74–76.)

Romania ratified the Charter in 2007, but does not mention Csángó, only Hungarian. Therefore the question of whether Csángó is considered a dialect of Hungarian or an independent language has again extreme relevance for its legal status. The report of the Council of Europe does not directly address this question, as the formulation was “their own language, a Hungarian dialect”. Human rights organizations Apador-CH and Pro Europa Liga have expressed their view that the Csángó Hungarians (in their wording) would benefit from the status of a separate national minority (Andreescu & Enache 2011a: 118).

The Council of Europe monitors the implementation of the Charter in the countries that have ratified it. However, the reports by Romanian authorities in 2010 and by the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe in 2012 do not take into account the considerable differences between regions, but just generally assess the status of Hungarian in Romania. In 2012 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe gave recommendations to Romania stating that it should, among others, adopt a structured approach for the implementation of each undertaking under the Charter, in co-operation with representatives of the minority language speakers; provide the basic and further training of a sufficient number of teachers to fully implement the undertakings under Article 8 with regard to German, Hungarian, Turkish and Ukrainian; reconsider the thresholds for official use of minority languages in administration as well as improve the offer of radio and television broadcasts in the Part III languages (*Report CE/Recommendation CM*). In the Csángó areas the Romanian authorities could certainly take a more active role in implementing the Charter.

## 6. Conclusions

The Csángós, as citizens of the European Union, are nowadays better aware of their cultural and linguistic rights. Also the European Ombudsman, who has a regional office in the Csángó area in Bákó/Bacău, has helped and assisted the Csángós in their struggle for fundamental rights. As Ilona Nyisztor<sup>3</sup> puts it: “(...) for us, who want to act for the maintenance of our language and culture, it is of great help that we can refer to it [the Recommendation] in front of the authorities and that we have been acknowledged as Hungarians and thus received the right to mother tongue teaching”.

However, the majority of the Csángós still need to be better informed about their rights to promote their own language, culture and history and of their children’s right to receive instruction in their language. They should know that the fundamental minority rights cover everyone, also the Csángós, and that belonging to the European community gives them a way of asserting their rights.

According to Spolsky (2004: 133) the nationality policy of a certain country is the result of an interplay of four factors: the actual sociolinguistic situation, a set of beliefs influenced by national or ethnic identity claims, the spread of English as a global language and the emerging pressure for rights for linguistic minorities. In the case of the Csángós in Romania the emerging international pressure can be regarded as one of the factors contributing to the improvement of the attitudes towards multilingualism and minority rights and counterbalancing the majority-favoring set of beliefs.

In Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa’s view as an expert of European co-operation, the Council of Europe should continue to monitor the linguistic and cultural rights among the Csángós, help them to write their own history, raise their situation for the public discussion also in the European Union, and support them financially. The consequences of discriminatory practices can often be felt for a long time after these practices are lifted, and to balance this positive discrimination is now needed. The Csángós are an illustration of how national politics and international politics take part in shaping a people’s fate. The significance of the case of the Csángós lies first and

3. Personal email from Ilona Nyisztor, 10 February 2014, translated from Hungarian by O.T.

foremost in its European minority rights context: in that European *de facto* minorities are recognized as minorities and their rights are ensured. Cultural values are unique, and everyone should have the right to enjoy and develop their own cultural and linguistic heritage.



Picture 1. The Recommendation 1521 (Csángó minority culture in Romania) adopted by the Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2001. The Csángó question finally reached the European Parliament in 2013. Photo: Isohookana-Asunmaa, adapted from poster.

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LEHEL PETI

## **Studies on Moldavian Csángós in Romania and Their Impact on the Local Communities**

### ***Abstract***

The first part of this paper focuses on the current situation of the Moldavian Csángós, namely the most important changes influenced by the Recommendation of the European Council, adopted in 2001; alterations that occurred at the institutional level, concerning education, self-representation of interests, and ecclesiastical matters. According to my insight, increasing interest towards the Csángós has inevitably affected the Moldavian communities, making attitudes change at the local level. The second part of the paper focuses on the influence of scientific and political actions targeting the Csángós: I either present the “structure” of external impacts/agents on the local societies, or the local outcomes resulting from activity of the Csángós themselves. Thirdly, co-inhabitants’ attitudes towards the Csángós are analyzed.

### 1. The Csángós – A brief introduction

The majority of the Moldavian Csángó communities live in a peripheral, rural region, usually without any intellectual stratum. After installation of the communist regime, the locals were forced to give up their traditional way of life (farming) and become wage labourers (see Pozsony 1996: 174, 2005a: 55). (Some elements of traditional life remain: see Pictures 1 and 2. For old tradition with modern pictures see Picture 3.)



Picture 1. Traditional elements in the home. Wood burning oven and fire place. Trunk/Galbeni, January 2006. Photo: Lehel Peti.



Picture 2. On the way home. Traditional domestic animal husbandry. Klézse/Cleja, 2012. Photo: Lehel Peti.



Picture 3. Modern religious pictures. Trunk/Galbeni, November 2006. Photo: Lehel Peti.

After political changes in 1989, the Moldavian Csángós' society underwent a radical change: secularization, fragmentation of the archaic religious worldview, decreasing influence of the Roman Catholic Church and transformation of its previous roles (see Peti 2008).

After 1989, many Csángós spent time working in Western countries, which influenced modernization in the region. Subsequently, the world of the Moldavian Csángós has become an eternally shrinking "cultural island", as local life is ruled by the transnational, global forces, in George E. Marcus' and Michel J. Fischer's terms (Marcus & Fischer 1999, Marcus 1995).

Plenty of villagers from this disadvantaged region started to work abroad, so, as an outcome, distances in mentality and lifestyles between generations have considerably increased (see Peti 2008, Adler-Lomnitz & González 2007, Pozsony 2005b: 188–189, Mohácsék & Vitos 2005).

As a result of modernization processes, the appearance of transnational symbolic universes, global tastes and aspirations, new,

transnational identity models based on certain cultural emotions were born (Niedermüller 2005: 58). Post 1989 tendencies became more accentuated by the latest waves of labour migration: modernization – as a factor shaping the social world – is revealed not just by new, “outward features” of lifestyles, but also by the change in religious-based values, especially among the younger generations. Moreover, these new issues slowly are becoming acknowledged cultural patterns among the locals (for a detailed analysis see Peti 2008).

Regular conversions (joining new religious movements and other religious communities) after the changes of 1989 indicate the decrease in social impact of the Roman Catholic Church and may be seen as strategies for mobility in the Moldavian villages. Weakening of confessional endogamy, which offers new possibilities for religious conversion, can also be considered part of the same process.

Violations of human rights – especially linguistic human rights – have been frequently present among Moldavian Csángós during the last decades (see Tánczos 2012a: 154).<sup>1</sup> So, in the first part of this paper, I follow how the Recommendation of the European Commission of 2001 (Recommendation 2001 [2011]) has influenced the status of the Moldavian Csángós.

After 1989, one could witness an increase in popularity of the Csángó topic. The ‘Csángó’ has become a mythical category, a national cause in the Hungarian public sphere of both Hungary and Transylvania. As Vilmos Tánczos emphasizes, the Csángó community symbolizes the assimilation of Hungarians living outside the borders of Hungary, the demographical decline of the Hungarians from Hungary, and the potential destruction of the Hungarian nation (Tánczos 2001: 56, 57).

Besides its political and scientific popularity, the Csángó question influences the local communities as well<sup>2</sup>, by changing attitudes at the local level. In the second part of my paper I present the “structure” of external interference in the form of *saving or salvaging the Csángós* in the local societies, then I attempt to analyze how the Csángós themselves have been influenced by such external interest.

1. For further information: see Vincze 2008.

2. The following train of thought makes part one of my article (Peti 2011), it is a significantly shorter and improved version of it.

I intend to present a few situations to draw conclusions regarding the significance of this intervention in the community, and to try to interpret the symbolic meanings of the attitudes based on these situations. It is important to emphasize that my paper does not aim to judge or criticize people affected by these processes. Rather, it contains experiences I earned during fieldwork in several Moldavian Csángó villages over the last ten years and my subjective thoughts and dilemmas about these experiences.

## 2. The situation of Hungarian schools

At this time, 2064 school-age children<sup>3</sup>, are enrolled in a Hungarian language-teaching program for 3–4 hours per week in 27 communities (with 42 teachers) (RMPSZ 2014). Some years ago, the Romanian state enabled Hungarian language-teaching in state schools, if Moldavian Csángó parents had submitted and renewed yearly an official (written) application.

The submission of such applications was initially promoted by teachers of the Hungarian schools – comprised initially of Hungarian intellectuals from Transylvania and Hungary, and later of educated Csángós with college degrees, mostly from Hungary. As the parents were intimidated by local authorities, schoolteachers or representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and local activists, quite a few parents withdrew their applications. More recently, in the past few years, no such violations of rights has occurred (according to my knowledge), but more refined techniques of hindrance applied by local potentates have taken the place of direct attacks. As a Hungarian teacher told me during my fieldwork in summer of 2011, the local priest convenes children for compulsory religious instructions, held simultaneously with the Hungarian-language teaching program. The Hungarian teacher re-scheduled his lessons many times, and the priest insisted on “adjusting” his instruction time to match them, hence hindering participation in the Hungarian-language teaching program.

3. In 2012 there were 1860 children studying, of whom about 983 were studying in state-schools. (MCSMSZ 2012)

The Hungarian teaching program is attractive, due to its free excursions and summer camps for children coming from usually disadvantaged families. For these children, the organized trips in Romania or abroad (mostly to Hungary), are the first such trips they have ever attended. This is why many families send their children on these excursions, even if they do not agree with taking Hungarian lessons (e.g. due to fear of the priest or school authorities, or because of ideological reasons, or because they think that it is better for their children to learn Romanian fluently). As the Roman Catholic priests have a very strong reputation in these communities, just a few persons dare to question the legitimacy of information coming from them.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, disinformation is a very effective tool, enabling the priests to apply control over the Hungarian teaching program. According to a Hungarian teacher who I talked with in 2011, the priest from his village divulged a rumor, that instead of trips to Hungary, children sent abroad are forced into prostitution, their blood and organs being later sold to international organ merchants. My informant recalled one of their departures for an summer camp in a Hungarian town, when an old woman started to cry hysterically to him: “My son, my son, you sold the children to the Hungarians!” As he recalls, it was difficult to organize a trip that summer, as some people hesitated to let their children participate.

In my opinion, official offences against the organizations representing Csángó interest - founded at the beginning of the 2000 - have stopped in the last few years. Previously, the School Inspectorate of Bákó/Bacău County, an institute subordinated to the Ministry of Education sued the Szeret Klézse Foundation (*Szeret Klézse Alapítvány/Asociația „Siret-Cleja”*, SZKF) and the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia (Hun. *Moldvai Csángómagyarok Szövetsége/Rom. Asociația Maghiarilor Ceangăi din Moldova*, ACHM), accusing them both for organizing illegal afternoon-classes on Hungarian for Csángó children.

Currently, there are eight non-governmental organizations for Csángó self-organizing in Moldavia and Szeklerland. True, the Romanian state contributes a small amount of money to their operation,

4. About the social functions of the Moldavian priests see more: Kinda 2005a, 2005b, Pozsony 2005d.

but the majority of funds come from Hungary through donations and applications to state-institutions and foundations based in Hungary. The important role of these eight NGOs is to keep the eight Hungarian schools in operation. All of these schools fall under the auspices of the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia (ACHM), responsible for teaching Hungarian to the local children. Teachers working in these schools (generally one or two per “school”) contribute to the preservation of the traditional Csángó culture, and the increase in its prestige.

Material support offered by the Romanian state, a small amount, comes through the satellite-foundations of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (Hun. *Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség, RMDSZ/Rom. Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România, UDMR*). For these organizations, usually with poor infrastructure and a few employees, purchasing resources essential for functioning is a daily problem. In a recent conversation with some of the employees, I understood that the direct resistance of the state institutions against self-representation of the Moldavian Csángós has come to an end since the Recommendation of the European Commission was enacted but definitely this did not change into political support. In other words, the either positive or negative attitudes of the employees of local administrative units influence the functioning of the NGOs. For example, the local councils can give (or not) tax benefits of around 1000 euros or more, representing a real support for a non-profit organization with an annual budget around a few thousand Euros. Different forms of sponsoring (such as supplying Hungarian schools with firewood etc.) would also be remarkable, though these occur in very rare situations. The Csángó Ethnographical Museum from Zabola, which gets some financial assistance each year from the budget of a local council, is a unique case.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note, that Hungarians from Hungary and Transylvania as well as the Csángó intellectuals with Hungarian identity do not consider the Csángós as an independent minority, but part of the Hungarian nation. I am not aware of any attempts of the Hungarian intellectuals, nor the Csángó ones to include the Csángós among the 18 national minorities officially recognized by the Romanian

5. About the safeguarding of the Moldavian Csángós after the Romanian system change from 1989, see more: Pozsony 2005e.

government. On the other hand one must admit, there would be no chance for such an initiation to succeed in the current political and social climate in Romania.

### 3. The role of the Roman Catholic Church in Moldavia

In my opinion in opposition to the relatively positive changes at the level of state institutions, Csángó self-representation is less accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, which refuses the Moldavian Csángós' demand for practicing their religion and having masses in the Hungarian language. Except the allowance of Hungarian tourists in some village churches, who pursue the priests to allow Hungarian sermons, not a single form of religious life in Hungarian is accepted for local believers.<sup>6</sup> The Roman Catholic Church in Moldavia unceasingly continues to encourage assimilation of the Moldavian Csángós despite the Recommendation of the European Commission.

“In the mid-twentieth century, the Romanian nationalist thought created a quasi-scientific theory on the Romanian origin of the Csángós, built upon fascist racist postulates”, such as Iosif Petru, M. Pal and Petru Râmneanu (Tánczos 2011a: 289)<sup>7</sup>. The concept of the Romanian origins of the Csángós is set forth by Dumitru Mărtinaş, whose book was probably written and issued with cooperation/contribution of the Romanian Secret Service (*Securitate*) (see Arens 2008: 117, Pozsony 2011: 297–298). Dumitru Mărtinaş' theory is still present in the Romanian scientific discourses, representing the only and unquestionable truth for the Roman Catholic Church in Moldavia.

It is hardly accidental that in 2001, when the Recommendation of the European Commission was adopted, the Roman Catholic Episcopate from Iaşi founded a so-called scientific research institute<sup>8</sup> (see Pozsony 2005e: 202), with publications intending to prove the

6. As Ferenc Pozsony brought to my attention.

7. For background on the current social historical context see also: Davis 2008.

8. Called the Department of Scientific Researches of the Roman Catholic Episcopate from Iaşi.

Romanian origin of the Moldavian Csángós by “scientific methods”.<sup>9</sup> Since then the Church supports the Dumitru Mărtinaş Association also founded in 2001, which spreads extremist ideas regarding the Csángó question.

### 4. The identity of the Moldavian Csángós

The traditional structure of the Moldavian Csángó identity is a controversial issue in scientific discourse. As the Moldavian Csángós had not taken part in modern nation-building processes of the 19th century, they don't share the most important components of ethnic identity (awareness of common origin, common historical experience and memory, emotional/symbolic relation to particular cultural characteristics and language see Tánczos 2012b: 306, Tánczos 2011b: 28). In their absence, the awareness of belonging to the Roman Catholic Church is a key element for identity construction. .

In the 2011 census, out of the 60 Hungarian census operators proposed by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia (ACHM) only 12 persons were accepted by the Romanian officials, the others being rejected due to bureaucratic objections raised by local councils (see Tánczos 2012b: 289–290). Moreover “[t]he categorizations of the modern census (citizenship, mother tongue, ethnicity, religion) do not make it possible to get a real image of this complicated identity structure, since the really important identity factors do not correspond to the identity factors that the modern civil national structures of identity can describe” (Tánczos 2012b: 320–321). According to unofficial data, collected in 1997 by Vilmos Tánczos, there were 62,000 Hungarian speaking Moldavian Csángós (Tánczos 1999) in the region. As Vilmos Tánczos' most recent research shows, assimilation of the Moldavian Csángós, has been accelerated in the last decade as the number of the Hungarian speaking locals has decreased from 62,000 to 44,000 (Tánczos 2011a: 366) in less than fifteen years.

The assimilation process is illustrated through results of a survey carried out in the village called Bogdánfalva/Valea Seacă

9. About the activity of this institute see more: Pozsony 2005c: 202–203.

(Figure 1). The survey was conducted in January 2012 by fieldwork assistants.<sup>10</sup> The language of the survey was Romanian, and only Catholics over age 18 were interviewed. There are 100 completed questionnaires, the sample being structured according to gender and age.

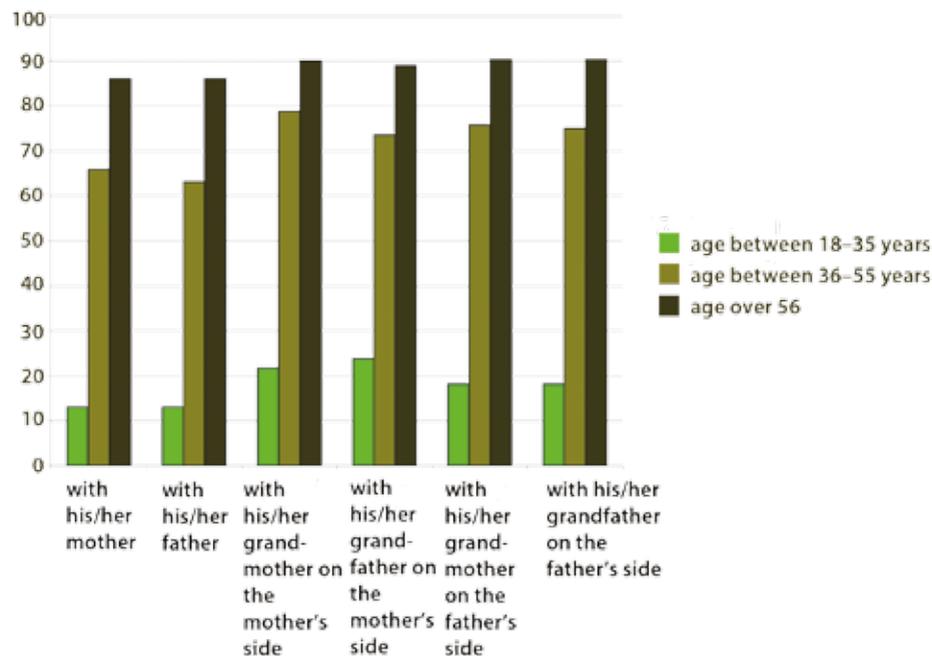


Figure 1. Frequencies (%) on Csángó language-use in family by age cohorts from Bogdánfalva/Valea Seacă.

Results of the questionnaire show that answers on language use depend on the age-group of the respondent. The majority of persons over 56 (86–90%) speak the Csángó dialect almost always when communicating with their family members. 63–79% of the 36–55 age cohort use the Csángó dialect depending on the interlocutor; they usually use the Csángó dialect in communication with their grandparents, and less

10. The survey was ordered by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (Hun. *Nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézet, NKI* / Rom. *Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, ISPMN*).

with their parents. The proportion of persons between 18–35 years who use the Csángó dialect in most cases is just 13–23%. In accordance with the survey, members of the younger generation communicate in Romanian almost always.

## 5. The structures for saving the Csángós and local responses to them

### 5.1. Media, journalism

Media, especially the opinion journalistic-type of publications fulfill and reproduce ideological expectations of the public opinion regarding the Csángós, and help in embedding such views. The media representation of Csángó culture neglects its significant and constant structural alterations, and if it mentions a change, it places it in the context of Romanian nationalistic aspirations. These writings do not emphasize or characterize the most unique aspects of the Csángó culture, nor do they analyze its alterations in specific situations, but rather present different slices of Csángó culture from an ideological point of view: as it “should be” (see Kinda & Peti 2006: 92). Like academic publications, journalism has started to criticize the self-validating behavior of the Romanian perspective regarding the Csángós, and tends to disarm the nationalist discourse; thus, both academic publications and journalism are ethnically committed discourses with double polarity. Still, in the Hungarian media the Csángó issue represents a pretext for journalists to develop a discourse on the existence of an endangered minority, which is, in fact, a myth-creating act.<sup>11</sup>

According to Regina Bendix “[f]olklore has long served as a vehicle in the search for the authentic, satisfying a longing for an escape from modernity” (Bendix 1997: 7). As it emerges from the media reports from Transilvania about the Moldavian Csángós (the Csángó Archive of the Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság/ *Asociația Etnografică „Kriza János”/Kriza János Ethnographical Society*), journalism changes ideologies related to the specific Csángó culture: journalism mythologizes it. According to this myth, Csángós are Hungarians

11. Of course, there are some exceptions as well.

living in a very harsh environment, being “*the Easternmost group of Hungarians*”; they have preserved the most ancient, most original, most precious traits of the Hungarian nation. “Safeguarding” this culture is interpreted by journalists as a conscious stance, an active role. The romantic image of the Csángós who preserve their identity fits the Hungarian history in a framework of a dramatic tale, with social success guaranteed by its mythical traditions about the painful national fate.

Unlike organizations acting in the region, actions undertaken by media to save the Csángós seldom succeed in the intended impact on the local society, as broadcasts which carry out these representations do not reach the villages. Ironically, it is common that satellites with the *Duna TV* inscription are used to watch the regional Romanian language broadcast, *Etno TV*, that has a highly significant popularity among the villages around Bákó/Bacău. (The channel regularly broadcasts “artificial Romanian folklore”, mainly songs and dances.)

Regina Bendix states that “[t]he most powerful modern political movement, nationalism, builds on the essentialist notions inherent in authenticity, and folklore in the guise of native cultural discovery and rediscovery has continually served nationalist movements since the Romantic era” (Bendix 1997: 7). In the symbolic political fight for Csángós the use of folklore for nationalist purposes is not rare. To highlight political rejection towards spread of the traditional Csángó culture, Vilmos Tánzos affirms that “folklore and ‘artificial folklore’ has been part of the political arsenal used by most extreme nationalists” (Tánzos 2001: 54).

## 5.2. Csángó culture at festivals: the organization of culture

Eric Hobsbawm argues that through producing political traditions in the context of the social transformations at the end of 19th century in Europe “Quite new, or old but dramatically transformed, social groups, environments and social contexts called for new devices to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to structure social relations” (Hobsbawm 1999: 263). After 1989, Csángó cultural heritage became an ethnic symbol entering the stage of many folk

programs and festivals. Vilmos Tánzos outlines the “Csángó Renaissance” after 1989. “In Hungary in the last decades the idealizing ideology has spread, that invoking the archaic and “ancient Hungarian” nature of the Csángó culture and language and its high aesthetic quality idealizes this culture, and exactly in these terms tries to integrate the Moldavian Csángós into the modern Hungarian national culture” (Tánzos 2012b 307–308). So, for example, each village appointed a person to represent this particular ‘traditional’ culture, representatives became permanent guests, ethnic elements of the programs organized in Romania and Hungary. The aim of such events was not the presentation of the authentic Csángó culture: tendencies to its conservation, its involuntary articulation into the Hungarian nation, as well as the ideological support for the alternative vindication of rights by the Hungarian political sphere, all these point to political folklorism. One basic criterion in ethnicizing the Csángó cultural heritage is its degradation to an exotic, and simultaneously ‘Hungarian-like’ entertainment program.

Local aspects of the Csángó festivals organized regularly in Hungary have led to acculturation, since they enforce tendencies of the modernization paradigm and thus facilitate the “relativization” of community values. This is why a few years ago it would have been inconceivable for the Csángós to express their attitudes on the most recent Csángó Festival and its local arrangements, in which they were involved. The organizers wanted to take pictures for the poster of the festival, so they brought a group of people from Klézse/Cleja and the neighboring villages by bus together with a traditional orchestra. According to their concept the Csángós, dressed in their traditional costumes, were expected to dance in an idyllic environment. As festival arrangements took place during Lent, the bus was sent to a location further away from the village as Csángó norms prohibit any cheery, communal dance manifestations during this period. Breaking the norms would draw disapproval of the Church and the community, so the people put on their traditional costumes, but instead of dancing, they merely posed as if dancing, according to the instructions of the seven or eight photographers. Although the poster was finished by professionals,

*[t]he priest found out. He preached about it in the church, that I don't know, the Hungarians give garments [And they consider the priest's words?] After he had said that, many people started to feel embarrassed. That he would speak about it in the church, and then... [Many people think that...] Many think that it is a sin. A sin. We were raised from early childhood, we are raised that it is a sin to dance in Lent, at work, or to make oaths. They never did these things. [Still many of them got on the bus.] Yes, yes, at that time. They left, but I knew that they thought, it wasn't a great sin.*<sup>12</sup>

It is important to emphasize the role of the priest in leading public opinion, his intention to link ethnic elements to sin, placed in the religious framework of the sermon, and religiously legitimized through it. It is interesting that the Romanian Roman Catholic Church condemned the Csángó children being sent to camp in Hungary because one of the organizing groups were *protestant Hungarians* who did not take the children to church, to the Holy Mass.<sup>13</sup>

### 5.3. The Roman Catholic Church of Transylvania

In their structure the Church programs for the Csángós resemble political rites. One of them, the Csángó Mass of Csíksomlyó/Șumuleu Ciuc is attended even by high-ranking politicians. In 2003 the sermon, besides its religious message, also expressed clear ideological topics addressing the national unity of the Hungarians, Székelys (Seklars) and Csángós. Mythical tradition highlighting common ancestry of the Jewish and the Hungarian nations was mentioned in the sermon – broadcast by the Duna TV – together with the idea of national unity between Moldavians and Hungarians both in and outside the borders.<sup>14</sup> The Duna TV is a Hungarian state-funded public service television channel; its broadcast schedule features mostly programs for or about Hungarians beyond the borders of Hungary.

12. My key informant in this matter is often invited to Csángó-related performances in Hungary. All the following quotations come from her.

13. As Vilmos Tánzos brought to my attention.

14. My own field experiences.

Csángó cultural programs are connected to church events, as they serve as closing rituals for the former. Moreover, mass in the Hungarian language serves community integration purposes, too. Subsequently, the Transylvanian Roman Catholic priests have been deeply involved in spreading the church (religious) culture in Hungarian; they had celebrated secret masses in private homes during the communist period.<sup>15</sup> After the political changes, some priests from Hungary undertook this ritual while working in the Roman Catholic villages.

### 5.4. Education in Hungarian language

Teachers of Hungarian language are not only educators but also act as ethnographers, philosophers and artists – who do not necessarily have teacher education – eager to understand the local culture. Attitudes towards the present-day organization of the Hungarian-language education are also different. In opposition to the past, when propaganda delegitimizing Hungarian education stirred up local tempers, nowadays introduction of the Hungarian-language education into the official educational system has a legitimizing effect.

It seems that the official viewpoint regarding Hungarian-language education could have an important effect on the attitudes of the Csángós in judging its value, as seen from the following statements made by one of my informants:

*[Were there any problems with organizing the Hungarian-language education?] There were problems at first. They did not allow it in schools. They did not want it. They even spoke about this in the village. But whoever wanted, let it be. Now everyone is calmed down, nothing is said. No... [And what might be the reason for this?] They are used to it, that this has to be this way. You see, they even permitted it in the schools. And they talked about this a lot, I heard it in the radio, even in the television, and I heard that they said that they would help the minorities with this, and then people hear it, and say, that this needs to be done. They can see that there is a law given, that they have to let them learn in their language, everyone, and they just don't speak about this...*

15. For example see the reports of such a priest (Jáki 2002).

The fact that external pressure has been reduced greatly facilitated many parents applying for this educational alternative. The fact is that some expect material help from sending their children to the Hungarian class, as the majority of the Csángós live in very difficult economic conditions.

*Many of them go, because, as I understand, they give them money, two million and four hundred thousand a year. [...] There are many poor people. [...] They live in poverty. And those two million mean a lot to them.*

#### 5.5. Politicians from Hungary and Transylvania

Local reactions triggered by local or county officials (among them, the Church)<sup>16</sup> regularly followed visits of politicians advocating Hungarian in Moldavia after 1989. Emotions raised by these visits (understood as atrocities), were related to them being regarded as actions of “identity protection” of the power structures. Frustrations of the local elite with Romanian connections were connected to the thought that alternative Hungarian identity of the Csángós would receive a boost from external interventions; success of these movements was assured by the ideological propagation of “the Hungarian danger”. In fact almost every visit of Hungarian politicians aimed at the validation of interests or the surveying of life-conditions of the people was followed by a long stream of conflicts. Unleashing of the conflicts was a result of the exaggerated symbolic significance assigned to these visits.

#### 5.6. Collectors of Csángó folklore: getting in touch with local culture

After regime change in 1989, the Moldavian villages were swamped by a high number of people collecting Csángó folklore, of whom very few were keen to produce a scientific analysis of phenomena.

Ethnographers who worked in Moldavia often were treated as enemies of the Romanian Church nationalism. Moreover, they were

16. See the comprehensive study of Ferenc Pozsony on the advocating endeavours on behalf of the Moldavian Csángós (Pozsony 2005c).

subjected to persecution and threats by the official investigating institutions. As a result, animosity was often directed at the researchers, and the villagers were often reserved or even afraid while meeting the scholars.

In interactive contexts the local respondents often act out (sometimes forced) role-plays to reproduce asymmetric relationships, enacting the archetype of the archaic, of the non-civilized; such interaction fuels, too, hostility against researchers.<sup>17</sup> In a social dynamic where these contexts are interpreted within a system of heavily charged symbolic relations, the intention of the locals to represent their “personal culture”, leads to an attitude of the “weird respondent.”

My informants think that researchers from Hungary gather the dancers because they earn money from organizing traditional dance clubs, while the villagers have no economic benefit of it. Respondents, who have attended Hungarian folk programs and seen dances performed in a “professional way”, have expressed their reluctance, interpreted as a phase of alienation from their culture:

*Nothing long-lasting will come out of this. They record it, they will keep it. They will have it, they learnt it, they perform it and earn money from it. Because they get a lot of money from it. Because they are popular. Because they cannot dance the dances as we do. Then they mix things into it, and it is not the same. They do not dance it exactly the same. And the village does not get anything from it. This is my opinion.*

#### 5.7. (Quasi scientific) publications claiming scientific recognition

A vacuum-effect of the Csángó cultural life can be illustrated by the high number of different types of publications presenting Csángó ways of life. This tendency is best represented by the *Csángó bibliográfia* (‘Csángó bibliography’, see Ilyés et al. 2006). Typical of these

17. Hanna Snellman (2010) showed how the image of the “authentic”, “typical” Finn (Snellman 2010: 57) was created with ethnographic tools in the early 1970s in a research project of the Nordic Museum. She argued that in the context of such research “Ethnicity, culture and national identity were treated almost as something people were born with” (Snellman 2010: 57).

publications is their incapacity to overcome presenting the Moldavian Csángós in an ethnic context (see Pozsony 2005e: 8).

Hungarian publications about the Csángós, that depict them as persons with Hungarian identity, are often thrown out by the villagers, if not, they are kept in places that hold no symbolic relevance.<sup>18</sup>

Csángós with Romanian identity consider the Hungarian language publications as the bearers/manifestations of the *Hungarian threat*, as written Hungarian holds irrational, almost magical characteristics to them. It came out in the conflict on April 25, 1995, when representatives of the Association of Hungarian Csángós from Moldova met representatives from the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania (DAHR) to discuss possibilities of institutionalizing Hungarian language education and cultural life. Due to extremist political organizations the meeting became a scene for verbal and physical aggression: extremists burned the Hungarian textbooks brought by car (see Pozsony 2005e: 195). The Moldavian clergy knowingly constructed a magical circle around the Hungarian language, whose speakers were regarded as demonic objectifications. Burning of the books was a public *auto da fé*, similar to the medieval event, as well as that of setting communist literature on fire during the events of 1989.

*There was a time when some people came and brought some writings [...] and we went to the vineyard to work. We went up to the outskirts of the village, this is where we have our vineyard. And I heard people saying the Hungarians were coming and bringing some kind of writings, and I don't know what. [Did they speak about this in the village?] The people were speaking about this, and went to meet them. They started encouraging each other saying 'let's go, let's not allow them' and things like that. [...]. But they encouraged one another, saying 'let's go and hit them in their heads!' [But for what?] Because they wanted to... and perhaps the priest encouraged them as well.*

Attitudes towards the “procession of Hungarians” (*magyarjárás*) after the regime change were endowed with a symbolic possibility to

18. My own experiences.

change ethnic identity. Building up relations with people from Hungary, the community made clear for itself and incorporated into its inner system of relations who the “Hungarians” were. Such classification engendered the restructuring of local relations:

*[Were they mad at you for siding with the Hungarians?] Oh yes, a lot of them. They even said that they would burn down our houses. But my husband said that they wouldn't be capable to, they wouldn't put their minds to it. [...] There is not one who is that crazy to...*

As these situations were conflictual, and social sanctions to create borders against “the Hungarians” were appealed to, some assumed symbolic attitudes that indicate a forced identity practice. Public refusal/conviction to talk to people who collected data was many times part of the symbolic exclusion of the Hungarians:

*And then, there is the case of the violin player, Botyézát. The Hungarians came to play the violin. The Hungarians came, looked for people to play the violin. Some played the pipe... but he did not want to play the violin. [Why?] Because he was afraid what the other villagers would do to him. Everyone would say that he sided with the Hungarians.*

Locals who did not conform to local opinion, risked being stigmatized. Ethnographers doing fieldwork in the Székely and Southern Csángó villages often experienced, while visiting their former respondents with whom they used to be in good terms, a hostile reception, as well as the disengagement of new relations.<sup>19</sup>

Attending folk festivals in Hungary also engendered discrimination within the Csángó community, leading to its internal division. Such jarring situations are signaled by delegitimizing narratives that accuse participants in this “ethno-migration” with transgressing community norms because they made a commitment to the “Hungarians”. On the narrative level, this phenomenon is similar to the group stigmatization observable in the forming of sects; it recalls a practice when

19. Based on personal conversations and my own experiences.

representing a new cultural/religious identity is considered a violation of the group norms (see Peti 2008: 39).

*They say that they made a choice. They go to the Hungarians. That's what they are saying. They are speaking about this.*

Like sect members, these persons are suspected of siding with the Hungarians for material reasons:

*As they see that a car comes into the village, and they are Hungarians, they say that they bring aid to the dancers. [...] They say that they bring things to the dancers. But they never brought anything explicitly to the dancers. But that is what people say.*

Such dismissive attitudes towards visitors from Hungary are rooted in the so-called sensitivity regarding identity<sup>20</sup>; touchiness resulting partly from the impact of Romanian nationalist ideologies held by some organizations.

## 6. Instead of conclusions

Lacking a group of Csángó intellectuals entailed the appearance of an *external* discourse claiming to idealize the inner processes within the Csángó society. Biased in its views on nation, this discourse considers the Csángós essentially helpless. Under the impact of recent interventions into their lives, local communities have become articulated alongside identity constructions that contribute to developing new conflicts. From the perspective of identity construction, villages influenced by these movements of 'salvation' gain an insecure status, as the consciously assumed acculturation has brought forth external disturbance of collective life strategies. During this process of "salvation" several Csángós have been faced with questions of their ancestry, ethnic affiliation - issues that may raise future controversies (and have done so many times).

20. About the complexity of the identity of the Moldavian Csángós see: Tánczos 2012b, 2012c; Pozsony 2005f; Magyar 1994; Pávai 2005; Fodor 1995.

Having in mind the effects of the Csángó 'salvation', I reject stigmatizing in any way protagonists of these actions and their activities. As mentioned earlier, recognition of the Moldavian Csángó culture has its important results, especially in the domain of Hungarian language teaching of Csángó children. I myself would hesitate in naming better, more professional alternatives than the actual ones, able to support cultural values of the Moldavian Csángós. What I have presented here is just an anthropological reflection on how acknowledgement and preservation of Moldavian Csángós' traditional culture articulates local identity constructions under the shadow of nation-building.

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## Unwelcome Stranger in the Field: Fieldwork Experiences among the Csángós

### Abstract

In this paper I will provide a sample of my experiences and adventures during fieldwork among the Moldavian Csángós since 2001. I will analyze the local attitudes to ethnographers’ work, as I experienced doing fieldwork in Moldavian Csángó villages. I will describe the circumstances that made the fieldwork difficult, that is, the prejudices of the representatives of the local church and civil authorities as well as the fears of the community members. I will show my struggles to find a suitable methodological framework in the midst of a local environment that did not support the ethnographer’s work.

### 1. The context

I started my fieldwork in Moldavia in 2001. By then Romania had left behind the troubled political and economic situation of the post-socialist period; the country was touched by Western modernization and moving ahead on the road of political and social consolidation. Towards the end of 1990s, beginning of 2000 the Moldavian Csángó society went through a social change that proved to be crucial for its present-day situation. Like the whole country, Moldavian society took part in the exploding Westward flow of labour migration, which has proven able to influence the traditional social constructions, identity structure and folk culture of the ethnic group. Large numbers of

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villagers from the region, with a particularly positive demographic potential but still disadvantaged in their chances of employment, seized the opportunity of working abroad. Labour migration led to a general abandonment of the old lifestyle and mentality (see Peti 2008; Mohácsék & Vitos 2005; Pápai 2005).

When I speak about the Moldavian Csángós I mean all the Roman Catholics living in 7 counties (Bacău, Neamț, Iași, Vaslui, Vrancea, Galați, Botoșan) in the Eastern part of Romania (see Tánzos 2010: 62). According to Vilmos Tánzos “the language of their ancestors is spoken only by a small group, especially by the older generations, and the great majority of the ethnic group declared itself to be of Romanian nationality with Romanian as its mother tongue” (Tánzos 2012a: 7). Nevertheless, there are several features along which a continuous cultural boundary persists between the Catholic Csángós and the Orthodox Romanian (see Peti 2013). When I speak about the Moldavian Csángós as an *ethnic group* I take into account Fredrik Barth’s notion, who argues that cultural differences matter in the process of boundary maintenance: “Entailed in ethnic boundary maintenance are also situations of social contact between persons of different cultures: ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply marked difference in behaviour, i.e. persisting cultural differences” (Barth 1969: 15–16).

## 2. Mistrust

I’ve carried out fieldwork between 2001 and 2012 in several Moldavian Csángó villages mostly settled around the city Bákó/Bacău. My research was concentrated mainly around issues on popular religion and ethnicity.

I faced authorities’ revulsion of Hungarian ethnographers and their prejudices influenced my fieldwork throughout; it determined my methods of data collection and my relationship with the locals. During my work in Moldavia, I constantly faced that ethnographic data collection is burdened by ethnicity (about this phenomenon see more: Tánzos 2000: 92–103, 146–159).

Let me recall a story from my field notes from January the 14th 2006 to highlight the above-mentioned phenomenon:

Center of Trunk (my site) is crucial for the village: streets are converging towards it, lining in a star-shaped formation. Moreover, this centrality conveys visibility to local life: not only the mill, the biggest grocery store, the most popular pub, the highest and most decorated *sztátuja* ‘statue’, the school and the bus stop can be found in the “core”, the village center is also a stop for coaches with international destinations. Due to this organization, one cannot avoid the center; not even passing from one street to another, having business in the main institutions is impossible without going through it. (See Picture 1.)



Picture 1. The central square with the statue of Saint Francis of Assisi at the crossroads. Trunk/Galbeni, November 2006. Photo: Lehel Peti.

Subsequently, the center is a fairly populated place, irrespective of the weather. While searching for old informants or finding out the whereabouts of the newly “recommended” ones we often had to cross the village center, so the hub was connected to data gathering as well. (See Picture 2 and 3: meeting villagers on the road and at home.)



Picture 2. Elderly women coming home from hoeing. Trunk/Galbeni, October 2006. Photo: Lehel Peti.



Picture 3 . Elderly woman with a blessed candle. Trunk/Galbeni, October 2006. Photo: Lehel Peti.

The structure of the settlement's center also explains why a researcher in Trunk cannot remain invisible, especially when he carries a two-meter high camera stand. As we first walked through the center, one man heading towards the pub yelled at us:

“What do you have with you?”

I said it was a camera stand, and then he replied:

“I only wanted to ask...”<sup>1</sup>

He was curious to know who we were, and by the time he found out, this short conversation had already been overheard by at least ten people at the square. The most important thing they filtered out from our answer was not the role of our camera but who we really were. This news then quickly spread in the village. Sometimes, we did not manage to find opportunities to talk to locals, even after being “introduced” in the village center. After several unsuccessful attempts to create a proper context for interviewing and filming, we were perplexedly walking down the main street, when a woman around eighty greeted us, from a yard girdled by low planking:

“Where are you going?”

In response we introduced ourselves, and told that we are students from Cluj, eager to “discuss” “old things” with the locals. She asked at once if we could enter her house where she would tell us stories. During our conversation a forty-year-old woman came out wearing clothes for outdoor work.

“Who are you?”

We told her (in a bit more detailed manner) who we were, what our interests were (on how they used to live, etc), still, we remained unable to overcome her negative attitude.

“I have many things to do, boys and no time for chatting!”

She could not be convinced even though I clarified we need nothing but her time. She mentioned her duties again then turned around and left for the backyard.

Although her arguments seemed to be grounded, we soon found out that her work was not the only reason for rejection. Convinced by the inability to change her mind, we returned to the old lady again. As

1. The conversation took place in Romanian.

a reaction, the younger woman turned to her saying with a determined whisper:

“You do not have time either! Tell them that you do not have time either!”<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Participant observation and the length of stay

During my fieldwork in the Moldavian villages I applied methods different from ones of the classical anthropology developed by Bronislaw Malinowski.<sup>3</sup> The “traditional fieldwork” according to Helena Wulff means “(...) one year of more or less uninterrupted participant observation in a village or an urban neighborhood as a unit (...)” (Wulff 2009: 139). It became obvious even the first time, when I worked as a student usually accompanied by a colleague, that ethnographic data gathering – given the special circumstances – should apply research methods that are adjusted to the local conditions. Time spent in the field varied from two-three day periods to one-two week long ones, reaching 25 weeks in total.<sup>4</sup> Besides its obvious disadvantages – especially the short periods of time I could spend there – this type of fieldwork had its advantages, too.

I often experienced families who welcomed me at our first encounter and seemed keen to carry on long conversations. Yet, one-two days or two-three weeks later, when I visited them again, they looked dismissive and refused to be interviewed, referring to various strange reasons. Some respondents I was on good terms with and had visited on several occasions refused to talk to me on later occasions, telling me that after my previous visit the priest sent one of his trusted men and threatened them with preaching “out” in the church or refusing to offer basic clerical services – like presentation of sacraments – to them

2. The conversation took place in Hungarian.

3. According to John van Maanen, Bronislaw Malinowski was the one who made “The turn to personal experience or ‘open-air’ ethnography (...)” (Maanen 2011: 16). On Malinowski and others’ methods, see Maanen (2011: 36).

4. In the anthropological literature this type of field work is called ‘multi-local yo-yo fieldwork’ (see Wulff 2009: 139–145).

and their family members (e.g. confession, christening the children/grandchildren, consecrating the house on Twelfth night, etc).

In contrast, during my short fieldwork trips I frequently visited my informants, so my presence became unnoticeable in the field. While some no longer wished to talk with me, with others I succeeded in remaining in touch. Two or three families or individuals always welcomed and trusted me. I returned each time to those who offered me accommodation and the opportunity to talk. During these spontaneously evolving conversations, I strived to become familiar with local relations and details of community life; often the new respondents were found with their help.

Besides the conversations and the interviews conducted, I took part in several local rites (e.g. memorial dinners, commemorations, pilgrimages). Many times I was able to participate in events of the same group, as my host family invited me to join them. On other occasions I could witness rites involving a larger crowd without making a stir (e.g. village festivals, open-air masses). I only carried out participant observation during these occasions (no interviews were conducted), to avoid any conflicts. Other times the Csángó hospitality and courtesy overrode prejudices and fears towards the ethnographers, and I was invited to the ritual meal following the memorial dinner, where I was able to deepen my relation with local people. Talking to them during these events was a communication act in public space, enabling collective supervision, thus approved by the community. Many times I participated in the Pentecost pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó/Şumuleu Ciuc attended by the Csángós, where, together with observing and documenting their rites, I had the opportunity to conduct some interviews, before the mass or during the night vigils. Beyond participant observation, these pilgrimages, which extend over several days, offer a great opportunity for setting up new conversations; the majority of these were audio-recorded or filmed with video camera.

#### 4. The burden of ethnic issues officially and unofficially

It was obvious even from my first fieldwork that the priest had organized an informal network in the village, which I sensed in the middle of the first decade of 2000. Vilmos Tánczos argues that in the Moldavian Csángó villages “the families close to the official state institutions and to the Catholic Church, or existentially depending on these, officially commit themselves to the Romanian identity, and sometimes are extremely anti-Hungarian<sup>5</sup>” (Tánczos 2012b: 305). As ethnographic data collection is burdened by suspicions, in this Moldavian fieldwork, my respondents were warned by people closely connected to the church (e.g. nuns, members of the church committee, people close to the priest), as well as employees of the state institutions (e.g. teachers, councilors) not to talk to me. People feared being seen with me either by their neighbors or by others who would report to the priest or to the local authorities (councilor, mayor or local principle); so they took their family members’ advice and stopped communication. As Vilmos Tánczos (2012b: 305) emphasizes, the relationship to ethnicity among the local authorities can be explained through the need to display loyalty and also through fear for failing to do so. As I have already presented in detail in another article, “the separation of the Csángós due to their cultural otherness, their lower positions occupied in society, as well as their Catholic religion has impugned their integration and loyalty in the eyes of the Orthodox Romanians” (Peti 2013: 12).

In studying the Csángó ethnicity I found that cooperating with their community, living by the norms of the community is highly important even in the case of individuals, who, by enrolling their children in a Hungarian class, create a sensitive interpretation gap in the social perception of the local community regarding community cooperation (see Peti 2013: 18). The question of loyalty arises in a range of contexts beyond the borders of the village as well – in the perception of Transylvanian Hungarians or regarding shows organized in Hungary. “Accentuating the fact of belonging to the Csángó community in certain contexts means falling under the suspicion of a Hungarian identity which, despite the advanced linguistic assimilation into the Romanian

5. Being against the Hungarian ethnographers – L.P.

majority of Orthodox religion warns the Csángós of Moldova about the fragility of integration and calls into question their loyalty towards the majority society” (Peti 2013: 32).

Beyond the visible presence of the institutions and authorities, the territory of the village is also characterized by the placement of Catholics’ and Orthodox’ houses. We conducted a survey on ethnicity through interviews in summer of 2011. The interviewees from a Csángó village near a large town, told us that Catholics living close to Romanian Orthodox villagers were more reluctant to speak on ethnicity, compared to Catholics living elsewhere (other parts of the village, typically on the peripheries).

My most accessible informants were often located on the peripheries of the village; they were old people, adepts of the traditional worldview and system of values; as well as a few houses where a global lifestyle with transnational elements was emerging.<sup>6</sup> This sharp contradiction between the two worlds was stunning and also intriguing at the same time, warning me constantly that generalization is impossible, and interpretations of research results should be made with care.

In order to learn about this other world, a different approach had to be used, with a different strategy than the above mentioned. During fieldwork in 2011, I conducted interviews mostly in Romanian, sticking to this language even when code-shifting (switching from Romanian to Hungarian), characteristic to Moldavian Csángós, would enable me to ask questions in my native tongue. I did not deny my identity as a Hungarian (from Transylvania), but did not expose it either, letting it “flutter”. At the time of my fieldwork, I was employed by a research institution of the Romanian government. During fieldwork I provided legal documents and certificates referring to my position as my introduction to the interviews. Since my interest focused on the effects of working abroad and modernization on ethnicity, most of my interviewees were important figures in the local economic and political circles: councilors, entrepreneurs and migrant workers. My

6. About the relation between the center of the village and the presence of priest’s power see: Kinda 2005: 28. Like Kinda and Peti’s work, Kiss Tamás emphasizes that the way in which social science knowledge reflects understanding varies depending on whether the researcher engages in research from the center or the periphery (see Kiss 2005: 233–235).

“new identity” brought more favorable results than I expected. I think their loyalty to the state institutions contributed in letting me into their living-rooms (not just the gate), offering a cup of coffee and a nice chat about things I was interested in.

I met a councilor through my contact, who lead a traditional dance group and took part in many Hungarian events as a performer, with a program that presented the traditional Moldavian Csángó culture. I started our conversation in Romanian, asking unoffending, neutral questions first (about the local institutions, economic status, political relationships), later introducing the topic of ethnicity. Though the councilor replied politely, I felt him refusing to produce explicit answers, perhaps because of his relation to power he was avoiding any display of disloyalty to state institutions. For instance, when I asked him about the postponement of the local Hungarian educational program and the standpoint of the institution he represents, he refused to answer, stating that local authorities do not have control over the initiative. Decisions on the matter – he asserted – had been made from “above”, by the government. Although a series of circumstances contradicted his statements, he seemed to agree totally with the official line of no support for such initiatives. He knew I was Hungarian and, at the same time, a guest from a state institution. This may explain why whenever I asked a question in Romanian, his wife tried to switch to Hungarian. When I asked my interviewee about his language use, he told me – very reluctantly in Romanian – that he did not know a single word of Romanian at kindergarten age, so he had to start school a year later. When I asked him about the language he speaks in the town hall, he said, after a moment’s pause, that he uses Hungarian sometimes with people familiar to him. Then he quickly remarked that in the past he knew the Hungarian folk songs sung at festivals, but he “had forgotten” them due to lack of practice. Being a representative of a state institution, the conflict between his loyalty towards the state and his identity as a host might influence his attitude to discuss local ethnic processes. Hence he was on guard and provided aloof accounts.

The fact that the issue of trusting the person of the ethnographer is not only a matter of time spent in the field, but also depends on extrinsic causes, was experienced through the attitude changes that have occurred in the 11 years since my research in Moldova. It is possible

that through long-term fieldwork involving continuous residence, some of the obstacles could have been avoided and the high degree of distrust could have been dismantled more successfully. However, I can only report on my experiences that happened within the frameworks of the presented research, and that made me think. High quality ethnographic material on the reactions of the members of the community regarding long-term field-work encompassing more than one or two years (which I do not possess) can be obtained from the subjective reports of the participants in the educational program, residing for at least one year in a given settlement. This topic is covered in the volume *Tíz év Moldvában* (Ten years in Moldova - Kosztándi (ed.) 2010), which includes the subjective experiences, observations, and feelings of the teachers participating in the program. Réka Szokol's essay (see Szokol 2008) is especially thought-provoking and anthropologically authentic, based on which one can conclude that the person of the teacher (like the ethnographer or a "missionary from the boat"<sup>7</sup>), due to their long-term stay, could divide the members of the community, organizing them into coalitions and polarizing them from an emotional point of view.

## 5. Linguistic issues

In my studies on the Moldavian Csángós, I used ethnographical materials that were produced by filmmakers, as part of ethnographic documentaries. A part of the filmed interviews were conducted with some of my long-time informants. In addition, we also carried out interviews with many persons unknown to me, who provided ethnographic material.

As part of the documentary crew it was my job to get in contact with the informants. Although the majority of the crew were Transylvanian Hungarians, who understood the Moldavian Csángós' language variety very well (due to their Romanian knowledge), it surprised me, that the communication between us and the Moldavian Csángós was

7. Based on the metaphor from the title of the article by Hans Medick (Medick 1988) quoting Bernard S. Cohn's thoughts, as well as from the title of the volume in which the relevant study was published (Vári (ed.) 1988).

often unsuccessful. Funny situations occurred. For example, during an interview with an old woman, after finishing the interview, the cameraman, in his attempt to be polite, said to the lady (as a compliment) that she has a very good memory. As the old woman looked back perplexed, he thought the lady was deaf, so he loudly repeated his insight. Confusion in communication was solved when the lady turned to me and asked: "young man, what is he saying?" I told her that my friend complimented her on her remembering so well how things were and that she is a very good storyteller. (*Jól tud „rendítetni”<sup>8</sup> régi dolgokról, jól „tanácsol”* meaning that she is a good storyteller). During my fieldwork I used the so-called "mixed" (Hungarian-Romanian) language that stands very close to the Moldavian Csángó dialect. I also often use some dialect words, which I have picked up during my fieldwork. They have proved to be helpful in communication, and in filling a part of the cultural gap between them and us, and also important in getting the researcher accepted and getting closer to the locals.

Most Moldavian Csángós do not realize how close the Transylvanian Hungarian variety actually is to their dialect, they reject the idea that the differences are not that big. "... the Csángós themselves do not regard their language as Hungarian, but a Hungarian-Romanian, and sometimes even Romanian-Hungarian mixed one, *korcsitúra* 'hybrid', in which the Hungarian and Romanian languages are equally present" (Tánczos 2012c: 214). In many cases, they have no idea whether their words are Hungarian or Romanian (see Tánczos 2012d: 214), which is highlighted by the following example. At the beginning of 2000, in a distant Moldavian Csángó village, I recorded the narratives of an elderly man, who really knew how to tell a story. He lived alone, with a bad leg, making him stay in one place. He had no relatives and his neighbors came and visited him only once in a week. So talking to me, an ethnographer, meant for him the fulfillment of his social needs. Although, as mentioned, the man was a refined storyteller, and maybe helped by constraints of the genre, he told his stories in a language close to the Hungarian standard. However, he did not believe that I could understand what he was saying. Even though I told him that I was perfectly understanding and enjoying his narrative,

8. Csángó word.

during the storytelling he continuously queried if I understood words such as “fox”, “forest” or “tree”. After chatting for a couple of hours, when he saw that a Transylvanian Hungarian can have a nice talk with him without problems in understanding, he stated half seriously at my departure: “You are a Moldavian Csángó yourself!”

## 6. A short summary

I have described some anthropological situations, where the use of ethnographic methods failed or were challenging. Finally, I have reflected on a few situations, where taking into account the special local situation resulted in gaining access to valuable ethnographic data. Although containing methodological reflections, this paper is mainly a narrative essay – it presents a few examples of my experience gained in the research of the Moldavian Csángós – rather than a study aiming at answering general methodological questions.

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## Summary in Romanian

## Cercetare de teren la ceangăii moldoveni

Lucrarea face o descriere a experienței trăite de autor în timpul cercetărilor de teren, realizate, între ceangăii moldoveni începând din anii 2001. Lucrarea va arăta modul în care autorul a încercat să găsească tehnicile metodologice pentru a putea descrie realitățile văzute în teren. Circumstanțele, care fac din munca de etnograf să aibă o dificultate mare vor fi discutate în continuare. Aceste sunt prejudecățile reprezentanților bisericilor locale precum și a autorităților statului, dar și frica membrilor comunității locale. Peti Lehel va reflecta asupra poziției cercetătorului în comunitățile locale ceangăiești, când interesul crescut pentru cultura acestor comunități poate să producă atitudini negative față de munca de etnograf.

VERONIKA LAJOS

## Teaching and Participant Observation: Interconnections of Culture and Language in an Eastern-European Local Society

### *Abstract*

To study in one's native language is a general right supported by the European Union. Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa, a Finnish social scientist and politician, initiated CoE recommendation 1521 in 2001 regarding these rights of the Moldavian Csángós in Romania. The Moldavian Csángós are a minority of Hungarian origin, the vast majority of the Roman-Catholic faith, most of them being bilingual and speaking different local Hungarian dialects.

Nowadays, it is almost a commonplace statement in Hungarian scholarly and public discourse that the 'Moldavian Csángós are not allowed to study in their own mother tongue'. However, it is worth taking a closer look at the context and presumptions of this statement.

For an ethnologist, teaching Hungarian for an academic year in one of the Csángó villages can be considered as a useful, as well as a controversial, means to be frequently present in the field. In this context it might also be seen as a socio-political act aiming to save the local Hungarian dialect, the Csángó culture and minority from fully assimilating into the Romanian nation. Nevertheless, my aims are to recognize and comprehend the inner meanings and implications of the matter of teaching.

In this paper, I present details of events that occurred during my teaching period in Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra, Bacău, Romania. My aim is to highlight matters about the ways native people and outsiders consider the opportunity to learn Hungarian as a “mother tongue”, about the local conflicts generated by the option of Hungarian language lessons and its connections to the Csángó social space of multiple cultural and linguistic ties.

## 1. Introduction

In my paper<sup>1</sup> I wish to trace the present challenges of Hungarian education and teaching Hungarian as a ‘mother tongue’ in a particular Moldavian Csángó [ča:ngo:] local community, in Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra.<sup>2</sup> I will not examine all the aspects of the recent challenges of Hungarian education in Moldavia, but I try to interpret the conflicts generated by the encounters of national idea, ‘mother tongue’ and the present traits of the Csángó culture. While I investigate this question, certain peculiarities of the Csángó people will be revealed. On the one hand, the specific features of the Csángó social space are the dialogic quality of the Csángó culture and the constant presence of a transcultural social space. On the other hand, the structure of their sociocultural system is characterized by ‘compound non-synchronism’. My suggestions are formulated on the basis of my anthropological fieldwork since 2005, in particular stationary fieldwork carried out in 2006–2007

1. This study has been prepared with the generous help of the MTA-DE Ethnology Research Group, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. It is based on my PhD research (see the thesis in English <[http://ganymedes.lib.unideb.hu:8080/dea/bitstream/2437/103477/6/Lajos%20Veronika%20tezisfuzet\\_angol-t.pdf](http://ganymedes.lib.unideb.hu:8080/dea/bitstream/2437/103477/6/Lajos%20Veronika%20tezisfuzet_angol-t.pdf)>.) supervised by Professor Róbert Keményfi at the Department of Ethnology, University of Debrecen, Hungary. Hereby I would like to thank to researcher Petteri Laihonon, PhD for inviting me to the Csángó seminar in Jyväskylä in March 2012. I am also thankful to other scholars, Magdolna Kovács, Juliet Langman and the two anonymous peer-reviewers, for their kind suggestions on how to develop my ideas in the text.

2. Throughout the text I use two terms, Moldavian Csángó and Csángó, referring to the same minority in Eastern Romania, situated in the valleys of the river Trotuş, Prut and Szeret/Şiret.

in the above-mentioned Csángó village, Lujzikalagor, where I was a teacher of Hungarian in the same academic year.<sup>3</sup>



Picture 1. Going home from work, Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra. September, 2012. Photo: Veronika Lajos.

Lujzikalagor is situated quite close, 10 kilometres, to the county town, Bákó/Bacău. Due to its proximity to the cultural, economic and political centre of the county, the rural community of the village has a complex relation with the urban world. Inhabitants commute to their workplace; children attend town schools; housewives go to the market place in the city; relatives, who have already moved to the urban area, regularly return to help out their family members in completing seasonal agricultural activities and so forth. (See Picture 1.)

The village is one of the Csángó settlements where most of the adult inhabitants still speak the local Hungarian dialect, which I shall

3. The collected material – interviews, manuscripts and transcripts of occasional conversations – and fieldwork notes are in the author’s possession. According to the standard procedure of ethnology and cultural anthropology I keep my conversation partners name and other identifiable characters in anonymity or in disguise to avoid causing any possible harm (material, social, moral or even physical) to them or to any other locals.

call Csángó applying the local practice.<sup>4</sup> I did not conduct any linguistic research about the status of the language. According to my everyday experiences, I may say that language assimilation to Romanian is well underway in Lujzikalagor, as Vilmos Tánczos's research (2008–2010) also shows: 55% (2502 people) of the local inhabitants speak the local Hungarian dialect and 71% (3247 people) understand it (Tánczos 2012a: 247).<sup>5</sup> Csángó is usually used in everyday communication among people above the age of 50/60; it is rather intra-generational then intergenerational. Elderly locals live by specific traditions kept orally, both in the field of folklore and popular beliefs. Besides, recent research in the field of sociolinguistics (Bodó 2012: 31–49) suggests that Csángós who remain in their local surroundings and work in the agricultural sector are re-socialized in the local Hungarian dialect of their village (Bodó calls this second language socialization 2012: 36). To learn the Csángó dialect in this case is part of the process of being accepted in the world of the adults of the settlement, so it serves as a means to gain full group membership among the adults. It means that the processes of language assimilation do not point determinedly and irreversibly to the complete dissolution of the local Hungarian dialects and urge us to consider the notion of assimilation as a bit more complex process than one of culture loss and deprivation.

Recently, it is widely accepted in the Hungarian scholarly and public discourse, and it is not unknown even in the international scene due to the Council of Europe (CoE) report and recommendation that the Moldavian Csángós are not allowed to study in their own mother tongue. CoE Recommendation 1521 requested that “the possibility to

4. I follow the scholars who consider Csángó not to be an independent language, but one of the many dialects of Hungarian standard. For counterarguments for a Csángó koiné see, for example, Sándor 2000: 141–168, Sándor 2005: 163–186.

5. According to the population and housing census in 2002, 4590 people inhabited Lujzikalagor, of whom 4527 were Roman Catholic (98,62%), 50 Orthodox, 11 Adventist and 2 belonged to another kind of faith. According to the 2011 census, the population of Lujzikalagor is 3553, of whom 3243 are Roman-Catholic (91,27%), 67 Orthodox, 7 Adventist and 2 Muslim. In 2011, 3283 people considered themselves to be Romanian, 31 Hungarian and 3 Turkish. Less than 3 people claimed Csángó as their ethnic identity, therefore the exact number is not shown in the census. Regarding the question of mother tongue, 3283 people (92,40%) claimed Romanian as their native language, 35 Hungarian (and 1 Turkish). See the official site of the census: <<http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/>> (last accessed in 26 June 2014).

be educated in the mother tongue should be ensured in accordance with the Romanian Constitution and the legislation on education.” (9. i.).<sup>6</sup> However, we shall immediately stop here and dwell on the inner meanings and implications of these statements, taking a closer look at the referential context and presumptions of the first sentence. First of all, the ‘Moldavian Csángós are not allowed to study’ part implies that ordinary Csángó people have significant intentions to learn Hungarian language in schools. Secondly, the approach of the Hungarian side (scholars, politicians and laymen) automatically considers Hungarian language to be the mother tongue of the Csángó community. This approach does not distinguish between the language usage of different generations or genders; neither has it made any use of the achievements of sociolinguistic investigations stating that there can be more than one mother tongue in one's lifetime. The sphere of meaning of the term “mother tongue” is very changeable in a minority-majority environment. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1984:18) classified the mother tongue definitions that are general in everyday, academic and official uses according to four criteria: origin, competence, function and attitude – from both internal and external identification. None of these criteria by themselves would provide an answer static in its temporality and content as regards the mother tongue of the individual. In this case one should recognize that the linguistic reality of the Moldavian Csángós may differ from the meaning of the mother tongue definition, but should also realize that the identification of the mother tongue is an obligatory institutional option encoded in the approach defined by national ideology. However, in many cases, it is the parents and the grandparents, and not necessarily the children, who exhibit emotional attitudes towards the Hungarian language (internal identification – the individual's own definition of the mother tongue), in fact, in case of these generations Csángó, the local Hungarian dialect can have the most commonly used language status in their local settings (function).

At the same time, the Hungarian political context – be it an expression of public opinion, a political agenda, or a scholarly discourse – holds the lack of education in Hungarian as an example of deliberate exclusion on the part of the official educational institutions and the Romanian state. The third implication of the statement is connected to

6. See the CoE recommendation: <<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta01/EREC1521.htm>>.

the second one, since it is also presumed that Csángó people attribute a special value to the Hungarian language as other people with Hungarian national identity do, and associate national affiliation, in a modern sense, to the Hungarian language (defined as a national language) as well as to the use of the local Hungarian dialect. There are other examples as well where an ethnic or national affiliation does not imply the same attachment to the use of the traditional language, such as the case of the Irish.

## 2. Multiple linguistic and cultural ties in the Csángó social context

In this part of the paper I examine the implications of the initial statement that Moldavian Csángó people cannot study in their own mother tongue. The first implication that Csángó people would like to learn Hungarian language in schools by their own will, fails immediately when one realizes that many locals usually do not even know about the option of studying Hungarian in state schools or outside the educational institutions in study groups. Furthermore, as responding to the recent changes of their surroundings in a dialogic way, many Csángó mothers have been teaching Romanian to their children as the first language. What counts for them in the long run is to make their children capable of speaking both languages, the local Hungarian dialect and Romanian, and of making use of the particular cultural knowledge in a successful way in each sociocultural reality. This kind of attitude basically considers language as an instrument to achieving success in life, as a means of communication, usually not associated with modern national affiliation or national emotions. It does not mean that they do not attach emotions to language, but it usually does not correspond with national affiliation.

For a better understanding of the situation, a decisive attribution of the Csángó life-world should be pointed out. The Moldavian Csángó socio-cultural reality is a social space that generates multiple cultural and linguistic ties. It requires a constant ability to find one's way between two cultural systems of relationships in the same physical environment, i.e., between the differences of the Csángó and the

Romanian cultures; expecting any individual to participate and come up to the challenges posed by the Csángó and Romanian cultural environment. The condition for successful orientation in the social sphere is the appropriate use of the socio-cultural sets of knowledge of both worlds and the creative, "optional" and situation-dependent application of the cultural information sets.

Today the social reality of Lujzikalagor is decisively characterized by the in-between nature of cultures, a uniquely colourful network of Csángó-Romanian cultural peculiarities. In the socio-cultural existence of the inhabitants of Lujzikalagor, there are organically parallel but functionally differing communal traditions, operating within identical geographical frameworks. In the micro-environment (in the village and also in the city, Bákó, that is organically related to the local world), the transition between the Csángó and Romanian cultures is a routine and natural possibility. Thus, the simultaneous and continuous presence in both cultural environments, i.e., the doubled presence in two differing cultural traditions, is a given possibility.

The multiple linguistic and cultural ties of the Moldavian Csángó existence have helped to resolve symbolic borderline situations connected to the issue of modernization, such as in the case of the old woman's life I touched upon in my other paper in this volume, on a number of different occasions. This socio-cultural setting or milieu does indeed support the activation of affirmative peasant adaptivity to a great extent. The tolerance encoded in the multiple ties and the lack of absolute exclusivity draw our attention to two important phenomena. First, that for the members of the Moldavian Csángó society the multiple attachments imply the capacity of acknowledging the similarities with the culturally different, by understanding the Other. Second, it demonstrates that assimilation changes are multi-directional processes, that is during assimilation the one assimilated is not just simply "losing" from their socio-cultural ties, but is gaining new ties as well through their "becoming similar to something formerly different" (see Gábor Biczó's works on assimilation, Biczó 2004; 2005: 21–42).

Their sociocultural reality is a transcultural social space in the sense that it requires a continuous successful orientation between two cultural systems of relations, to cope with the Csángó and the

Romanian cultural characteristics.<sup>7</sup> Csángó people are expected not only to be able to take part in both cultural systems, but to respond to the challenges of these realities.

The two cultural realities, the Csángó and the Romanian, live side by side in the same geographical territory, but function in different levels and in different social conditions. In Moldavia, Csángó people regularly pass between the Csángó and the Romanian culture in a natural way, their everyday life is a kind of synchronous and continuous presence in both cultural realities. They possess the capability to live in a doubled life-world, in two different cultural traditions. Nowadays, their sociocultural reality is characterized by their existence between cultures, a particular network of Csángó and Romanian cultural features, in which Csángó people develop diverse relationships to each locality. As a matter of fact, the villagers are usually bilinguals and put both the local Hungarian dialect and the Romanian language, or more precisely, the regional variation of Romanian they speak, as well as the related and encoded cultural attributes to good use in order to apply the suitable attitudes to the challenges of their transcultural reality.

Nevertheless, our emblematic, yet rather commonplace statement that the Moldavian Csángós are not allowed to study in their mother tongue is not exclusively valid any more. Neither secular, nor clerical intellectuals had a chance to study in Hungarian until the 1990s, except for a short decade from 1947 to 1958/59. For example in Klézse/Cleja, Pusztina/Pustiana, and even in Lujzikalagor Hungarian schools were launched, but due to lack of resources, materials, unsuitable conditions for teaching – e.g. some of the teaching personnel did not speak Romanian fluently; there were not enough textbooks or blackboards to use day by day; and inhabitants of Csángó settlements debated the legitimacy of founding Hungarian schools – usually these initiatives

7. First Péter Niedermüller gave an example of transnational flows in a market place in one of the Moldavian Csángó villages (Niedermüller 2005: 52–66), then Veronika Lajos drew a parallel between transnational social space and the Moldavian Csángó local conditions (Lajos 2006: 177–184, 2008: 67–83). Lehel Peti discussed the relationship between transnational flows and religion (Peti 2008: 305–328). For the current use of the multi-layer diaspora notion in Hungary see Keményfi 2010: 191–209.

failed (see the details in Vincze 2004: 20, 44–50).<sup>8</sup> After the revolution in 1989, attempts were made to take up the challenge of democratic opportunities for having Hungarian lessons, regularly and legally, for children. However, these attempts were isolated and not well organized, without the necessary official support and further faced a strong opposition of local authorities.<sup>9</sup> All initiatives resulted in failure; none of them achieved their aims in a longer term. Despite the difficulties at the beginning, a quite successful schooling program exists today, as one result of the course of actions carried out by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia (*Asociația Maghiarilor Ceangăi din Moldova* in Romanian, *Moldvai Csángómagyarok Szövetsége* in Hungarian, its abbreviation is *MCSMSZ*).

After the fall of state socialism in 1989, besides the similar ambitions of other ethnocultural minorities of Romania, the Csángós also initiated official actions in the interest of establishing their own lobby group. The Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia came into existence in 1991 (in 2007 the organization had 1147 members). The Association has a wide range of programs and is engaged in various social, health, economic, religious, and cultural activities. The organization aims to provide facilities for members of the Csángó community to have better living conditions, a more modern living environment and to develop a more conscious and reflexive relation towards their own cultural heritage – a heritage they consider to be Hungarian: specifically, to support the community in discovering their own socio-cultural background and become aware of its value.

It is also useful to keep in mind, that there has always been a local, Catholic intelligentsia, comprised of local priests, teachers, and the mayor after the political shift; this intelligentsia filled the local

8. According to the statistics and historical records only 12 pupils went to the Hungarian school while 399 attended the Romanian one in Lujzikalagor at the beginning of 1951. The findings were quite similar in other Csángó villages. For more details see Vincze 2004: 44–48.

9. Attila Hegyeli, the initiator of the schooling program led by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia, states that there are two periods in teaching Hungarian after the fall of the Ceaușescu regime in 1989 in the Moldavian Csángó villages: 1. before the turn of the millennium and 2. after it (see in details Hegyeli 2001: 183–189). The latter is the period when a centrally organized schooling program started to develop in more than one Csángó village.

governing and leading positions in the Moldavian Csángó villages. But since they regard themselves Romanians, the Hungarian-speaking scholarly and public discourse of East-Central Europe has not considered them to be representatives of the intelligentsia of Moldavian Csángó culture. Instead, the Hungarian discourse is keen on highlighting their Csángó origins to emphasize that they had turned against, rather than being supportive of, the Hungarian culture (Bodó 2004: 156).

As regards the question of teaching, the schooling program is one of the main activities of the Association. Teachers at the outset, were generally Hungarians from Transylvania or Hungary; lately they are more frequently members of the Csángó community. The program started to operate officially in state schools of Bákó/Bacău county in the 2002/2003 school year. Since 2000 study groups had begun in several Csángó villages, for example in Klézse/Cleja, Puszta/Pustiana, Diószén/Giosen and in the 2006 and 2007 school years in Lujzikalagor as well. In 2012/2013, the teaching program functioned in 25 villages and involved circa 2000–2200 pupils.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Conflicts, encounters, clashes

My experience as a teacher in Lujzikalagor started seven years ago, when I was employed by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia as a teacher of Hungarian for a school year, outside the state school curriculum. I undertook the post, because I wanted to spend a longer period in one of the Moldavian Csángó settlements to conduct long-term field-work. In spite of the fact that researchers tend to treat people teaching Hungarian in Csángó villages as ones engaged in activities aiming to ‘rescue the Csángós, their dialect and archaic culture’, my decision was not made to ‘save the Csángós’, or to ‘restore the traditional Csángó world’, neither did I intend to use the information and experience gathered during teaching for supporting

10. Read more on the Hungarian language competence of pupils in Papp Z. & Márton 2014: 7–32. Since the beginning of 2012 the education program has not been operated by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia, but by the Hungarian Teacher’s Association of Romania (abbreviation in Hungarian *RMPSZ*).

the idea of the structural immobility of the Csángó culture. Teaching in the village basically served the purpose of making my continuous presence in Lujzikalagor acceptable and sensible for the locals. On the one hand, this choice meant a determined role in the local setting from the beginning, with all its advantages and disadvantages. On the other hand, I regarded it as an opportunity to enable the children to get an insight into a kindred linguistic reality (Hungarian) – that of standard Hungarian, as well as into the kindred cultural reality; irrespective of the extent to which they would later consider it to be their own, determinant of their lives or their identities.

The first difficulty came with finding an accommodation. First, an elderly woman, who lived in a big house of many rooms with her husband and the youngest daughter of their eight children, who was 15 years old at the time, agreed to let me one room. She had found nothing wrong with the children to be taught Hungarian in Lujzikalagor, and she could get extra income by letting out one of her rooms. However, her decision was overwritten by the lack of consent by other members of her family, especially her children working abroad. In order to avoid family conflict, the woman withdrew her earlier promise to let out a room to the unknown teacher from Hungary. In this case, the role of the Hungarian teacher, representing the so-called “Hungarian-ness,” became a potential source of danger that could affect the life of the whole family. This danger derived partly from the conflict within the family, and partly from the more general community sentiment that events and actions related to Hungarians are to be viewed with a bit of suspicion. This perspective has been rooted in the local public opinion of the turn of the millennium (the year 2000). Subsequently, I rented a room in the home of another community member.

The introduction of Hungarian lessons in Lujzikalagor faced several challenges and created several conflicts that I will outline below. These challenges all centered on the ideological issues surrounding the use of Hungarian – whether it be a standard or local variety. Similar to issues related to securing housing, there were difficulties in securing a site for the classes. Eventually the question of accommodating the classes was solved, as a local resident supportive of the work of the Association of Csángós agreed to let his now empty convenience store for the purpose of teaching Hungarian. The owner stated that

‘the more languages a person knows the better it is for him/her and the easier to get ahead in life’ (field notes 11 October 2006) giving this as a reason why he would enroll his own children to the Hungarian school as well.



Picture 2. Hungarian school operated in this building in 2006–2007. Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra. September, 2012. Photo: Veronika Lajos.

Teaching started in early November, and took place outside the framework of compulsory state education. At the beginning, and for several weeks, it was only attended by the children of the local members of the Association, and those of their relatives and friends. When I started my work as a teacher, the number of pupils in the study group was no more than six or seven; their age ranging from five/six to nine. Two of them spoke and understood Hungarian fluently – one could consider it as their “mother tongue” in the sense that they could express themselves the best in this language at this stage of their life – since their parents used to live in Budapest for more than ten years. The rest had a passive knowledge of the local Hungarian dialect because of having listened to their parents’ conversations with their grandparents, in spite of the fact that their parents usually spoke to each other in Romanian and always did so to them.

After a few weeks the principal of the local school and a history teacher showed up in “our school”. They came in, looked around, and threatened me, the teacher, in Romanian with taking away my passport, and eventually sending me to prison, for violating Romanian laws. The children were really frightened, so I closed up school for that day. In the afternoon, the local young policeman was asked to come to the school. He was puzzled why he was asked to identify the Hungarian books lying around the benches and the tables as a “Hungarian threat”.

As already mentioned above, a gradual language shift takes place in Lujzikalagor. Nowadays generally the elder generation speak and understand the local Hungarian dialect; people born from the middle of the 1970s onwards were usually taught in Romanian first, as that was the accepted and required practice in the local society. In the first few years of the 21st century the middle-aged generation could more or less speak and understand the local dialect but used Romanian generally with their children as a first choice of communication. In the Hungarian study groups the children at the age of 11–12 or older could understand my conversation with an elder member of the local society, but were not able, or did not want, to join in using the local Hungarian dialect, rather they choose to comment in Romanian. The younger ones had difficulties understanding the conversation itself.

While I was a teacher of Hungarian I was also a student of the local Hungarian dialect and the regional version of Romanian in order to be able to communicate with the local community, not only with the pupils, but also the rest of the society for whom shifting from the local Hungarian dialect to the regional variety of Romanian and back was a natural way of talking to each other even using both versions in a particular sentence. My own language use was influenced by this learning. During the classes as well as in other situations I tried to follow the local Hungarian dialect, for example using the conventional forms when greeting someone or saying goodbye (once I learnt them on the street and from other members of the local community) such as *Maradjanak békével!*, a word-to-word translation in English is “Stay in peace!” in a formal way, while in standard Hungarian people usually say *Viszontlátásra!* when leaving, meaning “See you later!”.

According to the general policy of Hungarian education in the Csángó-Hungarian Association teachers were expected to include the phrases, words, idioms and other specific characteristics of the particular local Hungarian dialect that was in use in the local society where they were teaching. For example, besides the standard version of the color term ‘yellow’ in Hungarian, which is *sárga*, I also taught the local version of the word, that being *sárig*. In Lujzikalagor 2006–2007 was the first year of Hungarian teaching which meant that I did not use a specific method of any textbooks, but started to teach the Hungarian alphabet, words (verbs and nouns), greeting forms, Christmas songs etc. using interactive methods to help students memorize them, as well as engaging students in small conversations – for example painting and drawing while learning colors, matching words with their images etc. The Hungarian study groups at this point were supposed to familiarize others with the possibility of attending Hungarian language and culture lessons in the local society and introduce the idea of studying standard Hungarian later on as part of the state school curriculum.

The next conflict surfaced in May 2007 when, according to the law, parents filed for the possibility to include Hungarian language in the school agenda for the academic year of 2007/2008. The introduction of the option of learning Hungarian language as a mother tongue in the state school of Lujzikalagor generated a situation where locals had to face conflicts in both the public and the private spheres.

On the one hand, problems occurred when, in the public sphere, locals were made to take sides in an obligatory way with either the Hungarian or the Romanian national identity in connection with language. The local government, especially the mayor and the school director tended to take advantage of their positions and official power in the locality. This meant taking steps to purposely misinform the parents, as well as humiliating the children who took part in the Hungarian study groups, in front of their classmates. These actions were for the sake of interfering with the legalization of Hungarian language in the state school agenda of Lujzikalagor. During the spring of 2008 a parent of a pupil in the Hungarian study group went to meet the teachers of her 8th grade daughter, who was not a pupil of the Hungarian lessons outside the school agenda, to talk about her grades and plans for secondary education. The mother felt that some of the teachers

implied, in one way or another, the possibility that her daughter would not get the grade she deserved and that it would have been necessary for her to go on to a grammar school in the city because she, the parent, had filed an official request for Hungarian lessons in the state school of Lujzikalagor (field notes April 2007). Consequently, weeks later she withdrew her signature from the petition to have Hungarian classes at the school as her fellow inhabitants had done so.

But that is only the surface. In the background, the dilemma of legalizing the schooling program in the village and the option of including Hungarian language in the state school agenda or denying the existence of publicly verbalized demands for Hungarian lessons is a more complex phenomenon. On the one part, it correlates to the practice of maintaining power and controlling people’s everyday life, which characterized life during the socialist period. On the other part, it is in coherence with the nature of the Csángó discourse itself. As a matter of fact, there is a scholarly struggle both on secular and clerical levels, laced with political intentions, for the virtual possession of the Csángó’s national and/or ethnic identity, their language, the local Hungarian dialect and their origin. All is arranged “above the locals’ heads”, and usually without taking their native point of view into consideration. After the fall of the socialist regime in 1989, the whole ‘Csángó issue’ itself got loaded again with strong political ambitions, provoking conflicts and pro and contra attitudes in the locals’ everyday life more and more often. This reveals how the practice of cultural appropriation in the national discourse functions and how it is deeply encoded in the Csángó discourse on both the Hungarian and the Romanian side. Furthermore, it identifies the dimensions in which the national discourse fulfils prescriptive functions in ordinary people’s modern life, such as in the case of studying a language as one’s mother tongue.

As for the native’s point of view: standing up in public for the Hungarian or the Romanian language as a mother tongue meant new kinds of border events emerging in the Csángós’ sociocultural life-world. During these border events locals interact with each other by involuntarily identifying themselves with national cultures that are unwilling to give up their own distinct otherness. That is to say, several times the inhabitants of Lujzikalagor started to react to the challenges of their life-world in a more monologic than a dialogic way.

#### 4. Language and dialogic social conditions

The distinction made between monologic and dialogic social conditions is built from the Russian social theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of monologic and dialogic modes of behaviour. This differentiation can easily be applied to social conditions themselves, so monologic social conditions and dialogic social conditions can be examined. The former means that people tend to speak and act without acknowledging the others in anything more than a superficial and objectified way (Bakhtin 1981, 1986). They conceive the world as divided along precise, rigid and generally hierarchical boundaries, a separateness of individual actors and discrete categories. The dialogic conditions, however, seem to be an opportunity for social actors to be able and urged to take each other into account (Bell et al. 2006: 29–30). People maintain openness to other's concerns and views and envision their place in social life as an interactive part of the constantly changing whole. Social actors of dialogic social conditions even regard their own categories and language with a similarly open and interactive outlook.

The Moldavian Csángós are situated in dialogic social conditions and live in a transcultural social space. The Csángó culture itself, as well as the socio-cultural life-world of the Csángós, are also dialogic entities reflexively responding to recent changes and entering into dialogues with differing modernization processes of today. However, attention has to be drawn to the fact that pure monologic or dialogic cultures do not exist in the world; the monologic and dialogic social conditions usually have the role of a dominant character of a culture or of social life. Of course, not all the Csángó people act and behave as purely dialogic social actors but, on the basis of my field experience in Moldavia, inhabitants could be considered as, in general, having a more dialogic than monologic approach to the world, in comparison with other people, such as Romanians living in the same general context.

The conflict generated by the process of officially designating a mother tongue also constrained local Csángós to designate a national identity, either the Hungarian or the Romanian, as within this context, a bicultural identity is highly contested. The action of selecting one of them also means excluding the other. Furthermore, the new conflict

coming up as a result of the potential to offer Hungarian language education in Csángó areas denotes the potential shift from more dialogic social conditions to more monologic ones, resulting potentially in people starting to lose openness and reflexive attitudes toward novelties. This might further lead to people beginning to build up their life-world along more hierarchical and severe boundaries generated by national ideas.

The conflicts that the legal initiation of instruction in standard Hungarian language in state school agenda generated occurred in the private life and hence affected the welfare of a family. I have already mentioned the case of the elderly woman who refused to rent a room to the Hungarian teacher in favour of avoiding the conflict with her adult children. Here I shall bring up another example. Conflicts are also generated between family members when a child wants to take part in the Hungarian study group, but their parents do not permit them to do so, or when a mother acknowledges the advantages of studying another language, learning about the Hungarian cultural heritage, but the father does not want to get involved in these misty and challenging events or vice versa. Locals usually do not take the risk of a more serious conflict in the family due to a desire to learn standard Hungarian.

There was a family with two children in primary education. The children were born in Hungary during the time their parents were employed there. The family moved back to their homeland years later, around 2000–2002. Each of the parents took turns working abroad, usually in Italy, while the other stayed home with the children. At that time the mother had been working in Italy for some time, while the husband and the children stayed at home in Lujzikalagor. When I visited them to have the official form filled out requesting Hungarian as a mother tongue being taught as part of the state school curriculum the father was kidding his son that he should complete the form since he studies Hungarian because, quote, 'I am a Csángó' (field notes 24 April 2007). When his wife returned for a short visit at the beginning of May she preferred that the whole family would stay away from the potential harms, for example social exclusion, bullying at school, resulting from filling in and signing the official request. As a consequence, the children never attended the Hungarian study group again from May until the end of the school year.

Another specific attribution of the Moldavian Csángós worth mentioning is the tendency to take ethnic identity as an instrument and use it for one's own interest, either as a long-term life strategy or for a short-term advantage (Simon 2012: 172). To join the Hungarian study group outside of state school education in Lujzikalagor also involves various economic and cultural benefits, such as the annual support of the Hungarian state provided to the Hungarian minorities living outside the current state borders, and the trips and summer camps abroad organized for Csángó children.<sup>11</sup> Some of the parents recognized the importance of studying and its function as a means of social mobilization, working either in Romania or abroad. The schooling program can also provide a scholarship for the talented children to study in a Hungarian high school or at a university, either in Transylvania or in the even more preferred Hungary.

However, the definite either-or choice is still not so widespread in the Csángós' everyday life, in the transcultural social space. There, the borders between the Csángó culture and the Romanian environment are constituted in a very reflexive way according to the actual situations. Several scholars consider the non-presence of a singular and invariable identity to be a distinct deficiency of Csángó people, usually laying the blame on the Romanian authorities. This approach also suggests an image of people who change 'identity' from one situation to another and make use of the potential identities afforded by the actual conditions as they are conceptualized as being individuals who have already lost their own identity. While holding on to this scholarly position, these scholars fail to realize the emergence and function of transcultural spaces and glocality (about the paradigm of glocality see Meyrowitz 2004: 21–30). The contemporary processes of globalization and the transnational perspective have drawn attention to the pitfalls and blind spots of methodological nationalism and opened up new vistas to reconsider the conceptual apparatus of social sciences since the 1980–90s. There is no such exceptional geographical location that

11. These activities draw attention to the dynamic nature of ethnicity and ethnic encounters when ethnic identity is manifested in different ways according to the situation and as part of a complex whole. This is the constructivist approach of ethnicity introduced by Fredrik Barth (Barth 1969). Boglárka Simon (2012) follows this tradition concerning the Csángós' identity.

is not interconnected to recent global flows, not even the one where the Moldavian Csángós live, which is per se a multicultural space, a transcultural social world<sup>12</sup> where encountering the Other, the local Romanian and the local Hungarian, day by day is a natural condition influencing processes of self-identification and self-differentiation.

At the same time, in the case of the Moldavian Csángós the undertaking of varying cultural identities according to the particular circumstances is likely to be a special capability tied to the ability to become aware of and appreciate the peculiarities of the Other's culture, for example the Romanian one. Choosing a singular, constant and all-pervading identity construction, a national identity, would impede local Csángós from possessing the ability to understand and conceive the Other, the Stranger and one's own self in parallel. It would hinder the potential identification of one's own self with the Other.

## 5. Non-synchronism and the Moldavian Csángó social space

In the following I shall return to the second and third implications of our starting point, the status of the local Hungarian dialect in the transcultural social space of Moldavian Csángós. The position of the language in the Csángós' sociocultural life-world, naturally, differs from the position of the language in a national frame. In the dialogic transcultural conditions, the language is usually a functional means to communicate, to understand the others, and to be understood by others. However, in accordance with their own experiences, locals do link emotions to language, both to the local Hungarian dialect and to the regional Romanian one, but this has nothing to do with the national affiliation related to a singular national language used on a daily basis.

Language is a useful device in the Csángó culture, an instrument for locals to be able to cope with various situations and challenges that occur in everyday life as a result of the co-existence of a more traditional Csángó reality and a more modernized, as well as globalized, Romanian one of today. The simultaneous presence of

12. For a more detailed view on transcultural social space concerning the Moldavian Csángó society see the author's other paper in this volume.

differing sociocultural realities leads us to another special feature of the structure of the Csángó culture.

People in the Moldavian Csángó micro-world have had to face a number of new cultural, social, and economic influences in the time period following the change of the political regime. However, modernization did not come as a singular challenge for the entire socio-cultural set of peasant knowledge at once, but it rather shaped, and continues to shape to this day, Moldavian social reality gradually, through a series of interactions. The conflicts generated by intensive and quick changes have dissolved in various parts of the local culture differently and with varying degrees of intensity. The discrepancies concerning the time and the way of adaptation to these make it possible for us to observe the process of coordinating the individual practices that are characteristic of specific time periods of social history.

As a result of modernization and of migration processes, the structure of the Moldavian socio-cultural life world has also changed; in addition to the transformation of its numerous factors, a constructional modification has taken place. I interpret this structural shift in the framework of the concept of ‘compound non-synchronism’. The transformed Moldavian Csángó scene can be correlated to the phenomenon of ‘*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*’, or ‘*Ungleichzeitigkeit*’ for short. It translates into English as ‘**the synchronism of the non-synchronous**’, or ‘non-synchronism’ for short, emerging in Ernst Bloch’s footsteps in cultural philosophy as well as in the field of social sciences.<sup>13</sup> The notion of ‘*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*’ generally refers to the coexistence of two cultural systems situated in the same geographical environment that differ from one another in points of their structural nature, conceptualization of space and time, as well as in ways of thinking (see international examples from South-Korea and rural Northern China: Jeh-hong 2004: 8–33; Flitsch 2008: 265–288). The term was first introduced in ethnography by Hermann Bausinger and, with reference to the Moldavian Csángó culture, first employed by Vilmos Tánzos, then among others by Lehel Peti (Bausinger 1989: 24–37; see also Kashuba 1999/2004: 151–154; in the Moldavian

Csángó context see Tánzos 1996: 97–173; Kotics 1999: 56; Hegyeli 2005: 226–234; Peti 2007: 95, 2008: 305–338).

On the basis of the experience gathered during field work, it may be stated that at the present time, a special case of “non-synchronism” can be observed in Moldavian Csángó villages, which we might term combined or “compound non-synchronism”. The notion of “compound non-synchronism” covers socio-cultural systems that operate simultaneously side by side, the same way as the term “non-synchronism” does. The differing social and historical horizons are located in the socio-cultural space of non-synchronism, intertwined with each other and forming a peculiar unity. The population of Lujzikalagor realizes this unity within their experiential horizon concerning their own existence consciously and under pressure at the same time by coordinating the various norms and the occasionally contradictory experiences.

The attribute “compound” is supposed to call attention to the fact that Moldavian Csángó life-world has a multiple structure, in which – at times – there might be multiple differences in level between parallel socio-cultural arenas within the system of the chain of socio-historical places, which is often interpreted as development. Structural complexity then highlights the simultaneous layering of socio-cultural systems identified with different socio-historical time-periods, as well as the combination of elements of varying diachronic depths. The arenas or stages of Moldavian quotidian existence may be associated with a variety of forms of differing historical dimensions and experiential horizons: 1. traditional ~ “village, local”; 2. socialist modernization ~ “Romanian urban due to socialist urbanization”; 3. post-socialist ~ “Romanian urban following the change of political regime”; and/or 4. late modern, or post-modern ~ “western European metropolitan” sets of values (or socio-cultural layers representing specific cultural practices) transmitted by one’s children or other family members working abroad.<sup>14</sup>

The notion of “compound non-synchronism” identified as a structural peculiarity of Moldavian socio-cultural existence illustrates

13. As Bloch (1935/1977: 22.) puts it: ‘Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so only externally, by virtue of the fact that they may all be seen today. But that does not mean that they are living at the same time with others.’

14. Since the end of 1990s many young and middle age adults from Moldavian Csángó villages have worked in Western European countries, especially in Italy and Spain.

the multi-layered structural characteristic of Moldavian Csángó culture today, while in Lujzikalagor it expresses the simultaneous presence of various, historically different, experiential horizons at work in everyday existence arranged in a complex system. This phenomenon, the simultaneous conglomeration of cultural systems, historical time dimensions, and experiential spaces fundamentally determine the system of relationships between individuals, the communal responses to modern challenges, as well as the relatively flexible and affirmative but also selective adaptive approaches.

For a better understanding, I will illustrate the relationship between this structural complexity, the compound non-synchronism and the challenges of Hungarian education through some examples. It is commonly known that language was not considered to constitute a significant part of a man's identity before the national movements in the 18th–19th century. The emergence of nations and states, the necessity to rule all the inhabitants of a certain geographical entity gave importance to a standardized and officially recognized version of language(s) mainly used in state administration and education, while locals tended to follow their earlier linguistic practices in everyday situations. The local Hungarian dialect is characterized by the cultural layer of traditional, rural, Csángó that can usually be observed in the domains where locals regularly use the dialect – such as in agriculture or in domestic work. Locals tend not to attach monologic features to the local Hungarian dialect. It means that they create new words and expressions with ease in creative ways, similarly to the practice in other local societies on a language periphery, to be able to define and describe the changes of the modernizing and globalizing world around them. We shall take the example of *szépbűzű*, which is *öblítő* 'fabric softener' in the so-called standard Hungarian, and 'rinse' in English, but translates word to word as something which has a 'nice scent'.

Both the standard Romanian and Hungarian language correspond to the modern, urban level and are simultaneously presented in the structure of the Csángó culture with the local Hungarian dialect. Due to the more and more frequent presence of the phenomena such as patriotic feelings, national affiliations to language, and cultural exclusion implied in the notion of the standardized national language, locals have recently tended to act, think and behave in a more monologic

than a dialogic way, taking each other into account decreasingly.<sup>15</sup> The reflexive nature of a Csángó individual's behaviour, formerly adaptive towards changing realities and new challenges, tends to be more rigid and hierarchic, preferring precise boundaries. Within these boundaries people are considered to constitute a closed community while identifying themselves with a certain national identity, and outside of it people are not acknowledged in anything more than a superficial and objectified way.

## 6. Closing remarks

To sum it up, I wish to emphasise the fact that neither the Hungarian nor the Romanian academic field have realized the significant cultural value of the transcultural social space in the Moldavian Csángó communities and the dialogicity of the Csángós' social life. This latter value reveals the potential of understanding and conceiving the Other, the Stranger and one's own self at the same time by similar categories as well as the categories generally used by each culture (Biczó 2004). I also wish to call attention to the fact that anyone who wants to reach a social position as an intellectual or a leader of the Csángós is forced to identify themselves with a certain national identity to be legally accepted outside of the Csángó community. Practically, no other alternative exists for an intellectual because of the outside pressure on them to identify themselves as Hungarian or Romanian, with all the constraints of a national identity.

However, the operation of the transcultural social space, the dialogic social conditions and the assimilation and dissimilation processes determine the locals' life day by day. The characteristics of these realities set the status, the role and the space for mobility of a person in the Moldavian Csángó local societies. This can be illustrated by a suggestive example of a teacher with a Csángó origin, working in the schooling program of the Csángó Association, who regularly speaks with her daughter, in accordance with the generally accepted mode of language usage in her village, in Romanian.

15. See Tánzos 2012a about the language ideologies in Moldvian Csángó villages.

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## An Imaginary and an Alternative: A Critical Approach to Modernizing Moldavian Csángó Local Societies

### Abstract

It is widely known that the comprehension of the scholarly findings in an ethnographic field is significantly defined by the actual discourse of the discipline. In my paper, I attempt to show the interrelatedness of the scholarly discourse on the Moldavian Csángós, the researcher’s preliminary presumptions encoded in the academic discourse, the social studies’ stereotyping of the Csángós and the results of a fieldwork study.

Two fundamental readings of modernizing Hungarian local peasant societies, including the Csángó ones, are dominant in both Hungarian social sciences and the public view: one, considering modernization as culture loss, and the other, holding the image of a successfully resisting culture. Nevertheless, a third possibility seems to be valid to approach the issue of modernization; one that emphasizes various types of cultural resilience and adaptation, while not denying the possibility of developing modernization skills and flexible responses to macro-level changes.

In my paper, I wish to argue that there is reason for this alternative reading of peasantry capable of adapting. I wish to support my statement with examples demonstrating resilience and adaptation derived from the life of an elderly woman (born in 1947) from a Moldavian Csángó settlement, Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra in Bacău, Romania. I base my findings primarily on the experiences of my ethnological fieldwork in Lujzikalagor from 2005.

## 1. Introduction

In 2005, I had the opportunity to spend almost a year in a Moldavian Csángó village called Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra conducting ethnographic stationary fieldwork. At the same time I was employed by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia as a teacher of Hungarian for a school year, outside the state school curriculum. Taking the role of a teacher was a deliberate decision, serving the purpose of making my stay in the village meaningful and sensible for the locals. On the other hand, this choice determined a specific role in the local setting, with all its advantages and disadvantages. I intend to elaborate on this topic in my other paper in this volume on teaching Hungarian in a Moldavian Csángó settlement. Initially, the topics of my research were modernization, global processes of transition, migration and the change of local living conditions.<sup>1</sup>

My orientation to fieldwork changed as the woman who provided me accommodation, let's call her Klára, proved to be an excellent example of a "key-informant". She was reliable and considerate, capable of viewing events happening around her in their context, forming a reflective attitude towards her situation, while distancing herself from her life and personal feelings. I realized that living together with a Moldavian Csángó woman provided a unique opportunity to observe

1. This study has been prepared with the generous help of the MTA-DE Ethnology Research Group, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This article was written as part of my postdoctoral research project based on my PhD research. First I took part in a Csángó Seminar in Jyväskylä March 2012, then I spent three months at the University of Helsinki, Finland in 2012–2013, in the frame of a project directed by Professor of European Ethnology Hanna Snellman with a title of "Modernization Strategies and Traditional Ties: Symbolic Borderline Cases of Social Transition in a Csángó Community Located in Moldavia" funded by the Academy of Finland (decision number 259291). The work was a continuation of my PhD project having the same title (see the theses in English <[http://ganymedes.lib.unideb.hu:8080/dea/bitstream/2437/103477/6/Lajos%20Veronika%20tezisfuzet\\_angol-t.pdf](http://ganymedes.lib.unideb.hu:8080/dea/bitstream/2437/103477/6/Lajos%20Veronika%20tezisfuzet_angol-t.pdf)>) supervised by Professor Róbert Keményfi at the Department of Ethnology, University of Debrecen, Hungary. Hereby I would like to render thanks to Professor Hanna Snellman and her colleagues at the department for their kind and encouraging cooperation, and express my appreciation to researcher Petteri Laihonen, PhD for being the person who introduced me to his Finnish colleague and encouraged me to collaborate with distinguished Finnish researchers. I also wish to thank Magdolna Kovács and Juliet Langman for their kind suggestions on how to improve the text.

at length Klára's narratives and her Self-representations and Reality-representations presented through these narratives, together with the socioculturally determined everyday life of local Moldavian Csángós.<sup>2</sup> This way I not only managed to gain an insight into the dialectic interplay between the surrounding world and the narrated Self, but could compare those representations of the narratives' "reality" which refer to the present with the immediate events and their individual perception. Thus, besides participant observation – being a data collection method used while doing fieldwork especially in ethnology, cultural anthropology and sociology – I applied the narrative biographical method in my research. In the present case, stationary fieldwork refers to active participation – one of the types of participant observation in addition to 1. non-participation, 2. moderate, and 3. complete participation (see details in Dewalt, K. M. & Dewalt, B. R. & Wayland 1998: 262–264, or Bernard 2006: 342–386).

As a consequence of my use of narrative biography, I focused my investigation on one of the central issues in ethnographic research; namely, the clash between traditional and modern systems of values in a peasant society in the process of modernization. More specifically, I started to explore the conflict between 20th century (forced socialist and post-socialist) modernization and the local Moldavian Csángó society, the latter having multiple cultural and language ties and continuing to display some archaic features even today (see for example Diószegi (ed.) 2002; Pozsony 2006a; Peti & Tánzos (eds) 2012). Thus, my research work aimed to analyze and interpret the cultural and social processes that have promoted the application of modernization strategies to the status of legitimate practice in Moldavian Csángó society.

Supporting an alternative interpretation of modernizing traditional societies, first I provide an example of a modernizing narrative from Klára's life – the case of building a bathroom – and then I outline a critical reading of the modernizing local Hungarian peasant societies. In the discussion I explore how the researcher's preliminary pre-suppositions are revealed and were encoded in the academic discourse

2. The woman, her husband and her children are aware of the fact that I was doing research in Lujzikalagor and gave me permission to use the collected materials. The filed materials are in the author's possession.

and the social studies' stereotypical view on the Moldavian Csángós, mainly formed by Hungarian scholars and widely shared by the Hungarian public, but occasionally appearing in Western European contexts as well.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. A Csángó woman of Lujzikalagor: whose perspective and why?

Klára, that's the imaginary name of a real woman from Lujzikalagor, was born in 1947 and was brought up (and socialized) in a kind of traditional context within the local life-world. Her mother, born in 1919 and her father, born in 1910, both from the same village, got married in 1936. She has two brothers and two sisters. Her schooling did not exceed more than four years. She was eighteen years old when she got married to the son of her father's best friend who died in the Second World War. Her husband worked in the food industry for 30 years (1967–1997). Klára gave birth to eight children between 1966 and 1979, of whom one died as a new-born.

Unlike her younger siblings, Klára belongs to an age-group whose life follows the quasi-traditional model in Lujzikalagor. At the same time, through her closest family members, first her siblings, then her children, she gained experience of the changes in urban life-style in Romanian as well as foreign cities. Her position in a unique generational boundary-situation enables her to emerge as the central figure of the research. Klára shares the following characteristics typical of her generation: according to local traditions, she got married before she turned 20; her husband started to work in one of the factories of Bákó/Bacău, while she lived her life as a mother of seven children and worked in the local farmers' collective in the 1970s and 80s during the socialist period. Her younger siblings moved to the nearby Bacău with their families, except for one, who settled in Brassó/Braşov, because of her husband. Presently none of Klára's seven children live in the village, nor in Romania, as, together with many of their contemporaries

3. For the latter see for example the Recommendation 1521 (2001) on Csángó minority culture in Romania by the Council of Europe – <<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta01/EREC1521.htm>> or Isohookana-Asunmaa 2012.

they migrated to the West for better employment options at the end of the 1990s. Her eldest son was an exception because he escaped to Germany right after the fall of the socialist regime (1989). She visited him in 1995 for the first time and she had been abroad five times by the end of 2007. Klára's whole life is characterized by resilience, by her adaptation to the structurally transforming Moldavian sociocultural reality, in order to "make her way in life" – as she puts it.

The radical transformation of the traditional Moldavian Csángó culture took more or less a lifetime, gradually taking place from the 1920s and 30s. Klára's knowledge of the Moldavian Csángó life combines the "traditional" set of knowledge having been valid for a long time and the newer, the ever actual, the unprecedented or newly discovered elements of the local culture, those slightly or strikingly different from the traditional or inherited ones. Therefore, her narrative implies the cultural and social factors characteristic of the past, the previous socio-historical periods, as well as findings reflecting particular features perceptible today and characteristic of modern life.

The complexity of the sociocultural lifeworld in Lujzikalagor is reflected through Klára's everyday actions and social relations. As a social actor determined by the family system of relations, she becomes, depending on the situation, an active, strenuous, or passive, observant member of the local society and hence, a creator of Moldavian Csángó culture.

This paper follows the tradition of Csángó research that focuses on the personality of individuals (See some recent examples in folk poetry: Faragó 2003; Kallós 2003, 2005, and in religious visions: Kóka 2006; Pozsony 2006b: 223–229; Pócs 2006: 230–251.) However, it does so with the important exception that the individual personality of Klára is not featured only at the level of data collection, but her personal narrative also determines the perspective of the analysis of the local Moldavian Csángó society (see examples of this kind of approach in African studies, for instance: Shostak 1983; Crapanzano 1985).

Theoretically, we assume that the way of thinking and the worldview of any individual is fundamentally determined by their own sociocultural relations. On the basis of this anthropological premise (cf. Geertz 1973), Klára is present in her own Moldavian sociocultural

locality, as someone comprehending and interpreting her existence. It is exactly from this premise that the research sets out to examine the version of social and cultural reality according to which Klára interprets her own culture and the conflict situations of social transition that she encounters – in this paper the example picked out of her life experiences is the building of a bathroom in 2006–2008. The reconstruction of a given “stage” in the life story serves as a means for comprehending and consequently analyzing the dynamics of adaptation used during the course of the life path.

A woman’s personal perspective as a ground for analysis grasps the local sociocultural reality and its transition in her everyday actions and the interpretation of her narratives. In our case the practice of an emic interpretation of the Moldavian Csángó lifeworld is the implementation of the individual’s perspective, through the tool of personal narratives. This approach analyzes adaptation through the individual’s relation to the changing sociocultural circumstances as reflected in her narratives. The analysis of the transforming interpretation of changing sociocultural practices confirms the presence of the ability of culturally encoded adaptation and resilience while exposing the way this adaptation operates, and the local inventory of its operation.

However, slightly deviating from the traditional approach in Csángó investigations, my research exploring the transformation of the sociocultural system of the Moldavian Csángós did not adopt the perspective that regards the Csángós as a people living in a minority status, oppressed and silenced throughout history. The reason for that is that such a consideration was not shared by Klára; ‘minority’ is not part of her personal self-identity. Furthermore, this approach should be avoided as it could facilitate the unfortunate forming of a hierarchical relationship between the “mute” Klára and the “enlightened” researcher, where the “researcher talks *for* the speechless researched”.<sup>4</sup>

In the next section we aim to present an interpretation of cultural adaptation, a mode of cultural resilience through the analysis of concepts and practices of purity under the influence of modernization and transnational flows.

4. Since the 1980s the relationship between the researcher and the researched has changed as a result of the critical turn in anthropology: it transformed the way anthropologists tended to treat members of the local society: “from an object to be known to a subject who can control” (van Willigen & Kedia 2005: 349).

### 3. Cultural adaptation: modernization, purity and the body

It is a cliché that in Romania modernization, and especially the forced modernization of Socialism brought about processes that radically transformed the local peasant societies during the 20th century, including that of the Moldavian Csángós, which was regarded archaic all over Europe.<sup>5</sup> In their everyday life, inhabitants of the Moldavian Csángó local societies have faced macro-social changes of increasing intensity, experienced as the locally perceptible variety of modernization and globalization processes.

I use an example taken from the Moldavian Csángó woman’s life to reveal the interplay between modernization and the Csángó peasant society through a classical manifestation of modernization changes, the acquisition of modern technical equipment. It is an attempt to interpret the value-concepts attached to the modern, mechanized household, and the discrepancy between acquiring and applying the said equipment.

It is a well-known phenomenon that when members of a particular traditional society, under the influence of modernization, equip their households with a wide variety of technical instruments, the locals either rarely or hardly ever use them, or employ them for something quite different from their original intended function. For example, they do not wash their clothes in the washing machine but only keep various objects on top of it after it has been installed; they ask the help of a neighbour to use the DVD player properly on rare occasions of use, etc. In Moldavia the case of the bathroom is similar, when it was introduced due to the new social images of the body and to the altered ideas of cleanliness in interior design. It is worth noting though that the local customs of taking physical care of the body have not followed the modern practices applied in a bathroom.

5. From the 1960s especially Csángó men from villages nearby Bákó started to undertake jobs in factories in and surrounding the city. See for example Benedek H. 1997: 197; Pozsony 2003: 149, 2006: 209–210, 2008: 229. In the 1990s work-related migration to Hungary was significant. See for example Adler & Lomnitz & González 2007: 67–88.

The dual concept of the body outlined by Mary Douglas (1995: 8–11), a British representative of symbolic anthropology, makes a distinction between the social experience of the body and the experiences gained by perceiving the body as a physical entity. The social experience of the body influences the perception of the body as a physical entity, also influencing the ways of considering the body to be clean, the face and the hair groomed, or the kind of actions that are considered necessary to be taken to have the physical body cleaned. There is an interaction between the physical and the social perception of the body, the different aspects mutually intensifying each other, therefore the alteration of the social perception of the body results in changes in experiencing the physical body.

The notion of purity refers both to the sacred and the secular infection, dirtiness (see Douglas: 1966). Therefore, purity can be described basically by two pairs of concepts: pure–impure and clean–dirty.<sup>6</sup> The former refers to the symbolic, ritual cleanness while the latter refers to the physical dirt and its removal.<sup>7</sup>

Klára, the elderly Csángó woman, had the bathroom built in her house in the spring of 2008 in accordance with the style accepted in the ‘city.’ However, she did not change her customs concerning the practices of achieving cleanliness and body hygiene. In the case of Klára the social experience of the body has not yet overwritten the traditional practices of keeping the body clean. Following her earlier routine, she continued to wash herself once a week or so and used the toilet outside (less and less during the winter) instead of the flushing closet in the house.

6. The realization of the habit of living together with one’s love without getting married is a question of what the concepts of pure and impure mean nowadays in Moldavian Csángó villages and in the world outside. I will not introduce this issue now, but for further discussion on the topic see Lajos 2010: 176–188.

7. In the tradition of Moldavian Csángó research, the notion of purity is used in multiple contexts. It can refer either to the idyllic, archaic and untouched nature of the Csángó culture; or to the state of the local Hungarian dialect, the Csángó being mixed and impure (often named to *corcitură*, *korcsitúra* ‘hybrid’ as opposed to the standard Hungarian). The third meaning of purity implies the lack of articulate borderlines between politics, social science research and the church. See this in details Lajos 2012: 176–193.



Picture 1. Status symbol or wealthy family home? Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra. September, 2012. Photo: Veronika Lajos.

On the basis of this phenomenon, also noticeable elsewhere in the village of Lujzikalagor, a question arises: what can be the reason for the widespread building of bathrooms employing the latest design even if the owners-to-be have to borrow money to build them? Can the point at issue be that the aging parents living in the village build the bathroom for their adult children, who work abroad and are used to the urban circumstances? Or does the bathroom simply function as a symbol of status today?<sup>8</sup> (See Picture 1 of a modern house.)

If we place the phenomenon of building bathrooms in the context of body-purity-modernization, while omitting the use of their original function, the query can be put as follows: how does the approach of a dual concept of the body take a cultural action with the spiritual-physical concept of purity, in the time of conflicts between the Moldavian Csángó culture and the challenges presented by contemporary

8. In another Csángó village, in Magyarfalu/Arini for example to buy a car, have the water-pipes laid in and to build the house of stone are all considered to be purchases of high prestige and successful investments. See Mohácsék & Vitos 2005: 214–225.

modernization? How can cultural resilience be apprehended in this example?

Beyond the interactions of the physical and the social images of the body, the cultural categories of perceiving the body are related to the concept of the society, thus in Moldavia, a formerly peripheral or rather unknown image of the human body was created in parallel to the form of a human being realized by the modernization processes. The concept formed along the ideas of Marcel Mauss (2000: 423–446), that the body is basically characterized by the lack of its “natural” state, moves socially-acquired forms of knowledge to the front in the field of bodily activities. According to that, in the time of sociocultural shifts, alternative approaches, newly formed expectations for the physical and social perception of the body may be acquired through “socially transmitted learning processes”. In Moldavia, the concept of body cleanliness, the meaning of clean/unclean have broadened in content during the sociocultural transformations of today and new, formerly unknown practices of washing and grooming have appeared.

In the summer of 2006, the adult children of Klára came together and bought her an automatic washing machine and installed it in their parents’ house. Yet Klára did not even touch the appliance for a long time, she simply disliked it. She was often heard saying: “We do not have that much laundry. And I prefer washing by hand, it’s faster...” (In the original language: “Nincs nekünk sok [szennyesünk]. S jobb szeretem kézzel, gyorsan megvan...”.) Her daughters from Italy kept asking her on the telephone whether she had started to use the new appliance or she continued using her hands or the old machine. One morning Klára made the decision and asked for assistance to learn how to use the new washing machine. After a few times, she could use it by herself and later she learned to choose from a range of different programmes as well. She quickly adapted and after three weeks she could confidently use all the facilities of the machine. This case not only refers to the influence of mechanized technology, but shows that modern expectations pertaining to personal hygiene and the cleaning of clothes have found a relatively quick way into the formerly existing social construction of the clean environment. It also shows that the benefits arising from the use of technical equipment superseded the earlier forms of washing to a large extent.

Unlike the washing machine, which was presented to her, Klára prepared for the construction of the *baie* (it is the Romanian word for bathroom) for months: “Why, we should build a shower bath” (in the original language: “Bár építsünk egy morzsa *dușt* [tusolót]”). She planned the ideal positioning of the bathroom within the traditionally sectioned Moldavian peasant-house, which had been enlarged after the political shift in 1989. As a first step, in the summer of 2006 they constructed the concrete sewer pit in the courtyard as the village did not have a sewage system. Klára bought a bathtub after a year, in 2007. That is because in the nearby Bákó she could not find the one she wanted, a kind of sitting tub her children working in Italy had shown her. Eventually, the bathroom was built in the part of the house that was formerly used as an entrance hall. The purchases and the building costs took all of Klára and her husband’s saved money, all of her children’s contributions, and she had to borrow money from a wealthier brother in the city to pay the workers. “We could build that small *baie*! Well, if God would help us! I have to see my brother, he would give me *para* (‘money’)! I will do, and repay him as I have to. See? I could do that! Him (pointing to her husband), he does not care, not at all. If there’s no money, then that’s it! But this (ie. the bathroom) is so important for us, so we’ll do it.” (In the original language: “Meg tudnám csánni azt a morzsa *bájét*! Lám, ha Jóisten megsegítne! El kell végezzem az öcsémvel, ad ő *parát*! Pénzet. Csak úgy csánok, s aztán adom vissza rendre nekije. Lám! Lám, mit tudok csinálni! Ő [utal Klára a férjére] nem törődik, semmi módúlag. Há nincs *para*, nincs pénz, s akkor nincs, s akkó ennyi!... Ez nagyon szükség nekünk, azt megcsánjuk.”) In her family it is not the husband with the attribution of authority, but she herself is the one who embodies innovativeness, she is the one who shows aptitude towards the instruments of modernization, towards novelties. It is Klára who dares to take the risk of possible failure, who dares to try new things, and who is consistent in urging the acquisition of modern “necessities”.

After the bathroom was finally ready, furnished and equipped in the summer 2008, and they moved the washing machine in there from the kitchen, Klára started to visit the flushing closet more and more frequently, especially during the night and in the winter time. By having the *baie* built in the house, the Csángó woman and her husband did

not start to take a shower every day, although she urged and invited her urban visitors, the researcher included, to use the bathroom as it was supposed to be used in an urban setting due to the internalized modern social image of the body.

One often recalled story Klára tells is about her youngest daughter, who lives in Turin, Italy, who continuously asks about the progress of the bathroom, the appliances and fixtures, the style and quality of objects and decoration. According to the narrative, the same question is asked during each telephone conversation: “Did you make the *baie* as everybody else in the village does?” (In the original context she used both Hungarian and Romanian: “Úgy csánták kendtek a *bájét*, mind a világ?”; “Ați făcut ca lumea?”)

Another narrative connected to the bathroom centres around her youngest daughter. She married an Italian man in the autumn of 2007 and visited the village with her fiancé for the first time in August, 2006. Not only the fact that the young couple had been living together in Turin before marriage got Klára’s attention – although she is a faithful Catholic it would be rather easy to state that it was simply a sinful act in her eyes but the phenomenon of cohabitation of the Csángó youth in cities without being married is far more complex in the context of modernization (see for example Lajos 2011) – but she wondered at the division of labour between them: both man and woman did the housework at home, doing the washing-up or cleaning the house. Transnational processes have not only transformed the nature of the lives of Klára’s children living abroad but they have affected their experiences, values, and way of thinking and, moreover, their expectations of how their parents’ household should look, what should be in the house when they return home for a holiday.

Rephrasing the question about the making of the bathroom it can be read as whether the aging parents built the *baie* according to the “urban” requirements of bathroom-building, which is the custom in Lujzikalagor now, so as not to bring shame on themselves by having a bathroom not according to the latest fashion and social expectations. In other words: did they meet the requirements of demonstrating progress through their objects and household commodities, regardless of the difficulties of raising the necessary finances, or, “to their shame”, were they to fail in the local competition for social status and prestige?

In Lujzikalagor, the building of bathrooms is related to the changes in water use, the meaning of purity and the relation to the body, linked to modern ideas. Building the *baie* gradually spread around in the village as the social image of the body has changed, while the new concept of purity, having been extended to the everyday cleaning process of the ‘naked’ body has also appeared among the accepted values of the local society, side by side with the traditional one. The regular use of the washing-machine and the emergence of the need to have a bathroom built in the house indicate that Klára started to appreciate new meanings of the notion of cleanliness either in reference to clothes or the body itself and integrated them into her value system.

The shift between the social and the physical image of the body, the quicker reactions of the former to the modern paradigmatic challenges and global flows, produced the experimental fact that the presence of modern objects, appliances or rooms considered to be necessary, and their proper use in practice are not correlated to each other. This has also modified the concept and meaning of body hygiene. As a matter of fact, the shift of meaning between the two body concepts confronts the traditional values and modernization, or rather the values conveyed by the modern set of appliances, allowing an overview of the relation between the altered rural living conditions and the new cultural strategies. Due to transnational flows urban facilities, practices and ways of life, generally following the Western-European standards, appeared in the village meanwhile inhabitants of Lujzikalagor were capable of solving conflicts and problems by practices of cultural resilience. The solution to the conflict is found along symbolic actions like the building of bathrooms and in adjusting the possibility of cleaning the whole naked body of a person every single day in contrast to the widely accepted practices of body hygiene related to bathing once a week.

So, by building the *baie* according to the local expectations, Klára and her family symbolically joined the cultural, social and economic shift-process of modernization, while they also recognized and accepted the alteration of the social image of the body, and accepted the modern concept of the cleanliness of the body, and accordingly, the requirement of the daily cleaning of the whole body. On the other hand, it did not pertain to the change in the physical experience of the

body; it did not depend on whether they used the bathroom according to its intended purpose, or did not use it at all.

#### 4. An alternative perspective on modernizing Csángó societies

There are several approaches towards modernization.<sup>9</sup> Here, we shall consider it as a process that is not an external, all-embracing, destructive, and consumptive imperative but rather the total of sociocultural interactions between the peasant way of life and the contemporary cultural, social, and economic impulses (Fejős 1998: 14). Modernization covers a complex system of economic, social, political, and cultural changes, which has confronted the value system, customs, and adaptation models available in the traditional peasant way of life. Peasant societies, be they either the peasantry of the Carpathian Basin, or the farming communities of Africa, or elsewhere, react differently to the paradigmatic challenges of modernization. The diverse cultural responses embody different strategies of adaptation that change by the active participation of group-members according to the given peasant environment and the local characteristics of modernization influences.

In a critical approach to the modernizing local Hungarian peasant societies, it is worth examining how the modernizing traditional Hungarian peasant society is being constructed in scholarly and public discourses and what social and cultural implications are associated with it. While introducing two conventional narratives of modernization I intend to argue for the validity of a third approach that regards the so-called peasantry, including the Moldavian Csángós, as a social group capable of adapting itself to modernization processes while maintaining a traditional orientation to particular aspects of life – such as in the above-mentioned case when Klára found it necessary to build the bathroom (*baie*) in accordance with the new (modern) social image

9. Here I do not intend to elaborate on the different approaches to modernization, but only to give a definition of the concept used in this paper. About the latest ideas on modernization see the concept of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2000:1–29, Eisenstadt (ed.) 2002) and its critique, that of the varieties of modernity (Smidt 2006: 77–97).

of the body (changing content of cleanliness), while maintaining the old (traditional) practice of cleaning the body using the shower rather infrequently, usually no more than once a week.

In the previous section we have elaborated on an actual Moldavian Csángó example, the bathroom and the related social practices and meanings, and encountered neither endangering effects of social change nor refusal to respond to modernizing challenges, but rather resilience and adaptation. In the following I discuss the classical Hungarian interpretations referring to the modernizing peasant societies while a third possible interpretation arises.

The identification of the Hungarian peasantry with the socio-culturally different Other of the same society led to the attribution of the characteristics of “exotic” and “idyllic” to the academically and publicly accepted image of the peasantry. The same happened in Western Europe, for example in Germany (see the work of Kaschuba (1999/2004) or Bausinger (1990)). As a result, it is still a commonly accepted view in both the academic and the public sphere that the sociocultural practice of traditional Hungarian peasant societies is traditionally and quasi-conventionally conservative, self-segregating and introverted. Based on this approach, having recognized that ‘ethnographies are hierarchical arrangements of discourses’ and have institutionalized ways, altering in time, of describing the others (Clifford 1986: 10, 17), two options prevail in analyzing modernization’s effects on peasant societies. One interpretation is that of the “disintegration of the traditional peasant culture” (Fejős 1998: 13); the other is that of the successfully resisting peasant world.

According to the first narrative, or one may say a hardly self-reflexive writing strategy,<sup>10</sup> that of the endangered society, the cultural, social and economic processes affecting local peasant societies, the transformation of the classic peasant lifestyle is a negative change, during which the traditional practice and the accumulated “peasant knowledge” decompose to a considerable extent. The

10. In the middle of the 1980s cultural anthropologists started paying attention to the ethnographic writing strategies, the poetics and politics of ethnographic discourses and the ways, as well as the means of describing the others (the emblematic example of this reflexive, critical turn is the book entitled *Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus 1986)).

anti-modernization approach regards the modernization of peasant societies as loss, as a culture loss, thus rendering the social historical periods of the peasantry's sociocultural world into a hierarchical relationship, which associates the concept of idyllic to the traditional peasant lifestyle. This idealistic view was shaped in the time of Romanticism in Hungary during the 19th century, constantly reproduced and continuously validated by Hungarian ethnology in the 20th century (see examples in the basic handbooks of Hungarian ethnology such as *A magyarság néprajza* I–IV. 1933–1937 or Balassa & Ortutay 1979). Furthermore, this approach cannot accept that the interactions between the traditional world and modernization, as well as the resolution of conflict-situations, may bring about new values. Moreover, the “deprivation” reading of modernization associates values to both traditional peasant societies and modern ones, thus creating a hierarchical positioning in their relationship. It also simplifies the complex system of communal and individual adaptation patterns responding to modernizing impulses, describing them as a one-sided, one-way process.

Besides the view of “modernization interpreted as loss”, there is the other approach that depicts the relationship between peasant society and modernization in the framework of heroic fighting, of immobility preserved, as successful resistance. To paraphrase Habermas (1993: 153–154), the concept of “modern” deprived of its historical bearings was the product of 19th century Romanticism, as an abstract opposition to traditions, the whole history itself. “Modern” is a historically changing concept. Before the 19th century the modern denoted to the correspondence to antiquity, referred to the outcome of transition between the old and the new. However, the shift in its interpretation tossed the traditional into the state of static, frozen traditions, while it associated the effect of the modern, the new with the capability of change and dynamic adaptation. It attached values to both, and created the concept of infinite progress, identifying modernization with evolution, with changing towards the positive.

Both approaches regard the modernizing peasant culture as a closed, “pure”, homogeneous, timeless entity, the complex system of which is either dissolved by grand-scale cultural, economic, and social transformations, or left untouched by them. The first version revives

the concept of a lost peasant tradition, “in its final hour”, while the second depicts an isolated peasant tradition, steadfastly clinging to its traditional ways. Both interpretations illustrate a falsely recorded, idealized image of the classic peasant society.

There seems to be a third alternative to 20th century modernization challenges. This approach does not deny the possibility of developing modernization skills and flexible reactions to macro-level changes in genuine peasant societies of archaic structure. On the contrary, it aims to present the various types of cultural adaptation by investigating the actual practices in local communities in this process of adaptation. Emphasis on the way of adaptation highlights the fact that while local peasant societies are mostly reluctant to change at first, still they are very much capable of adapting to modern challenges. This approach presupposes cultural practices and techniques to be at work that can moderate or solve the conflicts created by modernization impulses and radical cultural otherness, while at the same time, it does not attach value judgements and qualification labels to the new practices, which develop as a consequence of adaptation. The narrative of the peasant tradition that is capable of displaying economic flexibility and culturally encoded adaptation contributes to the process of “taking away the magical features” attributed to these classical peasant societies by reviewing and overriding the romantic, idealized, and erroneously petrified stereotypes associated with their sociocultural practices.

This narrative of the peasant society that has displayed a great degree of affinity to adapt when facing the challenges of modernization is not totally unfamiliar in Hungarian ethnology.<sup>11</sup> However, this

11. Some examples of this research are the following: 1. In the 1970s the narrative of an adaptive peasant tradition appeared in Hungarian ethnology for the first time, see for example Bodrogi (ed.) 1978; Szemerényi (ed.) 1980; Niedermüller (ed.) 1982. 2. Two decades later in the 1990s traditionalism became a popular approach once again in Hungarian ethnology, however, scholarly interest also turned towards the interactions between modernization, the traditional ways of life and the present situation of rural settlements (Fejős 2003: 14.). See research connected to cultural resilience in the field of Csángó studies for example Tánczos 1996; Kotics 1999; Korunk 2003/9; Kinda & Pozsony (eds) 2005; Erdélyi Társadalom 2007/2; Ilyés & Peti & Pozsony (eds) 2008, religion and modernization, for example: Kinda 2010; Peti 2008, 2012.

narrative appears to question the presence of certain abstract qualities (conservative, self-segregative, introverted) associated with genuine peasant societies of archaic structure. Instead of citing examples, let us have a brief overview of these traits that are regarded as valid by both the approach of culture loss and that of successful resistance.

Both the narratives of the endangered and those of the resistant peasant culture consider the conservative, self-segregative, and introverted features to be applicable to Hungarian peasant societies. At the general level, these cover several assumptions that I will briefly outline in the following section.

## 5. Distinctive features of an idealized rural world

The first characteristic of the idealized traditional peasant lifestyle I wish to describe relates to the image of the farming “homo conservativus”. The conservative nature attributed to genuine peasant societies of archaic structure postulates the preservation of the currently operating social system and relations together with the already existing cultural system. Furthermore, it implies a conscious opposing of experimentation with the admission of “the modern” and a reservation towards all practices that may not directly fit into the system of local traditions or into the framework of the interpretation of the world determined by historical processes and individual experience. (See Picture 2.)

Further assumptions: the current world is the “best of all possible worlds”; everyday actions are controlled and guided by the urge to preserve; the notion of timelessness of customs; reverence towards authority; a conservative sense of time – the concept of the ethnographical present tense; the static and fixed image of peasant society; a religious worldview.

The second genuine feature that the narrative of culture loss and successful resistance associates with modernizing peasant societies is the aspect of an introverted and isolated society. This aspect assumes that the traditional world of the peasants is the natural and social domain of inherently reticent and introverted people. In this view, peasants and farmers deliberately refuse to seek external contacts and they



Picture 2: Roadside cross with parabolic antenna. Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra, September, 2012. Photo: Veronika Lajos.

live their quotidian life guided by the desire to be isolated. As a consequence of this isolation, they are also uncorrupted and immaculate. In this image, the quality of being introverted is equally valid for all the fields of society, culture and economy. This means that it represents a distinct and impermeable demarcation line between the peasant society and the social reality outside the village boundaries, so space and culture are bound to each other.

According to the third assumption (consciously sustained segregation) the genuine peasant societies of archaic structure separate themselves from their environment by deliberately implementing a range of self-segregating practices. This identifies the population of local societies as the victims of economic, political, and cultural changes or as the passive recipients of the impacts of transformations. In this context, the implementation of sociocultural separation is a consciously applied cultural pattern of behaviour that functions as a routine cultural practice in the life of the local society. The idea of purposeful isolation however does not seem to be relevant only in a geographical sense but also covers the general way of thinking,

as well as the ordinary practices of the local existence. Still a further degree of consciousness is presupposed within the establishment and maintenance of spatial and cultural boundaries, while isolation is regarded to be a culturally encoded approach in the micro-world. Further presumptions include the concept of the unified quality of the micro-world.

According to the findings of my research, the above stereotypes are not valid, or can only be valid in some really restricted sense. In my paper, the narrative of the affirmative adaptation practice of the Hungarian peasant societies, including that of the Moldavian Csángó as well, has been modelled by the life story of a Moldavian Csángó woman in her 60s, Klára. The analysis of her life-world (see Schutz & Luckmann 1973) in Lujzikalagor presents in context the interactions of modernization and the Csángó peasant routine, the value conflicts thereof and their solutions, as well as the adaptation strategies that are experienced as far from being forced. Examples taken from Klára's world have formed the basis for the analyses that shed light on the way adaptation and resilience work or culturally encoded ability and knowledge operate. Events from her life highlight the operation of such cultural practices and techniques, which testify to a large-scale adaptation capability in resolving conflicts of modernizing impulses.

## 6. Conflicts, border-situations, resilience and adaptability

As can be seen from the above, cultural resilience and adaptation to sociocultural changes are without difficulties in everyday life; understandably, conflicts arise from symbolic and physically perceptible border-situations, and transition periods. It is needless to say that adaptation processes are dynamic and still permeated by sociocultural clashes. These are observable not only in disagreements between generations within the family, but even on the level of personality, in individual self-contradictions.

Nevertheless, it would not be too far-fetched to say that Klára, the woman in her sixties, from Lujzikalagor has regularly applied cultural practices and techniques during her life that have demonstrated

great adaptation skills in resolving clashes caused by modernization impulses, while maintaining a resilience characterized by mainly affirmative praxises and, of course, inevitable conflicts with one's own established practice and convictions as well as that of other generations. In my paper I argued that even in the Moldavian sociocultural environment one can observe an aptitude for modernization manifested in a great number of practices of mostly affirmative nature. Through the case of the bathroom in a Moldavian Csángó rural society, I intended to interpret the reasons why people in modernizing societies tend to refrain from the use of their modern equipment or rooms, while also considering them necessary to possess by applying the concept of purity and the dual notion of the body in the context of social modernization. I have chosen this particular example to show that the bathroom does not simply function as a symbol of status in the Csángó local societies of today, instead, it is the discontinuity between the social image of the body (modernization of socio-cultural knowledge) and praxis (traditional treatment of the body) that makes it self-evident to have the bathroom built as a necessity, and to use it occasionally. I also hope to have demonstrated how the complex peasant knowledge can serve as a cultural kit when facing modernization challenges. In a sense, the approach of the peasant tradition capable of cultural adaptation and resilience "takes away the magical features" of the Moldavian Csángó culture and re-interprets the romantic, falsely recorded, idealized particularities of the peasant world.

So the above example, the building of the bathroom, the transformation of the concept of cleanliness aimed to demonstrate that the resolution of value-conflicts arising from the interplay between modernization and the everyday life of Moldavian Csángó peasants actualizes adaptation strategies that are far from being experienced as forced ones. Also, I wished to draw attention to those ethnographic presuppositions encoded in the Moldavian Csángó discourse, which do or may permeate the Moldavian Csángó field of research to a great extent, and which heavily affect the perception of the events observable in the field, and thus the process of attributing meaning to them.

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LAURA IANCU

## **Magyarfalu in the 1980s: Reflections on My Childhood in a Csángó Village**

### *Abstract*

In my paper I deal with questions connected to bilingualism and identity in a minority–majority setting in Moldavia, Romania. Through my childhood memories of Magyarfalu/Arini, my aim is to show how the given minority–majority circumstances both forced and helped the Hungarian-speaking children to learn about Hungarian or Csángó identity. The derogatory use of the term Csángó by outsiders, both Romanians and Hungarians, had a major influence on the Csángó children, so that they could not accept their Csángó identity with pride. However, the adult peasant community expressed their identity through everyday practices and passed them to their children as well. In my paper I also show how the Roman Catholic identity of Csángós dominated over the national one.

### 1. Introduction

I was born in 1978 in Magyarfalu/Arini, Romania, in a family of 6 children of Hungarian nationality and Roman Catholic religion. Magyarfalu is situated in the southeast part of the Moldavian region, which is inhabited by a Hungarian speaking ethnic group. I lived here until the age of 12.

In my childhood, the language of the school and church was Romanian in Magyarfalu, and the language of our everyday life was

Hungarian. We could read and write in the former, but only speak in the latter. Later I moved to the Transylvanian region of Romania into a town with Hungarian speaking majority (Csikszereda/Miercurea Ciuc) to continue my schooling. These circumstances greatly influenced my and other children's identity in my village.

In my paper my goal is to answer the question of how the given circumstances influenced the children's identity building: how did they become conscious about Hungarian and Csángó identity, how the Roman catholic identity influenced the national or ethnic identity, and how the adult peasants expressed their identity for the children. While looking for answers to these questions, I'll try to formulate my answers based on my memories.

The structure of the paper is the following. Before recalling my remembrances, I give a short overview on two genres in Hungarian ethnology, on peasant autobiography and sociography because my work is tightly placed into this context. My article is linked to the latter from the point of view of genre and methodology as well. In the next part I describe the population and the life in general in Magyarfalu. Next, I discuss how the conflicts caused by speaking Hungarian influenced the Hungarian identity. In the next part I show how we were determined by other Hungarians to be Csángós and Csángó speaking. In the following two parts I show how the everyday practices and holidays influenced our identity. Then I shortly describe the changes in our village in the last twenty years. Finally, I make conclusions, and a short summary in my home dialect in the end of the paper. (See picture 1 of a decorated street for a religious celebration.)



Picture 1. Street decorated with traditional textiles in Magyarfalu/Arini - awaiting the bishop's arrival for a confirmation celebration. Summer 2005.

Photo: Laura Iancu.

## 2. Hungarian peasant autobiography and sociography

In Hungarian ethnography the research of peasant autobiographies is a separate field. Influenced by literacy, the genre appeared at the end of the 19th century in the form of poems,<sup>1</sup> then prose (Hoppál & Küllös 1972: 284). They have been printed since the 1930s continuously.<sup>2</sup> They were a response to outside influence and ethnographers'

1. The primacy of the poetic form is not a surprise. Even the peasant popular poetry of the 19th century was connected to the appearance of more elaborated structural and aesthetic forms of language (Hoppál & Küllös 1972: 285).

2. A considerable part of the folk/peasant autobiographies are in the Ethnology Archive of Museum of Ethnography (Budapest).

encouragements, sometimes written to participate in calls.<sup>3</sup> Their most striking peculiarity in Hungarian oral, communal and folk culture was their unique depiction of one's own fate. From the perspective of content and structure, they all comply with the rules of memoir or autobiography so well-known in literature. A critical difference between the two types is a stylistic and linguistic characteristic: the peasant autobiographies are composed according to the rules of colloquial speech. They came to be appreciated first by historians and agrarians, however, they contain a tremendous amount of irreplaceable information for Hungarian ethnography, too.<sup>4</sup>

The authors of the peasant autobiographies continued their peasant lifestyle, they did not become intellectuals or professional writers. Nevertheless, in Hungarian science we find a certain group of authors who are linked to the above mentioned phenomenon in several ways. They are sociographers, writers, publicists and sociologists, intellectuals who come from a peasant background and to whom the literature of sociography is linked.<sup>5</sup> It is very important to stress that sociographic literature is not closely related to ethnographical specialist literature, neither as a source, nor as a theoretical or sociological thesis.

The question of sociography is very diversified.<sup>6</sup> One of the most famous Hungarian sociographers, Péter Cseke, defines sociography in the following words: “even though sociography focuses on the exploration of objective real phenomena and processes, it emphasizes their sentimental, empathetic display, thus stepping across its own limits.

3. In this way, the autobiographies published in 1974 in a representative book were based on ethnographers' calls for participation (Hoppál & Küllös & Manga 1974).

4. The majority of authors write their personal, family stories “at the end of the life”, looking back, starting with the childhood and in a chronological order. In these descriptions we find very important data connecting with the lifestyle (food culture, dress, farming, building operations, habits, holidays and weekdays, world view etc.) of the 19–20. Century Hungarian peasantry (Hoppál & Küllös 1972: 286; Küllös 1981: 186–187).

5. Writer Gyula Illyés for example was a sociographer like this. He wrote a book on the poor people of the Hungarian plains. His contemporary, the poet Mihály Babits writes about his sociography the following: “The Hungarian puszta may be known only by the child of the plains. But this knowledge may turn into conscious only if the child left the plains, rises above it (...) A poet was needed for this. The dry statistical or sociological data would leave us in darkness” (Babits 1978: 327–335).

6. For the early story of the Hungarian sociography and the methodological criticisms concerning the genre of the sociography see Némedi 1984.

It centres on the subjective and intuitive display of all connections between the phenomena of social reality” (Cseke 2002: 12; 2008: 5). Most social researchers and ethnographers criticize sociography because of its sentimentalism and subjectivity, its factual errors, and its lack of methodological foundation (Kósa 2002: 60–61).

Hungarian sociography as a genre developed during the 1930s.<sup>7</sup> Sociography as such – even though its cultivators were highly educated individuals of peasant origins<sup>8</sup> – did not integrate into either ethnography or sociology or literature.<sup>9</sup> It has been and remains the genre of social clashes (Cseke 2002: 18), no matter if it approached the subject from a literary, journalistic or scientific style (Cseke 2008: 36). Its topics have been extremely varied: the initial social peasant descriptions were complemented by the discussion of the relation of some of the problems of certain social layers, minorities or ethnicities.<sup>10</sup>

An author who brings to light a certain piece of knowledge that he feels he must publish is a sociographer. He notices connections between the processes of everyday life that would avoid the eyes of those living it. He is able to word his recognitions more sensitively than the sociologist and thus he “can project the human content and meaning of our sifting reality” (Cseke 2008: 36). Its effect on forming public and social opinion lies exactly in this. A methodological and practical principle in sociography states that like an insider ethnographer, the sociographer must also approach his newly explored facts as an outsider, objectively, however, his opinion is influenced by both the outer reality as well as the inner reality of his explored world “with which he completely identifies in order to get to know it” (Cseke 2002: 30). The sociographical methodology is defined as such, by both inner and outer opinions.

7. At the same time, some of the 20th century taboos about Hungarian society were written only after the 1989 transformation of regime.

8. For example: Gyula Illyés (1902–1983) is a peasant's, a shepherd family's child, and one of the most important poets of the Hungarian literature of 20th century; Erdei Ferenc (1910–1971) is a peasant's child, and a famous, influential jurist etc.

9. László Kósa examined the contact between the ethnography and the sociography literature (and the village-exploration movement) (Kósa 2002: 57–66).

10. The historicism of the genre is expressed in the titles of the publications as well. Some recurring concepts, keywords: “prison report book”, “confines land”, “underpasses people, a library's or a school's sociography etc.

We find peasant autobiographies (Forrai 1994) and sociographies (Beke 1988) among Moldavian Hungarians as well. Although I am Moldavian Hungarian, I have never written an autobiography nor a sociography, however, I have used my childhood memories indirectly in my ethnographic or literary works. The memory related below can be deemed as a piece of sociography, because the remembrances are looked upon from the eyes of an adult and ethnographer, too. I tried my best to choose events that can be evaluated from both the inside and outside. If I should place my work in the modern international field, it would be analytic autoethnography in the sense used by Anderson (2006); however, pieces of autoethnography what Anderson calls evocative or emotional autoethnography also can be found in my writing.

### 3. Population and life in Magyarfalú/Arini in the 1980s

I spent my childhood in Magyarfalú in the 1980s. What did Magyarfalú look like between the years 1980 and 1990? It would be hard to tell the exact number of the population of Magyarfalú, since the majority of men able to work (fathers and sons over the age of 16) were working in either one of the industrial cities of the country or on cooperative farms in South-Romania. Men working in the nearest cities (Bacău, Adjud, Oneşti etc.) were able to visit their families once or twice a month, but those working in farther parts of the country could only come home 3–4 times a year or even more rarely. The other, smaller part of men able to work were working in the neighbouring Dealu Morii Collective Farm, which handled the land of the village population as well. This collective farm was the workplace of our mothers and of those youngsters who finished the 10th grade and were over 16.

When the boys turned 18, they had to take compulsory military service in a barrack of a city. Siblings and parents visited the young soldiers on the day of their taking of oath, which took place 3–4 months after their enlistment. For the children – including me as well – this was the first occasion of sitting in a car and going to a city. Of course,

there were children who already had this opportunity while going to hospital, or some others who had visited cities while on school excursions. The contemporary educational policy prescribed that elementary school pupils had to go on school excursions once a year to the neighbouring cities in order to visit some World War monuments.

Places for learning Romanian were the military service for men, the ethnically mixed cooperative farms for women and obviously, school for children. The population of Magyarfalú had become bilingual since the 1960s. While Hungarian was only used orally, which means it wasn't used as a written language; the latter (the Romanian) was used orally and for reading and writing as well. Romanian was the language of literacy, high culture in general, and of civilization; nevertheless Romanian at this time was not equivalent to mother tongue. In the 1980s these two languages were equally evaluated, Hungarian meant the inner coherency of the community, while Romanian helped the individual to get along in the outer world.

On a spring, summer or autumn weekday a visitor walking along the village would have seen only empty streets. Adults were working; old people were taking care of their grandchildren while working on their household farms; and children were at school in the mornings and herding animals (in officially permitted numbers) in the afternoons. Those households where the grandmother had died, the older brothers and sisters were babysitting and taking care of the 3–5-month-old babies. Sundays and holidays were somewhat different, because it was not always compulsory to work on these days. Mothers only had to go to work (in the collective farm or other places) on every second or third Sunday. But almost every person from Magyarfalú got a day off for important religious holidays (like Christmas or Easter) or the day of the church-ale/kermess fair, so that they could go home to the village. The result of this was that on these days the population of the village grew so much that people simply could not fit either into the church or the pub. On some of these church-ale days there were so many local people present in the village that those events are still talked about with great awe. Apart from these holidays, one could see such big crowds only on weddings or funerals.

## 4. Language and identity

### 4.1. I am Hungarian

In the 1980s (our) grandparents were “traditional csángó people” who were putting their grandchildren to sleep with religious folk songs and fairy tales. My grandmother who was the maid of the cantor/chorister was a so called precantor – which meant a certain privilege in the village – only knew how to say *Bună ziua!* in Romanian, that is “Good day”. On the other hand, she spoke a Roma language, because she had Roma friends in the near Roma village, which is about a “two-mountain-distance” (about 15 km) from the village. Her Roma friends did not speak Romanian either, so somehow they had to learn each other’s language to a certain level to be able to communicate. So when the postman brought my grandmother her pension, she thanked him in Roma by saying *Boda proste!*

Though at school or at church we were allowed to speak only in Romanian, we always talked in Hungarian in the family or on the streets. The way I learned that we are Hungarians and that our language is Hungarian was from our teachers and the priest who forbade us to use Hungarian in public or official places (state offices, church). They said: *În școală este interzisă limba maghiară!* “The use of Hungarian is strictly forbidden at school!” Sadly I can’t remember whether my grandmother spoke about Hungary, about the Hungarian nation, when she put me on her lap or not. But I clearly remember that we got detention from our teachers for letting out Hungarian words during classes. I can remember the priest, who was always ordering us in Romanian (though he spoke Hungarian as well), no matter where we were (but mostly at the church): *Vorbește românește!* “Speak Romanian!” The priest used the same (aggressive) devices to discipline us as the teachers did: smacking in the face, pulling the ears, putting us to public shame etc. In the presence of the priest at church we knelt down and were only allowed to pray, sing, or listen to the mass in Romanian. But as my later research revealed, people were always praying in their own mother tongue, silently, with their own words, if no one could hear them – and it is still so nowadays as well (Iancu 2013). We also know that in the 1980s and 90s some old people were only able to

confess in Hungarian, which means they told the prayers in Latin and told their sins in Hungarian. The local priest allowed them to do so, actually, he couldn’t do anything else but accept it, because old people couldn’t speak Romanian.

I also clearly remember that my grandmother used to vanish for some days, but she always came back. We kept asking her, where was she, what was she doing. She always said: I was to confess. When we asked her: Where did you confess? She said: *At a Hungarian priest!* She never told us where the Hungarian priest lived. Finally, I also remember that my grandmother told us: *We have to cringe. We have to do what we are told to, because we are strangers here.*

Another platform to reveal us being Hungarians were sports competitions between villages and interschool competitions in certain subjects. We had traditional competitions between the Hungarian Magyarfalú and the Romanian Gajcsána/Găiceana. Romanian pupils won all content area competitions. People believed that the Romanian children couldn’t accept that a *bozgor* (which is a pejorative word for Hungarian) might win a Romanian competition. But the sports competitions were almost always won by us, children from Magyarfalú, which was also not popular with the Romanian children. Since every competition was held in Gajcsána, the organizers had to see us off to the end of the village, because the defeated Romanian pupils were shouting various negative remarks about our nationality. Otherwise I don’t know of any open or radical ethnic conflicts between the two villages, but there obviously was a hidden mutual disengagement from each other on a personal level. Therefore we can assume it was not us (Csángós) who declared who we are. But it was the others who told us who we are.

In my childhood, all inhabitants except two teacher couples were Hungarian speaking Hungarians in our village, Magyarfalú. Therefore signifying the identity of the people in the village was not reasonable: all of us knew who we are; it was self evident for us, a fact that did not need further discussion among us.

Expressing our ethnic difference in external contexts was not intentional; it was, rather unavoidable for two reasons. First, the Hungarian-speaking inhabitants could not speak the Romanian language or if they could, they spoke it with mistakes and with a “strange”

accent. This fact made the linguistic and ethnic background immediately visible when our people started to speak to Romanian speaking persons. The other telltale mark of difference was the behavior and the use of catholic symbols in front of religious buildings and objects in contrast to orthodox people, for example, the difference in making the sign of the cross. They were only small signs of the identity expressed on the surface, but still very revealing ones. In addition, wearing folk costumes, which at least before the Second World War was a regular practice in the area, also revealed immediately which ethnic group a certain person belongs to.

These patterns, settings and hierarchies were visible also for children. However, ethnic conflicts hardly occurred because the different communities lived side by side without tight connections: catholic communities lived an “inside life”, that is, outside contacts were made only with other catholic Csángó villages. These were the possibilities for them – and it was natural for them.

These circumstances actually strengthened the Hungarian identity of the people inasmuch as the appearance or the talk of the Hungarian Catholics identified them ethnically and religiously as other, as strange, from their own perspective as well as that of the majority society.

#### 4.2. I am Csángó

As I have mentioned before, I was brought up in Magyarfalú as being Hungarian. But in 1991 something important happened. Students starting the seventh grade could enter or follow education in Hungarian, in a Hungarian speaking school in Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc, for free. (Csíkszereda is located on the Western part of the Carpathian Mountains, in the east part of Transylvania in Romania, where the Hungarian *Székely* ‘Sekler’ minority forms the majority of the population – not as in our area where the majority are Romanian speaking people.) This program was directed by a Roman Catholic priest, Lajos György-Deák from Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc. He commissioned a lady from Magyarfalú, Ágnes Bogdán, to speak to the parents, and provide them as much information as needed about this program. My parents were thinking till the last moments whether to let me go away

or not. We arrived at the bus station in the very last moment, the engine of the bus, which had come to carry us to Szekler Land, had already been started. This way we started school in the Attila József Elementary School in Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc in the fall of 1991. There were many new things, many “firsts” for me there, such as the train, and the Hungarian alphabet. But something else was an even bigger surprise for me there. This was the very first time in my life that I heard the word *Csángó*; that was the first time when I heard that I, and all those thirty children who had come to study in Csíkszereda, we were all Csángós. Therefore this name was not given to us by the Romanians, we got it from the Transylvanian Hungarian Székely people. We accepted the Csángó name, just as we did with the Hungarian back in Magyarfalú. We had no capacities to “investigate” the issues of Csángó or Hungarian, or even Csángó-Hungarian. Who exactly are we? We had to work in Magyarfalú and we had to study in Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc, this was the only clear thought in our life. We looked with awe upon those researchers sitting at their tables trying to declare “who we are”. We admired the researchers visiting us; we were happy if they stroked our head or smiled at us.

We learned in Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc that we are Csángós, but somehow none of us felt ourselves like “I am a Csángó”. We, children from Magyarfalú said Csángó for those who came from Lábnyik/Vladnic, those from Lábnyik/Vladnic called Csángó the pupils from Diószén/Gioseni, pupils from Diószén/Gioseni called children from Lujzikalagor/Lujzi-Călugăra Csángó.

Why didn’t we know the word Csángó before and why did we consider it odd? Maybe it was because we did not have exact information about the history of our ethnic group. Or more precisely, we knew something about it but what we knew was not the official history but rather what we gleaned from hearsay. What our parents and grandparents told us did not appear in official schoolbooks but only in oral tradition, in the people’s memory. These memories did not contain an exact history of the Csángós. Our teachers, indeed, spoke about why we were Csángós and we were curious and attracted to the notion of our ‘Csángóness’; however, this caused us uneasiness about our identity. Now, rather than a feeling of inferiority we began to struggle with a sort of disability, since our Csángóness was described first of all by

our special dialect (archaic, unique pronunciations, and lots of Romanian loanwords) which made it different from the Székely dialect – old-fashioned sounding and out of date. However, our teachers’ true-hearted enthusiasm for our language and culture alleviated our uneasy feelings but did not solve the problem, it rather retarded and made more difficult the process of the crystallization of a self identity.<sup>11</sup>

For us, it was Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc where we first met Csángó dialects from Moldva/Moldavia that were different from ours. We were surprised to encounter these dialect differences. I remember what fun and arguments we had about certain words and beliefs. Since the number of students was growing with the years and pupils came from many villages, these jokes and arguments went on for years in the boarding school, which was called the “Csángó boarding school” in the city. For example in Diószén/Gioseni people called the egg *tsukmony* and the chicken *pisleny*, which are archaic, words, unknown for the majority of people in the Hungarian language. Because of this, in our eye, their “old-fashioned” language was shameful. We, children from Magyarfalu/Arini, were those who used the “right” words (egg: *tojás*, chicken: *csirke*) - words that are used in today’s Hungarian vernacular language. In our opinion, children (also their culture and language) from Diószén/Gioseni ended on the bottom of the hierarchy. Since we were in the Hungarian linguistic field, the winning teams were the ones whose language was closer to the language used in Csíkszereda/Miercurea Ciuc. We, the somewhat Székely-like dialect-speaking children from Magyarfalu were shining stars among the children, along the criteria mentioned above. But this honour didn’t reach beyond the boundaries of our ‘Csángó’ group. Outside our own group, it was quite the opposite; the most archaic dialects were considered the most interesting for the outer world or for the researchers. These language games made it clear to me that although we were all called Csángós, we didn’t share many things in common, or to be most precise: there were some differences as well. I had already

11. Up to this day, I cannot identify myself with the expression Csángó, in spite of the fact that based on the ethnographic and linguistic research I have read, I am able to understand the distinction that exists between the scientific definitions and everyday understandings of phenomena.

known the names of other Csángó villages because my parents, grandparents and neighbours were regular visitors of the church-ale days in other Catholic villages, and pilgrims came to our Saint Steven church day too. As a child I knew that I had (Hungarian and Catholic) relatives in Ploszkocény/Ploscuțeni and Szászcut/Sascut; that the pottery was sold by Gorzafalva/Grozești people; that most people came from Lábnyik/Vladnic to the church-ale day, and that our priest was of Hungarian origin, but I had no information about how many Hungarians lived in Moldva/Moldavia and where, or how the Catholics came to live in Moldva/Moldavia at all. But even as a ten-year-old child it was perfectly clear for me that Catholics were considered strangers in this land. And I also knew who the person in the village was, who could tell the history of the village; who could tell the nicest and best tales and legends, which we simply called “speeches”; who the person was who knew how God created the world and what happened to people when they die etc. An average person did not have such knowledge. An average person only knew who those people were who possessed this knowledge.

Many Moldavian Hungarian peasant communities were formed via migration from Transylvania, especially from *Székelyföld* ‘Seklerland’ and lived as ethnic and religious minorities in their new place. As a result, a type of ‘newcomer’ identity formed, a fact, which also affected the practice of minority rights. This condition led to two types of stances among the community members: internally consistent demands for minority rights, or in the face of opposition, a complete passivity.

The most important consequence of the fact that migrants to these communities did not move at the same time, from the same place or for the same reason, was that they did not create compact, united communities. People moving from Transylvania to Moldavia strengthened the Moldavian Csángó communities in number, however, they also strengthened the feeling expressed by local people in the following words: “we are Hungarians of all kinds here, in Moldavia”<sup>12</sup>. Among

12. The Hungarian “of all kinds” here does not mean in a racial or ethnic sense but in a cultural one, that is, the Hungarians arrived from different parts of Transylvania (Háromszék/Trei Scaune, Gyergyó/Gherogheni, Csik/Ciuc etc.) to Moldavia.

the Hungarians of all kinds, the common denominators were the Hungarian language and the Roman Catholic religion.

The circumstances described above could explain why the folklore tradition (especially the historic tales of origin) in some villages is rich while in others it is very poor. This heterogeneity of knowledge of history and sense of historical origins explains why the uncertainty and insecurity of both ethnic and national identity, as well as the fact that the Moldavian communities, which are quite long distance from each other, did not develop tighter connections. For such tighter connections, an intelligentsia of their own, which the peasant communities did not have, would have been necessary.

## 5. Among us

### 5.1. A day in the life of a child

What was the day of a 7–9 year old child like in the 1980s in Magyarfalú? There are four answers for this question depending on what season we choose. Let us choose an autumn day. Until we reached the last days of harvest, an autumn day looked like the following. My mother and grandmother woke us, older children at about 4 o'clock in the morning to work for 2 or 3 hours on our family land. My mother started work in the collective farm at 8 o'clock and so did school begin for me at 8 o'clock too. Sometimes we went home before school and work; sometimes we went straight from the field. In the longest break between classes I would rush home to feed my two younger brothers, give water to the animals, or just check on my old grandmother. At about noon or 1 o'clock school finished, I went home, changed my clothes, had lunch, checked on the animals, and drove the cattle to the pasture. Every village part had its own pasture; our street had it too. More than 10 children gathered there these afternoons; we were playing and watching the cattle. We knew a lot of games, were playing the flute, singing, dancing, gathering berries and other edible wild things, catching birds, chasing/scaring wild animals. We had a wonderful, carefree time. We had no watches, but read the time by the movement of the sun. And there was one rule: we had to herd the

cattle home by the sound of the evensong. My mother arrived home at about 6–7 o'clock from the collective farm, and sometimes we had to go to the field (or somewhere else) to carry something home with the cart. Moreover, I had to arrive home by the time my mother got home too. If mother didn't need my help, I usually helped my grandmother and my older sister at home. If I was alone at home I had to make dinner. When everyone arrived home we had dinner and I had to do my homework. If I needed a writing table, I turned over a little stool, put a fur coat and a pillow on it and sat on it. I pulled up another stool and used it as a table. I put my notebook on it and started to write my homework. If I had to copy from the book, I usually put the book on the floor. If I had to learn or memorize something, I did it before sleep as well. Before sleep the evening prayer was due, we said it alone, for ourselves, silently. We said the basic prayers of the Roman Catholic Church: Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Prayer to the Guardian Angel, the Ten Commandments of God, and the Five Commandments of the Church. If we didn't prepare for the next day's lessons or we forgot to say our prayers, we got punishment from our parents, especially our father. Sometimes we had to kneel with bare knees on corn or wheat seed, or walk bare foot around the house in winter. If the children didn't prepare for the classes, teachers wrote home, threatened the parents that they would dismiss children from school or write a note to the office. There were many children who left school because they had to take care of their younger brothers, or couldn't learn Romanian, or did not have the right abilities for school.

In telling a common day of my childhood I tried to picture the daily rhythm of a child and a community, the way of living. In this way of living the substance of the identity was not tied to the ethnicity or the religion itself, but tied to the established and accepted norms and practices which strengthened the cohesion of the community and gave the frame of the socialization and integration of the new generation. Inside the community, the criterion for the identity was whether the individual accepted and followed the norms of the community. From the perspective of the child, the ethnic and religious elements were self-evident parts of our identity because these practices were homogenous in our peasant community.

## 5.2. Weekdays and holidays

There was a rather strict, unified, traditional world in my childhood in Magyarfalú. Not only human life had its turning points but also the year had them. Greater religious holidays (Christmas, Easter, Churchale Day) meant that we got new clothes and shoes, which we wore with care, because our younger brothers and sisters inherited these clothes later, for weekdays. A religious holiday meant that we could eat food we couldn't eat on any other days of the year. We ate cakes 3 times a year, on religious holidays, or at weddings. We only had stuffed chicken or scones, or nutcakes during the carnival period, on Shrove Tuesday. If one of my brothers came home from the military service it was also possible to eat scones if he was very keen to eat them. Naturally, the choice of food was not only influenced by traditions but by the availability of materials, such as sugar or flour.

We held fasts before greater religious holidays, and these were kept very seriously. During Lent we never listened to the radio or any music. Therefore when the Roma brass band arrived on the main square of the village on Easter day, the whole village was dancing till night. There were at least 20 brass players and they played continuously, without any pause.

We, children, went to the “little mass” or “children’s mass” every Sunday. From spring to autumn there were old people and children at these masses. Adults were working, so usually they could only arrive at the evening mass. There was no “main mass” during the day, because the priest usually went to the fields too to spend the day with those working in the fields. After the little mass the priest taught catechism to the children, if there was some religious event coming and the children had to prepare themselves for the big day, such as first confession, One Communion, or Confirmation. (See Picture 2 for a Palm Sunday celebration.)

We learned catechism in Romanian; the priest read the text out loud and we repeated it. We didn't use any books or notebooks; we learned everything from hearing by heart. If my mother didn't work on a Sunday, we washed the clothes and cleaned the house, contrary to the religious rules, which prohibited working on holy days. During the week we had to do these chores in the evenings.



Picture 2. Blessing of pussy willows on Palm Sunday at the church. Spring 2008.  
Photo: Laura Iancu.

As I already mentioned, the peasant communities in Moldavia were heterogenous but the (Hungarian) language and the catholic religion were established facts. The heterogenous villages were homogenized by the Roman Catholic Bishopry and priests from Jászvásár/Iași. The catholic institutions and religious ideology strengthened the catholic identity. Moreover, the ‘victory’ of the catholic identity over the ethnic one was not only the result of the radical meddling of the church, but also can be understood in light of the centuries old situation that the terms ‘catholic’ and ‘Hungarian’<sup>13</sup> were synonyms in Moldavia since the Middle Ages.<sup>14</sup> Political and religious decisions in the 20th century fused the two synonymys (Hungarian and catholic) tightly together,

13. Similarly, the orthodox and Romanian were also synonyms.

14. In a register (*Pachetul 1078, Documente Catolice*) in the National Archive in Iași, the Roman catholic churches and priests are often mentioned as *ungur* ‘Hungarian’, such as *biserica ungurească, preotul ungar*. For further information see Gegő 1838: 57; Perca 2012: 14; Tóth I. 2006: 16.

with the ethnic part withering away and religious one becoming dominant. If you ask Moldavian Catholics about their ethnic identity, the answer of many of them is: catholic.

### 5.3. What remained from "my world"?

The world I have written about is over now. The political and social movements in 1989 changed the local culture and local society completely. Men have crossed the border, work abroad, some even on other continents and are sending money home to their family in Magyarfalu. Family visits have become very rare; some only visit home for greater family events like weddings or funerals. (See picture 3 from the 1950s people in traditional cloths.)

Parents don't have 6–10 children, but 1 or 2. The previously taken land which was officially returned after the political changes in 1989, is only enough to fulfill the needs of the family. It is not enough for trade. Since the future in the village is very unsecure, parents do their best to pay for a good education for their children, send them to high school or further education, which means that these children are not likely to come back to the village. In fact, they won't. Strict, aggressive punishments have vanished from school or church education and from family discipline as well. Everything is available at the markets or supermarkets, people can buy whatever and whenever they like. When I was a child one had to travel to the city to buy a pair of socks, now it is available every Sunday on the market in the village, where almost everything is available. In 1987 there was only one television set in the village, now there are many sets in a family, broadcasting postmodern culture and life style. There were only 2 telephones in Magyarfalu when I was a child. There was one at the parish and one so-called "public telephone" which was operated by a family. Now one person can have even more than one mobile phone, change them weekly if they like.

Contrary to or, better put, alongside the changes, it is inevitable that the mentality of the community, the human behavior, the instinctual reflexes, and spontaneous manifestations still convey traces of the world I was brought up in.



Picture 3. People in traditional festive clothes of Magyarfalu/Arini in the 1950s. Unknown photographer.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, I tried to find elements, episodes and events from my memory which I consider important in building my identity, these elements are: mono- and bilingualism, church and school, the influence of the Moldavian Romanians and the Transylvanian Hungarians, etc. I tried to illustrate with different examples how the national (Hungarian) and the ethnic (Csángó) identity was influenced by the outsiders' judgments on Catholics. In other words, the influence the opinions of majority (Romanian) people living around Csángós, as well as the

public opinions of Hungarians had on the identity building of the catholic communities.

In the final part of the paper by remembering and reflecting on the everyday life and the holidays of my childhood I tried to show how the everyday local practices, traditions and values helped to strengthen the internal coherence of the community and how these practices reflect the community's self-identity.

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## Summary in Magyarfalú (Csángó) dialect

Magyarfaluba születtem, ezerkilencszázhetvennyolcra. Hatan vajunk tesvérek, magyarok vajunk, katólikok. A falum Moldovába van, Romániának a keleti részibe, magyarok élnek itt. Én es itt éltem, tizenkét esztendő vótam, mikor aztá elmentem innét. Mikor én gyermek vótam csak a támplómba s a z'iskolába beszélünk olául, egyébképpüleg mük magyarul beszélgettünk egyik a másik között, az ográdába es, a z'úton es, a faluba es. Csitilni csak olául tudtunk, magyar írást nem tudtunk. Ahogy jőne, két nyelvet tudtunk, de egyiket sem úgy ismertük hogy kellett lenne.

Ebbe a z'írásomba arról írnék, hogy milyen vót a faluba a z'élet, mikor én gyermek vótam, nyocvanba, azokba a z'esztendőkbé. Elmondom, mikor leltem ki, hogy magyar vajak s mikor halltam meg azt a szót, hogy csángó, mikor nekem azt monták, hogy csángó vajak. S aztá még leírom azt es, hogy milyen vót a gyermeknek az élete nyocvanba, egy őszi napon, úgy, ahogy nekem eszembe jut.

LAURA IANCU &  
MAGDOLNA KOVÁCS

## Considering Insiders, Outsiders and In-between: Reflections on Fieldwork in Magyarfalu

### *Abstract*

In this paper we present some problems and methods connected with Iancu's fieldwork. It is becoming more and more important to reveal the researchers' position to the researched community as their position can influence the results. In our paper, we discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider researcher. Making research on religion in Iancu's homeland, Magyarfalu/Arini<sup>1</sup>, led the first author to find herself in a peculiar situation because the (general) anthropological research methods could not always be applied. The authors point out some of the experiences Iancu gathered during her research with examples. As an insider researcher Iancu had the possibility of participating in many different activities. Long-term fieldwork and knowing the local network helped in choosing the informants. Understanding the local dialect made a better understanding of the local culture. The insider position helps to get more background information both on religion and people's life connected to it. An insider, especially in connection with religious material, might also have more trust. However, trust, the authors reflect, maybe could or should be earned again and again in every different situation. A good knowledge of the local dialect and long-term fieldwork could get the position of the outsider researcher closer to the advantages of the insider's one.

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1. Magyarfalu (Arini in Romanian) is a Hungarian (Csángó) village in East Romania.

## 1. Introduction

As an ethnographic researcher, I<sup>2</sup> have done research in several Moldavian Csángó villages but my most important site was my native village Magyarfalú. Because I have moved away from our village a long time ago, my job was to become a member of the village again. This was not always an easy task. The meetings, the talks and the data collection itself can be defined as a dialogue between two separate mentalities that share the same common past. I was not merely the researcher curious to hear about the community's life, faith, and experiences, but I was also an interviewee who had to share thoughts about her life outside the village and country (in Hungary), as well as about her faith and religion in general.

In anthropological research, the question of the *emic* and *etic* in (fieldwork) research has been discussed over the last 50 years. In the end of the 1980s, the discussions culminated in the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association and turned into a book edited by Thomas Headland, Kenneth Pike, and Marvin Harris (1990), *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*. In Chapter 1, Headland (1990) summarized the dialogue between the linguist Kenneth Pike and anthropologist Marvin Harris about the subject and he also gave a historical overview of the development of the concepts. *Emic* is associated or equated with insider (native) and *etic* with outsider (non-native) perspectives. The distinction is also expressed with other dichotomies such as subjective/objective (scientific), specific/universal, etc. Although Headland sees the problem of such a sharp juxtaposition himself, the title of the book, as one of the reviewers (Hickerson 1992) notices, just suggested that there is a problem to be addressed.

The dialogues about insider/outsider dichotomy have continued until now not only in anthropology but in all qualitative studies. The advantages of the insider are described in terms of better access, more trust from the native members but with possible home-blindness as the main disadvantage. In contrast, the outsider might not get as good access to native members or knowledge may be hidden from him/her

2. In this article, the 'I' refers to Laura Iancu, the first author's ethnographic experiences conducting fieldwork in her own community. The second author, Magdolna Kovács, collaborated with Iancu in framing the article within the current literature.

but the distance from the researched group might give more objectiveness. (For an overview of the topic, see e.g., in Dwyer & Buckle 2009; Eriksen 2006: 48, 54; Borsányi 1988: 57–58; Hoppál 1981: 23; Haller 2007:142–143.)

However, the sharp juxtaposition seems to be turning into a compromise. For example, in qualitative research, Breen (2007) stays in neither position, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) seek for "The Space Between". According to Dwyer & Buckle (2009: 61), a researcher may be closer either to the insider or the outsider position but she or he cannot be only in one of these positions. Borsányi (1988: 57–58) described the same as early as the 1980s: "the two [subjective/objective] viewpoints together make the facts that can be grasped from the inside be appreciated from the outside, too". (See also Fél 1991: 5; Fél & Hofer 2010: 23–26.)

In this paper, we give examples, of what the native and non-native researchers can face while gathering religious material in Magyarfalú, based on the first author's experiences, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the two positions. We also would like to suggest some solutions on how the insider/outsider or the subjective/objective point of view can be brought closer to each other.

## 2. Participating and sticking out: long-term fieldwork

Data collection through a participating or direct contact and interaction approach is very common in anthropological research. The essence of the method, generally speaking, lies in getting to know the very detailed life of several social layers and their structures. The aim is often to distill general cultural concepts through a comparative analysis (Borsányi 1988: 53–59).

My aim with the research on Magyarfalú was to give a summary of the religion. Most of all, I was interested in faith, knowledge (traditions) and the system (culture) because I felt that behind all the details there was an entirely complete reality or world view. If one needs to capture the whole, the researcher must focus on the details, too. Clifford Geertz called this method a hermeneutic circle when the

researcher either looks at the whole or at the details. The researcher is able to gather information about the whole through the details and about the details through the whole as well. As such, the whole and the details complementarily explain each other. (Geertz 1994: 200–216.)

In the data collection during my recurring field research encompassing ten years I have resorted to the participating approach and to interviewing. The participating approach meant an active participation most of the time. I participated in liturgical and semi-liturgical events, as well as work processes such as building a house, gathering ripe fruit, hoeing, making hay, etc. During these times I assumed many roles: the role of an outsider, a woman, a family member, a relative, an intellectual, a researcher and a journalist, among others.

I was curious not only to see the villagers working and their ways of doing so, but to hear their thoughts and feelings during work. Although I was born in Magyarfalú and lived there in my childhood, this part of the culture was unknown to me, because I left the village at the age of 12 for school located in a different place, just at the time when the socializing and learning processes turn into conscious knowledge, and returned there only for school holidays. Later, living in Hungary, I mainly went to Magyarfalú for data collecting and for some family events. However, I have had continuous contacts in the village. In that sense, I feel I am much more insider than outsider but still – because I did not live in the village in my adulthood continuously – there are many aspects of the people’s lives which remained unknown to me. Long-term stay and the participating method helped me to deepen my knowledge – as it also could help the outsider researcher.

When I visit Magyarfalú, I am going home. I was born here, my parents and two of my brothers live there. In the past fifteen years, no doubt, I only went home because I had to do some fieldwork there. Although I have a feeling that I am going home, my role has changed there since I started to collect ethnographic material. As a family member I am interested in what is happening in my family, participating in many events just as I did earlier but as an ethnographer, I don’t take part in the daily chores/work of my family, as I used to do earlier. I mainly focus on my own tasks, on my field research. In the beginning, this attitude was really strange for my parents. They were happy to see me, however, they realized they did not gain anything with my

presence. We all know that life in farming villages mostly concentrates on keeping animals and agricultural work, and everybody has to participate in it, with the exception of the work of the local priest and teacher. On the same note, my job as a researcher was unknown as yet. In that sense, my work separated me from the common villagers’ life and somehow put me slightly to the direction of the outsider position.

As far as I know, in Magyarfalú, both Hungarian or Romanian ethnographers were periodically present, but they only stayed in touch with a few families. The locals did not find out a lot about their intentions due to the fact that they were “strangers”, and – what is more important – they stayed only for a little while.<sup>3</sup> Long-term fieldwork occurred only in few cases in the past 2–3 years in Magyarfalú.

For me, doing long-term fieldwork in Magyarfalú is easier to arrange and not unusual because at the same time I am at home. However, at the beginning, my family and neighbors found it strange that I was staying for a long time, 4–5 months, not only 1–2 weeks as I used to before while, for example, being on holidays. But to satisfy their curiosity, usually it was enough to say “I had something to do at home”. I did not mean to change my local status (Eriksen 2004: 42, 51; Fél 1991: 5; Komáromi 2009; Mátyus 2004: 369), or do anything that marked my being at home ‘as a researcher’; I was at home in Magyarfalú, so it was not a question for me where to stay, when I did my fieldwork, of course, I stayed with my parents. A few times it happened to me that I had to stay and sleep at some relatives’ house 3–4 km away, but this only happened occasionally, just because I was afraid to walk home alone with all the dogs running around freely on the streets. I don’t know what would have happened if I had moved over to a relative or neighbors. I believe they all would have considered me “foolish” and talked about me all the time. In this case, the villagers would have ‘studied’ me and not vice versa. The mutual curiosity was always there, even though I stayed with my parents. I did not want to cause any such problems, because I did not return home to

3. Here, I’d like to add that, not much information reached me on the matter of the reception “stranger researchers” received, partly because, even though, their presence is or was unusual, it did not make the “news” in any way that led everybody to talk about them. Moreover, I didn’t ask about such things, because these phenomena do not make up a major part of my research.

question the traditional behaviors of the inhabitants, but for a different reason.

### 3. Choosing the informants

As an insider, I know the village and its extended network of relatives. I could use this knowledge when choosing informants and combine my knowledge with the demand of research ethics, or the concept of objectivity of the ethnographer that I learned during my ethnographic studies. When choosing informants, I took into consideration the following three viewpoints: 1. the informants should be from every street or village-region; 2. from all major families or clans; and if possible, 3. from three age groups (young adults, middle-age and old-age). This way I could ensure that the collected data is reliable and represents the village well.

I usually met the women and older ladies in their homes, (but not only there), and the young men mostly in public spaces, like bars, wedding events, before or after mass or during bus rides into town etc. In the village everybody knows everybody and it is common to talk to each other on the street or at different events. Moreover, I know the unwritten ethical code of the village well. According to this code, and because I did not want to have any misunderstanding, I met men of my age (or men in general) in the company of their wife or other family members or in the above-mentioned public places. Meetings in public places were usually fruitful: public places were natural locations where people meet and where it is natural for others to join the discussion. Hence, during interviews, other might join in, who would also add useful points of clarity or additional information to the themes being discussed one-on-one, in a completely ‘natural way’ from the perspective of village interactions and gain some clarity on issues tied to themes that emerged in interviews with key informants at earlier occasions.

In my research – which focuses on the local religion of Magyarfalú – I meant to find out during these discussions whether people’s religious faith or/and life has changed compared to their parents, in

what way it has changed, and if there was any disagreement resulting from this. (See Picture 1: religious symbols in a contemporary home).



Picture 1. Religious symbols in the interior of a home in Magyarfalú/Arini. Winter, 2007. Photo: Laura Iancu.

Due to the circumstances,<sup>4</sup> unfortunately, I could not make (recorded) interviews with the local priest or teachers, but I talked with them several times when I was home. In terms of my choice of informants, I was able to gather the least information from the young adults, who only returned to Magyarfalú on major events, like Christmas and

4. In the *research of Csángós* (Hungarian group who lives in Moldavia in East-Romania) there is a remarkable difference about the origin and history, identity and language of Csángós, between Hungarian and Romanian theories. This situation makes the communication difficult, and complicates approaching scientific points of view. The local Roman Catholic Church causes additional complexity, since the Church is the most important integrating organization and institution in Moldavian Catholic villages – in other words, Csángó villages. All the priests and teachers are Romanian, with a few exceptions, and they represent the official or non-official Romanian views. On the other hand, I must remark, that in the local context, it was not ‘proper’ to involve the local intellectual layer in the research.

Easter. They were only at home for indeterminate periods of time, however they could be reached on social networks, like Facebook. Since the majority of these young adults had been living in Italy, Spain, Hungary, or in Romania's bigger towns (Bucharest, Braşov, Bacău) for the past ten-fifteen years, I think it would be best to examine their lifestyles and changes in those lifestyles in those surroundings. In the end, the selection of the informants was defined by the aim of the research. As far as possible, I talked to everyone about religion. I must underline, that my research focused on people's knowledge (Fél 1991: 5; Fél & Hofer 2010: 23–30), belief, and interpretation of religious phenomena. As such, the interviews and conversations with people were very important methods of collecting information. In order to find out more about people's ways of thinking and about their religious attitudes, I returned to those people who provided me with a lot of information.

There were cases, when the end of the conversation came about really quickly, after the interviewee had given me only yes-no answers or expressed disappointment because I had been prying into his/her private thoughts, as I asked them to speak about their most intimate possession, in other words about their faith. This task cannot be performed easily (not only in Magyarfalú), even by myself, who was much more insider than outsider in the village. It is characteristic in general, that a certain piece of information comes out in only a specific situation. Religion or faith is not necessarily knowledge – despite that fact we all may know about it; religious life is also a question of education and socialization. Believing in God and being familiar with the liturgy and church services (in many cases) are somehow different things. One is not a consequence of the other, at least not in all cases. For example, I met an old woman who could not really answer my questions about religion, though she confessed that she believes in God, in Saints, in afterlife, in resurrection etc. She also got confused when I asked her to say the prayer Our Father. Although she obviously had said it repeatedly at church, this unusual situation completely disoriented her. Because, in Magyarfalú, speaking with someone about religious thoughts, *praying* to someone not for communicating or being in touch with God etc., is a “strange”, an “artificial” situation. In the local context religion is *lifestyle* (not a *subject* to speak about),

*faith* is an inner thought, a spiritual *feeling* (not a *question* needing to be responded to), *praying* is a *dialog* between prayer and God (not a *text* needing to be uttered) etc. Each conversation was very enlightening for me; as a result, it was difficult to decide in what ways I might use the data, given my interest in writing for social science and literary studies.

#### 4. Collecting ethnographic material in a bilingual community

When I traveled home to Magyarfalú, I always collected some (ethnographical) information. Even when I was around my family, I paid attention to their conversations especially if it was connected to religion. This does not mean that I purposefully lead each dialogue, nor that I participated in religious conversations only. During my fieldwork, participating in spontaneous discussions or being an active onlooker was an important information collection technique (Borsányi 1988: 53–59, 68).

I visited the informants without prior arrangements; however, many times the moment was not appropriate, so I had to return at a certain time proposed by them. A long-term stay made it possible to do so. The conversations recorded by dictaphone were usually taken in the courtyard or in the house of the interviewed. Every time, I had some little gifts, like chocolate for the kids. If there were no kids, I gave it to the hosts. The informants also always offered me something to drink, like brandy, water or wine, which is customary in Magyarfalú.

The language spoken in Magyarfalú is a local Hungarian dialect. The community is bilingual, so anyone who visits there, must speak both Romanian or Hungarian to be able to communicate with the inhabitants in all contexts. However, the Csángó dialect has its own special features in comparison to standard Hungarian. The dialect of Magyarfalú is close to the Székely/Secler, Transylvanian dialect (Kiss 2001: 307–308; Gálffy & Márton & Szabó T. 1981), so the researcher who speaks Hungarian is relatively in an easy situation here.

Still, Hungarian-speaking researchers might have some communication difficulties in interpretation of the local dialect in Csángó

communities. I am sure that both parties (the inhabitant and the researcher) need a little “training period” to be able to understand each other. Even if individual words are familiar to the researcher, the data collection may still run into linguistic obstacles: the locals’ speech is abundant with metaphors and a certain logical way of expression. I have not studied these linguistic phenomena deeply, I am only drawing consequences from the fact that I know both linguistic variants: the (standard) Hungarian language and also the local dialect, so I can grasp the very subtle, hidden differences between the two.

In the case of Romanian researchers, the situation is the same, but from a different perspective. The locals speak a little Romanian, however, if the researcher does not use simple words, it is highly possible that his questions will not come across, resulting in a range of answers that are not relevant. I have not dwelt upon this subject either, but I know the locals’ Romanian language knowledge, which I tried to measure during the Romanian language church service. I found out that, in many cases the inhabitants did not understand the meaning of the most important, frequent and very often repeated Romanian words that occur in the liturgy and in some well-known prayers, too.<sup>5</sup>

The peculiarity of religious discussions is that since the official religious church service is in Romanian, as are religious education classes, readings during the liturgy etc., the language code changes were very frequent, when or if we speak about thoughts connected with religiosity (Péntek 2002: 222; Sándor 1998: 1137; Tánzos 1995: 67). The answer to questions about religion is thought to be easier in the language people had studied these about. This of course is not a general widespread phenomena, and, we cannot talk about Magyarfalu in generalities from any perspective, even though we focus on only one subject, let’s say religion. For example, I also met many old people who expressed themselves, their thoughts and faith and ideas without inserting any Romanian words into their speech.

What are the consequences – regarding fieldwork – of the linguistic and identity peculiarities of Moldavian Hungarian culture? What kind of information can be told or transmitted, and in what way, by this specific Hungarian dialect?

5. For example: *tămăduitoare* – *gyógyító* (in Hungarian), ‘healing’.

Undoubtedly, the local dialect (of Magyarfalu) is an internally functional language that also incorporates local history. This dialect is not only a means of communication, it is a medium that contains experiences, preserves memories and helps to recall and organize them. Local people can understand each other by a few words. The dialect contains also “evident” information – not expressed by words but by tone etc. – that is difficult to understand by an external/stranger researcher. The object and the character of ethnographic research are determined mostly by the information that can be transmitted by the local dialect, including knowledge of the cultural practices. Let me illustrate my point by two examples in the following section. The first example is related to a Hungarian ethnographer and the other is based on experience with Romanian researchers.

## 5. The case of the outsider ethnographers

We are at the end of the 1990s. During the summer holiday a Hungarian ethnographer friend visited me in Magyarfalu, and asked me to take her around the village. She wanted to collect archaic folk prayers, so we visited primarily elderly people. We were in the house of an elderly woman when the following conversation took place:<sup>6</sup>

Hungarian ethnographer (HE): Good morning!

Informant (I): God bless you too!

HE: We would like to listen to some prayers, old prayers that you have learnt from the older generation, from your grandparents’ maybe.

I: Oh, I am very ill. My head would be torn apart if I have to recall them now!

HE: Then just tell me, do you turn your face to East when you pray?

A: No, I just pray to myself, silently.

HE: Don’t you turn toward the rising Sun when you pray in the morning?

I: It happens sometimes that I turn towards the Sun, but I don’t watch the Sun, I think of God.

6. I recall the story from my memory.

HE: Have you heard the prayer that starts like this: “Today is Holy Friday, Christ is going to suffer...”?

I: No, I have never heard of it.

HE: But you were taught how to pray in your childhood, weren't you?

I: Yes. My mother and my father and the chorister taught me to pray but we were very poor....

HE: You lived in poverty... You had a hard life? You had to share your bread, hadn't you?

I: Sometimes we ate, sometimes we didn't.

HE: Had you many brothers and sisters?

I: My mother gave birth to just sixteen. All of them died, I have buried them all. I am alone now.

HE: And how many children have you?

I: Me, I just have six... God didn't give me such a husband, who wanted to have more children.

The conversation was distracted by the word “poverty” which in Magyarfalú can express not only physical poverty but – as it is evident from the context – also spiritual poverty.

A few years later when I was a student of ethnography at the university, I heard that the mentioned woman was dying in bed at her home, so I decided to visit her. I knew that elderly ill people in our village preferred to have some dairy products to eat, so I asked my mother for some milk curds to give her. When I arrived at her house, the old woman was praying the Holy Rosary. “I don't want to disturb you!” – I said, and started to pray with her. After we finished the Rosary, the old woman continued praying, and if I remember well, she said about six archaic prayers.

This case teaches us many things. We would like to emphasize a few points. Firstly, the outsider ethnographer disregarded the natural local context of the prayer. For local people prayer is not a tradition like folklore data performed for a tape-recorder. For local people prayer is to create a sacred relationship with God. Not everybody would have a problem with saying a prayer out of the ordinary context, but for the above-mentioned elderly woman, it was a problem. She could not trust the ethnographer. Secondly, this distrust was increased by a sequence of misunderstandings caused by the peculiarities of the local dialect.

Thirdly, collecting religious material has to be made with extreme care. Certain religious materials are secret and open only or mainly for those who are “among us”, as already described in the fieldwork literature. (See, for example, Ruotsala 2001 about collecting material by native researcher among reindeer herders.) In this actual case it means that I, in contrast to the outsider ethnographer, was seen to have had the same religious upbringing, the same religious culture.

Further, research ethics<sup>7</sup> – and also a common human ethic as well – demands that one respect not only a dying person but also every conversation partner even at the expense of the data collection.

The second example is a bit different and raises the role of a native mediator between the outsider ethnographer and native informants of the village. We are in 2007 in Magyarfalú. After the mass on Sunday, the priest told the people who had gathered in the church, that in a few days some (Romanian) researchers would arrive in the village from the institute of the episcopate in Jászvásár/Iași. They are going to investigate the history and traditions of the village. The priest informed the people from the altar that ten local women and men would be chosen, and when the researchers arrived, they would have to go to the parish and answer the researchers' questions.

The Romanian ethnographers did not speak the Csángó Hungarian dialect and the older villagers did not understand Romanian well. According to my information, the priest himself was present during this special “fieldwork”. He had to interpret for the people from Magyarfalú who had difficulties understanding the literary or urban Romanian language. The priest who was born in a Hungarian (Csángó) community in Moldva and had served almost thirty years in Magyarfalú, knew the local dialect very well but most importantly he had a good understanding about the comprehension, mentality and way of thinking of the local people. Because of this, the priest played an important mediator role between the urban, élite, Romanian mother tongue researchers and the Hungarian mother tongue peasants and he made the fieldwork in reality possible. A good knowledge of the local dialect and a long-term stay might also make it possible for outsider researchers to get closer to the advantages of the insider position.

7. “To respect the well-being of humans and nonhuman primates” (Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association, AAA-Code 2009).

## 6. The insider researcher collecting religious material

At this point I would like to say a few words about my position, why is it different from the outsider researcher position. My experience is, that although the insider researcher does fieldwork in the present, their experiences are not only from the present but also steeped in the context, the historic background and dimensions, leading one to ‘see’ not only the partial but – in some way – also the whole (Geertz 1994: 200–216). Let me illustrate my statement with another fieldwork experience.

(The situation.) We are in 2007, on a hot summer day, late afternoon hours. I am in the courtyard of an elderly woman who has died. Vigil (mourning) is kept. I am participating in it. In the shade of the apple tree ten women in dark clothes, two teenage girls and me are sitting on a bench covered by a rag carpet. Women keeping the vigil are talking about the drought: “It is still not late to rain, the corn can cling if there is something to hold on to.” “But we cannot tell God what to do” – says one of the mourners. Then the youngest of the women present (who was the youngest daughter of the deceased) turns to an older woman and asks her to carry the Crucifix, which is a one or two meter high wooden cross with Jesus Christ on it. It is the first in the procession of flags carried by the mourners during the burial ceremony. The woman answered that she could not take the task because of her serious foot illness. She would be happy just to be able walk up on the steep cemetery hill with her heavy body. The young woman accepted the answer with sympathy and offered some orange soda and sweet biscuits to the people present.

(The insider researcher.) Regarding this situation I remembered that a couple of years earlier, the same old woman was standing next to me also at a burial ceremony. Without asking anything, she told me spontaneously that the relatives of the deceased originally had asked her to carry the Crucifix but her husband had not allowed her to take the task and she cited her husband’s words: “You are not that poor to wear the rags of that poor woman”. According to the tradition, the one that carries the Crucifix during the burial ceremony, inherits the nice clothes of the deceased. Although I was curious to know about this

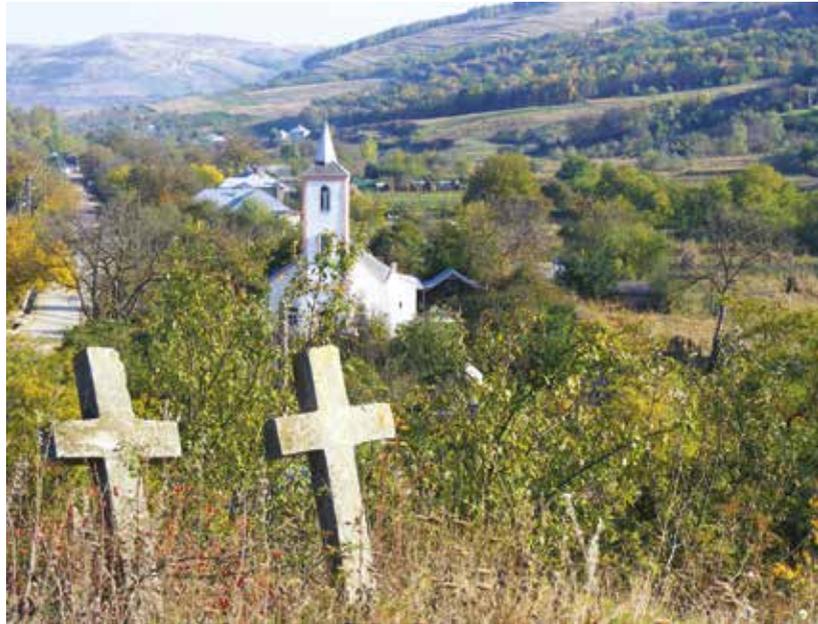


Picture 2. Farewell to the deceased. Magyarfalu/Arini, 1950s.  
Photographer unknown.

story, in that situation – the conversation would be impolite because people had started to pray – not only my research ethics<sup>8</sup> but also a common human ethic prevented me from asking questions. So, my ethical choice was not to pay too much attention to her words at this moment but to concentrate on the burial ceremony. (See Picture 2: Farewell to the deceased, from an earlier time.)

(The interview.) During my fieldwork in 2010 I tried correcting the inaccuracies and deficiencies of my earlier fieldwork. For that reason I wanted to meet with a local old man on a Sunday afternoon, but I did not find him at home. From my childhood memories I vaguely remembered that this man used to visit his wife’s tomb on holidays if he had the time. People – especially the children of my generation – were laughing when they met him, but we were also afraid if we met him during dark hours. While I was standing in front of his house, I wondered why we had not talked about his former (or still existing)

8. About research ethics, see again AAA-Code 2009.



Picture 3. View of Magyarfalu/Arini from the cemetery hill. Autumn 2008.  
Photo: Laura Iancu.

habit during the interviews. Following my intuition I walked to the cemetery. (See picture 3.)

The path took me through a pasture. At the beginning of this narrow and rough path that was full of holes caused by the rain, I met a man who lived at the one edge of the village. He was sitting on the grass relaxing. After the mass he met his godson who had just returned from Petrozsény/Petroșani, Transylvania. Celebrating his return he got a little intoxicated. The man was happy to see me, and started an endless conversation or more exactly: a monologue. The researcher's intervening questions that could change the course of the conversation, were never heard by him. We were just chatting and unexpectedly the following story was told. He had served in the military together with R., the husband of the above-mentioned woman who rejected carrying the Crucifix. He still considered R. as his good friend just like his own brother. They usually sat together in the church if possible to "listen to the mass". He continued his story with the following: "Well, R. did not

attend the mass today! He might have fallen (ill) or maybe he was very busy because he usually doesn't miss the mass. I wonder what happened?" Without asking further questions, he also told me that once the clothes presented to R. for carrying the Crucifix miraculously had disappeared. R. was ashamed in front of the relatives of the deceased because he should have worn those clothes sometimes in public. But R.'s real problem was that the deceased had "appeared" in his dream, and had taken away the clothes, saying that he was not worthy of the gift. It is not extreme to suppose that the rejection of carrying the cross by the woman was caused by the strange experience of her husband R. By these examples I want to emphasize that events of the present can only be understood if we discover their historical background – which are more accessible to an insider researcher.

## 7. About trust

One of the main advantages of the insider researcher is seen that she gets more trust from the group members than the outsiders. (For a review, see, for example Dwyer & Buckle 2009.) However, the connection is not always so direct.

It is not too easy to remember and talk about trust gained during fieldwork, whether I had to fight for it, or earn it. The locals all know me and my family, they have an opinion about us. Basically, in the village, there is an opinion about each family based on experiences or on customary prejudices. Nevertheless, these opinions are crucial things in personal relationships. People have concrete and direct viewpoints about the families, about each other. Someone can be "gossipy", others are "hateful" or "stealing" etc. When I appeared at the front of a gate of a certain family, the landlord hosted me as he would host any other member of my family. I must underline that I did not meet two people behaving exactly the same way, nor did the same situation happen two times. I had to find a particular way to connect with each person, and I had to create the specific circumstances for each encounter. I inquired from them about topics which I knew they were experts on, for instance, those who "bathe the dead" talked to me about the death

cult and, with them, we only marginally touched upon other religious topics.

The question of trust was raised for example when they asked me not to relate the negative opinions they shared about certain people to anyone else, and in particular to those who would be affected by this. In other words, they asked that I keep all information strictly confidential. I had to promise them, I would not pass any of it on. I was always reminded: “You’d better not tell it to anyone, this is only for you!” Quite interestingly, at the same time, the exact opposite had occurred, too. Some families, brothers or neighbors, who are in bad relation with each other, had expressed their dislike openly or had given me secret signs that I had to pass over to their “enemies”. Although rarely, such things did happen during fieldwork. It only happened once that an informant did not want to speak with me, neither with nor without a microphone. She calmed me down saying, she had always refused to talk to researchers, so she would not make an exception with me. The position of the insider did not help me in that case.

The interviewees were duly reminded that the information they had given, would be used for a research, and would be public shortly. Only those discussions were recorded, for which I had permission from the informants. I suppose, during these dialogues the informants were honest to the point that they knew all they were saying would reach the public ear. My opinion is that people have the right to say only what they want to say.

As part of a good research ethic, I always informed the people that I’m doing research and collecting data. However, in the dialect of Magyarfalu, words like “research”, “ethnography”, “anthropology”, and “fieldwork” are unknown terms. I find it interesting that only a few people asked me why I was doing research, why I needed all this information. Even if they asked, I saw the answer was almost irrelevant for them. There were some people who thought they knew what my research was all about, but it turned out later, that they were thinking about journalism and in many cases this brought about a sense of reticence and rejection. However, after having cleared the meanings of these conceptions and my aim, almost everyone was ready to help me, except for the one person I mentioned before. I’m not sure, did I get the trust in the beginning as an insider or after my aims became

clearer to the informants or did I earn it during the interviews due to my insider knowledge and the ethical choices I tried to make throughout the process. Somehow, I think that the trust has to be earned during the fieldwork over and over again.

## 8. Conclusions

Iancu has been conducting ethnographic research mostly in her home area, in Csángó villages, especially in the village where she was born, in Magyarfalu. In this paper, we discussed her position as an ethnographer, and how this position, which is mostly of the insider, influenced the fieldwork. The position, indeed, might never be completely either insider or outsider, and in the research field, the last years has sought for a compromise, for an ‘in-between’ position (Dwyer & Buckle 2006).

Born and living in Magyarfalu until the age of 12 and later returning there for longer (school) holidays and long-term research, Iancu is much more an insider than an outsider. However, after moving away from her home village, upon her return for long-term research she had to regain her insider place again. Moving from the position of the villager, family member, relative, etc. to the position of the ethnographer might put one a bit in the direction of the outsider in the eye of (some) the villagers. The ethnographer’s position put Iancu a bit in the outsider’s position even within her own family in the beginning because her new role was strange for them.

In our view *emic* and *etic* (Headland 1990), if it means the dichotomy of subjective/objective, goes hand in hand in research and does not need to be in conflict. The *emic* view can be accomplished with the ethnographer’s professional knowledge and objectiveness or vice versa. However, if we change these terms into insider/outsider, according to the discussion presented here on fieldwork experiences, the insider position has more advantages than the outsider’s.

Collecting religious research is not an easy task, neither for insiders nor for outsiders, as often described (Ruotsala 2001). However, as Iancu illustrated with her own fieldwork experiences, an insider can stay for long-term research in her own family, knowing the local

network, she can choose informants who represent the village reliably. Background information can also be accessed more easily. The insider researcher is not only familiarized with the present situation, but she also knows well all the local events and systems that frame the present (the local family relations, relatives, similar events in the past etc.). This circumstance enables a certain complex view through which the cultural system, its components, the cause and effect connections between the events may be seen at the same time. We illustrated this with the example of the older women who refused to carry the Crucifix.

The insider researcher usually has better access to the local dialect and customs, which might assure a greater trust in the informants. However, in our view, trust also has to be earned during the fieldwork again and again.

We contrasted the insider perspective with examples of research conducted by outsiders. The example of the Hungarian ethnographer showed how the interview failed because the ethnographer did not know the local dialect and culture sufficiently to interpret the misunderstanding centered on a single word. As we see, acquiring the local dialect and conducting long-term fieldwork can move the outsider closer to the position of the insider. With another example we showed that a local helping person, a mediator (in this case a priest who is an insider and knows the people well), could also make the fieldwork easier for outsiders – although in some cases the opposite may also happen, depending on the aims of the mediator.

In our view, the success of any research greatly depends on the personality of the researcher (for example, their ability to empathize, especially in religious research) as well as, certainly, on the professional skills of the researcher.

(Epilogue by the first author.) I am not sure if any of the events during my fieldwork can be considered a success or a failure. After having planned a strong emphasis on data collection via interviews, obviously, all the obstacles in conducting interviews as planned seemed like small failures, however, only for a short time. If I did not succeed with one person, I walked over to the next one, and, sometimes, I was so much better off in this way. I found everything that happened during my research interesting, even if “nothing happened”. It was very important to keep a journal, but I barely had time for it.

The unfortunate efforts – from the perspective of my ‘plans’ going awry, made me get to know some phenomena that my plans did not include. A few years later now, I think none of the events were a failure. The question is, how could I realize my plans? Actually, I haven’t really “realized” my plans, I lived my life in the village, while I devoted much attention to people’s religious life, I inquired about their knowledge of religion. I think, one of the main reasons why my fieldwork was not a situation full of problems is that people did not make a problem of it. In this way, we can see how the ethnographer’s research is always a collaborative effort.

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## Summary in Magyarfalú (Csángó) dialect

Ebbe a z'írásomba mondanék valamiket azokról a nehezségekről melyekkel találkoztam mikor hond vótam s jártam gyüteni a faluba a z'emberekhez. Ingemet erőst intereszál a relidzsia, de mikor beszélgettem a z'emberekvel, akkor nem csak a z'Istenről, a szentekről, a hitről, a kredincáról beszélgettünk, hanem mindenféléről, met ingemet minden obicsej intereszál, ami a faluba van. Hamarább kicsit kifonákul jött nekem es, hogy én mikor hazamenek akkor nem menek a mezőre, nem segétem mámámat, hanem gyüteni járok, megjárom z'embereket, a z'öreg embereket es, kiket lehet senki nem jár lesz meg, meg kellett szokjam én es, s meg kellett szokja a világ es, hogy nekem ez a meszeriám. A faluba nem eppe tudják, mire való a stiinca, a csercsetárja, a z'embereknek ki kellett explikáljam, de úgy es, párka féltek, féltek, hogy felteszem a ziarba, kacagtatom őket a világ előtt, de aztá megszoktuk, immá tudják. Nem tudom, az igaz magyarok hogy értik meg a mük szónkat, erről es akarnék mondani egy beszédet, s aztán azt es elmondom, hogy micsináltak az oláh csercsetórok mikor eljöttek ide a faluba gyüteni.

ISTVÁN KINDA

## The Csángó Ethnographical Museum in Zabola

### *Abstract*

The richest set of Csángó artifacts which was meant to be a public collection by its owner, was founded by the ethnographer Ferenc Pozsony in his native village. The Csángó Ethnographical Museum in Zabola consists of two buildings on the same estate, which serve as expositional spaces; it houses two important collections: one incorporates almost a thousand pieces of Csángó artifacts, the other consists of more than two thousand pieces related to Szekler, Saxon, Romanian and Gypsy ethnic groups. The expositional spaces permit the display of 60 percent of the collection, with the rest in storage. The culture specific objects on display in thematic expositions document European minority cultural values and function as symbols of identity. The guests of the museum typically interpret them as the iconic expression of the ethnic identity of their producers and users

### 1. Historical background

In the course of the past eight centuries, Hungarian communities living in the Carpathian Basin have been continuously settling over into the territory of Moldavia, where they have to this day preserved several archaic layers of Hungarian, Romanian, and other European cultures (cf. Benda 2002; Vincze 2002; Pozsony 2006). The term Csángó is “the official designation as well as the popular name for Hungarians living in Moldavia. [...] The etymology of the name of this ethnic group reveals an interesting detail in the history of the Csángós: according to a widespread, yet never fully verified hypothesis, the word

Csángó derives from the verb *csang/csáng* (i. e. to wander, stroll, ramble, rove etc.) and thus the name of this ethnic group clearly refers to the migratory, colonising character of the Csángós.” (Tánczos 1998)

The communities of the Moldavian Csángó-Hungarian villages have undergone especially rapid linguistic and cultural change in recent decades. After the Romanian political changes of 1989 the previously closed frontiers became open for the Moldavian Csángós too, therefore a massive workforce migration to Western Europe speeded up the processes of modernization and globalization in this region as well. While the culture change of modernization turned out to be a longer process for the Hungarian communities of the Carpathian Basin, in Moldavia modernization resulted in a fast process of acculturation within the last two decades.

As the international network of the antiquity business has already reached this region too, dealers have been consequently robbing the Csángó villages. Thus the conscious collection, documentation and museum representation of the Csángó culture has grown even more urgent.

Since 1991, the Department of Hungarian Ethnography and Anthropology of the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca together with its supporting institution, the János Kriza Ethnographical Society, have carried out regular fieldwork in the Moldavian Hungarian communities. As a result of this research, which has inspired several papers at national and international conferences as well as a number of well-documented publications and exhibitions, scholarly attention has been called to the assimilation and acculturation processes which are taking place in the Csángó villages (Pozsony 2004; 2005).

## 2. Csángó museum in Moldavia or outside?

Starting with the 1990s there have been some sporadic initiatives to set up museums on the territory populated by Csángós, but apart from one or two smaller collections – that can be visited only with restrictions – these initiatives have been without success. The Romanian national policy conditions haven't been favorable – not even after the fall of communism – for approving the foundation and support of a

representative institution for a Hungarian minority deemed to be assimilated (Barszczewska 2008; Arens 2008; Diaconescu 2008). This isn't surprising since some Romanian radical groups of interest question even the existence of this ethnic group as a minority on its way to extinction; even after, based on the EU report made ten years ago by Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa, the Csángó problem has become a European issue (see Isohookana-Asunmaa 2001).

The objects selected into the collections of Moldavian museums emphasize the artistic creative genius of the Romanian people, keeping in deep silence that these objects were made and used by Hungarian speaking people, who have also Hungarian origin – of course, “they did not begin their lives as ethnographic objects. They *became* ethnographic through processes of detachment and contextualization” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998) – and once artifacts, belong to the Hungarian cultural heritage. (About the “identity” of objects and exhibiting other cultures see Pennanen 1991; Boniface & Fowler 1993; Lidchi 1997; in Sami context see Scheffy 2004.)

Although there have been discussions regarding the initiative of Hungarian researchers to set up in cooperation with the entire Hungarian community an independent Csángó museum and research centre in one of the Csángó settlements, due to the unfavorable political-administrative context ruling in Moldavia, the only reasonable solution to draw the attention of the country and of Europe to the values of this absolutely remarkable minority culture was to set up an institution outside Moldavia that could be sustained more easily.

## 3. The establishment process

The richest set of Csángó artifacts which was meant to be a public collection by its owner, was founded by the ethnographer Ferenc Pozsony in his native village Zabola/Zăbala, lying at the western foot of the Carpathians, 70 kilometers from Moldavia. He provided to the disposal of the future museum an estate belonging to his inheritance.

Ferenc Pozsony, now university professor at the Department of Hungarian Ethnography and Anthropology of the Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, has been collecting ethnographic material

since the early 1970s. During the communist dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu efforts to create a nation-state demanded the assimilation of minorities. This implied the denial of Hungarian minorities in Moldavia, hence their connection to other Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin was obstructed. Hungarian researchers coming from other parts of Romania were also expelled from the area. Among some taking the risk was professor Pozsony, whose aim was to collect and preserve elements of the material and spiritual heritage of the Csángós with the hope that someday it might become common proprietorship. In 1974, the continuously growing collection was placed in a peasant house built at the beginning of the 20th century. In its first decade of existence the collection was enriched with dozens of 16th–19th century glazed tiles, painted furniture and almost a thousand objects of everyday use.

In the 1980s, Transylvanian Saxon material was added, featuring formal and everyday costumes of men and women from the turn of the 20th century, nearly a hundred pieces of textiles and various tools. After the 1989 change of regime research in Moldavia could become more regular. However, a number of antiques dealers appeared in the Moldavian villages at that time buying the remaining valuable pieces from families struggling financially. This made clear that the loss is irreversible and led to the conviction that the material collected in the previous decades should be transformed into a well-framed exhibition based on scientific criteria. The collection can now only be enriched by relatively new items or those still in use in Csángó everyday life.

The professional registration, management and description of the collection were carried out by ethnography students of the Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, as part of summer fieldwork practice. The staff and the students of the university have been taking a serious part in the professional organization of the Csángó Ethnographical Museum since 2003.

The professional management of the institution was ensured by attaching it, in 2005, as an external unit, to the 140 year old Szekler National Museum in Sfântu Gheorghe, seat of Covasna County. This has resulted in an interesting situation: in Romania a small village museum representing a Hungarian ethnic group living in multiple

minority status has become part of the biggest and oldest museum of the Szekler-Hungarian minority (Pozsony & Kinda 2011).

#### 4. Exhibitions and values

The Csángó Ethnographical Museum in Zabola has two buildings on the same estate, which serve as expositional spaces and has two important collections: one comprising almost a thousand pieces of Csángó artifacts, the other consists of more than two thousand pieces related to Szekler, Saxon, Romanian and Gypsy ethnical groups. The expositional spaces permit the display of 60 percent of the collection, with the remainder in storage.

In the traditional vernacular house built at the beginning of the 20th century there are two rooms, a kitchen and a larder. Visitors can become familiar with different historical illustrations, traditional costumes and glazed tiles here, as well as seeing an interwar local “best room” set up in the house. Near the Szekler country house, in a new building the first permanent exhibition called *The Traditional Folk Art of the Moldavian Csángós* was opened between 2003 and 2012. Since May 2012 the second permanent exhibition about Csángós with the title *Ceramics of Gorzafalva/Oituz* can be visited.

In the hall of the new building a collection of photographs and maps introduces the settlement structures of the Moldavian Hungarian villages and their traditional architecture. On the first floor, visitors can see the workshop, living room, and earthenware products of potters from Gorzafalva, the reconstructed bedroom of the family with original objects. The second-floor gallery houses a temporary exhibition presenting the furniture of the area’s population at the turn of the 20th century, showing traces of urbanization. The space is set up so that visitors can admire pieces of living room, dining room and bedroom furniture from the end of the 19th century or they can walk among original objects and furniture of an early 20th century room.

Let us see what makes the Moldavian Csángó culture so unique and what kind of elements an institutionalized cultural centre may hold, preserve and represent. According to the recent theories in ethnography everything that surrounds or makes part of people’s life is

considered ethnographic, making up cultural characteristics of a region or community (Fowler – Fowler 1996; Fejős 2003). The most visible cultural heritage of the Csángós living in Moldavia consists of the following categories:

- 1) material culture (furniture, ceramics, documents, farming tools, elements of interior design),
- 2) spiritual culture (language, folklore, popular religiousness, community work organization forms, popular customary law, lifestyle, agricultural and calendar customs, etc.), and
- 3) technological heritage (e.g. crafts).

Museum collections usually focus on inventorying material culture, while preserving the extremely significant spiritual and technological culture is hardly possible without audiovisual recordings. Moreover, until the fall of communism the Romanian specialized institutions didn't have the necessary technology at their disposal, and by the time they managed to solve this lack, a significant part of this popular knowledge had fallen into oblivion. It was this realization that led, in the framework of the Csángó Ethnographic Museum in Zabola and the founding Ethnographic Society to doing everything to safely preserve the existing information and the results of ethnographic research carried out in *Csángóföld* (Schindlbeck 1993; Pearce 1999).

The Csángó Archive was also placed into the documentary centre of the institution, an archive that was created at the Kriza János Ethnographical Society in Cluj-Napoca. This includes the most important manuscripts or published documents, photographs, documentaries, audio and visual materials related to the Moldavian Csángós, as well as the materials of the ongoing investigations on the Csángós (Jacknis 2002).

## 5. Issues of expositions

The Csángó culture is not a rich one in material aspect. Until the end of the 20th century their modest dwellings were decorated with colorful homespun and devotional pictures only. Most of their tools and furniture were handmade. Let's see some examples presented from

the topics of the Csángó museum that are integral part of the Csángó village (Karp & Lavine 1991; Macdonald 1997).

### 5.1. Pottery

Situated on the Eastern side of the Carpathian Mountains, Gorzafalva had been the most important settlement of the Hungarian potters of Moldavia for centuries. This craft reached its height at the end of the 19th century, when numerous potters from Bereck/Brețcu crossed the mountains to settle down in the village. This was related to the fact that at that time mostly clay pottery was in use within the kitchens of Moldavia, and the attrition of clay was quite quick, due also to a rapidly growing population, which ensured the constancy of the market.

The potters of Gorzafalva sustained their families first of all by agriculture and husbandry, pottery being made mostly in periods when work in agriculture was suspended or during rainy days. Nevertheless the village situated in the valley of the Ojtoz river became the biggest pottery centre of Moldavia and of the whole country at the middle of the 20th century, numbering almost four hundred active potters. This craftsmen community was producing millions of traditionally red-fired items, able to satisfy the necessities of most of the villages in Central and Southern Moldavia.

Craftsmen were usually combining the Transylvanian and Moldavian traditional pottery with their own ideas and with the needs of the market quite flexibly. Acquisition and preparation of the material, as well as the manufacture, firing and ornamentation of the item was done by the potter himself. The pottery (pots for cooking, for food storage, saucepans and dishes, water, milk and wine pots, lids and toys) ornamented with white clay, shiny and green glaze was sold from wagons moving through the villages or at markets, being traded usually for money, grain or wine. The everyday needs of the population were signaled by the fact that up to the second half of the 20th century no ornaments were made; all the items were exclusively for everyday use.

However industrialization brought radical changes within the subsistence of the potters, while the modernization of the interiors, first of all the spread of the platen-stove and metal pots, reduced the

demand for pottery. As a result, at the beginning of the 21st century a single active potter could be found in Gorzafalva. He was given the chance to see how the pottery of Gorzafalva has gradually become an important symbol of Moldavian Hungarian identity and of Csángó folk culture. In 2011 the last potterer was buried, and with him the centuries old craft died out forever. This fact makes the pictures and objects documenting this extinct craft preserved in the museum even more valuable (Fejős 2003).

The exhibition commemorates the famous potters of Gorzafalva and the traditional craft itself. The tools and ceramic artifacts displayed were produced in the last decades of the 20th century. (See Picture 1.) This is due to the fact that all these objects can easily be damaged, therefore older specimens have not survived. On the long term, the documentary material and exhibition of the Csángó Ethnographic Museum related to the pottery of Gorzafalva aims at serving the resurrection of this traditional ceramic art.



Picture 1. Glazed pots from Gorzafalva/Oituz. Csángó Museum, Zabola/Zăbola, 2012. Photo: István Kinda.

## 5.2. Home culture

In the 19th–20th centuries the Csángós of serf origin usually lived in extended families. Their houses built on a narrow yard often gave a home for 2–3 generations, for about 10 to 12 people. In these circumstances they furnished their houses with the minimum necessary.

In the 20th century the Csángós usually lived in bicameral houses consisting of a room used as kitchen and scene of everyday life (dining room and bedroom) while the other, the ‘clean room’ served representational purposes and is where they kept homespun and furniture having a prestige value.

The most important place in the house was the fireplace. In most cases it was built of brick, plastered with mud and covered with a metal plate used for cooking and heating as well. In winter, they did their everyday work (spinning, weaving) sitting along the mantel of the fireplace.

The table and the bed used to be positioned according to traditional patterns in the rooms. In former times they used to live in rooms arranged in parallel structure, later in individual corners, while more recently, in centrally arranged rooms typical for modern interior designs. Beds were made of board and filled with straw. There was also a shelf used for holding drinking water, salt, and soap for cleaning purposes. The walls were decorated with colorful homespun and this is where the devotional objects – crucifixes, devotional pictures and rosaries – were hung (for more details see Kós & Szentimrei & Nagy 1981).

Cupboards appeared in the Csángó houses only at the beginning of the 20th century, but its forebear, a bar fixed on beams, the so-called sideboard where clothes were hung, is used even today.

From among the objects of the clean room we mention the dowry case ornamented according to the owner’s taste with pictures and paintings, the made bed on which the ready made home textiles were exposed. The walls of the room were covered with even more colorful homespun.

It also worth highlighting those small objects that assure by their presence the safety of Christian life for the Csángós. There are usually 8 to 10 crucifixes or crosses in each house that together with

smaller-bigger devotional pictures, symbols and statuettes create the sacred environment. The devotional objects – consecrated plants, objects, or water – acquired during different feasts can be used in times of trouble. They burn them or make potions out of them in times of drought, bad weather or against the temptations of Evil. Saint Anthony's lily in the window keeps the evil spirits out of the house (cf. Kinda 2009).

### 5.3. Traditional wear

Each Csángó settlement developed its own unique form of expression in clothes through the mixture of symbols and colors. It is a general practice that young people use vivid colors while elderly people usually dress in dark colors or black (Kós & Szentimrei & Nagy 1981; Gazda 2008). Some time ago one could tell the social status and financial situation of a person from his/her clothes. By now these symbols have faded, only the combination of colors bears certain messages in their traditional popular wear.

When arranging the objects in their original context in the exhibitions at the Csángó Ethnographic Museum in Zabola we also took into consideration the slight variations outlined here. Every exposed object has its own story; many times the clothes or books relate something about a life course or the story of a whole generation. Everything we can see in this unique museum reveals the knowledge and the different life phases full of hardships of an ethnic group left on its own for centuries. (See Picture 2 and 3.)



Picture 2. Csángó couple's traditional costumes and the ütőgardon, the 'folk cello'. Csángó Museum, Zabola/Zäbola, 2011. Photo: Zsolt Barabás.



Picture 3. Embroidered lady's shirt-sleeves. Csángó Museum, Zabola/Zäbola, 2011. Photo: Zsolt Barabás.

## 6. The museum as a workshop

As modern museums all over the world (Snellman 2010), the young institution in Zabola hosts special museology practice programs, primarily for ethnography students from Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, supervised by professional staff, as well as also the annual conference of young ethnographers on traditional culture and society of Szeklerland and Moldavia.

The Museum organizes research, various lectures and different events concerning the traditional culture, society and history of the Hungarians of Moldavia. Visiting scholars from Romania and abroad (Hungary and Finland) have presented their research on Hungarian folk culture, history and identity in Eastern Central Europe and Moldavia.

In addition to impressing visitors with the objects displayed, the aim is to use the whole collection for scientific research, museology training and transfer of knowledge. The programs, many of them interactive, are organized in the context of the Csángó museum's objects in order to show the ingenuity and taste of people of bygone times, as well as to enhance the recent history and connections between the material culture of the Csángós and Szeklers.

In 2012, Moldavian Csángó musicians performed in the opening of the *Pottery of Gorzafalva* exposition. The grandchild of the last potter in Gorzafalva (Moldavia), now living in Transylvania, performed skills he had learned from his grandfather on a potter's wheel, and invited the guests to participate as well. Every year, the Museum invites a group of ladies from Pusztina to teach guests to write and paint Easter eggs in the living motifs of Moldavia. They also invite Szeklers to learn about Easter gastronomy among of the Moldavian Csángós. The Museum is involved in travelling exhibitions and presentations as well. The staff travels often to present the Csángó culture in Romania and abroad and especially among the Hungarian diaspora in Transylvania in order to emphasize the value of identity maintenance and ethnic heritage preservation.

## 7. Conclusion

Although Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin pay special attention to the protection and presentation of the Csángó culture and spend a significant amount of money on projects such as the Csángó Museum presented here, the rate of assimilation and immigration of the Csángó population in Moldavia has accelerated in the past decade. This assimilation process can be traced in the number of the Hungarian-speaking Csángó minority: the earlier number of sixty thousand people speaking Hungarian to some level of competence has dwindled to a number of forty thousand (see Tánczos 2012). The exhibitions and professional work including collecting material and documenting culture aims at preserving an uninterrupted professional interest towards this endangered European ethnic minority.

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ISTVÁN KINDA

## **“Under Control”: Fieldwork among the Csángós**

### ***Abstract***

I will describe the main aspects of anthropological fieldwork since 2001 concentrating on topics difficult to approach: social control, its forms and the institutions that assure stability in the traditional Moldavian Csángó communities. Local people don't open up so easily when it comes to talk about whether there are conflicts, thefts or other shameful events in their deeply religious community. But if we approach them in the right manner we shall see that the rules reflect the idealistic view with respect to morals. Between this and the everyday life, there are huge differences.

### 1. Introduction

In this paper I present the main parameters of my research among the *Csángós*, which was the base of my PhD dissertation. I will answer some basic questions like: What have I studied in Moldavia? Why is this subject important for me and generally for the research community? How can this field and topic be approached? What were my main experiences? At the end I briefly present the research methods I've used and the conclusions of my research.

Outside the Carpathian Basin along the eastern borders of the mediaeval Hungarian Kingdom a settlement network consisting of Hungarian villages had formed in the 1300s. The Hungarian speaking, Roman Catholic, ethnic group that had been assigned the mission to protect the borders of Hungary throughout the centuries lived in

the Moldavian Principality, and reached up to a hundred thousand in number (see Benda 2002; Vincze 2002). Living in Romania, in an Orthodox environment, this ethnic group had gradually been assimilated during the 19–20th centuries to such an extent that today only the elder generation preserves the ancient language and culture. Being isolated from the Hungarian nation for centuries, they have preserved an incredibly old version of the Hungarian language as well as of ‘Hungarian’ material and spiritual culture (for an overview in English see Ilyés Z. 2011). This is why researching and better understanding the *Csángó* culture is so important for Hungarians; through them we can see ourselves as we used to be in the Middle Ages.

## 2. Approaching the Csángós

The discovery and methodological research rooted in Romanticism of this easternmost Hungarian speaking ethnic group began two centuries ago. The emancipating middle-class Hungarian intellectuals were already captivated by this Csángó ethnic group that had preserved medieval language and pieces of costumes, ancient social rules and worldviews, which included: every event happening on earth has transcendental causes and consequences, the myths and legends mixed with Christian elements are part of the everyday life. This situation has changed a lot today, but in the collective popular consciousness the course of life is still controlled by amazing features and correlations, that have nothing to do with watching TV shows brought to them through optical wires.

The Csángó society may be characterized by strong blood relations, a strong sense of community, and social and economic transparency. Since illiteracy started to be eliminated only at the end of the 20th century and there has never been any literacy in Hungarian, the Moldavian Csángó culture is basically an oral culture. This is why economic relationships between villages are based on conventional (oral) agreements; contractual (written) agreements have only recently been introduced (Pozsony 2006).

But what does a Csángó village look like and how can we get there? If we approach the region from the eastern part of Szeklerland/

Székelyland, from where the ancestors of the Csángós migrated into Moldavia in many phases in the past centuries, then we’ll see that the crest of the Carpathian Basin separates two major regions in Romania in two ways; it is not only the boundary of two counties but it marks an important cultural contact zone as well. Some scientists consider this meeting point a buffer zone between two major cultures, Eastern and Western civilization (Lükő 2002), and there is a seed of truth in that. For outsiders the characteristics of nature mirroring human interventions and the aspect of man-made environment show vivid differences. If we draw a comparison, we will see clear differences: the rivers of Szeklerland/Székelyland embanked where possible become in the Moldavian villages watercourses with altering tidelands used as main roads; the gentle slopes become land-slides and wild gullies, the fruit trees of the villages are alternated by humble willow-woods. As the image of the village, the road networks are also unusual, complicated. At the boundary between Szeklerland/Székelyland and Moldavia the houses and households change totally. Instead of discrete or ornamented gates we can see gates made with a totally different style, the tiles of the houses change into painted tin plates, the ornaments of the façade change into intarsia marquetry, colorful spiral columns, and arched porches. The harmony of the familiar dimensions, materials, forms and colors fall apart and get new meanings. We can feel that we are getting closer to the Balkan and the Byzantine culture but not close enough to see these cultural influences turn into clear and harmonic forms.

The local society and the everyday cultural environment are built upon the diachronic influences of Pre-Modern – Post-Modern, East and West. On their way to the church old women wearing traditional costumes sometimes hold rosaries and sometimes mobile phones in their hands as well. Roadside crucifixes peacefully coexist in this community with mausoleums emphasizing the personality cult. (See Picture 1 of a woman weaving a Csángó fabric.)



Picture 1. Weaving a Csángó fabric. Klézse/Cleja, 2003. Photo: István Kinda.

While we observe and reflect on all these things, our car runs on a well-maintained European road. Until we get to a designated village where we turn off the international main road and, leaving the car behind us, we walk into the first sidestreet. Cow-carts with wooden wheels rattle on the muddy road while in the air fighter planes of the Bacau military base perform drills. The locals walking towards the church muttering archaic prayers don't seem to be troubled by them at all, but the helicopters circling low above my head do bother me. The cultural adventure and story of my research starts in a village like this.

### 3. The story of my research

I first encountered Moldavian Csángós in their own living environment in summer 2001 during my first, almost two weeks long field work. They spoke a variant of the Hungarian language that reminded me of history of language courses and 400–500-year-old codices, and

which – of course – I could hardly understand. We were both Hungarians but the common language that helped us understand each other easily was Romanian.

I knew, but I dared not believe it could be part of the everyday reality, that from the middle of the 20th century on, political and ecclesiastical elites together have elaborated a Romanian nationalist politics, which tried to forbid the use of Hungarian language even in private life, to cut off external Hungarian connections and to prevent researchers from visiting Csángós. Persecutions and intimidation led to the situation that members of the local authorities kept foreigners under constant monitoring and that locals would run away from foreigners to avoid being accused of cooperating with Hungarians. The local ecclesia sustained a real network of informers that reported every event at once. I experienced that local Romanian nationalist activists (of course with Csángó-Hungarian origins) kept the anti-Hungarian atmosphere so strongly alive, that the inhabitants of the village – armed with field tools – could force an entire bus carrying students and professors to leave the village in minutes.

As a matter of fact many questions rose in my mind on the very first day related to the invisibly organized resistance, defensive and preventive measures since more and more astonishing scenes made it even more obvious to me that the spiritual leaders and inhabitants of the visited settlements were immediately informed about our arrival and kept us under continuous surveillance.

During my fieldwork which has become regular over the years, I have been treated with special attention in most settlements. Once as I was walking from one village to another a mysterious local joined me who showed interest in everything related to my stay. It also happened that immediately after our arrival a car came to meet us at the end of the village and the men dressed in black leather jackets that got out requested us to prove our identity, then seeing our official papers issued by the university drove back to their unknown consigner.

This special attention was obvious in the nun dressed in black hissing between her teeth ominously the word “*shut up*” to her fellow local talking to us while hurrying down the street, in the intellectual who had moved there a couple of decades ago and had become a Csángó but feared the priest's revenge and avoided meeting

us, or in the Csángó man considering himself Romanian but cursing in Hungarian, threatening us with his beet-digging pitchfork. All these behaviors seemed driven by some kind of uncircumscribable fear or eagerness to prove loyalty to some upper orders, and reflected actions attending to some kind of community expectations. It is shocking that in this culture not even the grown-up may decide for him- or herself, with whom to speak or what to do; let alone the widows, the old, the ill people living alone, who sometimes go over limping, or shout over to their neighbors asking if they are allowed to speak with foreigners.

The locals often considered my visit as a magical offence: I couldn't take pictures because according to the archaic beliefs taking pictures of people means taking their souls; or if foreigners take an object with them, they can torture the owner of that object through it – as it is known in Voodoo.

With these experiences, I became more and more interested in studying the invisible inner field of force, the social control (for the first description and main conclusions of this topic related to Moldavian Csángós see Kotics 1997) and I wanted to uncover, besides their conscience, what other upper constraints and outer facts influenced how they organized their lives. Why are they afraid of being "out-preached" by the priest in the church, why do they fear the village gossiping about their deeds, why are they more afraid of the fury of the village than the judicial authorities? (Locals' control on the street: see Picture 2 and Picture 3.)



Picture 2. Links on the village telegraph. Klézse/Cleja, 2005. Photo: István Kinda.



Picture 3: "Listen to me..." Pusztina/Pustiana, 2008. Photo: István Kinda.

#### 4. Methodology

In outlining the nature of my fieldwork and the chosen methods, the starting point derives from the theories of Clifford Geertz, according to which the scene of research is not equal to the object of research; that is anthropologists carry out their research in the villages, not on the villages (Geertz 2001: 194–227). While ideally, the best way to study certain things is within smaller, well-defined units, it is also possible to study a particular topic – in this case social control – in different locations. With my focus on Csángo lifestyles, with a particular geographic context in mind, no single village proved to assure a range of situations, that would yield a sufficiently rich treatment of the topic, because of the above-mentioned disproportionate presence and interference on the part of institutions of social control.

Concerning data collecting proceedings, because of the topic's moral and social sensitivity, I have used mainly the so-called *soft* methods of social sciences, rotating or combining working methods of ethnography, anthropology and sociology, and modulating the questions according to given situation. In this way, I have tried to succeed in a most complete data collecting possible. In working with my informants, I have preferred *deep interviews* and *unstructured interviews*. In the case of more reserved, uncommunicative persons, or in situations – working occasions, active participation at ritual events – where a recording was not possible, I have appealed to the *informal interview* with quick notes taken at the time for later completion. This resulted in rough texts, but reflecting, often, due to the lack of presence of recording devices, in more open opinions than usual (see Bernard 1995: 209).

During my research in the Moldavian Csángo villages, different techniques of *participating observation* have enriched the empirical chapters of this topic with several casual pieces of information. However, in the case of social control, social roles and deviance mostly the techniques of *passive* or *moderate participating observation* were employed (Spradley 1980: 58–62).

While studying this extremely delicate issue I put emphasis on talking to people in private and I had to put aside the traditional data collecting methods. The essence was the anthropological method of

just being there, or *hanging around* on the studied field. Since as an observer I wrote down my ideas only later, still I considered my work successful even if after a whole day of talking to people I went back to my quarters with empty tapes. My multiple fieldwork events and my particular working method resulted only in few voice and image recordings, hardly considerable as ethnographic, but my field notes covered many phenomena and problems that I couldn't have experienced if the people I was talking to would have chosen not to speak in the presence of my voice recorder. On the other hand I experienced that collecting linguistic and folkloric data and studying their material culture was met with favorable reception.

My male and female informants represented all age groups, the different problematics of the research naturally determined the sex and generation group of those answering my questions. Outlining the social role of the priest, for example, was possible with the help of the younger generation, who presented an opposition of principles with that of my elder male and female informants. In the same context my youngest informants unveiled, more sincerely than the elders, the atmosphere of religious curses. This allowed more informal discussions about, for example, punishment against those who sinned against parochial orders. Within my endeavours regarding family reconstruction and the observation and detection of deviance middle aged and elder women proved especially informed and communicative.

Besides observation and *oral history*-based fieldwork, I have studied the parochial records starting from 1883, the records of the local councils and the gendarmerie from the 1940s and 1950s, found in the Archives in Bacău.

Starting with the year 2001 I have been carrying out regular fieldwork in more than a dozen Moldavian Csángo villages, that means at least twenty occasions ranging from three to ten days. I have managed to carry out a more profound study in the *Szekler Csángo* villages along the Szeret/Siret river (around Bákó/Bacău) – Klézse/Cleja, Somoska/Șomosca, Forrófalva/Fărăoani, Pokolpatak/Valea Rea, Csík/Ciucani, Dózsa/Gheorghe Doja, Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra –, as well as in some *Southern Csángo* villages with medieval origins – Trunk/Galbeni, Diószén/Gioseni, Nagypatak/Valea Mare and Bogdánfalva/Valea Seacă. Further valuable information comes from a Szekler Csángo

village along the Beszterce/Bistrița river: Lészped/Lespezi and the nearby Alsógerlény/Gârlenii de Jos, as well as from Pusztina/Pusti-ana along the Tázló/Tazlău river, and from the most eastern Csángó village, situated east from the Szeret/Siret: Magyarfalu/Arini.

I consider myself especially lucky as in several cases I was able to experience the monitorizing and sanctioning role of social control as it was occurring, I was witness to the active or demonstrative expression of some control factors, and in a few cases I was the one to be measured by local norms and habits, having changed from a stranger, disturbing the peace of the village, to a regularly returning acquaintance, a friend, I might say. Exactly this profound personal connection, often pointing well beyond research, has made the objectivity of fieldwork questionable for me. In fact starting from choosing the topic, the preconceptions, the point of view formed by ethnographic literature, all are inevitably determined and influenced by the system of ideas and values of one's own – in this case – my society. These dilemmas have been partly dispersed by the theoretical and methodological milestones of cultural research. For example, the ideas of Aron J. Gurevich regarding the work of cultural history seem quite calming: according to him, during research and interpretation one cannot turn off completely the “sound level of the apparatus”, meaning the contemporary images of the author (Gurevics [Gurevich] 1974: 18).

For the revealing of society's controlling structures and for a multileveled interpretation I recorded the reports of individuals standing on different steps of social hierarchy, of the local priests and the representatives of the law, and I confronted the contradictory opinions at the level of analysis. In the same way, during the processing of the collected data, it was inevitable to contradict or complete some theses of the specific literature, which makes the analysis even more valuable. I agree with Geertz: “a research means advancement when it is more profound than the antecedents – whatever this expression means; but it doesn't really rely on them, rather it goes by them, provoking and being provoked” (Geertz 2001: 219).

## 5. What curiosities have I studied?

Social control means that a community has well defined norms for obtaining and maintaining peaceful coexistence. If law infringements increased that would lead to anarchy and cause the society to fall apart.

Many social institutions and entities supervise the observation of the rules. Formally organized, *legal* institutions are the church, with the priest having a prominent role, the police department, the court of justice, the mayor's office. Informal factors, considered *legitimate* by the community, have a significant role: public opinion, gossip, informers, activating different forms of magic represent a latent, retarding force for any would-be law-breakers (Kinda 2005, 2010).

The most common misdemeanors considered definitely sins by the community are: lying, cheating, stealing, verbal and physical violence, suicide, murder, blasphemy, religious conversion, corporality, sexuality, desecration of the dead and tombs, divorce, concubinage, love child, marriage at an old age, alcoholism. As we can see, these are considered crimes, either by ecclesiastical or secular judicial practices or by both.

Thus the punishments are also multiple. The most fearsome punishment is when the community itself sanctions in its own ways: gossip, public humiliation, by taking justice into their own hands, insults, popular verdict, ostracism, exclusion, curse and “black fasting”. There are some flagrant cases: in the 1990s a police officer that had committed many atrocities was beaten to death by the locals on the road between two villages, in 2001 a 70-year-old woman caught stealing was crucified, according to the mediaeval practice, on the board she had stolen (see Kinda 2003). It happened many times that the sinful person was expelled from the village where he/she could never return.

From the religious perspective, the church also has some very efficient punishing methods in its hands: outpreaching, pillorization, refusal of confession, are all more terrible than simple fines since such sanctions put to the test the body and soul alike. The secular retributions can impose only impersonal thus less efficient verdicts: fines and prisons (Kinda 2008).

In the past, when there were no courts and police departments, the unwritten rules and their observance were controlled by the

community, headed by the council of elders. The violators of the rule were sanctioned in public according to ancient legal customs: they hung around the neck of thieves what they had stolen, and while chasing them through the village the condemned had to shout that “this is what happens to those who steal” (Peti 2003). A girl who gave birth to a child before marriage had to do penance in the church before the altar seven Sundays consecutively wearing a crown of thorns and holding a black candle in her hands (Ilyés S. 2005).

These medieval-like punishments probably familiar to us from movies had double impact: on one hand, by doing the penance the guilty person had the chance to be reintegrated into the community, and on the other hand they set an example that functioned as a clear message for preventing further breaking of the rule. The advantage of a collectively executed punishment is that it offers protection to the executors and it strengthens group cohesion.

Local people don't open up so easily when it comes to talking about whether there are conflicts, thefts or other shameful events in their deeply religious community. But if we approach them in the right manner we shall see that the rules reflect the idealistic, while the everyday life reflects the actual moral situation, and moreover, that there are huge differences between the two. Csángós are considered one of the most religious ethnic groups in Europe, but and I can assert – without any myth-busting intention – that secularization and new Neo-Protestant churches are gaining more and more ground in their villages, and deviant cases are becoming even more frequent.

## 6. Some social history conclusions

The historical dimensions of the Csángós' moral rules and their controlling social and legal mechanisms can be defined along the following aspects that are interpreted as turning points in this ethnic group's social history:

- a) the planned and spontaneous medieval Hungarian settling and the transmission of their norms, control and punishment mechanisms;
- b) the existence of regulations rooted in the medieval/modern Szekler customary law in Csángó villages of Szekler origin;

c) the handicap of a mangled Csángó social organization and of the structured Moldavian society's disappearance at the end of the Middle Ages: the complete lack of an intellectual and bourgeois strata;

d) the existence of a biblical faith sanctified by a minority Roman Catholic confession in an Orthodox majority and its isolating, surviving and regulating strength;

e) the confessional and world concept determination caused by the permanent presence of the Roman Catholic Church in everyday life (Vincze 2002).

Although the above-mentioned socio-historical dimensions show us that this Hungarian group situated beyond the Carpathians followed its own specific course in history, its normative and controlling systems generally run parallel and may be included in a European law structure.

Nevertheless the composition of the institutions of social control functioning in the Moldavian Csángó villages meant no rigid structure, but functioning as a constant change throughout history, and within this scheme the direction of the change points from the unitary, democratic popular institutions towards the appearance of centralized structures of power, the functioning of which couldn't be influenced by the local communities, respectively in which secular and ecclesiastical power was racing to expropriate and serve the control over the traditional Csángó communities, which were meant for assimilation. Furthermore, not only the institutions' position within the structure have been different throughout history, but also the institutions of control themselves; certain mechanisms were brought to life or exiled by different political periods, different secular and ecclesiastical ideologies during the ages.

The characteristic of the period in question, namely of the 17th–21st centuries, is that a Csángó society so strongly bounded to religion has been constantly laying more and more emphasis on elaborating and functioning mechanisms designed to release the sense of remorse. Numerous forms of individual remorse and penitence drawn to the communal scene, from individual and common confession to fasting, the feasts and liturgies of collective purification had been playing the same role in the communities' life: through the punishment of an

individual breaking common rules, the possibility of social reintegration was offered (Hankiss 2004: 294). The harshness and impartiality of control was given by public opinion and by the gauge of the transcendental judge, thus moral judgement meant mainly a religious screening, the direct or indirect correspondence to a religious world view. With these regulations the defining majority of the means of punishment and forgiving was concentrated in the hands of the ecclesiastical power, which forced the submitting communities into a status of dependence. Besides the Church, also secular power – through its consolidation and the formation of its institutions – gained more and more ground in punishment and the release of remorse. Side by side with the obvious dominance of officialized ecclesiastical and secular power structures, there was a surviving control of the local communities, conserving old traditions and legal customs, assuring the frames of communal life, and thus showing a higher level of adaptability.

Based on almost a decade of fieldwork, I investigated how the Western-type cultures and modern life patterns, gradually discovered by the Csángós starting with the 1990s, are confronting in many segments traditional life organization. This confrontation generates serious changes rather on the level of social structure and functioning than on that of material culture. A massive work migration towards the urban areas and especially to other countries has resulted in a high number of incomplete families, as it is a general phenomenon in the Csángó villages, that the active members of the family are working abroad, regularly in Spain and Italy, most time of the year. It is well known that migrant work is undertaken by a social group between 20–40 years, the one that would have a determining role in the local society regarding the stability and preservation of social structure, as well as leadership. Thus society has lost exactly the stratum that would be capable of decision and action-taking on the most diverse levels of communal life.

The leadership over the remaining youngest and elder generations was undertaken by the most influential personality of the place: the priest. His controlling practices, besides religious life supervision, also covered the happenings of everyday life. He confronted the possible resistance of community with the power of faith, his sanctions being fortified by ritual and magical practices. Black mass, for example,

besides a continuous intimidation of the community, represents a great source of income. This practice appeared within the activity of the Moldavian Catholic priests due to the magic-exorcistic practice of the Orthodox priests, and its concrete effects and efficiency is not questioned by either the deeply religious inhabitants or by the younger generations living between faith and doubt. It is the specificity and continued relevance of practices such as black mass, that supports the analysis of Moldavian Csángó social control in the light of ecclesiastical and magical aspects. In addition, it is a quite remarkable moral downturn, which – together with an increasing number of ‘deviant’ individuals – determines the revival of centuries old forms of social control.

With the 20th century dissolution of traditional Csángó communities, another society was born, deeply articulated along convictions, interests and ideologies, within which the unitary public opinion has disappeared, and with the gradual diminishing of a unitary system of norms, the consequent control over society has lost its basis, thus also the collective means of punishment, assuring the rehabilitation of social order, have mostly disappeared. The period from the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st is characterized by structureless cultural transition (Tánczos 2000: 208), mixing traditional and modern world views, within which the anachronistic nature of the archaic custom law system is shown by the elements of punishment that appear from time to time in popular jurisdiction, behind which the traditional cultural sensibilities have mostly disappeared.

By the end of the 20th century traditional popular religiosity has been replaced by an ecclesiastical religious practice paying more attention to the secular scenery; at the same time, an international “popular religiosity” has been spreading among the traditionally homogeneous Catholic population of the Csángó villages, a modern world view tolerating and including different ideas of certain religious sects and groups. The relation to Church, to religion and to priest has been reevaluated, and these attitudes are creating constant situations of conflict. The weakening tendency of professed religious practice is strongly related to the demythologization of the priest and the desacralization of his status. As an influence of modernizing processes, the inner order of the community has fallen apart, also the legitimacy of

social control practiced by priest or community has been questioned. The individual is gaining more and more authority in self-definition and identity construction within the local structure of the community, thus communal control cannot really limit individual choices and decisions. Deviant attitudes, impeding the functioning of social control and social order, along with a desintegrating public opinion are only signs of a deeper danger within social structure, threatening with the loosening of social relations in the case of a traditionally defined society, with the damaging of its social texture, and with the decay and total disappearance of social cohesion-sustaining traditional value systems.

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JULIET LANGMAN

## **(Re)considering Reflexivity in the Research Process: Examining Multiple Stances to the Research Context**

### *Abstract*

This commentary explores the work of young scholars examining research on language and identity among Csángós. It takes as an orienting lens research attempts to explicitly link language and culture with a concern for inequality among cultural groups and to promote this linkage as a crucial focus in qualitative sociolinguistic research today. The research perspectives presented in this volume are examined in three ways; a) a critical approach that considers the broader socio-political context, b) the ethics of working in contexts and with individuals often under-researched, and c) the role of the researcher's own 'stance' or relationship to the focus of study.

### 1. Introduction

The study of the condition of language minority populations has been a focus in ethnographic and applied linguistics research for many decades. This area of study has a rich tradition and has employed a broad set of theoretical and methodological tools for examining roles, identities, ideologies, and practices. In recent years, several questions related to research approaches have drawn considerable attention. First, critical approaches, aimed at examining power relations and the broader political dimensions associated with understanding minority populations' lifeways has entered the field (Pennycook 2001). Second,

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the concept of reflexivity and the researcher's stance has continued to be of interest in qualitative research (Ramanathan & Atkinson 1999). More recently, a (renewed) focus on ethics and its relationship to qualitative methods has developed as a topic of concern and interest (De Costa 2014). Although I am orienting, in this discussion, as if these concerns were new, it is important to recall that at least since Hymes (1974), researchers have sought to explicitly link language and culture with a concern for inequality among cultural groups and to promote this linkage as a crucial focus in qualitative sociolinguistic research today. (See also van der Aa & Blommaert 2011.)

These concerns, a) taking a critical approach that considers the broader socio-political context, b) the ethics of working in contexts and with individuals often under-researched, and c) the role of the researcher's own 'stance' or relationship to the focus of study are clearly interconnected. In this commentary, I provide some discussion on how these concerns are reflected in the chapters of this volume.

I begin with my own stance as writer of this commentary, extending the notion of reflexivity beyond the researcher to the commentator. Reflexivity focuses on "the mutual interdependence of observer or knower to what is seen or known" (Barwell 2003). Lincoln and Guba (2000: 183) defined reflexivity as "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the 'human as instrument'". Because reflexivity is "grounded in both the social location and the social biography of the observer and the observed" it provides a frame for considering multiple dimensions in the research and writing process (Mann & Kelley 1997: 192).

My own research has focused, in part, on Hungarian minority communities in Slovakia. Trained as a qualitative researcher in the United States, and as a non-native speaker of Hungarian, I have worked on issues of language minority populations for several decades. Some of my reflections on the challenges of working in multilingual contexts are found in Langman (2014) in which I present a discussion of considerations related to conducting qualitative research in multilingual contexts where the researcher is not a 'native' of the language(s) or culture(s) under study.

On the basis of this experience, I was invited to participate at the conference where these papers were first presented. I was further

invited to provide English language editing of the chapters, a task that led to several exchanges with the authors and editors of this volume. My challenge was to place the words of the authors in a form of English that allowed for comprehension of points being made, without drawing too far from their own perspectives and style of writing. This challenge was in part due to that the fact that at times I held a distinctly different perspective on how to interpret that data being presented or how to position researcher vis à vis researched. Hence, my interaction with the authors and the written versions of these papers has been multi-dimensional.

Iancu's story reflects my own time as a fieldworker although through a different prism. In the family where I stayed during extensive fieldwork over several years, I was welcomed but many were confused about what I did all day – no useful work was seen to emerge from my hands – all I did was observe, read, and write. Similarly, Iancu states "As a family member I am interested in what is happening in my family, participated in many events just as I did earlier but as an ethnographer, I don't take part in the daily chores/work of my family, as I used to do earlier. I mainly focus on my own tasks, on my field research. In the beginning, this attitude was really strange for my parents. They were happy to see me, however, they realized they did not gain anything with my presence." For Iancu, being an ethnographer moved her more to the outsider position within her own family, for me, being an ethnographer, prevented me from integrating fully into the family life – no matter how often I cooked a meal or participated in working in the garden, it was never a 'full measure' of work as would be expected of other adults.

Finally, while my own research has not focused on the Moldavian Csángó population I have had the opportunity to visit Moldavia on several occasions as well as to participate in Moldavian Csángó cultural activities in Hungary, some of which are referred to in this volume, during my time living and working in Hungary in the late 1980s–1990s, and continuing to visit Hungary to the present.

## 2. Reflections

In this volume, scholars from the Moldavian Csángó community, from Romania, from Hungary, from Finland, working with different methodologies, and approaching issues of identity and ideology from different scales, ranging from broad European Union policy issues, to narrative reflections of a childhood told through the lens of literary and ethnographic perspectives, provide a wide ranging set of views on a complex community.

In reading the chapters in this volume as well as attending the conference upon which these pieces are based, I was struck with the ways in which I had to ‘read’ the articles, with a multileveled analytic attention that involved having familiarity, to varying degrees, with the context under study, the personal and professional experiences of the researchers, the traditions of scholarship in which researchers have been trained, and the languages in which the original research was conducted and original articles written. All of these elements had an effect on each author’s stance and choice of topic.

A multilayered approach paired with a critical applied linguistics lens, set for me a complex task of ‘reading through’ the oral and written Hungarian and English ‘texts’ to envision ‘representations of life’, reading through professional and personal stances, and reading through conclusions to how these conclusions align with life experiences of the Moldavian Csángó people.

Reading an ethnography, or literary, or discursive, or narrative piece on a minority population recently placed in a position of ‘notice’ in the international field, as is the case with the Moldavian Csángós is complex. In what follows, I offer some reflections loosely organized around the perspective on language and culture, and the insider-outsider perspective, and finally the mediation of certainty.

### 2.1. Stance one: perspective on language and culture

I begin by examining the perspective on language and culture taken. At one end of the spectrum, these papers represent culture as a static piece of history, an artifact that can and should be preserved, as follows: “Being isolated from the Hungarian nation for centuries, they

have preserved an incredibly old version of the Hungarian language as well as of ‘Hungarian’ material and spiritual culture.... This is why researching and better understanding the *Csángó* culture is so important for Hungarians; through them we can see ourselves as we used to be in the Middle Ages.” (Kinda). This perspective outlines culture – in the case of the Csángós as a living artifact interesting in its own right, but more interesting, in the view of the author for the light it can cast on the history of the Hungarian people. In this way, the view on culture is further aligned with an ideological view that points to the ‘placement’ of the Csángós in a sociopolitical context colored as Hungarian, that further places two countries, Hungary and Romania, and two ‘nations’ or ‘cultures’ – Hungarian and Romanian – at odds with one another. At the other end of the spectrum is the view of language and culture as always shifting, reflecting and responding to both local and global forces – drawing on a trans-global view of cultural practice (Lajos). Lajos states, “For a better understanding of the situation, a decisive attribution of the Csángó life-world should be pointed out. The Moldavian Csángó socio-cultural reality is a social space that generates multiple cultural and linguistic ties. It requires a constant ability to find one’s way between two cultural systems of relationships in the same physical environment, i.e., between the differences of the Csángó and the Romanian cultures; expecting any individual to participate and come up to the challenges posed by the Csángó and Romanian cultural environment. The condition for successful orientation in the social sphere is the appropriate use of the socio-cultural sets of knowledge of both worlds and the creative, “optional” and situation-dependent application of the cultural information sets.” From this practice perspective the life experiences of individuals form the starting point for the consideration of how culture plays a role in the broader sociopolitical context which incorporates disjunctures or cultural influences in response to the local community, to Romania, to Hungary, and to Italy, where many immigrants from the region have settled. Authors with different views of culture, further can leverage these views of culture to align with a perspective on the role of culture and nation – that is the ideological stance that aligns a view of culture with a ‘preferred’ world context. Hence, several of the articles examine the importance of culture for understanding not only the people

under study, but also others – in this case the ways in which culture draws a connecting link between the Csángó people and Hungarians living within and beyond the political borders of the current Republic of Hungary. These two views assign very different importance to any given practice witnessed by or described by individuals living their lives in Moldavian Csángó villages.

## 2.2. Stance two: insider-outsider perspectives

In addition to the perspective on culture taken by the authors, a clear difference emerges in the varying degrees and types of contact, in terms of time and space, between the researched and the researcher represented in this volume. These positions of self with respect to the researched take on an added dimension in this volume, when the researchers – themselves all young scholars working in multilingual contexts – are also positioning themselves within international research communities.

The authors who conducted fieldwork (Iancu, Lajos, Kinda, Peti) fall in my mind on a set of intersecting continua, in terms of their connectedness to the researched through not only their professional, but also their personal positionalities. Iancu, a Moldavian Csángó researcher trained in Hungary, can lay claim in one sense to the most authentic connection to the researched, while Lajos, a Hungarian researcher trained in Hungary who conducted fieldwork while also serving as a Hungarian teacher in a community, may fall at the other end of the continuum of connectedness – the classic ethnographer arriving in the field with background information from reading, and an intention to live in the community for an extended period of time. The other two researchers, Kinda and Peti are members of the large Hungarian minority in Transylvania, Romania with research training in Romania largely trained by well-established Hungarian researchers. Their connections to the communities are, from a classic ethnographic perspective, less in-depth, while nonetheless drawing systematically on qualitative survey, observation, and interview methods; their connection to the communities under study are consistent with many qualitative researchers interested in understanding how life in particular contexts has changed over time. In particular, Peti refers to the nature

of the fieldwork he has been able to conduct, citing Wulff (2009), as “multi-local yo-yo fieldwork” a type of fieldwork many researchers are familiar with, including myself, balancing time and energy in the field with other work and personal obligations away from the field.

Kinda’s work focuses on the role of social control over the participants of village society, and explores his own interaction with them as part of a reflexive ethnographic project – one that made him quite uneasy, as his role in the villages changed over time. He draws on the work of Gurevics [Gurevich] (1974) who outlines that “cultural history [can] seem quite calming: according to him, during research and interpretation one cannot turn off completely the ‘sound level of the apparatus’, meaning the contemporary images of the author (Gurevics [Gurevich] 1974: 18).” Kinda further aligns his research perspective with Geertz “I agree with Geertz: ‘a research means advancement when it is more profound than the antecedents – whatever this expression means; but it doesn’t really rely on them, rather it goes by them, provoking and being provoked’ (Geertz 2001: 219).” In my interpretation, for Kinda, the ground of reflexive ethnography is as much about his own positionality and his reflections as a Hungarian researcher and museum director in Romania, as it is about understanding the lifeways of the Csángós. In addition, the current life practices, for Kinda, are set against a backdrop of the sociopolitical turmoil of the time period during- and post-Communist Romania. Nor does Kinda claim otherwise; yet in so doing, the Csángós are positioned in a world and with an orientation that some of them might not recognize as ‘true’.

Peti, in his paper on Fieldwork, provides a similar perspective on the insider-outsider perspective combined with a view on reflexivity, as he places himself, as the ethnographer, as the subject, as he reflects on “the circumstances that made the fieldwork difficult, that is, the prejudices of the representatives of the local church and civil authorities as well as the fears of the community members.”

In contrast to these researchers, Lajos’ work examining the culture of between-ness characteristic of many multilingual and multicultural contexts aligns with Anzaldúa’s (1987) vision of the borderlands and the potential of individuals living in the borderlands to see similarities rather than differences. Thus these authors stand in stark contrast to one another on how one can know the other. Even though

these authors all refer to the works of ethnographic anthropology, a range of experiences as well as orientations to culture lead them to nuance their findings about the lifeways of the Moldavian Csángós in quite different ways. For each author, a range of factors have led them to focus the lens of observation as well as the frame for interpretation in a different way.

Iancu's perspective is most personal, a stance derived from both her personal relationship to the community under study – her home village – and her professional orientation, Iancu draws on the ethnographic stance, and places within it an orientation of both insider and outsider, when she draws on the work of Cseke, stating “the ethnographer, the sociographer must also approach his newly explored facts as an outsider, objectively, however, his opinion is influenced by both the outer reality as well as the inner reality of his explored world with which he completely identifies in order to get to know it” (Cseke 2002: 30). The sociographical methodology is defined as such, by both inner and outer opinions.”

As an example of how she reflects on her insider-outsider stance, Iancu examines the role of language as a primary marker of culture. Csángó itself is a contested term, and *Csángó*, seen as a variety, dialect or language in its own right<sup>1</sup> is juxtaposed and judged against *Hungarian* spoken elsewhere, and in particular in Hungary, where *Standard Hungarian* draws its name by virtue of its association to a nation. This designation of language is coupled with ideology and aligns with the view that determines culture (and language) as an artefact. Taking the perspective of an insider reflecting on her own cultural understanding, Iancu states in her autobiographical commentary, that the fact that she is Csángó and that Csángó is an ‘archaic’ form of Hungarian only ‘came to light’ for her, in connection and interaction with other “Hungarians” in her case at the time of entering secondary school in the neighbouring region of Transylvania, a region of Romania, which, in contrast to Moldavia, has a long history as a part of the Hungarian kingdom, and which with its regional Hungarian majority continues to represent the ‘Hungarian world’ for many. Before arriving there, Iancu thought of herself as Hungarian and Hungarian-speaking. After

1. About the discussion on this subject, see, for example, Sándor 2000 and Tánzos 2011.

that time, she became Csángó – accepting the labels given to her by the Other.

There is then for Iancu, a stretching continuum of coming to understand her own identity through the interpretations of her language and practices by a range of others, beginning with her attending high school outside her home region and continuing into her university studies in Hungary. With the stretching and potential redefining of her native variety, comes, too, the stretching and adding of ideological value claims on the variety.

At a further level, Iancu places herself in the insider-outsider position not only in her own community, but also in the research community; like the between-ness expressed in Lajos' work, Iancu embodies between-ness and border crossing. This is reflected in her stating “If I should place my work in the modern international field, it would be analytic auto-ethnography in the sense used by Anderson (2006); ... pieces of auto-ethnography what Anderson calls evocative or emotional auto-ethnography also can be found in my writing.” Iancu's work with her unique stance as someone born in the community under study, takes on the evocative that is also valued in *testimonios* (Behar 1993), and extends the ethnographer's work into the realm of the writer or sociographer. In her work, nonetheless, she reflects on her position as a researcher, examining her own past through a new, theoretical lens. This reflection is further born out in her decision to invite a second author, Kovács, to co-write one of her papers, as a way of drawing her story into a theoretical conversation, through interactions with one of the editors of this volume.

In contrast, Peti's stance, as a researcher interested in language policy, takes the greatest distance from the individual subjects. For Peti, examining institutions and their interactions with individuals is most fruitfully set in the frame of policy documents examining, in this case, the effect of the European level policies, stating “in the first part of this paper, I follow how the Recommendation of the European Commission from 2001 (Recommendation 2001 [2011]) has influenced the status of the Moldavian Csángós.” In the later part of this paper, he further outlines how these changes in policy at the European level have affected local practices, drawing on a top-down analysis of language policy to examine the “‘structure’ of external interference

called *saving or salvaging the Csángós* in the local societies,” and how “the Csángós themselves have been influenced by such external interest.” Across the various authors we see quite different implicit and explicit connection between ‘culture’ and ideology in the service of building a perspective on the ‘nation-state’ and the position of the Csángós within it. For Peti, there is an implicit and strong connection between institutional level language policy and planning, and a specific ideology, that appears – in his writing as incontrovertible. Hence, Peti and to a somewhat similar degree Kinda’s work is more strongly tied to a socio-politically clearly defined stance of understanding how minority populations and in this particular case, Moldavian Csángós persist, in the face of discrimination over long periods of time.

### 2.3. Stance three: mediation of certainty

These chapters suggest how researchers employing anthropological frames tied to studies of identity and ideology can examine the interweaving experiences of multi-cultural, multi-generational, multi-regional space and come up with quite different interpretations of similar instances of recorded lived experience. For me in reading the chapters, I find that the authors whose work is more traditionally ethnographic or life history framed has resulted in more nuanced representations of how people experience a context of ‘social control and minority status’ or alternatively a life in a rural context recently more strongly connected to global flows. Yet, the other chapters, in a sense address head on – although to my mind in insufficiently nuanced ways – the critical perspective on how people’s minority condition should be addressed and challenged for reasons of social justice.

For many of the papers, I asked the question, whose story is this? There is in the writing of several pieces a strong sense of ‘truth’ which I see more as the taking of an ‘essentialist’ stance, that leaves little room for alternative interpretations. What I miss in a number of the papers, and hope to express here in terms of a methodological note, is what I want to call the *mediating of certainty*. Although written and expressed as written from a particular position – insider/outsider, Hungarian/Romanian, linguist/sociologist, the writing often takes the form of ‘hard truths.’ I have experienced ‘this’ and have documented

report of ‘this’ in other published literature; hence it is ‘the case’, ‘the truth’. Yet, if we have learned anything from a rich body of research on positionality, from research in post-structuralism and social constructivism, it is that there are no ‘truths’; that perspectives, views, perceptions are always mediated through the lens of a complex of contexts, identities, and exigencies, mediated by not a single ideology, but rather a range of ideologies. As Gal states, “Ideology is conceptualized . . . not only as systematic ideas, cultural constructions, commonsense notions, and representations, but also as the everyday practices in which such notions are enacted; the structured and experienced social relations through which humans act upon the world” (1992: 445–446). With this view of ideology, it is difficult to find a single clear determination of how to understand the practices of any individual actors in the social world.

The training of several of the qualitative researchers working in areas related to understanding the lived experiences of individuals living in minority contexts does not seem to support writing or researching with ‘uncertainty’ at the forefront. Our training seems to push us to see single truths within a given set of lived experiences. One angle is the much needed critical lens, that seeks to understand ideologies underlying experiences and practices, and that seeks to layer explanations, drawing from sociohistorical contexts onto the expressed views and behaviors on individuals ‘in the street’ – for the purpose of social justice.

When I talk about nuance or the mediation of certainty, in a sense, I am referring to my reader’s perception of the extent to which the individual authors have examined their own stance, have claimed a perspective clearly, and analyzed critically the extent to which this perspective creates a lens that sharpens ‘truth,’ and ‘facts’ drawn from triangulated research data. To my mind, this is where the chapters reflect clear differences in aim, in intention, and in connection to the broader socio-political forces in which the Moldavian Csángós find themselves – whether they see themselves affected by these forces or not. To take a critical stance, as these authors do, entails uncovering injustice, and also understanding the subject’s own orientation to what they may see as an injustice – it further requires a reflection of how positing injustice serves broader aims, aims in this case, of a range of

institutional players – the European Union, Hungary, Romania, the Catholic Church, and local representatives of these institutions, as well as individual actors living out their lives.

For me, one way of mediating certainty is to borrow from a feminist stance, drawing on Anzaldúa (2002) who urged scholars (and activists) to imitate “la neplantera” who “calls on the ‘connectionist’ faculty to ... picture ... similarities instead of social divisions” (567–568). While her work specifically addresses an understanding of women of color in the US context, her message can be extended to a focus on all contexts where social injustice is a key part of individuals’ experience.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, I borrow from Barwell (2003) who reminds us of Duranti’s (2000) discussion of the responsibility of the researcher to attempt to remove him or herself from the research “If one of the basic ethnographic questions is ‘Who does this matter for?’ we must be prepared to say that in some cases something matters for us, that we are the context... But such a recognition – and the reflexivity that it implies – cannot be the totality of our epistemological quest. Other times we must decenter, suspend judgment, and hence learn to ‘remove ourselves’, to be able to hear the speakers’ utterances in a way that is hopefully closer to – although no means identical with – the way in which *they* heard them.” (Duranti 2000: 9 in Barwell 2003).

More so than ever, then, one of the researcher’s responsibilities is to infuse their work with some contextualization of their own experiences, personal and academic, that frame their orientation to the research – if for no other reason than to address – as removal is likely not possible – the pretense of objectivity, that is to mediate certainty. The scholars in this volume represent a broad range of orientations to the study of a single group, and for the reader of this volume – their juxtaposition one against the other may help us all to discern the differences in stance which underlie difference in conclusions drawn and statements uttered that attempt to represent a complex and constantly changing community currently pulled into the eye of researchers and politicians across Europe.

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## List of Contributors

- Iancu, Laura  
Hungarian Academy of Sciences  
Institute of Ethnology, Budapest, Hungary  
iancu.laura@gmail.com
- Isohookana-Asunmaa, Tytti  
University of Oulu, Finland  
tytti.asunmaa@gmail.com
- Kinda, István  
Szekler National Museum  
Sfântu Gheorghe/Sepsiszentgyörgy, Romania  
kindaistvan.szn@gmail.com
- Kovács, Magdolna  
University of Helsinki  
Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies, Finland  
magdolna.kovacs@helsinki.fi
- Laihonen, Petteri  
University of Jyväskylä  
Centre for Applied Language Studies, Finland  
petteri.laihonen@ju.fi
- Lajos, Veronika  
University of Debrecen  
MTA-DE Ethnologic Research Group, Hungary  
lajosvera@yahoo.co.uk
- Langman, Juliet  
University of Texas at San Antonio  
Department of Bicultural Bilingual Studies, USA  
juliet.langman@utsa.edu
- Peti, Lehel  
Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities  
Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, Romania  
Petilehel@yahoo.com

Snellman, Hanna

University of Helsinki

Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies, Finland

[hanna.snellman@helsinki.fi](mailto:hanna.snellman@helsinki.fi)

Tánczos, Outi

University of Helsinki

Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies, Finland

[outi.tanczos@helsinki.fi](mailto:outi.tanczos@helsinki.fi)