

Klára Gazda

Material Culture and Identity at the Moldavian Catholics

The Moldavian Csángós – based on common origin, common historical faith, strong sense of belonging and delimitation from their neighbours – are considered by Hungarian ethnography a Hungarian ethnic group. A group of Transylvanian Hungarian origin, whose ancestors immigrated to Moldavia in different periods of history, undergoing a process of assimilation, thus forming an ethnic and religious Diaspora, saving their religious endogamy and calling themselves *Catholics*, and the Orthodox (who in their turn refer to them as *Ungur* [Hungarian]) *Oláh* [Valachian/Romanian]. The essence of the Hungarian ethnographers' work has been the discovery of the specificities of the Csángó culture that had been brought from their places of origin, of the influence of the Moldavian Romanian culture and of the preserving power of Diaspora existence. The conclusion drawn by Gábor Lükő is that the Csángós socially and culturally belong both to the Hungarians and to the Romanians (Lükő 2002: 33).

The Romanian ethnographic literature (Pal 1942, Mărtinaş 1985, Ichim 1987, Ciubotaru 1998, 2002, 2005), showing an obvious delay in comparison to the Hungarian one, has been concentrating on demonstrating the Romanian origin of the Moldavian Catholics by “birth, formation, mentality and ethno-cultural heritage” (<http://www.ercis.ro> Amos News, Vineri, 08 Noiembrie 2002 – 06:45 PM). Many of them do this only on the level of affirmations. For example, the editors of Mărtinaş's post mortem volume, Ion Coja and V. M. Ungureanu, conclude only leafing through the most complete monograph written on this topic by Kós–Szentimrei–Nagy that the material culture of this bilingual “Romanian” group – which in their opinion “learnt Hungarian already in their Transylvanian homes as a result of the authorities' Magyarizing policies” – such as: costume, customs, way of life, houses and plots, heating devices, utensils, low round tables, looms, interiors, benches, depositing barns and trousseau chests are of Romanian “character” (Mărtinaş 1985: 49). Dorinel Ichim also considers it an evidence that the culture of the Csángós from the Trotuş and Bacău region can be nothing but Romanian (Ichim 1983, 1987: 17). The more profound and detailed works, as the ethnographic chapter of Iosif Petru Pal's work (1942: 56–68)¹ and later on the three volumes by Ion H. Ciubotaru as the main products of Csángó-related Romanian ethnographic literature (1998, 2002, 2005), provide even arguments for this statement. The contemporary academic discourse is enthusiastic about the conclusions of Ciubotaru: he managed to prove the Romanian being of the Csángós (Gavriliuță 2004. id. <http://lit.tuiasi.ro.philippide/buletin/Buletin-3-2005.pdf>, <http://www.ercis.ro> Amos News, Vineri, 08 Noiembrie 2002 – 06:45 PM)².

¹ Focusing mostly on dwelling-house, interior and costume.

² For example Sabina Ispas, the director of C. Brăiloiu Ethnographic and Folklore Institute and Eugen Simion, the president of the Romanian Academy of Sciences.

In the present study, with an analysis on this debate's methodology, followed by the content analysis of the Csángó traditional material culture, we will try to answer the question: how can the material culture be related to ethnicity and ethnic identity, and how can ethnography be competent in the discovery of certain communities' origin.

Researchers, Subjects, Objects and Methods of Research

Hungarian researchers' attitude to the Csángós reflects a kind of affection, the latter being regarded as the Eastern brothers/sisters, living in worse conditions than the former. A desire for discovering these relatives and their unknown cultural dimensions was voiced³ as early as in 1840 by Gábor Döbrentei, the secretary of the Hungarian Academic Society, who urged the collection of information through a 38-item questionnaire; research was carried out by Incze János Petrás (Petrás 2004), followed by Gábor Lükő (Lükő 2002), László Mikecs (Mikecs 1989), Károly Kós (Kós 1976, 1981) and his team (Kós–Szentimrei–Nagy 1981) and lately Péter Halász (Halász 2002). When expenses were not covered by institutions (the Romanian Academy of Sciences sponsored the research only in the 1950s, while the Ethnographic Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences has been doing it only for a few years lately), these researchers undertook fieldwork on their own expense, even if it proved to be a risky thing⁴ due to the mistrust of the Romanian authorities⁵. Compared to the Hungarian one, the more archaic, sometimes Middle Ages-like Csángó culture also raised the interest of the Hungarian researchers.

The researchers were also faced with the local population's wariness. Since the formation of the modern Romanian nation (1859) and since becoming citizens of the Romanian state nation⁶, the locals had had to face the fact that declaring their Hungarian being was a damnatory action, and the "proper" identification for them is *Romanian Catholic*.⁷

³ Hungarian research has always concentrated on about 50 villages from the compact region along the Moldova river, the estuary of the Bistrița, the plains along the Siret and the territories along the Tazlău and Trotuș – with mostly Hungarian population. Thus the reproach of the Romanian scholars – regarding the attention of the Hungarians exclusively on the mentioned regions and ignoring the already Romanianized Catholic villages – seems to be legitimate.

⁴ In 1933, Gábor Lükő was expelled from the country (Lükő 2002: 13). Between 1970–1990 several Hungarian researchers were calumniated by the Securitate. They had to reckon with the fact that their utensils would be confiscated; their recording tapes and photographs would be destroyed. The author of this study, accompanied by a few students, was sent away by the local vicar in 1994 with reference to the Securitate.

⁵ As Iosif Petru Pal (1942: 93) mentions, the term Hungarian or Csángó that appears in the publications "represents the bases of the aspirations of the Hungarians from Budapest".

⁶ At the formation of the Romanian state, convoking the Parliament of Moldavia in 1857 the majoritary representants proposed that only the Orthodox inhabitants would receive citizenry rights. Mihail Kogălniceanu defended the Catholics from Iași and Bacău regions, the răzeși and several boyars with great functions. "Our great task is to unite all our fellow countrymen – regardless of confessional belonging – by a real equality into the same harmony, into the same love for their country, thus we would be one nation defending one country, our beautiful Romanian" (Pal 1942: 19).

⁷ "The only true name that the Moldavian catholics can request is *Romanian Catholics*. This name reflects their Romanian blood and the vital interests of our country, which cannot repress them from her maternal

The changing success of this demand supported also by the clergy and the state power is reflected by the fluctuation of the data from the national census.⁸

Village	Total population	Nr. of Catholics in 1930	Nr. of Hungarians in 1930	Total population in 1992⁹	Nr. of Catholics in 1992	Nr. of Hungarians in 1992	Nr. of Hungarians in 2002
<i>Frumoasa</i>	903	903	903	3550	2116	2	111
<i>Coman</i>	373	369	368	931	927	5 m.+14 cs.	
<i>Oituz</i>	1713		626			6+1	
<i>Onești</i>	2945	1236	627				214+15
<i>Pustiana</i>	1153	1146		2070	2055	53	370+189
<i>Gârlenii de Sus</i>	480		235	1581	1398		
<i>Lespezi</i>	1314	1058	1053				(Garleni) 43+162
<i>Sascut-Fântânele</i>	627		547		759	2	
<i>Florești</i>	387	370	366		540		
<i>Satu Nou</i>	292		292				25

As compared to the 1859 data, in 1930 we can talk about a two-third decrease (Tánczos 1998), while in 1992 this process reaches its peak; thus in 2002 – as a result of the most self-conscious Csángós' activity – a few people still dare to declare themselves Hungarians¹⁰

Among the Romanian researchers, we can find a rather negative motivation. For example, Ion H. Ciubotaru reveals his own negative feeling when he translates the *lisp*ing character of the Csángó dialect formulated by Péter Zöld as *disturbing* (Ciubotaru 2005: 14). In their case internal curiosity is replaced with political task, the aim to demonstrate the Romanian origin of the Csángós. The written volumes are the results of state (Ichim

arms, who sincerely and deeply consider themselves only and only as her sons, that is *Romanians* [emphasis by the author] (Pal 1942: 93). The distortion of the term *Roman Catholic* into *Romanian Catholic* dates back to the second half of the 19th century, as it is presented by Lükő quoting Jerney (Lükő 2002: 33).

⁸ The table was compiled based on Gazda 2005, and the criterion of selection was the existing data on the settlements.

⁹ The 1992 national census recorded only 525 Hungarian and around 2000 Csángós (and not Hungarian!) inhabitants in this area (Tánczos 1998: 181).

¹⁰ About the selective, tendentious use of demographic data see: Tánczos 1998.

1983, 1987) or clergy¹¹ assignments (Ciubotaru 1998, 2002, 2005). As locals¹², they are not motivated by the intellectual experience of “a journey back in time” either.

Hungarian scholars have mostly succeeded in charting the Moldavian Catholic settlements with the use of the related Latin, Hungarian, Romanian and other historical and statistical data. For example, in Lükő's appendix (Lükő 2002: 161–277), 488 settlements are given the ethnic structure and the evolution of Hungarian language-use until the 1930s. The data have been updated by Vilmos Tánczos, estimating the use of Hungarian and the ratio between it and the total population and the Catholic population in 85 settlements. In his opinion nowadays one quarter of the Moldavian Catholics speaks Hungarian (Tánczos 1999).¹³

Hungarian ethnographic research has been carried out first of all in Hungarian and within Hungarian-speaking groups.¹⁴ Gábor Lükő preferred the region of Săbăoani, while Kós and co. the region of Bacău, precisely 49 settlements (Kós–Szentimrei–Nagy 1981: 11). Péter Halász is familiar with all the regions. Setting out from historical sources, lately the ethnographic literature has used alternatively, as synonyms, the terms Moldavian Csángó, Csángó-Hungarian and Moldavian Catholics. The Romanian colleagues are shocked at the latter two, because they argue for the Romanian origin of the Csángós (Ciubotaru 2005: 415–416), and they object to the fact that the Hungarian researchers keep away from the Romanian-speaking groups.

The central points of view in the Hungarian research are the detailed recording, charting of the different types and variants of ethnographic phenomena¹⁵, outlining the evolutionary schemes, underscoring the ancient surviving strata¹⁶, the delimitation of the original, inherited Hungarian and the overtaken Moldavian Romanian elements, the comparison of the former with the Transylvanian Hungarian material. Károly Kós (1964, 1981) revealed the formation and transformation history of several ethnographic objects (items of clothing and furniture), Jenő Nagy placed the history of some items of clothing in a European context (Nagy 1981), Péter Halász studied issues of local terminology (Halász 2002: 115) backing up the historical and typological research of Lajos Szolnoky (1972) on material culture. Szentimrei (1981) described and compared piece by piece the terminology of textile processing and ornaments. Charting the comparison of Moldavian and Transylvanian material culture items, Gábor Lükő not only revealed the frontiers of the Csángó culture's inner division – delimitating Szekler Csángós and Hungarian Csángós – but also the connections of the locals with different Transylvanian regions, thus touching the question of origins (Lükő 1936b: 105–152). Academician László Kósa considers the methods of Lükő – with some reservation and correction – an example to

¹¹ The Roman Catholic District of Iași was the one to order the three-volume monograph.

¹² Dorinel Ichim is the director of the Museum of Bacău, Ion H. Ciubotaru is the researcher of the Folklore Archive of Iași and professor of the Al. I. Cuza University from the same city.

¹³ His map reflects the language situation of more than 100 Moldavian settlements in 1997.

¹⁴ A complete summary on this topic: Halász 2002: 19–31.

¹⁵ E.g. Károly Kós recorded and dated the schemes of 79 fireplaces, 49 dwelling-houses etc.

¹⁶ E.g. the closer relation between technique and ornaments or the ritual character of object use.

follow, mentioning that “the right results are based on questionable premises, needing correction and completion through newer research. [...] Diaspora life often gives birth to strong conservatorism, which in their case, in an Orthodox environment, was joined in a specific way by Roman Catholicism, a western ideology that had so much importance for them.” (Kósa 1990: 395). Károly Kós has tried to place the material culture into a social-historical context (Kós 1976, 1981), just like Péter Halász, who undertook the task of a more detailed, nuanced presentation of some topics (Halász 2002).

Some Romanian groups reject the interest manifested by Hungarian scholars in the Moldavian Hungarians under suspicion of irredentism (Pal 1942: 13), therefore they minimize the ration of Hungarians. Romanian literature deals with this question in a contradictory way: either it says that it is only 10% of the Catholic population (Ciubotaru 2005: 416), or that not even this 10% is Hungarian, but Magyarized Romanians who can speak Hungarian. It submits historical data to this aim, using it in a selective way, regarding the momentary interest. For example, Ion H. Ciubotaru contests the relevancy of Valea Seacă as the research base for Károly Kós and his team. He quotes Iosif Petru Pal, who considered that the village was founded by Transylvanian Greek Catholic Romanians (Ciubotaru 1998: 31). Although this religion was introduced by a decree of Lipoth I on August 23rd 1692, he suppresses the data provided by Bandinus from 1646 that he should know about from Năstase (Năstase 1936)¹⁷. In another chapter of his book he points out that the village was first mentioned in the 17th century, but he systematically suppresses that its inhabitants were Hungarians at that time (Ciubotaru 2005: 9).¹⁸ Nevertheless, he could have mentioned that according to two reports – from 1779 and 1782 – there had been also Greek Catholics living there (Pal 1942: 48).

The empirical statement of the Romanian scholars regarding the conformity of Catholic and Orthodox Moldavian material culture – including settlement structure (Ciubotaru 1998: 22), plot structure (ibid.), dwelling structure (ibid: 29), costume (ibid: 165), ornamental art (ibid: 91) – cannot be really checked due to lack of evidence. The results of Romanian ethnography before 1989, published in the series *Ethnographic Regions*, describe the characteristic topics of this science by counties, but without any further distinction by religion, ethnicity or else; not being a fashion in the communist era, in the 1980s the Hungarian origin of the Csángós was rejected¹⁹. The volumes on Bacău and Trotuș counties are characterized by superficiality and the repetition of stereotypes (Ichim 1987, 1991). Therefore we cannot discover much on either the Csángós or the Romanians of these areas, and we have no sufficient data for comparison and analysis. Instead of a whole row of appearance, only singular examples illustrate the phenomena, and only as an exception can we mention their differentiation by strata, region or else.

¹⁷ It is possible that he is not familiar with the whole text of Bandinus, because he quotes the study of Urechea (1895) instead of the Romanian edition of the report.

¹⁸ For more details on the Romanian literature's selective use of sources see: Tánzos 1998.

¹⁹ In this matter Dorinel Ichim quotes the volume of Mărtinaș, dedicating complete articles to the “Romanian” costume of the Csángós (Ichim 1987, 1991).

Even the more complete academic volume, the monograph on the Șoimuzul Mare Valley written also by Ciubotaru (1991) avoids any reference to the confessional structure of the population or to social status. Therefore the mentioned conformity – although it is not completely excluded – in most of the cases²⁰ is not supported by arguments.

It becomes more serious when the authors conclude something that cannot be concluded from a possible, but not demonstrated statement. Both Ichim and Ciubotaru affirm that the conformity of the two confession's material culture proves that their bearers are all a part of the Romanian ethnicity: "For the Moldavian Catholics traditional costume has always meant a sign of Romanian identity" (Ciubotaru 1998: 205, 420). "The Romanian identity of this community can be recognized in the ornamentals of the interiors as well" (ibid: 418). "Today we can state that even those (few) who might have had different ethnic origins, with their way of life and of thinking enrol themselves into the spiritual circle of Romanians" (ibid: 419).

Let us take a look at their arguments. According to Dorinel Ichim the "Romanian" origin of the Csángós is demonstrated by their "2000-year old Romanian costume. [...] It is certain – he writes – that only a local population from the region between the Carpathians, the Danube and the Black Sea could have maintained so far – in time and space – the Geto-Dacian ancestors' costume. There is this genre of popular creation, the costume that represents continuity, the undisputed element of a coexistence of long duration on Romanian lands, which determines the ethnic origin of a population living in a certain geographic area at a certain moment of time." The decisive pieces of clothing are "the Carpathian shirt, the *katrinca* [specific skirt], tight white linen culottes and the sandal" (Ichim 1991: 126)²¹. Ciubotaru agrees with him on the basis that on the monument from Adamclisi (Ciubotaru 1998: 177), the Dacians' clothes include, and even more, "represent a Romanian identity symbol" and "a proof of autochthonism"; he discovers the prototype of the Csángó women's "corny" hairstyle on a bronze application of Goddess Diana from Sarmisegetusa Ulpia Traiana. In his opinion, this corresponds to the Tracian-Dacian Goddess Bendis, who wears a half-moon, and to the bull symbolism of the ancient Persian, Hellene, Hindu and Roman Goddesses of Faith. The same attributes are possessed by Selena and Artemis Traupolos (Ciubotaru 1998: 169).²² His final conclusion therefore: "the morphologic and stylistic specificities that appear on the festive costumes of the Moldavian Catholics undoubtedly demonstrate the Romanian origin of these believers" (Ciubotaru 1998: 166). The arguments listed by Iosif Petru Pal for the Romanian character of the Csángó costume, namely that it is similar all over the Romanian areas, but it totally differs from that of the population of the Hungarian Plain (Pal 1942: 64),

²⁰ A contrary example also occurs: the mentioning of the Romanian parallels of the double yard and of the costume (Ciubotaru 1998: 30, 165).

²¹ We have to mention that Augustin Goia, a scholar in costume history, draws our attention to the fact that the pieces of clothing from the monument from Adamclisi, in spite of the myth spread within Romanian ethnology, structurally do not correspond to the Romanian costume (Goia 1982).

²² I have to mention that the piece fixing the hair of the Csángó girls has the form of a ring and not of a half-moon.

could be more plausible if the whole system of cultural phenomena should be the same within a certain ethnicity. But this is not so, not even with Romanians.

According to these researchers the costume should have remained unchanged for thousands of years, the facts of adaptation to a new location, borrowing from others, as stated by Hungarian scholars are excluded: the costume “is the territory where mutual borrowing from another nation is almost impossible, regarding the fact that inter-zone influences are very hard to be formed. For archaic mentality the change of costume equals with the loss of identity, and that is an extremely heavy spiritual burden” (Ciubotaru 1998: 166).²³ This sounds very good, and it can be true for shorter periods, but it does not take into consideration the possibility of adaptation to the circumstances and generally of the changing and transformation of culture: if this were true, we should be still wearing loin-cloth and mask today.

According to Ciubotaru the cultural elements that are present in the Romanians cannot be “specificities” of the Csángós at the same time. It is true that they are not Csángó-Hungarian ethnic specificities, but anyway, Kós is not speaking about these in this manner, but as about specificities of the changing in time of the ethnic culture borne by this group: “these double-yards had been well spread before, and in some places (e.g. Valea Mare, Valea Seacă, Tămășeni) even general” (Kós 1981: 28). This has been interpreted by Ciubotaru as it follows: “The Hungarian scholars do not hesitate to consider the double-yard as a »specific Csángós element«”(Ciubotaru 1998: 30). Therefore the cause of his grumbling is misreading and an inaccurate translation.

In the same author, a phenomenon’s role as a Romanian identity-mark is demonstrated by the denial of its Hungarian character. An excellent example is that of folk art. He allows only the techniques of free lines and the baroque ornamentals with flower motifs to be called Hungarian, and the possibility of purchasing it from a folk art store is regarded as a mitigating circumstance (Ciubotaru 1998: 36, 2005: 419). Geometric motifs are exclusively Romanian, and meander is the indisputable sign of Romanian spirituality (Ciubotaru 1998: 181). The Easter egg decoration technique used by the Csángós on White Sunday [the Sunday after Easter] – within they remove the red paint from it – is Romanian, because it is known in Vrancea and Suceava counties as well (Ciubotaru 2002: 282). His argument is supported – besides the Moldavian examples – by an 18th century note of an aristocrat from Hunedoara, but he forgets to mention that the name of the man was a Hungarian one: György Hortobágyi (Ciubotaru 2002: 283, 300). So he slides things, just like the quoted author, Cristina Ghiurițan, does in her main text, but at least the latter revealed the name of the mentioned aristocrat in a footnote (Ghiurițan 1976: 84). Because of lack of attention (or bad faith?) the author ignores all the other Hungarian comparisons and the trustfulness of the Hungarian scholars: “we do not find out what region István Sándor was referring to” (Ciubotaru 2002: 282). Although from the appropriate quoting apparatus (Malonyay 1933 III: 253–259) of the given works we know not only the location (Kaposvár, Hungary), but

²³ He “proves” his affirmation by the confession of one single (!) informant.

the name of the decorating woman as well (Györgyné Pamuki). He does not observe either the two similar eggs from Hungary that appear in Györffy's catalogue – seemingly known to him (Györffy 1925). The fact that the tradition of Easter egg decoration survived in a different way in different territories is used to demonstrate the Romanian origin of the Szekler and Csángó eggs, that were considered the most beautiful ones, although he should know from Ghiurițan that due to the impact of social and economic factors in the beginning of the 20th century this custom was dropped by Romanians as well, surviving only in certain areas like Maramureș, Bucovina, Bran, Săcele (Ghiurițan 1976: 85). And in Moldavia, of course. Referring to Malonyay, he states that the Hungarians from Trei Scaune used to make their eggs decorated by Romanian women, so he concludes that the motifs of the Szekler eggs should be of Romanian origin (Ciubotaru 2002: 285). Only that the quotation that was compiled from two separate paragraphs and its changed meaning is a forgery; Malonyay did not say anything like that (see: Malonyay 1909: 270). It is also objectionable that in order to answer such a question, he quotes although classic, but outdated works instead of contemporary literature.²⁴ As a result, no wonder that – lead by prejudices – he “educates” not only the presenter of the sources, Dénes Kovács, but also those living in the quoted areas and practicing this custom: he knows better than them which motif can be combined with the other and which cannot (Ciubotaru 2002: 286).

We summarize and conclude the differences between the two research groups with another example: Kós stated that because the Csángós have had no intelligentsia to transmit elements of elite culture, there have been no newer influences of style in their folklore, thus their folk art “has no flourish to overshadow reality and the original meanings” (Kós 1981: 8). Ciubotaru understands the following: “has no aspects to hide from the point of view of understanding (ethnic) origins” (Ciubotaru 1998: 166). These misinterpretations, being unintentional, pathological or of bad faith, due to their nature and content, will generate mistrust instead of cooperation between the author and the reader.

Regardless of the facts mentioned above, Ciubotaru's three-volume work contains many extremely important data on the culture of the Moldavian Catholics. It is regrettable that the signalled prejudice deprives it of its validity.

Some Specificities and Relations of the Moldavian Popular Culture

In the following we shall try to delimitate some specificities of the Csángó material culture, to outline its spatial, temporal and ethnic limits, thus signalling the degree of reality of our debate partners' statements.

²⁴ When writing about Hungarian Easter egg decorations, the study of Erzsébet Györgyi (1974) cannot be avoided.

Types of Settlements

According to the Romanian ethnographic literature, the types of villages cannot be tied to nationalities or to time. They appear in a mixed way and they also cross all language frontiers (Vuia 1975: 173). It is true, for example the entangled village of the Transylvanian and Subcarpathian areas is also very specific to the North-Moldavian Romanians (Vuia 1960: 44, Ciubotaru 2005: 416), but it also appears at the Hungarians as well (Bárth 1997: 40). In their case, animal breeding has a major role.

Hungarian literature considers that besides geographic environment and ways of farming the social factor has a determining role: history, first of all local history, has had a major part in the formation of the villages' image, and vice versa, the image of a village tells us about the time of its formation and about its turning points in time (Bárth 1997: 39). For example, Gábor Lükő concludes from the density of the Csángó settlements and from their favourable location – at crossroads, at the gates of mountains, at the mouth of rivers – that their inhabitants settled down at the same time as the Moldavian Romanians, as it is supported by documents (Lükő 2002: 15) and admitted by Nicolae Iorga as well: “already in the 13th century they descended to the territory of the Cumanian bishopric, and got to the waters of the river Siret” (Iorga 1972 II: 229 quoted by Gazda 2005: 211). Károly Kós explains the dense settlement network of the plains along the Siret with the gradual conquest of these marshy unpopulated lands. He argues relying on the fact that in the territories along the Trotuş and the Tazlău, inhabited mostly by Romanians, the Hungarian villages are more rare, and the Szeklers inhabiting the valleys of the Oituz and Uz also tried their luck in unpopulated areas (Kós 1976: 170, 1981: 17–18).

The same author states that the past of these settlements is reflected by their spatial configuration and street structure. The older villages are of two kinds: closed and open ones. The closed ones were formed by the simultaneous settlement of independent groups organized on the bases of blood relation and living on communal estates: according to the local tradition – he says (Kós 1976: 216) – this is the case of Trebiş (1428)²⁵, Luizi-Călugăra (1498)²⁶ and Cleja (1588)²⁷. We can add also Săbăoani (1453)²⁸. The members of these settling groups had been located next to each other on familial bases, taking the fields into communal possession. Later on the plots and the rights regarding the use of the fields were more and more individualised. At Oneşti the families of the same clan could be found on the same street (Kós 1976: 173). “These villages, being »răzeş« ones, had several privileges, and they had been living like the Szeklers until the Fanariot reign, when the “boyars” took these over” (Kós 1976: 170, 216). If these

²⁵ Ibid. 488. The mentioned year shows the first documented mentioning of the village (cf. Costăchescu 1931–1932).

²⁶ Bogdan1913 II: 127–129.

²⁷ Coşa 2001: 20. (Catalog de documente din Arhivele Statului Iaşi. Moldova Vol. I.)

²⁸ Halász 1997: 4.

villages had become overpopulated, they would form another settlement in the outskirts (Tufescu 1934, Stahl 1958: 199, Kós 1976: 170, 216).²⁹ An example is Șomușca, a satellite of Cleja (Jerney 1851 I: 85).

The former open settlements were formed – without external or top-down directives – from several nuclei, by settlers arriving from many places over a long period of time, as it is shown by local tradition and family names. Valea Seacă (1420)³⁰ was formed from nine parts, while Lespezi (1634, 1752)³¹ from five (Kós 1981: 18). “These parts were formed from familial households: the »nations« [families, clans] settled down on one part or the other of the village, and in many cases some of the smaller streets bear the names of the families even today” (Kós 1976: 73). The author names 17 streets from Lespezi as an example.³² The bases of the street network are those short blind alleys that were formed on the plot of a settling ancestor leader when the descendants had to divide the land among themselves so that each of them would have a separate entry. Thus the bending communal streets had been formed to tie the mentioned alleys together (Kós 1981: 18).

These settlements reflecting the fundamental existence of blood relations with the related households next to each other and with the streets formed by the division of ancient plots are called clan settlements by the Hungarian ethnographic literature (Bárh 1997: 57–59, Paládi-Kovács 2000:147–152).

The newer closed villages (*újfaluk* or *szilistyéek*) had been formed outside the mother village as a result of aristocratic, and later state relocation: these are of a uniform structure, the engineers measuring out equal similarly shaped parcels. These had been gradually inhabited by the poorer families of the mother village. The village of Nicolae Bălcescu is such an example, dictated by the state in the 20th century and with Valea Seacă as mother village (Kós 1976: 170). In the same way, Garoafele was formed including the former inhabitants of Pustiana.³³ In these settlements the limits were determined by poverty, and the new plots extended the outskirts toward the water or the railway: “the poor were moving in accordance with their life conditions, so here the bases of neighbourhood were not the kinship relations, but the common fate” (Kós 1976: 174).

Using methods of comparison, Károly Kós states that the clan settlements of the Csángós are a result of (genetic) Transylvanian relations, more precisely Szekler relations, thus it is a pattern brought by those who came from Szeklerland and settled down in Moldavia (Kós 1981: 21). According to Ion H. Ciubotaru, it was taken over from the Romanians, thus proving the Romanian origin of the Csángós. His main argument is that it was once very well spread in Botoșani and Neamț counties (Ciubotaru 1998: 21).

²⁹ According to Rosetti “the răzeși of Moldova come from two or three common ancestor or from more cousins originally possessing the whole village. There had been no exceptions. (Rosetti 1907: 31)

³⁰ Timon 1754: 4, 21.

³¹ Rosetti 1889. But it is possible that the first inhabitants were Romanians, while the Hungarians settling after the events from Siculeni (quoted by Halász 1983: 3).

³² Ződ, János, Ádám, Kompót Feri, András Júzi (Józsi), Szentes, Bálint, Simon Péter, Simon István, Gál, Bartos, Kerekes, Júzi, Sánta Júzi, Komán Péter, Farkas, Fazekas.

³³ 16 families were settled here in 1921. Information kindly provided by László Gazda.

The frequent apparition of clan villages among the Romanians can really be demonstrated: we know from Henri H. Stahl that the inhabitants of the Moldavian “răzeș” villages, regardless of their ethnic belonging, inherited the inner and outer lands on the bases of familial descent (Stahl 2002: 93–118). No such structures could be formed in feudal villages, but the originally free, later on serf villages could maintain their privileges by paying taxes to the landowner (Stahl 2002: 127–128). The same could be seen regarding the so-called “slobozia” (Stahl 1965: 338). Due to the vicissitudes of history, to warfare and epidemics some villages became deserted during the 16th–18th centuries, thus the rulers of these lands settled workforce from abroad (Polish, Russians, Hungarians, Greeks, Serbs), and these settlements had their temporary privileges. Such a settlement was Arini, settled by Sturdza in 1817 (Repertoriul comunelor catolice din Moldova), Vladnic near Slobozia Nănești, which had probably evolved from a refugee camp, because of the positive attitude of its master towards the newcomers (Racoviță 1895: 383) The inhabitants of these villages had access to plenty of land, therefore all the conditions were secured for the formation of clan villages. The same can be stated about those who gained some privileges due to their craftsmanship. For example, those from Tîrgu Trotuș: “The original inhabitants of this village still possess their lands under the condition to be on duty at the salt mine on a weekly basis; but this probably was not the case in elder times” (Petrás Incze 2004: 81–82) Further privileges can be considered in the case of Solonț (for salt mining and trade), Bahna (for customs), Oituz, Pângărești and Satu Nou (for border-guards), Fărăoani (for vineyards) and the market places: Onești, Sascut-Sat, Roman, Săbăoani, Tescan, Scheia, Ciugheș and others (Gazda 2007).

Thus the preconditions of clan village formation are: 1. the possession of a plot of a considerable size, 2. the right to use it freely (structuring, building), 3. the right to do anything with it (e.g. divide it), 4. the need for the family to remain together. In Hungary these aspects characterised – besides nobiliary settlements – the central part of the socially mixed villages, mostly inhabited by nobles, and the privileged regions, even if they were no clan villages (Barabás 1960: 225–226).

The custom law of dividing the lands on the bases of clan-organization was brought by the Hungarians from their ancient lands of origin (Mesterházi 1980: 46, 77–78, 85). During feudalism this right was given only to the nobles and to the Szeklers, who were given collective nobility (Bánkiné Molnár 2005). The privileges of the latter were no taxes (except for festive gifts) and autonomy. The conquering Hungarians settled down dividing the territories of the country among the clans. The territories of the clans had been used commonly, except for the building plot. Later on the lands entered in the possession of families through delimitation and primordial occupation. After turning to agriculture, clan land communities turned into village land communities. The pastures and woods remained common, while the fields were divided among the villagers for regular periods, usually decided by lot (Szádeczky-Kardos 1993: 27).³⁴

³⁴ Cf. <http://ajkhok.elte.hu/jegyzettar/jegyzetek/Magyar%20%E1llam-%20%E9s%20jogt%F6rt%E9net/Majt1.doc> és <http://utassy-csalad.extra.hu>.

Some of the Moldavian Hungarian villages are very old. From the meaning and the Hungarian origin of the term *răzeș*, the location of the Romanian *răzeș* villages near the Hungarian ones, their local names, some of them appearing in the early possession documents, the Hungarian conscience (regarding origin) and traditions³⁵ of some of the Romanian villages (Iosupeni and Bârlad) and from the correspondence of the phenomenon with the Hungarian one, Mikecs concludes that the initiative and the pattern was Hungarian. He thinks that in the early Middle Ages the Hungarians took this form with them and spread it within the surrounding Romanian communities. The communal possessions from the period of the early Hungarian settlements had been confirmed by the Romanian reigning princes through official documents (Mikecs 1989: 160–163, Rosetti 1907: 111). So the *răzeși* were free peasants paying their taxes only to the state, having possessions confirmed by state documents (Petrás Incze 2004: 46), descending from one or the other clan, inheriting their own legal parts. These parts were possessions that could be sold, bought or inherited. Because of their possessions they were considered a kind of lower nobles (Petrás Incze 2004: 45). About the confirmation of the primordial possessions (plough-land, hayfield, vineyard, apiary) the first mentioning comes from the code of law of reigning prince Vasile Lupu (Pravila lui Vasile Lupu, 1646): all these can be inherited by their descendants (Rosetti 1907: 111).

Analysing the past of the Romanian free peasants from Moldavia, especially Vrancea, Stahl considered that in the first phase of free possession there was no need “to seek for the ancestors”; this became needed only with the final division of the outer lands, and the case of the inner lands came even later (Stahl 2001:93-118). If he and the Hungarian historians are right, then clan village structure in Moldavia had really developed following a Hungarian pattern. But it could emerge and survive only within those specific social conditions.

The image of the old city-like settlements was really similar to the Middle Age villages and market-towns from Hungary. Săbăoani was surrounded by a tall fence consolidated with embankments, moats and gates (Halász 2005), protecting the settlement from not wanted elements and from the wandering animals, plus controlling the passing traffic. “Data on village fences has survived from all over the Hungarian-language area, from the Upper-Őrség to Moldavia. Of course, it appeared not only among Hungarians, but among the coexisting other nations as well. It had been especially popular among the Transylvanian Romanian villages at the beginning of the 20th century.” (Báth 1997: 47) On the sketch of the city Roman we can outline the influence of the Transylvanian settlements and those from the upper valleys of the Tisza (Gazda 2005: 30).³⁶ The ethnicity-based rotation of the function of village mayor in the Moldavian cities (e.g. Cotnari, Bacău, Târgu Trotuș) referred to the similar jurisdictional status of the different ethnic groups (Binder 1982: 106–127 quoted by Gazda 2005: 52, 96, 187).

³⁵ In this matter he quotes Petrás Incze (2004: 49).

³⁶ His reference is page 100 from Condrea Petru 1891: *Dicționar Geografic al Județului Roman*. București.

Types of Plot: the Chain Yard

The frequent appearance of the double or chain yard³⁷ among the Moldavian Csángós was first mentioned by Lükő (2002: 124–127), pointing to the possibility of their relation with the neighbouring Romanians and the eastern nations. Kós considers these as parts of the grouped, blind alley-type settlements, stating their gradual withdrawal among the Csángós (Kós 1981: 18). Informing us about the widespread double yards within Romanian, Hungarian, Russian, South-Swedish environments, in the Alps, in South-Tyrol, Normandy, Picardy and Artois, orienting our attention to their relation with animal breeding, he also considers that their separate appearance could be a possibility. He agrees with Béla Gunda, who “arrived at the same conclusion following a different way” (Vuia 1961: 48).

Types of Dwellings

The first scholar to deal with the traditional Moldavian Hungarian house – surrounded by an embankment, with an entrance hall (*pitvar*) and two rooms – was Gábor Lükő. He considered it as corresponding to the basic type of the “Szekler house”, at least in its major aspects, but in Szeklerland the entrance hall was only limited with a fence (*eresz*), in Moldavia it was built in (*szin*). Plus the Szekler house had two, while the Moldavian one had three windows. From the Ukrainian origin and the meaning “shadow” of the term *szin*, plus from the fact that this word was also known in Szeklerland, but it meant the summer kitchen, Lükő concluded that this “Eastern-Hungarian” or “Szekler house” that differed very much from the Western-European type evolved from the single-room type in a Ukrainian environment (Lükő 2002: 101–104). Károly Kós draws 51 houses and he states that the Moldavian Hungarian and the Szekler houses had had the same evolution down to the details until the last 100 years, when they took separate ways (Kós 1981: 77–78). The reference to Szeklerland bothers Ciubotaru a lot (Ciubotaru 1998: 30).³⁸ The two-room house with an entrance hall and the evolved three-room house is considered to be an own specific type by Vuia also, who signals its presence in Northern Moldavia and in Southern Romania as well (Vuia 1960: 50). The former appears in the system of Froleč az type A. 1., being “a Central Eastern European form” present in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria. The latter (type A. 3.) is considered by Froleč as “Carpathian-Danubian form”, appearing only in Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia. The one related to the evolved Szekler house (type B. 5.) is named “Central European” by the same author, appearing in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia. According to the drawings of Kós, another type, a three-room house also can

³⁷ It is the archaic type of plot structure, where all the farm-building are situated in a delimited area next to the street, while the dwelling-house is inside the plot, half-way or in the back (cf. Filep 1977: 229).

³⁸ I have to mention here that the Romanian literature has published very few basic house sketches.

be found at the Csángós, a type labelled B. 4. by Froleč, appearing in all the so-far mentioned countries, except Bulgaria (Froleč 1989: 135, 139–142). Thus the Csángó house types mostly belong to more widely spread Central Eastern European types and only to a shorter extent to the Carpathian–Danubian one.³⁹

Referring to Crăiniceanu, Dorinel Ichim states that until the end of the 19th century serfs had been living in single-room houses, while the răzeși in houses with entrance halls. With the improving conditions given by land division, the one-room type had withdrawn. Since then the inhabitants used to stay in the kitchen (chiler) that was attached to the house (Ichim 1987: 75).

Types of Fireplaces

Lükő states that the ovens of the Moldavian Hungarians are lower and flatter than the Szekler ones. Compared to the ovens from Szeklerland, the Moldavian ones are open on their lower part, the actual fireplace is never cubic with tiles, but plastered (later on built of brick), often structured by moulding, and with the chimneys not rising to the attic, as in Szeklerland, but to the eaves. The parallels of all these elements can be seen on the Someș–Tisa line (Balassa 1994: 249). According to Lükő, the use of the flat oven in Moldavia and in the valley of the Someș does not prove the direct connection of these two territories, but refers to the Northern Slavians (Lükő 2002: 118). Kós also considers the higher flat ovens, also used as a bed, a Ukrainian influence (Kós 1982: 8). In rooms without floorboards or out in the yards he still finds some fireplaces without any chimneys, but in those with floorboards and roof there is always a kind of chimney (Kós 1982: 84). The author published 74 drawings.

Costume

The most specific costume of the Moldavian Hungarian women typologically corresponds to the Western Moldavian Romanian one. Its specific elements: shouldered blouse, rectangular skirt, wide belt. The specific blouse – besides Moldavia and Southern Romania (Bănățeanu–Stoica 1988: 76, Stoica–Petrescu–Bocșe 1985: 111, Formagiù 1974: 34–35) – can be found partly in Ukraine (Holme 1912: 341–344, Раманюк, Михасб 1981, pictures nr. 8, 11, 125, 329), Slovakia, South of Poland, Bulgaria (Зеленчик – Лившиц – Хынку 1968, ***1961: 28–30, picture nr 68., Телбизова–Телбизов 1958: 25–33, Kwasnik 1990–1991: 55) and partly in Yugoslavia (Bănățeanu–Stoica 1988: 76). It presents specific sleeves and ornaments that can be observed on the blouses of the prince's wives from the 16th and 17th centuries (Niculescu 1970: 159). Its neck is pulled together with cotton yarn, a practice called *bezáró* in Hungarian, also *brezărău* in Romanian. Because of its name Vuia considered it of Hungarian origin, reflecting on the fact that it can also

³⁹ The Balkanian types are new ones (Kós 1981, drawings no. 77, 93).

be found in other Hungarian groups (e.g. in the valley of Crișul Negru in Transylvania) (Vuia 1975: 57). The neck of the ladies' blouse from the Middle Ages had a specific collar (Niculescu 1970: 159). The Romanian ethnographic literature considers the mentioned blouse as a secondary type of the "Carpathian" one, being of Dacian origin and preserved continuously by the Transylvanian Romanians. Based on the complementary presence of the two, he states that the Romanian costume is "uniform". The blouse with the sleeves broadened on the sides can be found among the Slav populations and several Hungarian ethnic groups (in Călata, in Rimetea, in the valley of Crișul Negru). In Western Europe it had been spread in the period of the Renaissance, reaching even America through the Spanish invasions. The traditional skirt, the *katrinca*, on her old Hungarian name *kerekítő*, in this straight form cannot be found elsewhere else in Romania other than in Moldavia, in the South-West of the country, in the Transylvanian parts of some of the valleys from the Eastern Carpathians, thus at the Romanians from Someșul Mare area, from Toplița, Tulgheș, Întorsura Buzăului and Bran, plus in the Csángós of Ghimeș (Formagiu 1974: 76, Kós 1964: 171). It is generally widespread among the Ukrainians in Northern Moldavia; it also can be found among the Southern Russians, but made from a thicker material, completing the "real" clothes in Hungarians as well as in people living north of the Eurasian mountains (Kós 1976: 172, 175). A skirt made of silk, similar to the one that the Csángó girls are wearing (*fota*), "can be found in the classical areas of silk industry, in India, Ceylon, Burma, and it also appears in Vietnam", but east from there it is made of other materials. In the South-East it is the only piece of clothing women used to wear, tied with a belt (Kós 1976: 172). Romanian literature considers the Southern Romanian *vâlnic*, the *androc* and the Hungarian *muszuly* from Călata as variants of the "veil skirt" (Formagiu 1974: 74–75), so it sees the "kerekítő" as the ancient original form, while the others as results of inner evolution (Kós 1964). The same literature affirms the uniform character of the Romanian folk costume based on the complementary spreading of these (evolutionary) variants. We do not know if it was like that, but skirts similar to the *muszuly* have also been widely spread among the Eastern and Northern Slav nations and among the Estonians (Kós 1965: 176–177).

Ion Ciubotaru mentions the "horn wearing" (plaited hair on a wire circle) of the Moldavian Catholic women as a phenomenon unknown among Hungarians, being a sign of Romanian identity. This specific wearing is unknown in other places both among Hungarians and among Romanians. We know from Lükő that it was a sign of reaching an age, of entering the group of the big girls. Both the loss of this hairdo and the dissolution of the groups was a result of clerical forbiddance (Lükő 1936: 62). The affirmation of Ciubotaru according to which the hair circle was unknown among Hungarians is false: according to Alice Gáborján it was generally spread among women (Gáborján 1993: 70), and it also appears in quite recent fieldworks from the margins of Szeklerland, from Racoșul de Sus (Gazda–Haáz 1998: 32–33). It was also in fashion in Western Europe during the 17th century (Gáborján 1993: 70). In this period in Transylvania aristocratic women plaited their hair in a similar manner, but we can see a circle neither in the hair of the Szekler girl, nor in the hair of the privileged Romanian bride from Făgăraș (Gazda

1998: 59, *Viseletalbum* 1990: 8, picture nr. 62). This plaited wreath-like style was included into the Hungarian peasant costume in the 19th century (Gáborján 1993: 70). The round drifting of the hair resulted in a similar style that was a fashion during the Gothic period (Gáborján 1976, picture nr. 77), being preserved in the combing of little girls in different points of the Hungarian-language area (Gáborján 1976: 80, Gazda 1980: 65).

It is hard to follow why people called the Moldavian Csángó hair-style “horn style” (*broboadă cu coarnă*) (Ciubotaru 1998: 420). No such Hungarian term has appeared in Moldavia in the 19th century or later on. As a comparison, Chelcea presents two drawings on Mongol hair-styles, a female portrait painted by Van Eyk and three photographs from Făgăraș, the latter showing how the white kerchief was fixed on two rigid “buns” (Ciubotaru 1998: 160). The Moldavian Csángós covered the *bun* with different textiles (called among the locals *fez*, *kerpa*, *csepesz*), tying around another one (Chelcea 1970). The *fez* was a headdress of Turkish origin, worn also by Ukrainian and Bulgarian peasant women. This had spread among the Moldavian Romanians and Hungarians in the 19th century as an urban, noble influence, but by the first part of the 20th century it had become a rarity (Lükő 1936b: 66).⁴⁰ The Slav *kerpa*, that is “the kerchief twisted onto one’s head” spread among the Hungarians along the Bistrița also as an urban influence, similarly to the Romanians from Făgăraș, the Bulgarians from Caraș and the Ukrainians, in the case of the latter showing simpler forms” (Lükő 2002: 94–95). The *csepesz*, also an urban influence, was worn by Moldavian Szekler women. The long kerchief tied across it in any possible way – in the opinion of Ciubotaru – would be also alien to the Hungarians, but it appears in the Romanians and in the archaic regions of Europe, for example in Bretagne (Ciubotaru 1998: 420). He does not know that in a historical perspective, it is far from being alien: a 17th-century craftsman’s wife was wearing it, just like a woman from Săcădate, the hajdu’s wife, an old woman from Cluj-Napoca, and also a Szekler girl was holding it on her arms (*Viseletalbum*, pictures nr. 12, 1, 10, 34, 36, 8). In 1842 the whole village of Zabola (Trei Scaune region) earned its living from the weaving of tight, striped long kerchiefs. At that time in Szeklerland only the “wealthier” women twisted it “so gracefully, in the shape of a turban, falling in the back around their headdress”. Fifteen years later the “cloth from abroad exiled this item from the field of circulation” (Orbán 1869: 136, 28, 79, 148, 1871: 141, 1868: 84). This summary of history and geography of use shows that all these items had disappeared from the material culture of the Hungarians only in the middle of the 19th century. It is a question of fact that women’s headdresses were put for the first time on the head of the subjects on the occasion of the wedding, within a ritual. Besides that the mythological relations exposed by Ciubotaru cannot be demonstrated.

Ciubotaru has found among the Moldavian Csángós only fur-coats that were open on their forepart, therefore he exposes his supposition that the fur-coats that are closed on their forepart are of Romanian origin, but he is forced to relate to the costume of the Csángós from Ghimeș and that of Rimetea (Ciubotaru 1998: 178). Anyway, this piece

⁴⁰ Quoting Scheludko, Ischirkoff and Petrás Incze.

of clothing can also be found in several locations in Szeklerland, such as Gheorghieni (Orbán 1869a: 79), Odorheiu Secuiesc and Trei Scaune (Malonyay 1909: 36).

We should deal with only one more piece of clothing, and that is the long broad-cloth clothes. Ciubotaru says that at Arini the felt cloak had “very long and very wide sleeves”, and it had been worn thrown over one’s shoulder in all the Catholic villages, possibly as a Transylvanian influence (Ciubotaru 1998: 180). The sleeves longer than one’s fingers is an eastern element in the Hungarian costume: in the Illustrated Chronicle from the 14th century the first Hungarian settlers and the strangers coming from east are presented in such clothes. This specificity had been accentuated by the Ottoman-Turk influences from the period of their domination (Gáborján 1985–1988: 25–26). The 17th century Transylvanian Album of Costumes presents several such clothes worn by Saxon, Hungarian, Romanian and Jewish men, plus on a Hungarian woman (Viseletalbum, pictures nr. 16, 17, 21, 34, 41, 44, 49, 55). This early eastern pattern has been preserved also in the Hungarian peasant costumes of Northern Hungary, Transdanubia and the Great Hungarian Plain (Gáborján 1985–1988: 26).

Ornaments – Techniques and Compositions

The newer, nature-based strata of the Moldavian Csángó ornaments are probably of Romanian intermediation. It is completely different from the geometric stratum, which can be found all over Europe, in Western and Southern Asia and among the American Indians, being re-intermediated by the Renaissance, thus widespread all over the archaic Hungarian regions as well. The same goes for the Easter egg painting styles presenting free lines and strong stylising, which – in opposition with Ciubotaru’s ideas – are also known among the Hungarians (Györgyi 1974). Gábor Lükő’s remarks on the rectangular motifs of the Szekler carpets and the acute angle ones of the Moldavian Hungarian carpets deserve much more attention, but for supporting and interpreting it further research is needed. So the supposed Romanian origin of the geometric textile motifs and its lack among Hungarians is a false statement in the Romanian literature (cf. Barabás 1963: 93). The specific, very old techniques of embroidery – due to the coincidence of stitch-type and ornament (see Gazdáné Olosz 2001) – are known in neither other Hungarian nor other Romanian groups, and at the same time the embroidery is considered a Moldavian Hungarian specificity by both Hungarian and Romanian sources (Ciocan 1924: 20, Petrás 2004: 36, 38). Textile embroidery matching forms and names with the Moldavian Csángó one can be revealed not only among Hungarians and Romanians, but also in other nations: Kyrgyz (Ivanov–Antipina 1968), Turks (Gazda 2000) and Estonians (Rosenberga 1997). An example can be the double hook motif called *ram-horns* that appears even on Turkish carpets (Gazda 2000: 209), the wavy lines named *snakes* etc. Hungarian folk art presents a concentrating style, composing the motifs onto accentuated spots and stripes, while the Romanian one often prefers dispersed ornaments. The symbolic use of the ornaments and the ornamented objects can be found in both nations; it is an archaic specificity. E.g. the use of the Easter egg in the funeral cult and the custom of godfathership is also known

among Hungarians, too (Gazda 2006). Therefore the argument according to which the ornament, its name and symbolic use, is a Romanian specificity only because it can be found at the Romanians too, is untenable.

From Material Culture to Ethnic Identity and Back

Culture, as the indispensable tool in the organization of human life, appears and changes strongly tied and in mutual determination with society. An individual inherits it as direct making, just like in the case of his/her social medium, family and ethnicity. Its components that change in time and space often cross ethnic borders, becoming a property of several nations at the same time, but in every case within a little bit different system. Also the character, the existence in time, the transformational rhythm, the direction of spreading and the organizational way of its components can differ not only across nations but within the same community in different periods of time as well. A culture carried by a certain ethnicity at a certain time is called ethnic culture. This does not prove to be an ethnic culture because some of the components cannot be found in other ethnicities, but because the culture as a whole belongs to a certain ethnicity (Sárkány 1980: 49). Ethnic culture can include ethnic specificities, that is elements that are related to the origin of the ethnicity or conclude from an elder period of its historical evolution, and so (with their existence or on the contrary, with their lack) they really and constantly distinguish that ethnicity from another next to it (Barabás 1963: 86–88). Most of the cultural differences work on a short term, since ethnic differences can be explained by the phase-differences of the general phenomena's spreading rate.

An ethnic group usually uses its own ethnic culture in a spontaneous way; people do not necessarily become conscious of their ethnic specificities. Dividing this culture's phenomena, its history of becoming, the spreading in time and space of its components, revealing the contact zones and the ways of dispersion are all tasks of the scholars. In the 19th and 20th centuries the study of these aspects was undertaken by ethnography. The ethnographers have been able to reveal concrete ethnic specificities but few in number and with lots of uncertainty. Only in the last few decades has research focused on how people use some elements of their culture to delimit themselves from their neighbours and which elements they choose for this purpose. It turned out that these elements that have become so important can be of very small importance on their own in the system of the very culture.

In the following we shall present the spontaneous, general, specific and delimitating elements of the Moldavian Catholics' culture. We shall see why this group can be called an ethnicity, and therefore its culture an ethnic culture.

As we could see above, the major components of the Moldavian Catholics' pre-modern culture and its relations in space and time were revealed, presented and characterized by János Petrás Incze, Gábor Lükő, Károly Kós, Judit Szentimrei, Jenő Nagy, Péter Halász, Ella Gazdáné Olosz, Ion H. Ciubotaru and others. Thanks to their works, we became familiar with a group's work-culture, in which animal breeding, bee-keeping, fishing,

cereal culture, partly market-oriented (Lükő 2002: 32) vine-growing horticulture, craftsmanship and weaving-spinning-embroidery had a major role. We could discover their blind-alley settlement structure, their specific interiors, their specific male and female costumes, their objects with a symbolic function, their materials used in a symbolic way.

Some elements of their material culture were brought by the Moldavian Catholics from their Transylvanian place of origin, while others were discovered in their new homes (Kós 1976: 109). They brought from Transylvania the forms of the plug and the sledge, their sickles, hand-threshers, depositing barns, tools of bee-breeding and fishing, distaff, tools of pottery, technological knowledge – including the terms of the working stages different from the Moldavian one –, some items of their costume, mainly headdresses and maybe their customs related to settlement organization. They discovered in Moldavia maze-plantations and hives, sugar-beet plantations; they enriched their tools of fishing and vine-growing and started to keep herds of sheep and to process wool. The Transylvanian houses were completed with the specific kitchen (the *kilér*) and the low round table also became a common piece of their interiors (Kós 1976, 1981).

This culture included elements that were alike in Transylvania and Moldavia. It was the case of the two-room house with an entrance hall, plus its further evolved types, the long kerchief used as a headdress, the jerkin, several motifs and compositions of the geometrical ornamentals. The straight skirt and the shouldered blouse referred to their eastern, northern and southern neighbours, the Orthodox Romanians, Ukrainians and Bulgarians. The late settlers overtook these elements, adapting to the costumes worn in their environment. We can presume, but we cannot demonstrate, that the mentioned skirt as the most elementary piece of clothing had been also known in Transylvania, thus it could have evolved into the *muszuly* (just like to the *vâlnic* from Oltenia) and into the close skirt. Thus the early settlers could have taken it with them into Moldavia. Even if the Hungarian term for the *katrinca* (*kerekítő*) is not a real proof, it is thought-provoking why the collar-technique of the additional blouse is called by both the Transylvanian and the Moldavian Romanians *bezáró* (*bezărău*, *brezărău*).

The Moldavian Csángó Hungarians were characterized by their own culture even if several of its elements had been also a part of the surrounding Romanian or Ukrainian culture. The difference was made by the intensity of certain phenomena. At the time when Romanians were not wearing their traditional costume, but the Csángós were, the straight skirt costume was already a part of their own ethnic culture. Ethnic cultures characterized their wearers by their own spontaneous relation to them. Wearers generally used them as a naturally given thing, inheriting them and adapting them to the given circumstances. They emphasized only one or the other element in order to delimit themselves from the other surrounding ethnicities. These elements, which could have been quite important or insignificant in other terms, by their function of identity exposition served the expression of ethnic consciousness, presented an outstanding value together with the language and the historical consciousness. “These bloodline, linguistic, customary or other connections represent already by themselves a very

strong, sometimes unchangeable force of convergence” (Degregori 2006)⁴¹. Their importance is related not only to the fulfilment of needs, to common interests or moral commitment, but to the absolute importance given exactly by these bonds. As advanced is a group’s self-consciousness, as many symbols of identity it will use for delimiting itself.

The first aspect that refers to the Moldavian Csángós as a Hungarian ethnic group is their consciousness regarding their Hungarian origin. This was presented by early historical sources (Bandinus), plus other authors, e.g. Iorga regarding Huși (Iorga 1972: 195), the authors of the Great Geographic Dictionary regarding Butea (Lahovari–Brătianu–Tocilescu 1900 II.), Jerney (1851) regarding Gioseni and Pîrgărești, Ciocan regarding the Catholics in the Roman area (Ciocan 1924: 18). The last one wrote: “Although they are dealt with properly in Romania, they have the face to call themselves Hungarian, a term they care a lot about. The ignorant ones do not even know what country they live in” (Ciocan 1924: 18). These fragments that we are interested in were quoted recently by László Gazda (Gazda 2005: 44–45, 58, 85, 226). But also the more or less recent ethnographic sources present their origin related to Hungarian historic events. E.g. according to the people of Săbăoani *they arrived with Árpád, most of the settlers went to Pannonia, others stayed here* (Gazda é.n.: 10). Those from Tuta and Valea Rea know that *they came earlier than the Romanians* (Gazda é.n.: 190, Pozsony 2005), while those from Arini date their settlement back to the *times of Szent László or the times of the wars against the Turks* (Gazda 2005: 141). The people from Pârgărești – according to a local official from 1972 – arrived here because King Mátyás had become related to Ștefan cel Mare and he gave him some Szeklers to protect the frontiers of his principality. The people from Satu Nou had been guarding the Coșna, and as a reward, they were exempted from all services (Gazda 2005: 221). The Southern Csángós were brought by Alexandru cel Bun *to be farmers, so the Romanians could learn from them and become good farmers themselves* (Gazda é.n.: 11). The people from Florești are refugees of the Szekler rebellion after Mihai Viteazul (Gazda 2005: 176–177). The houses from Pârgărești were burnt down by the Tatars, so the inhabitants rebuilt them a little bit higher, and this is where the name of Satu Nou comes from (Gazda 2005: 222). The inhabitants of Slănic know that *under Maria Theresa seven settlers came here from Hungary. The first one was Pista Csihán*.⁴² They were experienced miners, *getting the salt down to Galați in their wagons* (Gazda 2005: 214). At Frumoasa *there came three men from Hungary, they formed this village* (Gazda 2005: 151). Those from Tărăța⁴³ and from Lespezi are also able to name the first settlers (Józsi Selyem); moreover, according to the local tradition the skull of the latter was kept and can be seen today (Gazda 2005: 99). At Pralea people know that the first settlers were Károly Szabó from Brețcu and Mihály Péntzes from Lemnia (Gazda 2005: 247). Beside the origin of the settlers, they can also name the cause of their arrival: the people of Vladnic came after the repression in Siculeni (Gazda 2005: 135), those from Vizantea were Szeklers from Trei Scaune region (Gazda 2005: 242). Those from Fundu

⁴¹ The author refers to Geertz.

⁴² The number seven could be related to the traditions of clan settlement structure (cf. Kós 1972).

⁴³ They arrived from Transylvania, the first settlers being the Elek family (Gazda 2005: 168).

Răcăciuni arrived 300 years before from other Moldavian Hungarian villages (Galbeni, Valea Mare, Fărăoani, Valea Seacă) in order to escape from the heavy taxes (Gazda 2005: 128). In some cases tradition preserved a not too proud past: the people of Nicorești arrived as sheep- and cattle-thieves, not joining the frontier guards (Gazda 2005: 236)⁴⁴. Those from Stufu were refugees hiding in the reeds (Gazda 2005: 173).

Undertaking the name *Hungarian* (*magyar/ungur*) in public does not characterize but very few of them, and we have empirical knowledge about its existence in the private sphere, but we have no relevant research on it. Some studies present the contextualized use of the term (Boross 2003, Simon 2005) and the practice of mixing/replacing it with other terms related to the Hungarians (Csángó, Szekler) (Hegveli 1999, Pávai 1999, Pozsony 2001). Nowadays they mostly define themselves as “Romanian Catholics”. This is related to the confessional delimitation from the Orthodox Romanians and a consequence of historical processes at the same time. Following the appearance of the modern Romanian nation, the discussions around earning citizenship, the rapid assimilation processes, the confusion created by various institutions (using the similarity in spelling in the case of *Romanian* and *Roman [Catholic]*), the transcription of ethnic identity with citizen identity all paid their tribute to the weakening of ethnic consciousness. Iorga presents a double identity of the Csángós: by origins and by citizenship: “They merrily speak Hungarian at home. Regarding nationality, »they declare themselves Romanians, because they eat Romanian bread «” (Iorga 1972: 229–230).

Their weakening insistence on their Hungarian language has been demonstrated by their applications throughout history. E.g. the application of the people from Troțuș at the visit of Bandinus, of those from Oituz in 1860, of those from Luizi-Călugăra in 1915, of those from Pustiana today (cf. Gazda 2005: 187, 199–200, 111).

About their sense of belonging we can find more from Péter Halász, who presents the endogamy, the connections, the similarities and differences among six regional groups of the Moldavian Csángós (see Halász 2002: 113–138). They have a folk song about ethnic stereotypes and about their delimitation from the Romanians:

<i>Nem szerethetem én</i>	[I cannot fall for
<i>Az olá rest lányát,</i>	The lazy girl of the Romanian,
<i>Nem tudja megfőzni,</i>	She cannot cook
<i>Keverti máláját.</i>	And mix her maize porridge.]

Cleja (Domokos 1976: 1376)⁴⁵

Besides their consciousness of origins their knowledge regarding a common Hungarian past has been transmitted from generation to generation mainly by oral folklore. “The huge quantity of folklore text and narrative demonstrates the preservation of many

⁴⁴ The author got the information from a local monograph kept at the centre of the local administration.

⁴⁵ The first man to collect this song was Rokonföldi, meaning Petrás.

Middle Ages-like elements by the Csángós' historical memory, so their historical knowledge is first of all related to the period when Moldavia was still under the authority of a strong, centralized Hungarian kingdom, including the existence of stronger and more vital relations with their former homeland" (Pozsony 2002: 358–359). They preserved until nowadays the knowledge (legends, ballads, songs etc.) of the most important Hungarian kings of the Middle Ages (e.g. Szent István, Szent László and Mátyás). It is worth considering that their massive Hungarian-language folklore preserved mostly such geographic names (Tisa, Danube) that are related to the central parts of the Hungarian-language area (Pozsony 2002: 358–359). Their churches consecrated to Hungarian saints – namely five to Szent István: at Găiceana-Unguri, Hârlău, Tețcani, Pustiana, Pârgărești (Halász 2002: 49), one to Szent László: at Vizantea (Jerney 1851: 220) and one to Szent Imre: at Târâța (Jerney 1851: 209)⁴⁶ – and their patron saints' festivals also contributed to the survival of their historical knowledge. Thus it is understandable that the Catholic Church has liquidated these churches in the last one hundred years. The Hungarian population and the church of Hârlău vanished in the middle of the 17th century; the festival of Tețcani was held on the 20th of August even at the turn to the 20th century, the village being called Istvánfalva by the surrounding settlements, and the church demolished in the 1930s; the old church of Arini was replaced by a new one in 1910, consecrated to martyr Stephen; the Szent Imre altar-piece of the Pârgărești church was over-painted, the rebuilt church named after the Holy Virgin Queen Mary; at Pustiana the altar-piece can be still seen, but the date of the patronal festival was placed to the first Sunday of September (Halász 2002: 49–55). This historical memory, not being supported by the official culture, has become quite fragmented and confused (Turai 1999).

Among the Moldavian Hungarians "such ethnic consciousness has survived which has not assigned any symbolic function or meaning either to mother tongue or to mother tongue folklore traditions" (Pozsony 2001).

The identity-marking function of the material culture has not been really studied. But János Petrás Incze noticed how, unlike to the Romanians, the Csángós used almost exclusively home-made materials for their costumes, insisting very much on their old costumes, their specific bearing and walk being easy to recognize because of "their neat outfit" and "excellent modesty", of the generation- and occasion-marks so different from those of the Romanians, of the low-key use of ornamentals and jewels, of the black jerkin's circle ornamentals, of the red embroidery of the shirt's neck, of the "external embroideries" (Petrás Incze 2004: 38–42) – that is of the "non-Romanian" shirt embroidery noticed by Ciocan also (Ciocan 1924: 20). We can think to what extent we can consider these mechanical or deliberate identity-marks (cf. Kivisto 1989), what kind of experiences stand beyond them, in what contexts they appear, but from the fact that their priest formulated so and the Romanians also recognized them due to these elements (Petrás Incze 2004: 38), we might conclude that these were deliberate marks, just like the local differences

⁴⁶ I thank László Gazda for this information.

reflected today, like the extremely red bags from Luizi-Călugăra, the more blue shirts from Valea Seacă, the blue hem of the *katrinca* from Cleja, the different embroidery of the shirts from Valea Mare, the more pearls used at Lespezi, the specific (*plátkás*) shirts of Arini and Gioseni and so on (Halász 2002: 113–138). These embroideries are clearly a part of the Csángó ethnic culture, and because they are unknown among the Romanian neighbours, maybe they can be considered as Csángó ethnic specificities.

Acculturation – as a consequence of modernization – naturally rejects or adapts the earlier cultural forms of long duration, selecting and transforming – sometimes until non-recognition – the identity-marks as well. Under unfavourable political conditions people give up these marks on their own, or at least they keep them within the private sphere. Or they express them only in certain situations, when they do not consider it unfavourable. This can be also related to the transformations or stagnations of the system of values. Anyway, the loosening of bonds refers to the loss of values. In these conditions very often specialized institutions initiate their preservation, their use within festive circumstances. The same will happen in the case of the Moldavian Csángós' culture; there are already some traditions that are carried on as phenomena of folklorism.

In the end we can state that culture and identity represent two separate groups of phenomena developing in accordance with different rules, but not independent from each other. Some elements of culture can characterize several nations at the same time, therefore based exclusively on culture, the belonging of a group can be stated only very cautiously.

In taking a decision in this question it is better to start from the historically preserved or the transformed identity. In the absence of proof, and judging only by external coincidences, it is illegitimate and unfounded to make any statements on internal identity factors.

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