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Transnational Ways of Life and Sects. About the Interpretive Possibilities of New Religious Phenomena from the Moldavian Csángó Villages

Introduction

In the last few years one of the major results of the research on the Csángós has been the fact that the discourse of social sciences regarding Csángó culture has focused on the factors of modernization – as important components which shape social life –, an aspect which in the past was constantly overshadowed by another discourse accentuating the “untouched”, “isolated” nature of the same culture. Contemporary research pointed out the disappearance of the archaic way of life that organized the life of the community along the traditional world concept and values. Nowadays, if we wonder through these villages, we have no doubt that the modernization affects even communities based on the archaic world concept.

The mentioned influences can be found in every aspect of life, therefore they have their impact on religious life as well. Recent analyses have signalled the deconstruction of the religious concepts which were presented as archaic, and the rationalization of the common world view.¹ In the case of a rapidly modernizing society, it is more probable an accentuated apparition of those tendencies which are suggesting the set out of secular components as a result of modernizing influences.

In my analysis I shall reveal some possible theoretic interpretations of the transformation of traditional religious world concept. The complete presentation of the question and the answering to all upcoming questions is almost impossible in one single study, and anyway, it is not the aim of the present one. In spite of this, I consider it an important task to reflect on the present questions, the systematisation of the related fieldwork experiences, which in certain cases might need corrections and shading through further systematic research and case studies.²

¹ Very often scientific research remains on the level of generalized affirmations which consider the Middle Ages-like belief of the Csángós as the model of their whole religious life. Anyway, there are some systematic analyses as well, presenting certain segments of the religious life in a broader context. See for example the related volumes, studies and essays of Vilmos Tánzos (Tánzos 1991, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000), the analyses of Ferenc Pozsony (Pozsony 1996, 1998, 2005) and Péter Halász (Halász 2002).

² The research programme *Church and Modernity. Contemporary sociological research on Csángó Hungarian Communities* organized by the Institute of Research Organization of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences enables further steps in answering these questions. Therefore I consider this present paper only a work in progress.

During the elaboration of this study I continuously faced the fact, that we know so little about the *individual lives* of the Moldavian Csángós after the change of regime in 1989. The Csángó society has changed more in the last seventeen years than in previous many centuries. Therefore I consider that besides the dominating topics of contemporary Csángó research, such as identity, research on their modernization should rely more on the methodology of life history.³

In the last few years the Csángó communities have showed important sectarian processes. My supposition is that components of modernization, just like the secular tendencies, represent the outer context of these processes, therefore it is justified to analyse it as a whole connected problem. However, these processes have had their impact on the change of religious mentality and of the place of religious norms, as well as on the differentiations in the relations between communities which are organized along religious world concepts.

Transformation of Central Values: Attitude Change Regarding Traditional Religiosity and Life Conduct

Parallel Different Temporalities

Due to ethnographic and sociologic results, the idealistic image of introverted religious communities living under total clerical and communal control has been modified, therefore scientific representations about the religious life of the Csángós also moved towards a structured model of religious elements and phenomena, which literature calls *simultaneous* or *parallel different temporalities*.⁴

The ethnographic interpretation of the notion is given by Hermann Bausinger, who defined this phenomenon following the steps of Ernst Bloch. According to Bausinger, under different temporalities Bloch meant in fact simultaneous temporalities, the simultaneous action of elements determined by force factors of different periods of time: “it is about the different temporalities of concepts and life styles, principles and ideologies, which exist simultaneously in the present” (Bausinger 1989: 25). Based on the fieldwork of Utz Jeggle, Carola Lipp and Wolfgang Kaschuba – considered something new at the beginning of the 1980s – the author states, “During their fieldwork in rural communities, these scholars drew the conclusion that the studied communities transmit norms, concepts and values that cannot be explained exclusively by the contemporary social determinations, but they are rooted in the older constellations and structures of rural life” (Bausinger 1989: 32). The idea is that certain phenomena, certain regions because of postponed evolutionary phases present the characteristics of different periods of time, so products of different periods live together at a certain point in time (see Liszka 2001: 395).

³ Regarding identity in this context see: Peti 2006: 201.

⁴ There are opinions accentuating the complete disappearance of archaic world concept.

In Wolfgang Kaschuba's opinion, when in the modern industrial age "traditional ethnography" was searching for original and archaic essence, it introduced the idea of "reversed" different temporalities. The author also warns us of the fact that newer anthropological orientations – even if they reject former traditional ethnography – are not totally free of the same idea: "All cultural norms which are concrete decide what is normal, usual or modern in our world, and what does not belong here, seeming old, out of date, belonging to history rather than reality. We usually relate all cultural models which were given up by most of the members of our society, all horizons of values that are not understood and are foreign to us to a second »time-sheet« that stretches from the past into our present" (Kaschuba 2004: 152).

Sociology of religion ties these phenomena to the processes under which in certain societies with traditional magical and religious thinking the tolerance to alternatives makes room for itself: "Ideas from the outside do not simply replace the old ones, but they exist together, showing a step by step incorporation" (Hamilton 1998: 58).

The works analysing the Moldavian Csángós' structured religious culture verify the above statements once more. When Vilmos Tánczos is talking about *the unstructured culture* of the Csángós⁵, he describes in fact the same phenomenon: the most diversified values, attitudes and ideologies are present in the Moldavian villages and towns that were considered of an archaic culture (see Tánczos 2000a: 137). About the system of values and a culture based on a Middle Ages-like⁶ very strong religious belief the author states that in spite of the fact that it survived here for the longest time, it can be found only in fragments, functioning only in certain situations, in certain territories of life (cf. Tánczos 2000a: 137).

It is a characteristic of the Csángó villages,⁷ too, that the very person who questions certain religious concepts and practices that are used and demanded by society as a whole, accepts some others without the slightest questioning.

Although religious belief has a major role in this case, too, it appears that the symbolic/religious way of thinking directed towards sublogic concepts of the medieval man is disappearing. During the collection of stories related to visions I noticed that even though people considered the visions of others valid and real, they couldn't tell us about their own stories, because they are not anymore under the spell of such religious experiences suggesting transcendental magic. About visions people say that they mostly happened in the past, nowadays less and less people "can see": *People used to say that they saw it... I can't remember, but they saw it. But not really nowadays. They don't see it nowadays.*⁸ [They said they saw Virgin Mary from a window in Gheorghe Doja.] *That is not true, don't*

⁵ This culture has no concrete structure, people can never know what to expect (Tánczos 2000a: 134).

⁶ Regarding the religious culture of the Moldavian Csángós, I use the term "Middle Ages-like" as a metaphor, not in any pejorative way, understanding it as an archaic, sanctified practice of religious belief.

⁷ I have done most of my fieldwork in the Szekler and Southern Csángó villages near Bacău, and in the village of Lespezi.

⁸ Bejan Kukuri Péter, 1933, Cleja, 13.10.2006, material collected by myself.

*you believe it. None of it is true.*⁹ All this signals that ecstatic transcendental experiences are replaced by a more rational, “logical” and secular religiosity, which still works as the main organizing force of everyday life.

Religious belief has not become a peripheral factor of social structuring due to the newer social transformation processes, but its previous deep archaic experimental nature has been fading. This process shows that religious experience is gradually disappearing from communal and clerical legitimacy, and the increasing importance of individual religious experiences and beliefs results in the plurality of world concept. These tendencies reflect Max Weber’s idea according to which “the world is no longer that magical garden filled with mysticism, which influenced the thinking of the pre-modern man” (Aldridge 2000: 16).

On the communal level these processes can be related to the Bryan Wilson’s hypothesis, who states that modernization, creating urban conditions for western communities, also resulted in the decrease of communal roles, and at the same time, to the changed place and role of social control (see Wilson 1982: 149). “In well-integrated communities social control had moral and religious bases. Opposite to it, in the modern, rational and bureaucratic world social control is unpersonal, ripped from its previous religious and ethic bases” (Aldridge 2000: 18). Reflecting on the ideas of Wilson, Malcolm B. Hamilton points out that “in this case religion loses ground similarly to communal values, which traditionally were expressed through collective rituals and religious festivals” (Hamilton 1998: 212).

József Kotics believes that one of the main outcomes of modernization processes in the Moldavian Csángó villages is the plurality of norms and the changed role of social control. He states that “nowadays a lifestyle based on very strict religious morals is mixed with a rather bourgeois system of values” (Kotics 1997: 47). The author states that “the change of values, the ignorance and questioning of their sacral basis is first of all the attitude of the younger generations who work in or already moved to urban settlements” (Kotics 1997: 47). Further on, “the role of social control has decreased due to the disappearance of private property and to workforce mobility, therefore its function is only relevant in closer family or communal relations, so the individual was set free from communal control, and there is less and less community life in the eyes of the village” (Kotics 1997: 49).¹⁰ The increasing impersonal nature of social control signals also the plurality and the decline of the morally and ethically based religious world concept.

The tendencies characterizing the years after 1989 are even more accentuated by the latest migrations for work: modernization as a factor which shapes social life is revealed not only in the exterior signs of lifestyle, but also in the change of religiously based values, especially among the younger generations. Therefore these new models slowly become admitted and usual cultural patterns.

⁹ Roza Coșa, about 40–45 years old. Galbeni, 14.01.2006, material collected by myself.

¹⁰ The same tendencies are pointed out by István Kinda (Kinda 2005: 37–38).

There is no doubt that the opening of Western European labour markets resulted in such outstanding modernizing changes in the case of most Csángó settlements that cannot be imagined in the case of Transylvanian villages – except for one or two Szekler settlements with specific economic profile. This migration had a major impact on the level of the individual, causing the reconstruction of personal identity and the emergence of a new self ontology.

On the communal level we can mention the radical change in consumer customs, in the relation to traditional culture (for example the interior of a house). In the newly built houses in Lespezi, the walls are no longer decorated with traditional Csángó carpets, the decrease in their value being also shown by their use as signals between parcels of land. Sometimes they are simply burnt: [And then it was when people burnt those carpets...] *Yes. They took down all of them. They painted the house, and that's all, they put nothing on the walls. [...] My husband went out with the wagon, taking out the trash. One of the neighbours said, "come here, take this one, too!" What was in it? All these carpets were thrown there. Kerchiefs. Dirty, used or so. They threw them in the wagon, on top of the trash. On the wagon, and if needed, a bucket of water, too.*

- *They were dirty, so they threw them away!*
- *This kind of kerchief was tied to the stick, to mark the edge of a man's land.*
- *They were laughing, they found it hard work!*
- *Kerchiefs like this, see? [She is pointing to it on the wall] It was tied to the stick, and it was placed there, between the corn, where the land ends.¹¹*

The Importance of Transnational Ways of Life in the Transformation of Culture

New ways to interpret the modernizing processes in the Moldavian villages are provided by the theory of transnationalism (see Appadurai 2001, Niedermüller 2002, 2005). *Transnational ways of life*¹² are explained by theories born in the context of modernism against the theories of *methodological nationalism*¹³ and *singular identities*¹⁴ (cf. Niedermüller 2005: 53–58).

The mentioned researches underline the static character of culture, plus its permanent, unchanging nature. Their argumentation states that cultures are ethnically determined entities tied to one single place, and the differences between them are unsolvable. Breaking up with this theoretic and ideological tradition, transnationalism was decisively influenced by the recognition of the new migratory practices and the changes in lifestyle

¹¹ Imre Györgyné Gyöngyös Mária (1942) and Anna Kompót (1948), Lespezi, 05.08.2007, material collected by myself.

¹² Transnationalism is practised through ways of life in which “people are living in several cultures simultaneously” (Niedermüller 2002: 142).

¹³ An approach favouring the field of national states, considering all cultures and communities homogeneous.

¹⁴ A theory considering “cultural and social identity singular constructions related and rooted in one place and one social environment” (Niedermüller 2005: 54).

brought along by international work on globalisation.¹⁵ Permanent movement and simultaneous belonging to several places form *translocal* communities (cf. Appadurai 2001: 19–20), which does not mean the final substitution of the cultural environment, but rather its repeated change, resulting from continuous movement between the different places. According to Péter Niedermüller “similar – or even higher – importance is attributed to the mobility and migration of cultural meanings, images, expectations, rather than to human mobility. And as a result, transnational symbolic universes, global tastes and aspirations, transnational *de-territorialized communities*¹⁶ and identity models of certain cultural emotions are born” (Niedermüller 2005: 58).

We presume that the Csángó people who often go abroad to work, or those who have emigrated, have a relationship with their native communities that is consumed within a typical transnational model.

These aspects describe people who migrate for work, the younger and middle-aged generations of the Csángó societies, the very demographical segments that are usually investigated by ethnographic, anthropologic and sociologic researchers. The evolution of mass communication systems has provided for diverse ways of communication with the family members at home. But transnationalism as a social practice has its effects on the functioning of whole societies. Furthermore, transnationalism determines the ways of life, mentality, national and cultural identity, emotional identification of larger social fields, because these processes are implanted by migrants into communal life.¹⁷

Péter Niedermüller exemplifies these processes using the commodities available in the market in Cleja, the symbolic meanings related to the objects and the experiences of a man from Galbeni in an urban marketplace. The commodities, such as CD-players from Hong Kong, carpets “from India”, Adidas and Puma labelled merchandise made in China, bear the same cultural meanings and give rise to the same wishes in youngsters in Cleja, as in their peers in Western Europe. According to the author, the Cleja market is directed and dominated by the same patterns of global culture as the ones in the big cities: “the markets in Cleja show us how and in what forms in a local society apparently at »the end of the world«¹⁸ transnational meanings and global images penetrate everyday life” (Niedermüller 2005: 61).¹⁹ Another example shows²⁰ that transnational experiences are incorporated in the life story and personal identity of an individual, in the individual interpretation of socio-cultural environment, in the social status of a person (see Niedermüller 2005: 61).

¹⁵ About transnational migration practices in the Romanian society, see the work of Dumitru Sandu (Sandu 2000).

¹⁶ Emphasis added – P. L.

¹⁷ For further details on transnationalism see: Welsch 1999.

¹⁸ Quotation also by the author – P. L.

¹⁹ Without the slightest intention of corrugation I add that besides the mentioned examples, the image of grunting pigs in the trunk of automobiles are also an important part of the Cleja market, and there is demand for traditional copper cauldrons (for distilling brandy), too.

²⁰ The author is relying on the narratives of a young man from Galbeni who was working for a Chinese entrepreneur in a city market.

One of the consequences of migration is the spreading of cultural plurality in the Csángó villages. This might explain how I could meet for example a Buddhist Csángó in Galbeni, whose religious deviance – from the Catholic point of view – seems to be only his own business, standing outside the weakening control of the clerical sphere and the communal moral system.²¹

The obvious economic growth of those working abroad started important movements, attitudes related to prestige (for example, young people having fun with cameras in the most important disco of the settlement). Young people are happy to adopt these attitudes, while in time their parents would also consider it a natural and necessary thing. All this leads to the conclusion that in the Csángó villages there are no attitudes written by communal institutions, but “simple adaptation becomes the central value” (Merton 2002: 216).

The frequent identity changes, with their favourable frames provided by linguistic and cultural assimilation (cf. Kotics 1997: 48), might become possible life strategies and the tools for social mobility. In these communities the reigning cultural accents do not consider identity change a deviant attitude; quite on the contrary, similar adjustment strategies gain cultural support. These forms of adaptation became cultural patterns in the Moldavian Csángó villages. Although these attitudes are the results of individual decisions and are not under institutional control, it is precisely the communal expectations that motivate individuals to use similar strategies in order to climb in the local social hierarchy. According to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, in the cases of transformations within the frames of social mobility “we meet already manufactured interpretational patterns, which present to all those involved what really happened *without*²² the total transformation of the individual” (Berger–Luckmann 1998: 223). And further, “in societies with a great mobility, the already prepared schematic interpretations, which are interiorised by the individual when he/she is not even mobile yet, assure the continuity of biography and account for the apparent controversies” (Berger–Luckmann 1998: 224).

Going to church also changes for those who work abroad and usually stay temporarily in their native village: instead of going to church for the sake of the religious experience, this practice is rather an opportunity to meet local people. We can consider as a consequence of migration the phenomenon according to which one of the organizing principles of social meetings became the religious festivals. Although I cannot question the sacredness of the festivals, these tendencies contributed to the decrease of the religious importance of everyday life, and to the transformation of traditional religious experiences. With support from literature, we can say that as opposed to the state of “living in permanent prayer”, festivals have become social events.

All these contributed to the new role of the Church. The weakened clerical control is also due to the fact that the members of the very mobile Csángó society spend little time in the physical space of the village. Nevertheless, “nowadays the Church is still the most

²¹ In her study on the religious orientations of a neoprotestant family from Cleja, Virág Pápai presents the “break away from Catholic confession” as a modernization strategy (see Pápai 2005).

²² Italicised also by authors – P. L.

elementary and determinative institution of the rural Csángó society” (Pozsony 2005b: 174). Although its mandating role is weaker and weaker, its symbolic role of control in the case of deviancies is quite strong, and even stronger on the level of magic control (see Peti 2003). One of the explanations – from the secular theories’ point of view – can be the challenge to preserve religious world concepts competing against the concepts promoted by natural sciences and various institutions. With the integration of non-canonized religious concepts, the religious world concept is not affected by pluralism or lack of consistency because in the popular way of thinking canonized religious practice and different phenomena of a folkloristic nature can bear each other without any controversy.²³

The major changes caused by modernization presented above have led to the Church losing a lot of its strict feudal control. Its relation to the emerging sectarian members leads us to the same conclusion. It uses only symbolic means of punishment against the converted ones, which have no real importance in the social sphere. I do not have any relevant data about personalized preaching against someone or other coercing practices.

Following Giddens’ concept of secularization, we notice that in the last few years we have encountered more and more cases of religious conversion. The regular conversions that can be experienced after the system change from 1989 signal the decrease in social impact of the Roman Catholic Church²⁴, and they are mostly attributable to mobility strategies in the Moldavian villages. The same process of decrease is shown by the weakened confessional endogamy, which means new possibilities for religious conversion.²⁵

The Transformation of Clerical Religiosity – Theories of Secularization²⁶

Theories of secularization try to explain why clerical religiosity has faded or totally disappeared in the modern Western society. The literature on this topic is quite large, thus in the following we would like to outline some of the basic characteristics of the related theories.²⁷

²³ Popular culture “is lived or felt by the individual as organic, homogeneous and Christian, he/she does not discover any controversies within, and lets the most different cultural elements live and work together”(Tánczos 2000b:224).

²⁴ I mention only relative decrease, because it is obvious to me that the Roman Catholic Church is the most powerful institution of the Csángó society.

²⁵ Contemporary researches record that “nowadays in Moldavia a new practice was born: individuals rejecting the norms of the Catholic community usually convert to Orthodoxy” (Pozsony 2005b: 188). Ferenc Pozsony explains with the regular practice of “stepping out” of women or girls working abroad that “if a girl or a woman is the topic of gossip because of her morals, she leaves the village unashamed to move in with an Orthodox man from another village in an ostentatious manner”. (Pozsony 2005b: 188). In the 1990s József Kotics observed an increase in the rate of divorces: “It can be noticed, that when a divorced person wants to get married again, he/she often converts to Orthodoxy” (Kotics 1997: 48).

²⁶ I am aware that these theories were born within the researches on Western European societies, therefore their adaptation to this topic is mostly hypothetical, serving as a basis for comparison. I shall use their conclusions on the social phenomenon I analyse only in an experimental way.

²⁷ Some attempts for the synthesis of theses on secularization: Robert W. Hefner (1998: 147–154), Vesa Raiskila (1995).

Talking about secular tendencies in the case of the Moldavian Csángós is quite difficult, first of all because the imprecise, multistructured meaning of the term. Following the definition of Alan Aldridge²⁸ I use this term as a paradigm of interpretation, with which ethnography can explain the process that in the case of the Csángós I called the decreasing importance of religion. I do this without relating all secular phenomena of the Western world to the case of the Csángós. However, when I talk about secular tendencies in the Moldavian Csángó villages, I mean *the transformation and fading of traditional religious forms which were characteristic to the Csángó communities*, and not the “death of religion” discussed by E. B. Tylor, James G. Frazer, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud.

This interpretation of secularization is not in opposition with the general use of the term. According to Meredith B. McGuire, “there is a profound disagreement over the meaning of this concept, but most interpretations of *secularization*²⁹ refer to a historical development by which religion has lost (or is losing) a presumed central place in society” (McGuire 1992: 249). My use of this term stays close to that of Anthony Giddens, who defines secularization as a process “during which religion loses its influence over the different spheres of social life” (Giddens 2000: 460).³⁰ The author analyses secularization on three different dimensions: 1.) membership of religious organizations; 2.) the extent to which the Church or other religious organizations keep their social influence, their wealth and prestige; 3.) the dimension of the *religiosity* related to the questions of principles and values (cf. Giddens 2000: 461–462). That is why I do not consider it a controversy that, when talking about Moldavian Csángó communities as religiously oriented ones with a *clerical religious* character, I also reveal synchronic processes which in the recent period of time³¹ have resulted in relative declines in the transformation of religious roles and in the decrease of the Church’s social influence.

Meredith B. McGuire considers that in modern societies the change in the role of religion – doubled by the transformation of its structure – has happened parallel with the differentiation of institutions, and with the growth of pluralism and rationalization. In her opinion, institutional differentiation means the division of society’s institutional spheres (for example education, political and economic leadership). “We can observe the opposite to institutional differentiation among simple societies, where beliefs, the values of everyday life and religious activities have a direct influence over everyday life conduct, while religion covers the whole society in a diffusive way” (McGuire 1992: 251). Following the ideas of Talcott Parsons, the author states that in a highly differentiated society religious norms, values and practices have only an indirect influence over other spheres of

²⁸ “In spite of the controversies surrounding this term, secularization can be accepted as a paradigm of interpretation which helps us to describe and interpret the social and religious changes of the Western society” (Aldridge 2000: 15). On the same subject see the views of B. McGuire (McGuire 1992: 249).

²⁹ Italicised also by the author – P. L.

³⁰ Bryan Wilson has a similar point of view (Wilson 1982: 149).

³¹ I refer to the period after the change of regime.

life, like the business or political spheres, pastime practices or the territory of education (cf. McGuire 1992: 251).

Quoting Olivier Tschannen, Alan Aldridge states that secularization as a modernisation phenomenon can be described by a triple basic notion-relation. The first one is *the spread of rationalization* as a process within the experience of reality loses its transcendental aspects, being replaced with the rational and causative explanation of the world. The second one is *differentiation*: the separation of society from religion. According to this, religion withdraws on the level of individual decisions, becoming a question of private life, having no more influence on the other aspects of social life. As a result, religious symbols, practices and institutions lose a major part of their prestige and importance. The third one is *increasing worldliness*: an intensified attention to problems of this earthly world, which nowadays – in the author’s opinion – is not only characteristic to modern societies, but gains more and more ground between the frames of traditional religiosity. According to Aldridge, around these three basic components of secularity there are many other related “orbiting” terms like *atomization* and *pluralism* (Aldridge 2000: 15).

Another wave of theories on secularization considers it a complex result of the processes of industrialization and urbanization, according to which “the man and the world become more and more the objects of rational and causative explanations and of human activities” (Hamilton 1998: 204), thus secularization is closely related to the spread of rational world concepts of natural sciences. The emerging non clerical elite in a traditional local society is outlined by literature as the representatives of the new discourse containing the world concept of natural sciences and undermining the religious concepts. In these societies the decrease of the Church’s importance is partly determined by the relation of forces among the members of local elite.

According to Bryan Wilson “secularization is not only a process with its influence in society, but the change of society itself and of its major institutions” (Wilson 1982: 149).

Sectarian Tendencies in a Transforming Csángó Society

The Roman Catholic Church of Moldavia does not tolerate other religious organizations, but seeks exclusive legitimacy. This is one of the major factors which explains why Csángós consider conversion an extremely serious sin. In their belief, leaving your own confession is a mortal sin. A woman from Galbeni, whose son became a witness of Jehovah, tried intensive prayer, pilgrimage and so on, hoping that her son would change his mind: *My son left his confession. What kind of confession is that when you read all those bibles? He’s reading those. And how much did I care and do, how much did I pray, and I went to Seuca³², too. And now he cannot come back to our faith? And I baptized him, he grew up, got married, he has three children! How could he convert? Last summer he converted*

³² Reference to the fact that she attended the Marian apparitions from Seuca, Transylvania.

to that confession. [Which one?] *Witnesses of Jehovah. The most dangerous one! How could he do that? His woman did it first, and then she dragged him, too.*³³

The intolerance of the Catholic Church in these cases is obvious, but the practice according to which the clergy tries to convince converted individuals to return to Catholic confession only by a personal discussion, shows the weakening of the coercive tools of the Church against law-breakers.³⁴ In the Csángós' opinion the priest can really punish someone in three different ways: if he will not bury him/her, if he will not allow him/her to partake in the Holy Communion or will not bless or sanctify his/her house. "The denial of religious services is a very serious and powerful means of punishment for the religious man, it is equal to excommunication" (Kotics 1997: 48).

At Fărăoani, distinction between Catholics and people who have converted to another religion is only symbolic; the priest does not sanctify their house at Epiphany: *There is a family in the village that converted to another religion. [Were they punished in any way?] Not really! The father said that if they wanted to... He said that people should not convert to another religion, but these people did not obey. They said that if they had known before how it was, they would have converted earlier. The father said that it is not really good to convert to another religion; people should keep to the religion they were born in. Do not change it! [And what was the punishment for these people?] There was no punishment except he did not go to their house, he didn't sanctify it. He didn't go there.*³⁵

It is quite interesting that at Lespezi, a village where migration for work and economic development are heavily represented, the relations to the local Adventist community are ambivalent. [Are there any sectarians in the village?] *Yes, there are, many kinds of people are here. Adventists, many converted to Adventism. [Is it a sin?] I don't know, everyone must keep the one he was born in. [And how do you think, Aunt Marika?] I don't know, there was a priest here, who said people should stay in their own religion. [The priest was not angry with them?] He warned them to be good, but if they didn't want to stay, you know, everyone does what he can do*³⁶. [Are there any sectarians in the village?] *Yes, there are, but not many, just three families. Adventists. [And the father is not angry with them?] Everyone does what he/she pleases. Now, when this union of Christendom is here, they do not accuse people, they say that those are also Christians.*³⁷ These opinions reflect a change at Lespezi, when religiosity becomes a result of a personal decision, a part of someone's private life. If we wonder through the village, observing the multi-storey American-looking houses, the entry phones, spectacular fountains beyond iron fences, expensive Western European cars, it is quite hard to imagine the practice that

³³ Maria Coșa, 1959, Galbeni, 2004, material collected by myself.

³⁴ In the last years, younger members of the clergy have tried to apply a more modern communal leading (opposite to the previous feudal methods using gestures of power), a part of which is a more personal relation with the members of the congregation.

³⁵ Luca Antal, 1932, Fărăoani, 8.07.2001, material collected by myself.

³⁶ Mária Mititel (1931), Lespezi, 5.09.2007, material collected by myself.

³⁷ János Ződ (1935), Lespezi, 5.08.2007, material collected by myself.

can still be found in less developed, archaic Csángó villages, where the priest interferes in the congregation members' private life. But the symbolic limitation from sectarian families is still in practice, appearing especially at holy matrimony and at the division of burial spots. In the 1960s the first Adventist deceased of the village was rejected from the Catholic burial ground by the clergy, therefore the Adventists bought a piece of land near the Catholic cemetery for their own burial ground. Because of the continuous pressure, they started to bury their dead at Gârleni. [And the priest is not angry with them?] *Maybe he is inside, but he does not say it out in the church.* [And what kind of sectarians are here?] *Calvinists, Adventists and Romanians, Orthodox Romanians.* [And how does the priest receive them?] *Only if they convert to Catholic religion, there is no other way.* [But are there any problems among people?] *There are enough problems, all right; they gave a separate cemetery for the Calvinists.* [Here in Lespezi?] *No, not in Lespezi, in Gârleni.* [In what year was it?] *What can I say, in the 1960s. And not for the Calvinists, but for the Adventists.* [But was there any trouble?] *No, not really, only when the first Adventist died, and his name was János Bíró, they didn't want to bury him in the Catholic cemetery. And then the others said: "If you don't want to give us land, we will buy our place!" And they bought some land right next to the Catholic burial ground. Since then they have been buried there, but it was still not enough, so they pushed them out to Gârleni to stop them trying to convince people.* [There are more of them in Gârleni?] *I wouldn't say that, but they are better accepted there.*³⁸

The tolerance of the inhabitants of Gârleni can be explained by the confessional structure of the settlement. While Lespezi is a homogeneous Catholic settlement (with 86.03% Roman Catholic and 13.8% Orthodox inhabitants) with an important influence of the Catholic Church, in the next settlement, Gârleni, Catholics are a confessional minority (18.6% Catholic inhabitants facing 79.13% Orthodox inhabitants)³⁹. The more numerous congregation in Gârleni must have been even more attractive for the Adventists of Lespezi, a fact that is even more important in the consideration of the survival of the new, endangered world concept.⁴⁰

At Lespezi the Adventist community tries to search for new members through family relations; local missionary work is not really frequent. There was an example for a mixed marriage when the Catholic part converted to Adventism and not vice versa, and in another case the newly baptized Adventist returned shortly to Catholic faith. [They didn't come to you, to convince you too?] *No, no, they only go to some of their relatives.* [Do they get married with Catholics?] *Yes, yes, it happens. There was a Catholic who married an Adventist and converted to Adventism, to the other's religion.* [And what

³⁸ József Fazakas (Colonel) (1927), Lespezi, 4.08.2007, material collected by myself.

³⁹ Based on the official data from the 2002 national census.

⁴⁰ McGuire describes this factor with the term of *plausibility structure* (1991). The term was taken over by Csata et al, too, for the interpretation of sectarian phenomena in a village from the Transylvanian Plain. In their opinion "plausibility structure is a system of interactions reinforcing and reproducing the given world concept. With its help, the individual can interpret the surrounding world" (Csata et alii. 2001: 46).

do people say, are they angry?] *Well, if they are that smart! What else can I say? [And what do you think, is it a sin to do it?] Well, whatever. If he thought he wanted to go. They say it is good like this, and it is also good like that. But I only feel this Hungarian faith, and I will stay this way.*⁴¹ [And Csángós, Catholics do not marry them?] *Well, it has happened. Even now there is a young man who works in a factory, and he converted to Adventism. And as he saw what kind of Adventist they were, he came back to Catholic faith, he received Holy Communion, he confessed. When they saw what was there at the Adventists, they faltered, and they came back to their previous confession. Anyway, I don't really know, I don't want to be involved in these things.*⁴²

The strengthening of sectarian tendencies is undoubtedly related to the migration for work of the Csángós. In Galbeni a young woman talked about how her brother became a Witness of Jehovah as he went after his wife, who had been working in Russia for three years. After they returned home, they could not get along with their relatives, or integrate in the neighbourhood and local relations, so they moved to the nearby village of Bălcescu, where they found a sectarian community. *My brother went to work to the Russians. He could do everything in a house. [And where did he learn about this religion?] His wife had gone three years earlier, then he found out that she had converted to it. [But where did he learn about it?] They came to their house and probably they loved it, or I don't know. They had a neighbour who had left long before. A kind of friend of the family.*

The family is ashamed of its sectarian members, because on the local level the whole family is stigmatised. Their excommunication might be interpreted as social pressure for their return to Catholic faith, a practice that has been used in other villages as well. One mother forbade them to participate at her funeral. [And people did not curse them or anything?] *Wow, they did, all right! It is bad to us, too, because he is his brother, and they do not come any more to help us.*

– *No, they don't... they do not come to me at all.*⁴³

[You don't go to him either?] *She is not going, because, you see, it hurts my mother, that he left his faith for another one. [Do people make fun of him?] Not really, because they went with other people, so they brought these writings, these magazines. People took them, they were not mad at them even if they were going from house to house. But even so it seems like he has changed. In the past he used to help us, because he can work in constructions, he used to help. Not anymore, they don't have time.*

It seems like in this case the persons who came back from abroad already converted became isolated, and they solved their conflict with the local community by moving out of the village.

Repulsion to sects is often given by the lack of information on them. I met a person in Cleja, who was not even sure of the fact that the sectarians from the village really worship God. [Are there any sectarians in the village?] *There are plenty. [Of what kind?] Those*

⁴¹ Marika Jánó (1939), Lespezi, 5.08.2007, material collected by myself.

⁴² József Fazakas (Colonel) (1927), Lespezi, 4.08.2007, material collected by myself.

⁴³ Says the mother.

who do not believe in God... I don't know if they believe in God or not... But they keep Saturday as a holy day. They celebrate Saturday, not Sunday. They work on Sundays.

A negative stereotype about these sectarians is the belief that they help each other only because they do not like to work. [There are no others?] *No, but not all are sectarians. Only a few families. Those who do not like to work, because they help each other. – If you have ten pigs, you have to give one to them.* ⁴⁴ [...] *They are too lazy to work, that is why they convert, because they help each other. They don't drink at all, they cut out all grape-vines. Yeah. They don't drink any alcohol.*

At Lespezi the symbolic distinction from Adventists is increased by the functional specificities of this small religious group: in the Catholics' opinion, the Adventists' lifestyle is not practical from the institutional point of view (for example, they do not have a local church). Furthermore, the legitimacy of this group is questioned also by the fact that "Adventists do not have priests". [Are there any Adventists in the village?] *Yes, there are, they don't bury their dead here, but they have their own cemetery in Gârleni. A little one.* [And what does the father say, is he not angry with them?] *What can he do, if they are only that smart? Some want to be there, some here.* [The father does not curse them?] *They do not go to him and say "Hey, we have converted!" Is it not closer here to go to church, to pay a... They have no priest, nothing. Then what kind of faith is that? Isn't that right? They just meet and read about what saint they believe in or not.* ⁴⁵

Catholics from Cleja say about sectarians that they do not use the most important symbols – the cross and the candle – during funerals: *when someone dies, the put no cross to his head. They do not light any candles either, unlike us.* At Galbeni, some people said that Witnesses of Jehovah do not bury their dead, but burn them: *they stay at the hole, they hold a speech. They are different, they don't bury the dead, just burn them. Or how should I know how it is? They say they are true and we are not. They tried me. One of them came to me and brought those newspapers. He tried me. But no way. I said: "I was born in this one, I shall die in this one". I don't like these things. My children love this faith; they are in good relations with the priest. No, no way. I don't go there.*

The above opinions clearly show the routine stigmatisation of the sectarians, which is due to the fact that the sect members refuse communal norms, and they turn against the traditional patterns of sanctity.

Sometimes Catholics have positive opinions about sectarians. At Lespezi besides the negative relation to Adventists we can also find positive opinions pointing to the religious depth of their faith and admitting that they "pray really nice". *And they pray so nice, it is a real wonder. I don't know if I should believe or not, but they pray really nice. The husband of that woman died, and I was there, because we are neighbours, almost next*

⁴⁴ Says the husband.

⁴⁵ Marika Jánó (1939), Lespezi, 5.08.2007, material collected by myself.

*door neighbours. And they came in cars, many-many preachers or so, and they sang and prayed. It wasn't bad, not at all. Then they asked me if I liked it. How can I say, I liked it, because they praised the Lord, too, they didn't curse Him.*⁴⁶

At Cleja people underlined the fact that a previously alcoholic, deviant couple have been living a normal life according to communal norms since they converted to Adventism. In their case religious conversion turned into a means of social integration.⁴⁷ According to a woman from the same village, her brother who became a Witness of Jehovah does not steal any more from his work. [They said that if they steal...] *You cannot, you cannot! See, there was my brother, Leon was his name. He used to bring home some thing from his work, a piece of metal, some screws. Not anymore. It is a sin. Everywhere people believe it is a positive thing that sectarians do not drink alcohol.*

More and more often we can discover the colourful publications of different sects in the houses of the Catholic inhabitants. They are usually kept in spite of the fact that people do not read them and do not identify with their content. Not even in this case can religious representations be the victims of profane actions.

The Nature of Sectarian Relations in the Approach of Sociology of Organizations

The literature on the sociology of religion which analyses of the organizational and communal types of religious groups describes the differences between religious organizations by a typology of four. Based on the ideas of Roy Wallis, sociologist Meredith B. McGuire names two starting points for the description of these types: 1.) the character of the relation between the religious group and the social environment, and 2.) the extent to which the group considers its own legitimacy an exclusive one (see McGuire 1992: 138). "The relation between the religious group and its social environment reflects the pressure between the values deduced from religious authority sources and the other values of society" (Kiss 2003: 57). If a social group accepts the values of the other group, we can talk about positive pressure, and if it does not, about negative pressure. Related to this, we are going to deal with pluralistic or exclusive legitimacy. Under pluralistic legitimacy I understand a communal attitude that accepts and to some extent tolerates the values of the other groups; while under the exclusive one I mean a doubtless mentality living its own values⁴⁸ as unquestionable certainties, an attitude of intolerance against the values of the others. I presume the latter characterizes the mentality of traditional societies that are seen by literature as transmitting dissolving, withdrawing, medieval religious concepts.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ József Fazakas (Colonel) (1927), Lespezi, 4.08.2007, material collected by myself.

⁴⁷ The social integrating power of sects is pointed out by József Gagyí using the example of the Gypsies from Crăciunel (Gagyí 2002: 62).

⁴⁸ Under the term *values* I understand mostly the religious values of communal acceptance.

⁴⁹ Sociology of religion defines this type of religiosity as *clerical religiosity* (see for example McGuire 1991).

Taking in consideration the above, McGuire defined the following organizational typology of religious groups: Church, sect, denomination, cult (see McGuire 1992: 139).⁵⁰

The further developed model was published by Steve Bruce (Bruce 1995: 20), who names the theoretic antecedents of Wallis' model: Ernst Troeltch, Howard Becker, Bryan Willson, Benton Johnson and Roland Robertson (Bruce 1998: 21):

Self-conceived legitimacy	THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS COLLECTIVITIES	
	GROUP/SOCIETY TENSION	
	Positive	Negative
Unique	CHURCH	SECT
Pluralistic	DENOMINATION	CULT

The structural typology of religious groups

According to this, the *sect* is a religious organization which considers its own legitimacy an exclusive one, and its relations to the majority society are relatively negative. The most important motivations in the Western European transformation of the Church were found by the mentioned authors in the modernization factors and in the related secular components. Under the term *modernization* this specific literature understands the multi-structured tendencies containing economic, political, cultural and social changes (cf. Bruce 1995: 127; 1998: 28). Therefore the quoted authors' argumentation refers to the fact that all religious organizations of the Church type disappeared from complex modern societies, and so did the communities that could be characterized by *clerical religiosity*, which were replaced in the first phases by sectarian religious organizations (see Bruce 1998: 33).

***The Spread of Sects in Moldavia
as Revealed by the 2002 National Census***

Statistics show that in Moldavia the settlements where Catholics are a minority as compared to the Orthodox (Răcăciuni, Strugari, Lilieci, Livezi, Bălăneasa, Turluianu, Gârleni, Enăchești etc.), or where the Orthodox are similar in number to the Catholics (Lespezi, Satu Nou, Luizi-Călugăra, Cleja) have the largest sectarian communities. Along religious

⁵⁰ Because this model mirrors a process in change, for the identification of certain types the definition of their social contexts, of the territorial level (state, region, locality) and time of the analysis are absolutely necessary. According to Anthony Giddens "sects that are to some extent constant in time will become with no doubt denominations" (Giddens 2000: 447). The author gives the examples of Calvinism and Methodism, which were once sects, but became more "respectable" (the term of the author – P. L.), so they are denominations. In his opinion this happens, because the "religious institutions with a long existence usually become rigid, bureaucratic organizations" (Giddens 2000: 448).

interferences we observe a more accentuated tolerance of religious otherness in non homogeneous villages than in “pure” Catholic ones. Cultural pluralism should be more common in the mixed villages also because denominational coexistence should influence not only the tolerance to different religious world concepts, but to the communication of ethnical and cultural otherness, to the practice of *ethnicity*. Catholic communities have to have a position towards Orthodox inhabitants related to their religious world concept and values, and related to their *Romanian nationality*, with all the different cultural characters and identity strategies involved. Although maintaining cultural borders is an important part in the function of coexisting communities, the norms regulating this coexistence call for a higher degree of tolerance. And besides ethnic strategies, tolerance is an important component of denominational relations, too (see Bruce 1995: 10).

This way it is more than indicated that when we talk about the sectarian tendencies from the Moldavian Csángó villages, we should take in consideration only the relative movements that have appeared on the field of religiosity under the influence of modernization, resulting in the appearance of sectarian communities, and not the major structural transformations of the confessional dimension.⁵¹ In the Moldavian villages the most relevant sects are the Adventists, the Pentecostals, the Evangelical Christians and the Baptists.

Conclusions

Individuals with a specific migratory life course turn to the teachings of new religious communities, which by an updated world concept and new religious/communal norms really integrate their own members against the rigid, almost feudal structure of the Catholic Church. As a result of the depersonalisation of social control, of the changed role of religious values, of the individualization of communities, in one term, of the social transforming influences of modernization, the Catholic Church can no longer entirely integrate the inhabitants of the Moldavian Csángó villages. On the communal level the pluralizing religious world concept of secularisation raised new opportunities for the sectarian groups in the Csángó settlements. In this meaning, sectarian tendencies related to social mobility are a part of the modernisation strategies. This is proved by the fact that mostly the Adventist sect – which is the most characteristic of modernization – has spread all over the Csángó villages. Through transnational lifestyles the sects become a part of social mobility, contributing to the assurance of coherence in the biographical continuity of the individual.

⁵¹ The relations between modernisation and sectarian tendencies in the case of a settlement from the Transylvanian Plain were analysed by Tamás Kiss (Kiss 2003). The same relations in the case of 19th century sects of the working class were analysed by Hobsbawm. In the author's opinion “the hotbed of sectarian tendencies is the urbanising village” (Hobsbawm 1974: 200).

	Adventists	Baptists	Pentecostals	Evangelical Christians	Orthodox	Catholics
II. SOUTHERN CSÁNGÓS (SIBILANT "SZ")						
Pădureni (Szeketura)	*	-	-	-	353	73
Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva)	*	-	*	-	255	1880
Nicolae Bălcescu (Újfalu)	-	-	-	-	430	3653
Galbeni (Trunk)	-	-	-	-	*	1287
Gioseni (Gyoszeny)	6	-	14	-	769	2516
III. SZEKLERISED CSÁNGÓS A. ALONG THE RIVER SIRET						
Călugăreni (Kalugarén)	-	-	-	-	56	862
Lespezi (Lésped)	19	-	-	-	338	2206
Gârlenii de Sus (Rácsila)	*	-	-	-	221	1460
Lilieci (Lilijecs)	10	*	10	41	1361	678
Gârleni (Gerlény)	14		9	*	1487	351
Berdilă (Bergvila)	?	?	?	?	?	?
Trebiș (Terebes)	?	?	?	?	?	?
Luizi- Călugăra (Lujzikalagor)	9	-	-	-	50	4527
Fărăoani (Forrófalva)	*	-	-	-	29	5143
Cleja (Klészse)	7	-	16	5	82	4366
Șomușca (Somoska)	-	-	-	-	*	1615
Valea Mică (Pokolpatak)	6	-	-	-	29	735
Gheorghe Doja (Újfalu/ Dózsa)	10	-	-	-	394	620
Ciucani (Csík)	-	-	-	-	0	580
Fundu Răcăciuni Külső- rekecsin)	-	-	-	-	*	1998

	Adventists	Baptists	Pentecostals	Evangelical Christians	Orthodox	Catholics
Capăta (Kápota)	*	-	-	-	257	139
Berindești (Berendfalva)	?	?	?	?	?	?
Răcăciuni (Rekecsin)	35	-	28	-	2491	469
Arini (Magyarfalu)	-	-	-	-	12	1332
Vladnic (Lábnik)	*	-	-	-	33	865
Săscut-Sat (Szászkút)	-	-	-	-	1618	526
Tămași (Tamás)	-	-	-	-	1144	256
Chetriș (Ketrish)	-	-	-	-	249	283
Furnicari (Furnikár)			39	x	795	321
B. ALONG THE RIVER TAZLĂU						
Frumoasa (Frumósza)	-	-	*	-	1437	2209
Pustiana (Pusztina)	-	-	-	-	18	1942
Bogdănești (Ripa Jepi)	-	-	-	-	57	516
Tărăța (Szoloncka)	?	?	?	?	?	?
Cucuieti (Kukujéc)	-	-	-	-	1304	97
Florești (Szerbek)	-	-	-	-	108	566
Strugari (Esztrugár)	115	-	2	-	530	129
Lărguța (Máriafalva/Lárguca)	-	-	-	-	*	262
Coman (Gajdár)	-	-	-	-	*	1025
Stufu (Esztofuj)	-	-	-	-	13	379
Livezi (Váliri)	33	-	*	*	609	206
Bălăneasa (Balanyásza)	33	-	*	*	899	119
Enăchești (Jenekest)	15	-	-	-	724	104
Turluianu (Turluján)	14	-	-	-	1155	167

	Adventists	Baptists	Pentecostals	Evangelical Christians	Orthodox	Catholics
Verșești (Gydráska)	-	-	-	-	690	187
Berzunți (Berzunc)	11	-	*	-	1890	807
Bârzulești (Berzujok)	-	-	-	-	87	165
Petricica (Kövesalja)	-	-	*	-	415	171
Ardeoani (Ardeván)	*	-	*	-	1614	1552
C. ALONG THE RIVER TROTUȘ						
Palanca (Palánka)	-	-	-	-	762	134
Ciugheș (Csügés)	*	-	-	-	688	1292
Brusturoasa (Bruzsturósza)	-	-	-	-	1038	272
Comănești (Kománfalva)	124	109	289	*	20 239	960
Moinești (Mojnest)	93	15	286	*	21 298	1132
Dărmănești (Dormánfalva)	-	*	71	30	8306	1567
Dofteana (Doftána)	*	*	61	-	2797	150
Seaca (Szálka)	-	-	-	-	110	395
V. Câmpului (Válé Kimpuluj)	?	?	?	?	?	?
Bogata (Bogáta)	-	-	-	-	530	344
Târgu Ocna (Aknavásár)	66	*	57	9	10 211	968
Păcurele (Degettes)	?	?	?	?	?	?
Gura Slănic (Szalántorka)	?	?	?	?	?	?
Slănic Moldova (Szlanikfürdő)	-	-	*	-	1059	694
Cerdac (Cserdák)	-	-	-	10	894	419
Cireșoaia (Szalánc)	-	-	-	-	75	1831
Tg. Trotuș (Tatros)	-	6	-	-	791	1267

	Adventists	Baptists	Pentecostals	Evangelical Christians	Orthodox	Catholics
Tuta (Diószeg)	-	-	-	-	13	2095
Pârgărești (Szőlőhegy)	-	-	-	-	40	1005
Satu Nou (Újfalva)	-	-	-	-	7	1732
Nicorești (Szitás)	-	-	-	-	0	946
Bahna (Bahána)	-	-	-	-	72	558
Grozești (Gorzafalva)	?	?	?	?	?	?
Ferestrău-Oituz (Fűrészfalva)	?	?	?	?	?	?
Onești (Onyest)	138	26	201	37	41 717	3662
Valea Seacă (Szárzypatak)	*	-	*	-	255	1880
Gutinaș (Gutinász)	-	-	-	-	403	103
Pralea (Prálea)	-	-	-	*	137	756
Vizantea Mănăstirească (Vizánta)	?	?	?	?	?	?

The confessional structure of the Csángó villages from Bacău County and the major sects⁵²

Signs and abbreviations:

* element nr. between 1 and 4

? no data provided

⁵² This table was made based on the 2002 national census. I would like to thank demographer Tamás Kiss for the provided statistics. I have no data regarding the Northern Csángó villages.

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