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# Migration and the Politics of Ethnicity. The Case of Moldavian Csángós[1]

This study is based on a field research conducted in 2011 in Bogdánfalva (Valea Seacă) and, closely associated with it, on the results of a survey research with 100 respondents. The purpose of this research was to analyse the manifestations of ethnicity in different contexts, in the manner proposed by Richard Jenkins (Jenkins 2002: 255–261, see also Jenkins 2008: 65–74).[2] In one of my earlier studies, I investigated the relationships between language use and ethnicity, also reflecting upon language use in a migration situation, as well as upon its effects on ethnicity (see Peti 2017), and analysed in a separate study the quantitative data of the survey research related to language use, religious coexistence, migration etc. (see Peti 2015a). In this study, I will review two important Jenkinsian contexts of the lived experience of ethnicity (*informal and kinship relations*; *institutions, ethnopolitics, church*; *economic life and migration*), and I will analyse as a further "context" the significance of *folklore* in the production of ethnicity.

In my earlier study, I suggested that there have been significant changes in the "content" of the Moldavian Csángós' ethnicity,[3] as a result of migration. Here, I will take further the analysis of the ethnicity processes in the conditions of economic migration, as well as of the development of the Csángó ethnicity emerging in the migration context, which is acquiring increasingly ethnicised contents,

1 The present study is the result of the research project "Manifestations of ethnicity in minority communities (2011–2012)", initiated by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale [ISPMN]). The co-leader of the research was Dénes Kiss. This study acquired its present shape as a result of the suggestions and helpful advice of several researchers, for whom I am grateful to: Dénes Kiss, Tamás Kiss, Ilka Veress, Attila Deák, and Melinda Kardos (the participants of the research project), as well as László Fosztó, Vilmos Tánczos, János Imre Heltai, József Lőrincz, Árpád Töhötöm Szabó, James A. Kapaló, and Lidia Guzy. I also owe thanks to Dániel Duma and Rezső Borsos, who carried out the survey research with 100 respondents (Romanian-speaking and layered according to gender and age). The article has already been published in Hungarian: Migráció és az etnicitás politikája: a moldvai csángók esete. [Migration and the Politics of Ethnicity: The Case of the Moldavian Csángós] In: Jakab Albert Zsolt – Vajda András (szerk./eds.): *Aranyhíd. Tanulmányok Keszeg Vilmos tiszteletére.* [Studies in Honour of Keszeg Vilmos.] Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság – BBTE Magyar Néprajz és Antropológia Intézet – Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, Kolozsvár, 2017. 305–320.

2 This method was the same for all different minority areas included in the research project, according to the *Methodological guide* elaborated by Dénes Kiss.

3 Moldavian Csángós: a dominantly Catholic and Hungarian-speaking ethnic sub-group living mostly in Bacău County, outside Transylvania. While in Hungarian literature (ethnography, history, sociology) they are considered Hungarians (Magyars), some Romanian scholars argue that they are originally Romanians who were Magyarized (editor's note).

also discussing the efforts of becoming Italians ('Italification') of the Moldavian Csángós.

These processes are also relevant from the perspective of Moldavian Csángó identity politics, since the European political sphere, which considers the Csángós a separate minority, has certain expectations related to the strengthening of the Csángó identity (especially as a result of the Council of Europe Recommendation 1521 from 2001, see Medgyesi 2011). The Recommendation places the Csángó identity under protection, along the lines of the characteristic elements of the Csángó culture (language, traditions etc.), as "part of the European cultural heritage".[4] Nevertheless, the creation of the Csángó identity is not the result of a "heritage protection" process coordinated from above and of international expectations, but the product of the migration context (see Peti 2017). My study presents a situation in which a minority ethnic group uses local cultural characteristics in a migration context with an ethnicizing purpose, thus "instrumentalising" them.

Bogdánfalva is, in several respects, like any other Moldavian Csángó settlement. There is nothing outstanding here compared to many Csángó villages regarding the settlement pattern, the institutional supply, and the livelihood strategies of the inhabitants: the peasant past and settlement character is mixed with the spectacular efforts for overcoming the "old ways", also represented in colours and building dimensions, and the latter are also sharply separated from the more traditional aspects in the case of the newly built part of the village.[5]

According to the data of the 2011 Population and Housing Census, the village has 1844 inhabitants, 291 persons fewer than the number of inhabitants recorded at the 2002 census. As for the denominational distribution, I only have data from the 2002 population census, when the total number of inhabitants (2135) included 1880 Catholics and 255 Eastern Orthodox Christians (additionally, according to my knowledge, there are also some Adventists living in Bogdánfalva, not recorded in the statistics).

## Institutions, Ethnopolitics, and the Church

After the 1989 change of the political system, Romanian state institutions, as well as the Roman Catholic Church have impeded the functioning of the Csángó organisations dedicated to the strengthening of the Hungarian identity of the Csángó community and to the preservation of their Hungarian-language folk culture (see Pozsony 2005).

4 *"Diversity of cultures and languages should be seen as a precious resource that enriches our European heritage and also reinforces the identity of each nation and individual. Assistance on the European level, and in particular from the Council of Europe, is justified to save any particular culture and is needed in the case of the Csángós."* (Recommendation 1521 2001 [2011], paragraph 8.)

5 For a more detailed presentation of the village, see: Peti 2015a, 2017.

After the acceptance of the European Council's Recommendation by Romania, open hindrances posed by the state against organising Hungarian language classes outside the school curriculum by civic organisations in the Moldavian Csángó villages have finally ceased (see Peti 2015b: 50). However, notwithstanding the changes in the attitude of state institutions determined by the European Council Recommendation of 2001, the Moldavian Catholic Church remains as inflexible as ever towards the aspirations of the Csángós with a Hungarian identity to extend their linguistic rights. For instance, the Catholic Church still sharply refuses to accept the requests of the Moldavian Csángós asking to practice their religion in their native language, and Catholic priests have taken repeated measures against various forms of official school education in Hungarian language, as well as against Hungarian language classes organised outside the school curriculum (see Peti 2015b: 52).

The Scientific Research Department of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Iaşi (*Departamentul Cercetării Ştiintifice al Episcopiei Romano-Catolice din Iaşi*), a research institute established in Iaşi in 2001, conducts ideologically biased researches (see Pozsony 2005: 202), and the declared objective of the Dumitru Mărtinaş Association, also benefitting from the support of the Catholic Church, is to hinder Csángó efforts associated with Hungarian ethnopolitical aspirations.

The Csángó Education Programme represents a network that integrates educators involved in the Hungarian language education of the Moldavian Csángós, functioning within the remit of the Hungarian Teachers' Association of Romania (*Romániai Magyar* Pedagógusok Szövetsége), the professional advocacy organisation of Hungarian-language educators in Romania. Before 2012, the functions exercised by this organisation were fulfilled by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia (*Moldvai Csángómagyarok Szövetsége*, MCSMSZ), which organised Hungarian language courses outside the school curriculum for the Csángó children. Beginning with the 2002–2003 school year, the teachers belonging to the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia gained the opportunity to teach Hungarian language as part of the official school curriculum. The Association is almost exclusively financed through Hungarian state and private sources (according to news reports, the ratio of the two sources is approximately half and half). In 2012, the Hungarian language education programme, which constituted the Csángó Association's main area of activity, was transferred for political reasons into the competence of the Hungarian Teachers' Association of Romania by the Hungarian Government. This fact, even if it did not mean the complete abolition of the Csángó-Hungarian Association, has effectively condemned it to inactivity. At the beginning of the 2017 school year, 1964 children studied at 29 education sites under the Csángó Education Programme.[6] 1190 of them studied Hungarian language within the state educational framework (1148 in primary education and

6 Data provided by Attila Márton, head of the Csángó Education Programme, at my request, on 24 March 2017.

42 in high school education).[7] The number of teachers involved in this programme, respectively of the educators who dedicate themselves to the preservation of traditions is 47 in total.[8] The scope of activities of the organisation includes teaching arrangements for education in the Hungarian language, extending the Csángó educational programme, handling the normative financial support received from Hungary, the attraction of new funding sources, the creation of pedagogical material needed for the Hungarian language education of the Csángó children, keeping in touch with professional organisations, etc.

Starting with 2010, the Hungarian education programme is conducted in Bogdánfalva. Its establishment was not surrounded by conflicts of such proportions (see Peti 2015a: 980) as in the case of several other villages. One can suppose that the reasons for the relative smoothness of this process consisted in the models having been already established and working in other villages, in the regulations having become clear, and in the Recommendation of the European Council. After tempers had calmed somewhat, the fact that the children taking Hungarian language courses outside the school curriculum went carolling in the village at Christmas with the old Csángó songs which they have relearned in class, has been received positively, according to many of my informants.

The general Romanianisation of personal names and toponyms after the World War II has not left Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva) untouched, either.

## Folklore Narratives

The attitude of the Moldavian Csángós towards Transylvanian Hungarians does not entail elements of ethnic solidarity with them. Their personal narratives about their encounters with ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania and from Hungary present Hungarians as an ethnic group whose attitude towards the Csángós is discriminatory and hostile. In my fieldwork, I recorded many narratives according to which the Csángós have been discriminated against in Hungarian language areas when speaking Romanian.

The discriminatory attitude of the Transylvanian Hungarians against the Csángós was the subject of two autobiographical narratives of an elderly informant. Both narratives are built on the same model: Transylvanian Hungarians refused to serve him in the shop and ignored him when he spoke in Romanian while shopping. This hostile attitude only changed when he addressed them in Hungarian. This informant condemns the discriminatory attitude of the Hungarians, because it goes against the traditional Christian values (according to which people must respect each other no matter what language they speak), and it is disloyal towards the Romanian State. The common element in both narratives is that he takes

7 Data provided by Attila Márton, head of the Csángó Education Programme, at my request, on 24 March 2017.

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revenge on the Transylvanian Hungarians who look down on and discriminate against him by threatening them with the authority of the Romanian State and its laws.[9]

Another narrative recounted by the same informant is built on a similar theme. In this narrative, his son, who has been away as a guest worker, was mistaken for an Italian when crossing the Hungarian border, so the corrupt Hungarian border guards tried to extort a "gift" from him. When his son addressed them in Hungarian, the border guards were ashamed. With this narrative recounted as a true story, the informant tried to convince his daughter-in-law, employed by the local mayor's office, of the importance of speaking the local dialect. The narrative attests to the fact that the appreciation of the Csángó dialect on a pragmatic level is associated with eliminating discrimination because of lacking Hungarian language proficiency or with its offering a practical advantage, and not with a positive ideological attitude towards it.

Vilmos Tánczos observed the identificatory function of these narratives about the discriminatory attitude of Hungarians from Transylvania and Hungary towards the Csángós during the 2011 census of Romania. "Whether they have a basis in reality or not, it is a fact that these narratives about the injuries and refusals suffered from the Hungarians and the Székelys get circulated as true stories among the Csángós and thereby become important factors of identification" (Tánczos 2011: 270–271). As Tánczos also points out, these stories are generally built on the same theme: the Csángós are not served in the shop when they ask for something in Romanian, but the shopkeepers immediately become more friendly and helpful when they find out that their customers speak Hungarian as well. In other words, these narratives are somewhat like folk legends and contain stereotypical

9 [Translator's note: The informant speaks a Hungarian dialect.] *We've been to Brașov (Brassó) and were about to return when this happened. We were crossing the mountain, and we stopped in a small town, the name of which I have forgotten. I went into a shop there, because there was no water. This happened on Saint Peter's day. There was no water in the whole town. So, I went in and asked them* [Translator's note: The informant quotes this in Romanian]*: "Would you please give me a bottle of mineral water?" The shopkeeper just stared at me for a long time, and then she went away. So, when she came back, I asked her again* [Translator's note: The informant quotes this again in Romanian]*: "I asked you for a bottle of mineral water, please." But she went again to the back of the shop. When she came back again, I asked her in Hungarian: "Please give me a bottle of mineral water." "Has your mouth been sewn shut until now?" – asks she. "Now wait a minute, Missis! Where do you think you are?! Aren't you in Romania?! Aren't you? So, if you come to Bacău [Bákó], and you can't speak any Romanian, then you shouldn't be served?* [The informant raises his voice.] *What's with this malice? Give me the claims book, so I can make a complaint!" "I apologise." Then the manager came, also to apologise, and they gave me two bottles of mineral water, just so I don't write anything in the claims book. Then I told them: "It's a shame, people! We're in Romania here, so we also have to know how to speak in Romanian, and when in Hungary, in Hungarian, and even if an Italian comes, he should know how to speak in Romanian! When Romanians go to visit Hungary, mustn't they know how to speak in Hungarian?! They must, because they're in that country. They're on Hungarian soil. So they must know how to speak the language! Or else they will not be served. It is the same here, in Romania." "We apologise."* J. J. (born in 1937), Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva), 1 August 2011.

generalisations about the nationalistic attitudes of Transylvanian Hungarians and their negative attitude towards the Moldavian Csángós (see ibid.).

In her study about the ethnic processes of the British middle-class community that has emigrated to Spain, Karen O'Reilly also discusses the role of stereotypes in creating symbolic demarcations. The author argues that, by portraying the Spanish as slow, backward, or even friendly, the members of this community are, in fact, recreating the boundaries of their own autonomous ethnicity (see O'Reilly 2000: 93–94).[10]

The interpretation of the attitudes, whether real or perceived, of Transylvanian Hungarians towards the Csángós, takes place through stereotypes supplied by the community. These narratives are, in fact, built upon the same stereotypical elements, which are circulated by the Romanian nationalistic discourse about the discriminatory and disloyal behaviour of Transylvanian Hungarians. Consistent with the observations of Karen O'Reilly, the stereotypes function in this discourse as a means of symbolic delimitation from the Transylvanian Hungarian community.

While analysing the role of ethnicity in everyday life, Christian Karner observes that, "rather than the static and one-dimensional phenomena they are widely believed to be, identities are shown to be subject to ongoing negotiations", which "are shaped by experiences and memories of migration and settlement, by racial marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination, as well as by group-internal struggles over self-definitions, role compliance and cultural change" (Karner 2007: 6). The way in which the inhabitants of Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva) use these stereotypical and quasi-folkloric narratives reminds us of the complexity and, as also mentioned by Christian Karner, the multidimensional character of the ethnic contents of identity on the level of the individual. On the one hand, the narratives told by the Csángós about Transylvanian Hungarians, which also contain stereotypical elements, articulate a sense of solidarity with the Orthodox Romanians. On the other hand, as we have already seen, the individual character of the Csángó ethnicity also expresses itself in other contexts in opposition to the Orthodox Romanians.

One middle-aged informant, who serves in the township council, recounted several narratives based on his personal experiences and built on similar themes to those of the stories presented above. Their subject is, again, the Hungarians' (or more precisely, the Székelys') stigmatising and nationalistic attitude towards the Csángós. According to one of his stories, he once worked as a tractor driver in Harghita County. He recounted that they barely wanted to serve him at his place of accommodation. However, their attitude towards him changed radically and "they almost hugged him" immediately when he addressed them in his Csángó dialect. He had similar experiences during his compulsory military service, too, where he kept it a secret for a long time that he is also proficient in Hungarian. He feels that

10 According to Karen O'Reilly, Judith Okely's observations related to nomadic Gypsies in England, whose stereotypes and popular images are not explicitly articulated as symbolic boundaries, were not confirmed in her case (see O'Reilly 2000: 93–94).

after his Hungarian comrades learned that he speaks their language, they resented him for communicating with them in Romanian the whole time.[11]

In another story, he was heading home with a Romanian colleague from Botoşani County with two tractors bought from the factory in Braşov (Brassó), when the cold night fell upon them in Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely)[12] They wanted to spend the night in a motel with an adequate parking lot. His Romanian colleague offered to take care of their accommodation, but the receptionist did not want to give him a room. Thereupon he went to the receptionist himself and addressed him in his Csángó dialect, and the receptionist handed him the keys to two rooms immediately. His story clearly reflects his dislike for the cruel nationalism of the Hungarian receptionist and his solidarity with his Romanian colleague.[13]

During our interview, his wife brought out a photo album. On one of the pictures I recognised him and his wife in a group dressed in Csángó traditional costumes. The woman explained to me that the photo was taken on a trip to Hungary, on which they have performed traditional Csángó dances at an event promoting Csángó culture. My informant immediately remarked that he still knows the Csángó dances, but has forgotten the songs and ritual texts performed in Hungarian on traditional holidays, because he did not practice them.

The scholarly literature uses the term *hybrid identities* to refer to identities with multiple cultural bonds. According to Christian Karner, in the case of hybrid identities, different ways of seeing and feeling are associated with distinct ethnicities in the everyday lives and individual biographies of social actors "who cannot be confined or reduced to one culture without their complexity being seriously distorted" (see Karner 2007: 73). However, the author does not argue that people would "choose freely from a range of ethnic traditions on offer". Instead, he maintains that "different *structures of action* impinge on them in different contexts and, depending on biographical circumstances, to different degrees" (see Karner 2007: 73).

The above case of the township councillor clearly illustrates the way in which, on the everyday level of ethnicity, Moldavian Csángós exist simultaneously in the fields of attraction of two cultural traditions and are permanently challenged to

11 [Translator's note: The informant speaks in Romanian: *We were travelling in Harghita (Hargita) County, and we also had our place of accommodation there. But you should know that they didn't really want to serve you if you spoke Romanian. At last, I switched to speaking Csángó. When they heard this, they almost hugged me. "How are you?* [Translator's note: The informant quotes this question in Hungarian.] *Why didn't you tell us that you speak Hungarian?" I also had to do my compulsory military service. I've met many Hungarians there. It took a while until they found out that I can speak Hungarian… and they were angry at me because I didn't speak with them in Hungarian right from the beginning.*

12 Translator's note: a city in Covasna County, Romania; part of the Székely Land.

13 [Translator's note: The informant speaks in Romanian.] *I was bringing back tractors from Braşov (Brassó), and once we stopped in Târgu Secuiesc (Kézdivásárhely). We stopped at a place that had a guarded parking lot, and we left the tractors there. My colleague from Botoşani went in. It was night, and it was cold. We didn't want to drive at night and in that cold. "Come on, go in."* […] *He comes back and tells me they don't want us. Then I asked in Csángó, and he* [Translator's note: the receptionist] *immediately gave me the keys.*

express their own position through the struggle for their own identity. On the one hand, as we have seen, the Orthodox Romanians have been traditionally stigmatising Moldavian Csángós because of their historical bonds with Hungarian cultural traditions, which urges the Csángós to hide and cover up these bonds in situations when encountering Romanians. On the other hand, Hungarians from Transylvania and Hungary, enchanted by the "myth of the Csángó" and emphasising the Csángós' rootedness in Hungarian cultural traditions, urge them to assume their Hungarian identity, thereby violating the complexity of their "hybrid identity", as defined by Christian Karner.[14] Some of the Csángós even participate in these events based on the "Csángó myth", which is perpetuated primarily from Hungary. Such events are meant as a ritual performance of the Csángós' Hungarian identity and as an expression of their bonds to Hungarian cultural traditions. However, the expression of their identity is not so clear when these same people are also influenced by other role identifications, as hinted at by C. Karner, such as the factors of power that are present in their everyday lives in their own reality. In his own village, the township councillor must play the role of the loyal state functionary, while as a member of the folk-dance ensemble he is present in his quality of a "Csángó-Hungarian", who acknowledges his bonds to Hungarian cultural traditions. Because of the conflictual relationship between these two roles, the informant was especially cautious during the interview regarding his identity ties and provided evasive answers that were designed to push the issue into the background. His intention to minimise his involvement in the Hungarian theatrical performance was also influenced by its incompatibility with his role as a Romanian state functionary, which he played in his home village. Also, his effort at preventing any suspicion of publicly assuming the Hungarian identity associated with Csángó folkloric traditions, an identification that would take place in an "ideologised context", reminds us of his attitudes manifested, according to his own narratives, during his compulsory military service, which seem to imply that the Moldavian Catholics kept their Csángó identity secret because they felt that falling under the suspicion of having a Hungarian identity would question their loyalty to the Romanian State. Emphasising the fact of belonging to the Csángó ethnic group can mean, in certain contexts, risking the suspicion of Hungarian identity. Despite the high-level linguistic assimilation to the dominant ethnic group composed of Orthodox Romanians, this danger reminds the Moldavian Csángós of the fragility of their integration, and of the possibility of their loyalty towards the dominant ethnicity being questioned.

James A. Kapaló compared the stigmatisation processes affecting the Moldavian Csángós and its consequences for their identity with the development processes of the Sami identity, strongly stigmatised within the Norwegian majority population, as described by Harald Eidheim (Eidheim 1969 *cited by* Kapaló 1996, Eidheim 1998). Kapaló demonstrated that, due to their multiply stigmatised status (with linguistic stigmatisation as one of its most significant, but not sole component), the Csángós

14 James A. Kapaló also emphasises the "cultural affinity pointing towards both groups" and the "hybrid" character of the Csángó identity in his article that problematises the identity of the Moldavian Csángó (Kapaló 1996).

"undercommunicate their ethnic identity"[15] in the Eidheimian "transitional zones" of their contact with Romanians (Kapaló 1996). As the Sami were scrupulously careful, in the case presented by Eidheim, not to overemphasise publicly their Sami identity, Kapaló also confirmed that the Csángós use similar strategies when they "overcommunicate their 'Romanianness'".[16] Kapaló's analysis shows that, since an important element of stigmatisation consists in the "asymmetrical balance of power in interethnic relations between Csángós and Romanians", the contents of the Csángó ethnicity lose their validity within the public sphere reflecting the actual power structure (see Kapaló 1996).

As we have seen, the contents which articulate Csángó ethnicity stem from the historical relationships of the Csángó society and its particular situation. Among these factors we can mention the following: the historically formed consciousness of separation between the coexisting Orthodox and Catholic ethnic group[17], the Csángós' feelings of inferiority towards the Romanians, the necessity to submit to political power and to its institutions, the awareness of the Csángó dialect's limited sphere of use, and the aspiration to collaborate with the majority community.[18]

## Economic Life and Migration

As a result of internal migration during the socialist era, many Moldavian Csángós moved to settlements in the Székely Land and Transylvania. The ethnic processes of Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva) are still influenced by the inhabitants' contact with family members and more distant relatives living in these towns and villages.

Before Romania joined the EU in 2007, Csángó guest workers managed to get abroad illegally, assuming great risks, and often with the help of clandestine immigration networks. A former guest worker from Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva), of around forty-five years of age, recounted that he paid two thousand dollars to obtain a visa illegally. Along with other Csángós, he first managed to get to Denmark, under the pretext of being on a religious pilgrimage. Thence they travelled illegally to Venice, where they parted ways. Today, this man lives in an imposing

15 Terms used by James A. Kapaló.

16 Terms used by James A. Kapaló.

17 In the case of Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva), the existence of this separation can be demonstrated by appealing to the designation of the Orthodox community as "oláhok" and "románok" ["Vlachs", "Romanians"] by the Csángós as well as through the low number of interfaith marriages. On the identificatory functions of the ethnonyms "oláh" ["Vlach"], "magyar" ["Hungarian"], and "csángó" within different speech situations, see the study of Sándor Szilágyi N. (Szilágyi 2002).

18 I should also mention here the elements of Hungarian folkloristic knowledge (for example the religious narratives about the Moldavian origin of the votive statue of the Virgin Mary from Șumuleu Ciuc [Csíksomlyó] (Editor's note: see Vilmos Tánczos's article in the present volume), the legends about the Székely origins of the Csángós, etc.) as well as certain elements of the Csángós' historical memory (for instance, the memory of the Romanianisation of personal names and the names of their ancestors of Hungarian mother tongue, Hungarian toponyms, etc.), which are beyond the scope of the present study.

Western-style villa, featuring the most modern amenities and comfort, with a first-floor terrace, an imposing fireplace, and a well-kept grass court. During our survey research, 41 persons from the 100 households we surveyed were abroad as worker migrants (see Peti 2015a: 977).

I have heard of several cases where both parents were out of the country, while their preschool-age children stayed home, entrusted to the care of relatives or trusted neighbours.

The financial benefits of guest work can clearly be seen on the newly built or renovated family houses, complete with modern architectural elements, new furniture, electronic kitchen appliances and their own bathrooms. However, these houses are unoccupied for most of the year. Most of the migrant workers use their houses for about one month a year during their summer vacation. There are also many of them who are planning to settle abroad and already have their own dwelling place in their chosen country, or would like to purchase it in the near future. Nevertheless, the many houses which are under construction in the village point to the fact that the majority of the guest workers from Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva) do not wish to settle abroad definitively, but neither do they plan to return to Romania anytime soon. Their accounts reflect the fact that these guest workers view the construction of family homes in their native village as securing an alternative after their jobs abroad, while they make the (indefinite) date of their return dependent on the narrowing of foreign employment opportunities or on their reaching old age.

In the context of the long-term migration practice of the Moldavian Csángós, the contents of Csángó ethnicity are also substantially modified. In the following, I will turn my attention to the effects of the migration phenomenon on the development of the identity of Moldavian Csángós. My argumentation will draw on Alejandro Portes' theory of the formation of identities in the context of transnational migration (Portes 1999).

Alejandro Portes differentiates between two types of identity that are formed among the members of migrant communities during transnational migration to the United States (the author uses the term "transnational activity"): *reactive* and *linear identity*. The main point of Portes' argument is that the positive or negative attitude of the receiving communities and the target country's authorities, respectively the extent of the discrimination against the immigrants, significantly affect their adaptation strategies. According to the author, in those cases in which the immigrant community has to suffer the continuous super-ordination of the receiving community and the harassment by the government of the target state because of its particular culture and/or distinctive racial characteristics, its members have no other choice but casting a protective net around themselves, to identify themselves with the traditions and interests rooted in their home country, and to symbolically, and sometimes also physically, separate themselves from the receiving community (Portes 1999: 465). Portes designates this type of attitude with the term *reactive identity*.

Also according to him, in the opposite case, if the receiving community is not especially hostile towards the immigrants, and the immigrant group is small enough to "lose itself" within the receiving community, which does not experience their presence as a threat, the conditions for *linear identity* construction are created. The author states that in this case migrants try to avoid any stigma associated with their particular citizenship through declaring themselves belonging to a different group or "convert" themselves to the receiving community (Portes 1999: 466).

In the case of the Moldavian Csángós, one of the most important effects of labour migration on identity is due to the fact that Romanian identity is heavily stigmatised in the target countries. The dismissive and often humiliating attitude they encounter from the citizens of the target country (which are consistently recurring elements in the accounts of the Csángó labour migrants) serves as a basis for the reactive identity building described by Portes. In accordance with the organising model of the "safety net" of their identity, which can be described as reactive in the sense established by Portes, these Moldavian Catholics live in Italy and Spain within subculture groups mostly consisting of Csángós, and one of the elements of this lifestyle lies in their physical and symbolic separation from the receiving community. Their network of relationships is made up of their relatives and fellow villagers who live in the same area. One of the guest worker women, who found employment near Turin, managed to enumerate as many as six Csángó families with which she keeps contacts. There have even already been marriages and baptisms within this circle in Italy. Csángó guest workers form new relationships especially with other labour migrants from Romania (Orthodox Romanians), most often as a consequence of practical necessities stemming from their situation as immigrants, such as renting a house in common or finding new employment opportunities.

The intolerance of the receiving population and their discriminatory behaviour, which also seems to communicate cultural superiority, are recurring elements in the narratives of the Csángó labour migrants, who reported countless negative experiences of being offended or humiliated as guest workers from Romania. For instance, during the ritual handshake which is performed as a part of the Roman Catholic mass, the autochthonous Portuguese explicitly refused to shake hands with them. Such experiences contributed to a large extent to the Csángós' limiting their contact with the local population to the minimum required. Another frequent narrative refers to positive experiences, which were exceptions: desperate life situations when, contrary to their expectations, they experienced helpfulness and generosity from some exceptional people.

## The "Rather Romanian" Identity

As a response to the direct question about their nationality ("what do you consider yourself: Romanian, Csángó, or Hungarian?"), our surveyed informants often

answered: "rather Romanian".[19] "Labour migration causes the intensification of spontaneous assimilation processes" (Peti 2015a: 978) by pushing the majority of the Csángó guest workers in the direction of the "rather Romanian" identity. However, it is also an important circumstance that, in certain situations, the linguistically assimilated Csángó guest workers declare themselves "rather Romanian" in a way that does not completely invalidate the previously presented contents of Csángó ethnicity.

Here we are dealing with a category of identity constructed upon the awareness of the dominant language use within the family as well as the more restricted confines of the social network. At the same time, the "rather Romanian" identity presents a reference point of identification for their social surroundings outside of the local life-world. It becomes relevant primarily when the Csángós leave the narrower surroundings of their native village. This is the language in which they can express themselves fluently and the speaking of which offers the possibility of their identification with a state-forming ethnic group. In the Csángó language, considered by them a "mixed language", they can only speak with a few relatives back home, who are older, poorer, and of a lower status than themselves, or at best, they can communicate in it within the surrounding villages. In other words, the use of this language is extremely restricted. Thus, the designation "Csángó" represents for them a label attached to the people who belong to, or stem from the local world, but which does not have any reference outside the world of the local villages beginning with Bacău city (Bákó). In their new life-world, the status of the Romanian language spoken quite naturally within their former, both narrower and wider life-world (the world of their native village and the surrounding villages, along with the world of the cities outside the Moldavian villages), also changes significantly. Since Romanian identity is stigmatised in Italy, the Romanian language spoken by the Csángó guest workers does not automatically mean any more their identification with the non-stigmatised identity by the outside world, as it did in Moldavia. In the context of labour migration, the "rather Romanian" identity does not contain symbolic and emotional elements.

## Csángó Identity in the Context of Migration

The specific character of the Csángós' seclusion, when compared to the "reactive identity" as described by Portes, consists in their identification, also due to the stigmatisation of Romanian identity, not only with the traditions and interests rooted in their country of origin, as Portes observed in the case of reactive identity, but also in their "discovering" and attaching new meanings to their being Csángós. In order to interpret this new type of attitude towards Csángó identity, I will rely on Vilmos Tánczos' argumentation concerning the *levels of Csángó identity*.

19 62 of the surveyed persons declared themselves to be Romanian, and 31 considered themselves Csángós.

In his essay summarising the experiences of the 2011 census in Moldavia, Vilmos Tánczos differentiates between three levels of the Csángó identity: the *pre-national*[20], the *national*, and the *post-national* level (Tánczos 2011). The author counts among the components of the prenational level of Csángó identity those elements that define the structuring of identity within the traditional framework (the lack of modern national consciousness, the importance of belonging to the Roman Catholic denomination, loyalty towards the state, their differentiation from the Orthodox "Vlachs", etc.) (see Tánczos 2011: 256–257).[21] As for the post-national, Tánczos observes that "there is a *new Csángó consciousness*[22] among young Csángó intellectuals; that is to say, there already are some young Csángós who are consciously trying to define their identity not as Romanian or Hungarian, but as *Csángó*[23], and who manifest a keen interest for the authentic local traditions and the language, which is in danger of dying out. However, this new Csángó self-awareness and attitude does not necessarily entail Hungarian (Csángó) linguistic knowledge as a basic component" (Tánczos 2011: 265).

Although an important proportion of Csángó guest workers had practically lived abroad for more than fifteen years, only rarely returning to visit their native village, the closer human relationships of these labour migrants still mostly tie them to their fellow villagers and to other guest workers of Roman Catholic faith, coming from the neighbouring villages of their narrower region. Thus, their social relations with members of the local community did not lose their importance during the Csángó labour migrants' stay as guest workers, but even increased in value in many cases. This is the case with regard to solving practical problems of everyday life, which require a high level of trust between the parties concerned (for instance, finding employment and sharing work, renting an accommodation together, organising the sending and receiving of packages, etc.). For these guest workers, the most important element of their identity consists in the awareness of being part of a local Roman Catholic community. The development of this identity is also strongly influenced by the elements of the symbolic attitude towards the local culture, also emphasised by Vilmos Tánczos.

Along with the stronger symbolic relationship with popular culture, which was pointed out by Tánczos, the context of labour migration also contributes to the increased valuation of the guest workers' symbolic attitude towards the value system of Catholicism and to their presumption that Roman Catholics are characterised by common behaviour patterns, attitudes, and cultural features. "*Catholicism means a difference which changes attitudes and behaviour*" – said a middle-aged male informant, who has been working in Italy for twenty years. For these guest workers, Roman Catholicism does not primarily mean a confessional identity,

20 Tamás Kiss also uses the term "prenational" in association with the identity of the Moldavian Csángós (see Kiss 2005: 234).

21 Within the scholarly literature about the Moldavian Csángós, Meinolf Arens uses the term "*prenational form of identity*" when referring to the traditional form of identity, which is defined by confessional affiliation (Arens 2005: 345).

22 Italics also from him – L.P.

23 Italics also from him – L.P.

but the attribution of certain cultural characteristics to a given local community, cultural features they can identify themselves with. Trustworthiness in work, modest and respectful behaviour, thrift and sparing lifestyle, loyalty towards their narrower lifeworld from back home – these are the values along which the Csángó labour migrants define themselves. Roman Catholicism is for them the totality of certain behavioural norms and of their system of attitudes towards the world. Usually, these contents of Catholicism are specified in contrast to Orthodox Romanians. Tensions stemming from joint tenant and employment relationships often maintained with Orthodox Romanians out of necessity can be the breeding ground for the formation of negative stereotypes. For instance, a forty-five-year-old woman, who lives in a flat with a Romanian family, concluded her account about her neighbours in the following way: "*Sometimes, Italians are more gentle/courteous than our Romanians.*" The man I cited above recounted that they were renting a house near Rome with several other Catholic families, never having any problems, until some Orthodox Romanians also moved into the house.[24] This informant had a crushingly low opinion not only of the Orthodox Romanians whom he met in Italy but also about the Orthodox community back home in Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva). He stated that one can see it even on the street who is a Roman Catholic and who is an Orthodox Romanian. In his opinion, although Catholics may not be as learned as the Orthodox, they are more modest, quiet, thrifty and proactive in their conduct. As the same informant further said, "*[Csángós] see to their work, but these people [the Romanians], the first thing they do is to steal something, as soon as they enter the building site, so you can rarely find an honest Romanian*."

These additional aspects of Csángó identity actually smooth over cultural differences (like differences in dialect and mentality) between the Roman Catholic villages of Moldavia and strongly emphasise the idea of their cultural identity and mentality, along with the solidarity between the residents of these villages.[25] They are conscious of the fact that this identity is very rarely recognised by the outside world, and it has no relevance whatsoever in most cases, because they are also heavily stigmatised as "Romanian guest workers". In the context of labour migration, their Csángó identity, constructed on the awareness of the contents of Catholicism, means protection against the massive stigmatisation of Romanian

24 *I don't think I have any Orthodox friends. There are these boys who work as couriers. They bring packages to people. Apart from them, everyone else in our circle is Catholic. For instance, once we were living in a house with a family. We've been five people there. Then another Catholic family came, who then brought along their brother-in-law and their relatives. There was whole a circle of people there, which… We also had some Orthodox people in the house as tenants, but… They touched stuff they were not supposed to, and it was different. I knew about these kinds of situations, and I bought my own stuff, I had my own water, my own beer, my own food, and no one could touch that, everyone kept their own stuff. Immediately as the Orthodox people moved in, things began to disappear… You can see in their behaviour if someone is in the habit of stealing things.*

25 Commenting upon the concept of "*transnational enterprise*" as introduced by Alejandro Portes, Tamás Kiss states that "migrants coming from the same geographical area are inclined to behave with solidarity to each other even if they are strangers" (Kiss 2010: 188).

identity. As emphasised by Portes, their local culture fulfils the function of a safety net for many Csángó guest workers.

The construction of this identity can sometimes also reflect the pragmatic relationship with the Hungarian language (the idea that "it is useful to speak many languages"[26]). At the same time, this pragmatic relationship with language excludes the symbolic attitude towards it, which could serve as a basis for the construction of a Hungarian identity. It is also an important factor that these new types of identity attitude are not only influenced by the migration experiences of the Csángó guest workers in western countries, but can recently also be observed in the case of young Moldavian Csángós who emigrated to Hungary and use their Csángó identity as a mobility strategy (reference or more details required).

## Tendencies of 'Italification'

Along with the "rather Romanian" and the Csángó identity (also invested with new meanings), both of which I included in the category of *reactive identity* introduced above, "the western migration of the Csángós also produced new identification strategies, such as 'italification' tendencies which can be observed in the case of many members of the younger generation, who have been working in Italy for 15 to 20 years" (Peti 2015a: 978). This can be seen especially in the phenomenon of language change from Romanian to Italian.

I heard many local accounts about people returning from Italy speaking among themselves in Italian and about their 'Italification'. For the time being, it would be difficult to say anything definite about the impact of the spread of Italian language use on Csángó ethnicity. In Portes' conceptual model, this phenomenon would lie closest to linear identity construction, as a result of which immigrants choose cultural adaptation to the receiving population. This is presumably a group that has chosen to settle down definitively in Italy.

A middle-aged woman who earns her living by taking care of elderly people and who was spending her one-month vacation in her middle-sized home, which nevertheless was nicely renovated and equipped with modern household appliances, told me that they most often speak in a mixed language consisting of Italian, Romanian and Csángó elements within her family, especially with her husband. "*Sometimes it happens that language does not come back to you*" – she explained. Nonetheless, this guest worker woman only speaks in Italian and Romanian with her children.

## Conclusion

Despite the advanced state of language shift among the Csángós living in Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva), their self-differentiation from the Orthodox Romanians

26 Recently, this idea also received institutional legitimation from the introduction of Hungarian language courses.

clearly expresses itself in the contexts of everyday life. However, even admitting the existence of many important areas such as religion, language use, informal and kinship relationships, which reproduce the autonomy of the Csángó ethnicity in opposition to the Orthodox Romanians, the Moldavian Csángós' attitude towards the official institutional system (of both the Church and the State) and their relationship with Transylvanian Hungarians reflects an unconditional solidarity with Romanians.

The experience of migration introduces an element of ambivalence in the Csángós' assimilative tendencies towards Romanians. The Moldavian Csángós' identification with Romanian identity loses its self-evident character because of its western stigmatisation (primarily due to its identification with the guest worker status). This has lead, on the one hand, to the appearance of a Csángó identity that has been invested with new meanings (Catholicism is associated with new cultural characteristics, value systems, and behavioural norms within the migration context), and on the other hand, to some of the Csángó guest workers being pushed towards the social networks formed by Romanian labour migrants, which, in its turn, also intensifies the process of language shift. The reinterpreted contents of Csángó identity provide an opportunity for some of the Moldavian Csángó guest workers to delimit themselves from the Romanian ethnic identity that is stigmatised abroad. This stigmatisation of the Romanian identity also contributes to the 'Italification' tendencies arisen among the Csángó labour migrants.

The attitude towards the elements of traditional popular culture which are considered values worthy of "heritagisation" also represents an essential element of Hungarian revitalisation expectations and aspirations (similar to international ones). The basic ideological stance towards the Csángós considers them the most valuable preservers of the Hungarian national character, due to the archaic character of their culture and dialect, in spite of the fact that they lie at the farthest from the perspective of their language state and ethnic identity options.[27] The Csángó identity developed in the migration context corresponds in its orientation to that of the expectations of the European minority politics, which urges the recognition of the Csángós on the basis of their cultural heritage (and not their Hungarian or Romanian language), as far as the strengthening (or the creation?) of the autonomous Csángó identity is concerned, but represents the result of independently organised processes.

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