

Thesis of doctoral (PhD) dissertation

Studies on ethnic coexistence situations of three settlements in the Nyírség with special regard to the role of the functions of tradition set in the community processes of contemporary local societies

Henriett Szabó

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Gábor Biczó



UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

Doctoral School of History and Ethnography

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I. The aim of the dissertation, defining of the topic

The social and cultural circumstances of the local rural communities in Hungary have radically changed since the regime change of 1989. The village, as the traditional living space of local communities have considerably changed in terms of status, function and demography. Social ethnography, anthropology, and other social sciences as well, tend to describe these processes as a kind of devaluation, as the decline of villages and rural areas. As a consequence of this approach the countryside has become a physical-geographic and sociocultural space connected with the concepts of disadvantage, marginality, periphery and poverty in contemporary scientific discourses. The decrease of the social importance of peasantry, the decline of agriculture and as a consequence the devaluation of the village as a settlement type are mutually reinforcing parallel effects which lead to the function loss of the countryside.

According to my study despite the obvious signs of the economic, social and cultural decline positive visible processes can be noticed as well. As social scientists studying the local communities closely, in a long term, from an emic perspective we could explore new community processes of the contemporary rural settlements in Hungary. Community processes evolved from the coexistence processes of local societies can be observed even in areas with the most disadvantageous sociocultural and socioeconomic position which allows us to study the function of contemporary rural areas in a quite new context.

The results of my coexistence researches partly based on community processes which have been conducted in different locations show that the different ethnosociological and ethnocultural relations of these settlements create markedly different coexistence practices which cannot be described with one generally valid model. However one common result of the studies is that social macro processes have unfavourable impact on the internal coexistence relations of local communities. Local communities cannot or just partly can synchronise their own function (which is present in the form of traditions as a result of organic and long-term coexistence) with the external macroenvironmental (economic, cultural and social) effects. Nevertheless the local community always remain a “place” which can be interpreted with its phenomenons only in the context that has formed it.

The aim of my basic research presented in this dissertation my thesis is to analyse the role of tradition in contemporary community processes through the community processes of three Eastern Hungarian localities (mainly rural, village-like settlements). I pay special attention to

the structure of available tradition sets, the characteristics of its function changes and to determining factors of local revival processes. The first chapter of the dissertation focuses on the connection between tradition and community in the three selected settlements.

Another important aim of community studies on contemporary local communities can be to understand the impacts of local – mainly ethnic – sub-communities on coexistence relations. According to the specialities of the selected settlements I think that the study of Hungarian and Roma ethnic coexistence relationship is a significant issue from an applied social science aspect. My survey covered the study of the defining factors of coexistence, the relations between the different local sub-communities and the impact of local traditions (mainly with significant ethnographic value) on community relations. The analysis of the different levels of interpersonal relationships was handled with high priority to understand the local systems of ethnic relations. The second chapter of the dissertation represents the results of these studies.

The third chapter of the dissertation represents the characteristics of non-governmental organisations operating in the studied settlements. The results of my research show that the local processes of civil self-organized communities have very different patterns and rules among the studied settlements. Therefore an important part of the survey was to study the civil non-governmental organizations, foundations, bands and to represent their operation. I also analysed the impact of these organisations (which are often found for the preservation and maintenance of traditions) on the coexistence of the communities to understand how the new local self-organized groups affect the relations between ethnic sub-communities. The third chapter summarises the results of these surveys.

An important goal of my study was to describe the ethnic coexistence relations of the studied settlements with such models which represent the local relations and allow us to compare the tendencies of the different coexistence situations. My research proves that the coexistence relations of contemporary rural communities and the analysis of community processes which have influence on these relations are needed to be studied specifically. Local coexistence models are schemes that represent the recent social and cultural connections and the relations between the ethnic sub-communities. The developed models can help the study of coexistence relations of other rural peripheral settlements with similar circumstances. The situational coexistence models also can serve as a basis for community improving projects which aim to develop the connections between the sub-communities.

II. Outline of the methods used

According to the results of our previous studies three multiethnic settlements were selected in the Nyírség Region (Eastern Hungary) which can be found close to each other and have similar ethnic structure. In all the three cases the coexistence situations of the three sub-communities (Hungarian, Romungro and Vlax Roma communities) have been studied. The selected settlements are: Nagyecsed, Nyírvasvári and Hodász. The fieldwork was carried out between 2017–2021.

First the tradition set of the communities in these settlements was studied with the method of visual data recording and semi structured interviews.

Ethnic coexistence relations were studied with questionnaires on the level of sub-communities as well. The questionnaires were filled out in the presence of an interviewer, I was present at the filling of each data sheet. The study sample was selected with random sampling method, therefore the composition of the studied ethnic communities was heterogeneous in terms of gender and age. In Nagyecsed 214, in Nyírvasvári 140 while in Hodász 115 people were selected in the sample.

The recent civil self-organized communities– civil organisations, associations- and their role in ethnic coexistence were studied with the method of observation and interviews. Structured interviews were made with the leaders of the civil organizations in the three studied settlements to understand the impact of these organizations on ethnic coexistence.

The exploration of the local social and economic relations of the studied settlements also happened with the method of observation and interview. Semi-structured interviews were made with the heads of institutions and socially important people – mayors, heads of educational establishments, leaders of community houses and museums, medical and social specialists.

The visual documentation of the local patterns of tradition set was a significant part of my study. During the study period- 2017-2021- documentaries were made which analyse the contemporary social and cultural relations of Nagyecsed, Nyírvasvári and Hodász. Furthermore documentaries were made about the recent set of traditions of Vlax Roma community in Nagyecsed, the traditional Roma folk music in Nyírvasvári and the local Roma dances.

III. Thesis-like listing of the results of the dissertation

The results of my studies in Chapter 1 show that intense acculturation processes have taken place over the last few decades. It determined the culture and evolution of the tradition set of each coexisting sub-communities. Hungarian communities mainly moved away from their classic valuable traditions thanks to the changes in their lifestyle which were the result of the typical modernisation processes of peasant societies. In the case of the Hungarian community only the remains of a few folklore tradition can be observed.

In the case of coexisting Roma communities we have to differentiate as acculturation processes affected differently the Vlax Roma and Romungro ethnic communities. The analysis shows that the relatively closed communities of Vlax Roma speaking Cerhari dialect preserved numerous elements of their cultural traditions.

In the case of the studied Vlax Roma communities acculturation appears in some visible external cultural properties of the ethnicity and contributes to the successful adaptation to the expectations of the majority society. The surroundings of Vlax Roma mainly copy the majority norms. The abandonment of traditional garment and the conscious conversion to Hungarian dressing habits is one example of adaptive acculturation.

Some elements of the ethnocultural set of traditions (which have direct impact on coexistence) have changed as well. One important recent phenomenon of acculturation is the decline of the Cerhari dialect of the Romani language in the everyday life which also helps the adaptation to the majority society.

On the one hand the living traditions of the Vlax Roma create cultural identity, while on the other hand they have a distinctive function towards Romungro communities which do not have archaic tradition elements. This partly can be the result of the fact that the settlement of Romungro communities happened earlier. Therefore their acculturation to the recipient majority society has already been completed.

The differences found between the studied settlements show that the analysis of coexistence situations cannot be based on a generally valid rule which is deduced from superficial analogies. The study of the coexistence practices and the contemporary community processes (which partly spring from local traditions) of the three selected settlements was based on a situational perspective that analyse every settlement according to its own conditions.

The second chapter of the dissertation deals with the past and current changes of the connections between the studied ethnic sub-communities as the result of long-term coexistence.

According to our results in Nagyecsed the relation between the Hungarian and Romungro community can be described with the concepts of segregation and isolation. The relation of the local Romungro and Vlax Roma communities basically can be categorized as a dissimilative relation in which the identity of the two Roma communities is defined by self-isolating differentiation from the other community.

The relation of the local Vlax Roma and Hungarian community is more accepting which is mainly the consequence of the Vlax Roma acculturation process..

On the contrary in Nyírvasvári Hungarians and the two Roma communities see each other in their practice of everyday life as opposing groups. In the case of the two local Roma communities we can see a special example of ethnic coexistence, namely the identification of Romungros in Nyírvasvári shows close resemblance to the local Vlax Roma community. This quite unique way of integration deepened the isolation of the Hungarian community.

In the third settlement, in Hodász, the local norms and rules of coexistence can be mainly described with affirmative relations. The interpersonal ethnic relations of the local community in Hodász illustrate a local society living more or less in harmony.

The results of coexistence-studies confirmed our hypothesis that local patterns are remarkably diverse. The coexistence relations of local communities are formed by significant differences and different rules even in the case of communities with the same ethnic origin living in similar geographic environment close to each other. The practical importance of this conclusion encourages us to study the contemporary local ethnic coexistence processes and their defining factors specifically.

The third chapter of the dissertation focuses on the local civil self-organized communities of the studied settlements. The study of this issue helped to understand how local traditions (which are key factors of local community organisation) promote the coexistence of ethnic communities. In these studies an important correlation was found: in those settlements where the communities have preserved more local traditions in their everyday life the civil organizations (which are often based on these traditions) have positive impacts on the coexistence of ethnic sub-communities. The recognition of this rule helped to interpret the connections of the ethnic groups of the studied settlements in their general context with the help of coexistence models. These models which explain the coexistence relations of the

ethnic sub-communities and their specialities in Nagyecséd, Nyírvasvári and Hodász, can play an important role in those projects aiming to develop the relationship of Hungarian and Roma communities.

The construction of models representing the coexistence of local ethnic communities is an important result of my work. Multiethnic local relations, interethnic interpersonal connections, impacts of local institutions and civil organisations on coexistence are all integrated in these models. The three models represent graphically the general correlations of ethnic relations of the settlements.

1, In Nagyecséd the ethnic relations were described with *the dynamic correlation coexistence model*. The results of my study show that the coexistence relations of the three ethnic sub-communities in Nagyecséd correlate with each other. The essence of this local coexistence rule is that if there is a change in any bilateral ethnic relation than this change necessarily has effects on the quality of the relationship with the third ethnic community. The local rules that form the ethnic coexistence processes create a dynamic system.

This process can be defined as a complex social phenomenon which can be deduced from the factors of coexistence relations and their changes. The model was constructed with the use of the following factors: relations of the ethnic sub-communities (from stereotypes to the different practices of acceptance), ethnic interpersonal connections (friendship, neighbourhood, mixed marriage), direct and indirect impacts of institutional (workplace and school) and civil communities.

2, Ethnic relation processes in Nyírvasvári were described with *the oppositional dynamic dissimilation model*. According to this scheme the oppositional structure of the coexistence of the Hungarian and two Roma communities shows a fundamentally dismissive, separative attitude. This is based on the spatial separation, the segregated living environment of Roma people. Another important factor is that in Nyírvasvári the contemporary cultural organisations cannot improve the relations of ethnic sub-communities.

The approach of the local Romungro and Vlach Roma communities (thanks to the cultural adaptation of Romungros) deepens the isolation from the Hungarian community. In contrary to Nagyecséd community processes of the Roma are not organized and institutionalized in Nyírvasvári, therefore they cannot decrease the cultural distance. According to the results we can conclude that in Nyírvasvári the distance between the Hungarian and Roma communities is rigid and impenetrable, their relation is segregative and prejudicial.

3, The third studied settlement is Hodász where the interethnic relations generally can be described with the *distance equalizing, affirmative relation model*. The results show that contrary to the other two settlements the relations of local ethnic sub-communities are not oppositional. In the case of Hodász coexistence is not determined by the ethnic specialties of the sub-communities. Here the so called “local Hodász identity” is the key factor which controls the function of the local society. This can be explained with two processes: structural integration and amalgamation. The high number of mixed marriages and the experiences of long-term coexistence form a “bridge” between the ethnic sub-communities that decrease the cultural distances and creates more flexible boundaries.

These affirmative relations (mainly mixed marriages) have the following impacts on coexistence processes: the groups stand on nearly on the same level from a structural point of view, there is biological amalgamation, but they follow special cultural patterns. The members of mixed marriages can maintain their important, identity forming ethnic cultural habits. However they are opened to external traditional elements in favour of quality cohabitation. With the affiliation of these tradition elements they can feel themselves the member of their direct local environment.

According to my results with the study of the affecting factors of the coexistence situations and on the basis of coexistence models (situational description of coexistence schemes) it is possible to explore the real and emic connection of ethnic relations.

The developed models can be useful in the study of similar multiethnic local societies. The models can contribute to the success of development policies aiming the improvement of ethnic coexistence quality and can help the determination of applied social scientific improvement suggestions.



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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian books (1)

1. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.**: "Kik vagyunk... és miért?": 3. sorozat. Didakt Kiadó Kft., Debrecen, 24 p., 2018. ISBN: 9786155212642

Hungarian book chapters (2)

2. **Szabó, H.**: A lokális hagyomány funkciói a nyírvasvári kortárs közösségfolyamatokban.
In: Jogok és lehetőségek a társadalomban. Szerk.: Karlovitz János Tibor, International Research Institute, Komárom, 196-209, 2020. ISBN: 9788089691692
3. **Szabó, H.**: "Mit lehet és mit nem...": Antropológiai szemléletű közösségkutatás a nagyecsed-i oláh cigány társadalomban.
In: Táj és kultúra 1.. Szerk.: Kavecsánszki Máté, Marinka Melinda, Debreceni Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Néprajzi Tanszék : MTA-DE Néprajzi Kutatócsoport, Debrecen, 189-202, 2018, (Studia Folkloristica et Ethnographica, ISSN 0138-9882 ; 63) ISBN: 9789634900733

Foreign language Hungarian book chapters (1)

4. **Szabó, H.**: Documentaries and Social Integration: Who Are We ... and Why?, Season 3 = A dokumentumfilmek és a társadalmi integráció = "Kik vagyunk... és miért? 3. széria =
In: Terepek és elméletek = Fields and Theories : A Lippai Balázs Roma Szakkollégium válogatott romológiai tanulmánygyűjteménye = Selected Essayes from the Field of Romology by Lippai Balázs Romani College. Szerk.: Biczó Gábor, Didakt Kiadó, Debrecen, 211-227, 47-67, 2019, (Studia Cingarorum, ISSN 2416-0970 ; 7) ISBN: 9786155212727

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (2)

5. **Szabó, H.**: A lokális hagyomány funkciói a nagyecsed-i kortárs közösségfolyamatokban.
Népr. Látóhatár. 28 (1-2), 157-204, 2019. ISSN: 1215-8097.
6. **Szabó, H.**: Alkalmazott antropológiai szemléletű közösségfejlesztés a Lippai Balázs Roma Szakkollégiumban.
Romológia. 6 (2), 120-130, 2018. ISSN: 2064-1257.





Hungarian conference proceedings (1)

7. **Szabó, H.:** Egy kelet-magyarországi település együttélési gyakorlatai és a vallás szerepe.
In: Válogatott tanulmányok a Magyarországi Református Egyház Doktorok Kollégiuma
Egyházi Néprajzi Szekciójában elhangzott előadásokból 2019. augusztus 26-27. Szerk.:
Sápy Szilvia, Bihari Nagy Éva, Debreceni Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Néprajzi
Tanszék, Debrecen, 194-210, 2019, (Vallási néprajz ; 16.) ISBN: 9789634902195

Documetaries (15)

8. **Szabó, H.:** Nyírvasvári cigány zene, 2021
9. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** A családom nélkül soha: Gabica filmje, 2020
10. **Szabó, H.:** A panyolai farsang, 2020
11. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** Sokat tanulhatunk egymástól...: Hodász, 2020
12. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** A hídon túl: Nagyecsed, 2019
13. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** Legyen hited az élethez: Hajdúdorog, 2019
14. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** Tiszalök, 2019
15. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** "Fehér holló": Tímea filmje, 2018
16. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** "A hagyomány árnyékában": Tünde filmje, 2018
17. **Szabó, H.:** "...mit lehet és mit nem...", 2018
18. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** Nincsenek illúzióink: Kisköre, 2018
19. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** "Óvónő akartam lenni": Vali filmje, 2018
20. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** "Take a smile": A lányok filmje, 2018
21. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** "Valamit valamiért": Péter filmje, 2018

List of other publications

Hungarian books (1)

22. Biczó, G., **Szabó, H.:** A magyarországi roma szakkollégiumok tagságának országos vizsgálata:
Humán Regiszter 2020. TTP Play Kft, Debrecen, 168 p., 2020. ISBN: 9786150108766





Hungarian book chapters (1)

23. **Szabó, H.:** A mentori munka az együttműködő önkéntes közösség kialakításában és az öntevékenység jelentősége a roma szakkollégium működtetésében.

In: Kis mentori kézikönyv : segédlet a Lippai Balázs Roma Szakkollégiumban végzett mentori tevékenységhez. Szerk.: Bálint Péter, Kocsis Péter Csaba, Didakt Kft., Debrecen, 82-101, 2016. ISBN: 9786155212406

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)

24. **Szabó, H.:** Tág a világ?

Népr. Látóhatár. 28 (3-4), 155-169, 2019. ISSN: 1215-8097.

Hungarian abstracts (2)

25. **Szabó, H.:** Etnikai együttélési mintázatok: a nyírvasvári modell.

In: XXIII. Tavaszi Szél Konferencia 2020: Nemzetközi Multidiszciplináris Konferencia.

Absztrakt kötet I.. Szerk.: Barna Boglárka Johanna, Kovács Petra, Molnár Dóra, Pató Viktória Lilla, Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, Budapest, 545, 2020. ISBN: 9786155586705

26. **Szabó, H.:** Kortárs etnikai közösségfolyamatok a nagyecsedei helyi társadalomban.

In: Tavaszi Szél Konferencia 2019 : Nemzetközi Multidiszciplináris Konferencia :

Absztraktkötet. Szerk.: Németh Katalin, Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, Debrecen, 692, 2019. ISBN: 9786155586422

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VI. Conference presentations on the topic of the dissertation

- 2018 *„Kik vagyunk... és miért?” - 3. széria: Milyen szerepe lehet a dokumentumfilmnek a társadalmi integráció előmozdításában?* Hajdúböszörmény, Debreceni Egyetem Gyermeknevelési és Gyógypedagógiai Kar – Lippai Balázs Roma Szakkollégium, Lippai Balázs Roma Szakkollégium Köztes Konferenciája
- 2018 *Nagyecsed etnikai közösségei és együttélési viszonyaik.* Debrecen, Debreceni Egyetem Néprajzi Tanszék, II. Ilyés Zoltán Emlékkonferencia – A táj és a kultúra
- 2019 *Kortárs etnikai közösségfolyamatok a nagyecsed helyi társadalomban.* Debrecen, Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, XXII. Tavasz Szél Konferencia
- 2019 *A vallás és a hagyománykészlet kapcsolata kelet-magyarországi cigány közösségekben.* Debrecen, Magyarországi Református Egyház Doktorok Kollégiuma - Egyházi Néprajzi szekció
- 2019 *Etnikai együttélési mintázatok: a nagyecsed modell.* Nyíregyháza, XIII. Nyíregyházi Doktorandusz Konferencia
- 2020 *A lokális hagyomány funkciói a nyírvasvári kortárs közösségfolyamatokban – Szlovákia, VIII. IRI Társadalomtudományi Nemzetközi Konferencia*
- 2020 *Etnikai együttélési mintázatok: a nyírvasvári modell.* Budapest, Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, XXIII. Tavasz Szél Nemzetközi Konferencia
- 2020 *Etnikai együttélési mintázatok: a hodászi modell.* Miskolc, Miskolci Egyetem BTK, Kulturális és Vizuális Antropológiai Intézet, Változás és változtatás: kihívások és válaszok interdiszciplináris megközelítésben. III. Ilyés Zoltán emlékkonferencia
- 2021 *Az akkulturáció hatása a cigány–magyar etnikai együttélési helyzetekre – Romológiai kutatás három nyírségi településen.* Pécs, Pécsi Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar, Neveléstudományi Intézet, X. Romológus Konferencia
- 2021 *A hagyomány és a hagyománykészlet funkciói a kortárs vidéki társadalmak közösségfolyamataiban.* Miskolc, Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, XXIV. Tavasz Szél Nemzetközi Konferencia

- 2021 *„Élő néprajzi hagyományaink” – A kortárs vidék hagyományvilágának vizuális reprezentációs lehetőségei és jelentősége a társadalomtudományi kutatásokban.*
Szlovákia, Komárno, IX. IRI Társadalomtudományi Konferencia
- 2021 *Egyéni életutakat elemző dokumentumfilmek szerepe a romák társadalmi integrációjának előmozdításában* – Debrecen, Debreceni Egyetem, A mozgóképek és a digitális médiumok – A Magyar Filmtudományi Társaság Éves Konferenciája