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THE IDENTITY CONFLICT OF THE CSANGO MINORITY FROM ROMANIA

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Research Issue

In the eastern province of Romania, also called Moldavia, lives a minority group of nearly a quarter of a million people named Csangoes, designated by the religious allegiance to the Roman-Catholic Church, and the use of Hungarian language as mother tongue by approximatively 60 000 people. The common literature of the last period has launched the idea that the Csangoes represent a mysterious minority whose origins have been lost in time, due to the isolation of the ermetic communities, most of them in rural environment.

A sound scientific research reveals that this image represents just a construction, which is part of a historical process initiated by the Romanian state at the middle of the 19th century, with the purpose of assimilating the Csango minority to the Romanian majority. The process included the ethnic components, leaving unspoiled the Catholic faith, which differs from the majority Orthodox Romanians.

During the last decades, after the totalitarian Communist regime fell, several members of the Csango minority initiated a project of cultural revival, meant to reassess the ethnic identity of the group. This endeavour created the premises for a conflict between the supporters of the Hungarian origin of Csangoes, and the radical nationalist Romanians, backed up by the Catholic Church officials, who are willing to defend the achievements of the centuries long assimilation process, which ended up in constructing a Romanian identity for most of the Csangoes.

1.2. The Quest for Objectivity

In the above-presented context, most of the literature written on this topic has served the interests of one of the sides. My purpose is to introduce a new perspective in the way of analysing the situation, by objectively presenting the views of both sides, and critically interpreting both the arguments brought forward by the academics and journalists, and the data I personally collected in the field. Through my research, I do not claim to bring light in the disputed issue about the origin and allegiance of Csangoes, or to realise a detailed analysis of the ethnographic and cultural heritage they preserved until the present. The goal of this paper is to answer several questions with respect to the patterns the conflict followed in time, its institutionalised dimension under the pressure of the state and the church, and the role they

played besides the civil society in feeding the conflict by dividing the community into two opposing parts.

1.3. Synthesis of the Paper

The thesis represents the result of a syncretic research comprising a short part of historical analysis, and a main part dedicated to anthropology.

The former, comprised in a chapter of the third part, tries to capture the ground of the conflict by presenting the historical presence of Hungarians in Moldavia, and how it represented a problem for the indigenous political authorities due to the different religious allegiance during the Middle Ages, and to the alien ethnic component in the age of nationalism.

The anthropological analysis is delimited into three main parts. The first consists of the presentation of the research carried out in the area inhabited by Csangoes, spotting the challenges I met in the field situations while collecting the data. At theoretical level, the methods applied subscribe to the pattern of qualitative research, based on interviews and participative observation. During the data collecting process, I tried to maintain an equidistant attitude towards the two sides in the conflict, both with respect to time allocated, and to the quality of the discussions.

The second part is dedicated to the theoretical analysis of the main concepts that I used in the paper. The main question raised here refers to how an ethnic group can be define and delimited in the contemporary societies. The discussion critically presents the perspective supported by the instrumentalists, who assert that the ethnic allegiance is the result of a process of ascription and self-ascription to an ethnic group, ignoring the content of the culture it carries.

 This view overcomes the primordialist perspective, which emphasises the role of cultural content in defining the limits of an ethnic group. In the case of the Csangoes' identity, the culture proved to have low relevance. First of all, the cultural content has been spoiled, or eradicated in many cases, under the pressure of the assimilation imposed from above, so the idea exposed by Barth, that the *cultural stuff* is exposed to mutation finds ground in the case of Csangoes. On the other hand, the members of the group who kept alive many cultural traces, together with the use of Hungarian language, do not consider themselves as ethnically distinct.

At this level intervenes the activity of the civic activists, who struggle to recover the cultural leftovers that are specific to the Csango minority, trying at the same time to make people aware of their identity, which was confiscated by the Romanian nation-state. The activity of the elite comes into contradiction with the values praised by the state, backed up by the Catholic Church, who share the common interest of eliminating the ethnic component from the Csangoes'

identity, transforming it into a religious minority of Romanian origin. This contradiction originated the conflict that practically represents the clash between two ways of interpreting ethnicity; that based on the values of the nation state, claiming the political unity and the cultural homogeneity of the population, and the post-modern perspective, emphasising conviviality for different ethnic groups in a pluri-cultural society.

2 METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN A FIELDWORK SITUATION

2.1 Preliminaries

The present chapter will try to capture the methodological aspects of the process of collecting data in the field, with a focus on the discrepancies between the epistemological settlement based in the relevant literature, and the challenges met in the *de facto* situations I encountered in the field.

The main focus will be on the analysis of methodological instruments and strategies in anthropological research, in the first part, containing explanations on the data gathering process, building relations with the partners, delimiting and exploiting the research environment.

The basic methods of investigation as designated in the large theoretical context contain participative observation and interviews following the instrumental delimitation of qualitative research. The final goal of this endeavour has been produce useful data for analysing the larger topic of defining the identity of Csangoes as an ethnic group in the context developed by the assimilation policies carried out by two main actors: the state authorities and the Catholic Church. The analysis of data is meant to explain the forging of a separate, unique cultural heritage, through rendering a holistic perspective of the social phenomena, including detailed explanation of facts, meanings, values, practices, and human relations.

The final part will capture the methods of investigation applied in the study of historical documents, meaning both written and oral sources. The main goal is to establish parameters of interpretation of historical sources, in order to contribute to a better understanding of social situations and of the construction of identity through culture in the past.

The conclusions drawn on the basis of the analysis will have been complete will try to verify the hypothesis that the conflict of identity developing in the area inhabited by Csangoes is the result of a social engineering process conducted by the State with the support of the Catholic Church, and whose finality is the assimilation of this minority to the Romanian majority, through the construction of a new identity meant to replace their genuine one. The main variable challenged in this process is cultural identity, which includes language, ethnographic components, beliefs and self-perpetuating collective narratives.

2.3 Methodological Analysis of the Fieldwork Activity

The anthropologist in the field is particularly interested in rendering a holistic image of the studied social situation, in relation to all the main variables contained within that framework, so that the final product will be delimitation of specific culture in a bounded area, considering all the data that one possesses. This way of approaching culture is what Clifford Geertz called *thick description (*Geertz, 1973*, 6)*, and it implies a focus on the description of the environment as a social locus of the phenomena that create meaning, and not just rendering the information about the social situations developing in that environment. The analysis must not be exhaustive, but it is meant to capture different facets of the social matrix in which it is found. (Holliday, 2001, p.80) In this manner, the locus of study becomes just the setting of what happens there, and not the object of study in itself.

2.3.1 How the Data Have Been Collected

Of course, the main instrument accessible in the field is data, which is considered the main source for defining culture. As Holliday mentioned, culture contains two surface components, *behaviour* and *artefacts,* but in order to properly interpret the researcher needs also *knowledge* about the environment and, besides background information mostly form written sources, this can only be obtained through interpretation of visible data. (Holliday, 2001, p.12) Therefore, the study will contain an overview over both explicit and tacit data, by following the assertions of interviewees and of the persons I got in contact with, and analysing the way the values they posit are translated into attitudes and behaviour.

Nevertheless, my expectations with respect to data collecting were shortly cut when starting the work, and I realise this happened because of lack of experience. Even though on a theoretical level I was aware that qualitative data emerge from social situations, such as the environment, rules and routines, external events, or behavioural patterns of the partners (Holliday, 2001, p. 75), when I found myself in the first field situation I have immediately eagered to find out as much information as possible, by suffocating the respondents with questions about rough information, but omitting details regarding parallel information. The enthusiasm stopped anyhow, when I realised that all I got at that moment were some starting points, or links to persons I could better use to get my data. Starting then I decided to rely more on writing what seemed interesting to me in the behaviour of the respondent, the manner he/she presented the information or the emotional participation transmitting how committed the person was to the cause he/she supported.

2.3.2 Conducting Qualitative Interviews

2.3.2.1 Constructing the Interviews

Making an interview is not just a simple discussion on a previously established topic, but one should follow several rules backed-up by spontaneity and imagination. An interview is a structured conversation (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p.129) out of which the interviewer must explore details, in order to discover and understand unexpected information that appear insignificant, but still may have a special meaning in the process of interpretation.

The design of the conversation must also imply exploring the deep structure of answers, by searching the meaning beyond the superficial strata, where most of the respondents tend to remain. This implies seeking to explain assertions that subscribe to mere conversational patterns, defining the concepts that for them might seem daily routine, but which usually are defined differently by other people, especially in a conflicting situation like the one I explored.

The art of exploring depth and details is strictly linked to the way of posing questions. When one starts in the field, as Rubin and Rubin suggests, she/he must already have a set of *main questions* that are transposing the research topic into terms that the conversational partner can relate to and discuss, and they serve as a starting point of the conversation. However, in order to explore depth and details about the issue, the interviewer must come up with *follow – up questions* that emanate from the discussion itself, spot the key-concepts, and ask for explanations and examples. (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p.129)

Depending on the situation and the person approached, it is not necessary to use the same pattern to start the conversation, but even under a different nuance, the main questions should constantly stick to the topic the hypothesis wants to reveal.

The main questions were always on my mind in the interview situations I found myself, only that I realised that the manner of asking was dependent on the interviewed person. For instance, my principal informants from the civil society represented NGOs with self-excluding activity, therefore the formula I used at the beginning had to be different, in order to make sure they would want to answer and create a proper environment for further questions. Yet, the content was the same, and captured their opinions, values, and implication in the conflict with respect to the opposing side.

Of an equal relevance are *follow-up questions,* as they are meant to reveal the sensitive pieces of information, the attitude towards concrete situations, and the emotional aspects. In order to avoid intrusiveness, which may tension the relationship established during the discussion, I preferred to appeal to vivid questions, jokes, or even fake partisanship in order

to make people talk alternative issues as well; otherwise, I could have risked getting just standard answers. By applying interoperability, I managed to find what attitude the sides had about each other, for instance by asking what was the relation between the civil society activists and the political actors, or how common people defined their relation to the church and the members of the clergy.

Of a special interest was to find out the description of opposing sides to the same event or fact, for instance the bilingual character of the Csangoes is a matter of pride and dignity for the most of those who support the idea of Hungarian allegiance, while for the Romanian nationalists, it is perceived as a burden, as a stigma that they feel embarrassed of. Similar attitudes were displayed with respect to the ethnographic heritage and folklore.

2.3.2.2 Checking Coherence

During the time I spent in the field, the main activity of information gathering was interviewing representatives of both conflicting sides with the explicit purpose to find out, what are their views on the disputed issue. As quantity, I approached a selective strategy including fourteen persons, which together summed up to forty hours of records.

In the cases that permitted, given the distant location and the time availability of the partners, I applied what is called a double check strategy, that is coming back to the same person for a new round of discussions, asking mainly the same questions, but in a different shape, in order to verify the continuity of their attitude and the coherence of the ideas they supported.

Besides this, applying such a technique gave me the possibility to understand in depth certain concepts and situations that during the first round did not appear of major importance to me, but after listening to them, an objective analysis revealed the need of a second approach, elaborating more follow-up questions on that subject.

In pursuing this idea, I managed to re-interview five of the most important informants, each time in a different environment, and the results were different, thus increasing the area of understanding and the amount of critical information.

2.3.3 Interpreting Avoidance and Silence

For many of the persons I came into contact with, co-operation meant putting themselves into danger in one way or another. Therefore, some of them preferred to keep silence about their opinion, by simply avoiding any reference to the conflict. As Saugestad suggested, avoidance can be expressed at the level of *front stage*, which is empirically translated in denying

any public reference to the conflict, and at *back stage level,* that is avoiding discussing the issue in private space, including references to the opposing side (Saugestad, Larsen in Cohen, 1982, p.145).

Situations subscribing to this pattern raise the questions how such attitudes can be interpreted, or which is the meaning of silence. From the experiences I lived, I can mention two types of silence; in a first instance, people simply refused to meet me, or receive me for a discussion, as it happened with two priests. This I presume to be the result of an act of force carried out by the Church authorities, who simply denied priests from villages with tensioned situations to get into contact with journalists or any "suspects".

A second facet of silence I encountered in the discussion with the professor of anthropology from Cluj, who during more than two hours of interview diplomatically avoided answering any of the core questions regarding the aspects of the conflict. This type of attitude can be ranked into the category of quasi-avoidance, or inter-active silence.

Even though both types of silence seem at a first glimpse to represent a void source of information, in the interpretation of qualitative research they express much more than samples of non-communication; the attitude and the reasons behind the interviewees' choice transmit meaning and information about the situation they are in and their way of understanding and acting in such a contest.

2.3.4 Integrating Quantitative Data

Yet, not all the data I gathered subscribe to the pattern of qualitative data. During the time of interviews and discussions, I fully took advantage of gathering quantitative data, such as statistics of population at certain historical moments, copies of documents and church transcripts regarding the names of the parishioners at certain moments, monographies and pictures of places and communities. Nevertheless, all these data are not to be presented in the rough state, but interpreted in the way they can provide relevant meaning.

The church transcripts, as well as monographies, reveal much information about the past of the Csango communities, and it is relevant to compare the names of the inhabitants of the villages I study as they appear now in their ID, and that of their forerunners. By doing this, I discovered that many names that now are transcribed in Romanian once have been Hungarian names, what makes me conclude that the state authorities changed them in the official papers.

The evolution of the Csango population during history, as revealed by statistics, allow me to interpret how the population grew and what caused them establish in certain areas,

as well as how many of the Catholics in Moldavia were speaking Hungarian at a certain moment, and why the percentage decreased as a result of the assimilation policies carried out by the state.

2.4 Defining the Research Area

Defining the setting of a research implies a twofold endeavour; the first refers to the physical location in space and time, and the second to the cultural research context. In both cases, defining the boundaries implies taking into consideration an amount of data, which must be both necessary and sufficient, provided by a subject of research, located in a manageable space and time location. (Holliday, 2001, p.37)

The established boundaries need to offer a symbolically concentrated information source, so that the questions raised in this microcosm and the conclusions drawn, must submit the possibility of being verified on the entire area concerned by the research, and at the same time to subscribe to a more general research paradigm (as in my case the identity conflict of an ethnic group)

2.4.1 Physical Location

Before heading for the spotted area, I was aware of the physical impossibility to cover all the locations, or even a consistent percentage of it (there are about 170 places where Csangoes live). Therefore I established a *core setting* (Holliday, 2001, p.40) consisting of the most representative rural and urban locations. The group of variables, meant to capture meaningful situations, influenced the choice.

The first distinction was made between urban and rural settings, as the social relations are strictly distinct and thus the attitudes and values of people. Then, the villages I decided upon (more precisely four) have been in recent time scenes of open confrontation, because of an increased activity from both sides. One village was situated in the western area inhabited by Csangoes, known locally as the Tatros valley, and the other three in the central part, the most consistent, also known as the Siret valley.

I also bore in mind accessibility in the locations established, and given the unpredicted condition I faced in Romania last summer this proved to be of major importance, (serious floods destroyed much of the infrastructure, and besides this, a three weeks railway strike almost kept me paralysed in Constanța, the town I live). There were situations when I had to cover two locations in the same day, and most of the times at short intervals (especially at

night) because people in the villages were in that period involved in agricultural activities, and covering distances in short time proved to be crucial.

In what concerns the environment of interviewing, in most situations it was the offices of NGOs or parishes, but also personal homes. This helped me establish a better link between the persons and the environment where they carried out activity, as well as making them feel more comfortable and open to communication. This way the place became a social setting both in the sense of interviewing location and of common daily activity for informants.

The locations chosen for observation contain two families that I lived with for a while, one mixed (a Csango wife and a Romanian husband), and one made up of two Csangoes. I also took advantage of the Sunday mass in some of my locations, being rather interested in the social activities following the service, when people use to linger for almost an hour chatting and socialising in front of the church. It was interesting to study especially two such situations on special holydays, one of them implying the presence of the local bishop.

2.4.2 Cultural Setting

Roughly speaking, the cultural setting I studied refers to the community of Csangoes in Moldavia, but it was not as easy as I expected to define this community. The discussion goes around establishing the cultural boundaries (Barth, 1969), on the fault line of common cultural affinities, in order to distinguish the homogeneity of the group, which defines itself as distinct, and on this basis claim official recognition and statutory rights. For this purpose, a minimal definition of culture, which can satisfy and support such an establishment, refers to those aspects of social cohesion, values and artefacts, which distinguish one social group from another. (Holliday, 2001, p. 38)

Even though at first it seemed easy for me to culturally locate my focus group, based on the theory presented above, the reality in the field raised more questions on this. I expected that all the people living within the area delimited by the affiliation to the Catholic Church in Moldavia could be considered as culturally and morally belonging to the Csango minority. The fact is that a serious majority among them denies this, and that represents actually the basic support for civil activists claiming the Romanian origin for Csangoes. Funnelling down to two main variables implied, that is religious affiliation and the use of Hungarian language as a second mother tongue, I expected to draft the boundaries I was after. The problem about this is that many persons who have knowledge about the language do not use it (especially in the cases of mixed marriages, and urban established persons and youngsters) therefore this criterion is relative, as well. Besides this category, there is the group who subscribes to both religious and

linguistic pattern, but under certain influence (especially the state propaganda during the Communist regime) perceives this differentiation as a stigma, thus denying allegiance to the minority of Csangoes.

What is left for defining boundaries of the group is then, besides the two major characteristics, the personal disposition of individuals, and small communities to adhere the common values they perceive and accept as different from the others. The people subscribing to this category represented the focus of my discussion during the fieldwork, but this does not mean that they were the only spotted for observation and interviews. They represented just the target issue, along with their cultural, political, and civil activities, but the interaction with the other presumed Csangoes and majority Romanians on the fault line of contradictory emergence of events is rendered analysing these endeavours in the social context of a struggle between the above-mentioned parts. Therefore, the cultural boundaries of the ethnic group and the development of the conflict must be established in accordance with, and related to the opinion and actions of the others.

2.5 The Role of the Researcher in the Field

2.5.1 Designing Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the presence of the researcher in the scientific production is necessarily evident. The work carried out must be accounted and presented in the paper at equal level as the conclusions one reaches, in order to justify the standpoint and the approach to the issue. This actually offers a certain degree of freedom to the researcher, who has the possibility to choose and shift the research instruments by adapting them to situations she/he encounters, making sure that rigor is maintained in following and applying the specific instruments that suit the scenario under analysis. (Holliday, 2001, p.8)

The choice of research setting, in accordance with the relevance and feasibility, must be communicated and described so that the reader can recognise the relationship established between the topic, and the actors and the environment. The same rules apply for the choice of themes and research activities, in order to articulate a judicious balance between opportunism and principles.

As a reflection of these rules stands the focus on the main actors and the analysis at the level of representatives – and here I refer to the main civil society activists, members of the clergy, members of the political life, and representatives of cultural and education circles. The target group I considered at first expanded accordingly with the requirements and opportunities,

but I always struggled to maintain the appropriate relationships with the research participants and the focus topic.

2.5.2 Managing Subjectivity

The practice of managing subjectivity is strictly linked to the relationship that is established between the researcher, the subjects of the research, and the environment where this is carried out. The role played in the field relates to learning and interpreting culture, and the way of doing this implies the analysis of culture as a process, not as a rough collection of information. Interpreting the data in a context of cultural relativism can better work when the researcher has already left the area with a sufficient amount of information and impressions.

A special case of subjectivity management refers to researchers who go into an area they personally know from before. Normally, in all situations, there must be a certain amount of knowledge about the area and the issue she/he tackles, but in these conditions, there is still a large amount of unexplored and unexpected situations one will face. In the case of persons belonging to the studied cultural group, special attention must be paid to situations that appear familiar, because in such cases the risk of taking for granted information, which normally must be interpreted, is huge.

Therefore, it is necessary that during the entire process, the situations should be made strange, impersonal, and all discussions should be questioned on spot so that further follow-up questions could be developed in order to get a full picture of what one needs to describe.

2.5.3 Scientific Objectivity and Research Ethics

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the main goals of the research was to render objectively the patterns of development the conflict follows, irrelevant of supporting any of the sides involved. This implied maintaining certain ethical standards with respect to both the information I got (which was generally biased, as different informants can present different facets of the same event in accordance with the values they shared), as well as to the way I carried out research.

Confidence was one of the most challenged features during my activity in the field, as both parts interpreted the work I was doing as a possible method of supporting their opinion, even though I explicitly stated in each case that my interest was to stick to scientific objectivity, and my goal was not by far to demonstrate that one side or the other was right.

At the level of communication established during the discussions, in spite of my claims, each partner treated me as if tacitly I took for granted what they said. I did not object to this for one single purpose, which was to carry on the discussion, and in a way, this was an advantage, as my goal was to find out their personal opinions, and not to convert them to other beliefs. Yet, even though not explicitly, I objected to the request of relating information I had acquired form the opponent side, by offering evasive answers, such as this topic I did not approach, or that person I am to meet soon, therefore I am not aware of his/her opinion.

This role of a go-betweener I experienced especially when talking to persons representing NGOs, who rarely communicate between each other, and usually the first question I would get at the beginning of an interview was if I established contact with the representatives of the opposing side.

2.5.4. Building Trust

Related to the facts analysed above, of major importance was to gain the trust of the person I worked with, especially when a long stand relationship was required for completing the data gathering. People usually are more willing to speak if they know something about your background, your interests, the topic of the research (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p. 89), without getting into details about the hypothesis or main questions, as this may confuse them – especially when dealing with people less familiar with the academic work.

A common allegiance with the interviewees may be a strong point in accepting you better, but too much familiarity can also be dangerous, as they may be reticent to open their mind to you as a close friend or member of the family. For me it was an advantage doing research in the area I was born, as this provided confidence in me from both sides. Without being trapped in opportunism, I could easily claim for real my allegiance to both the Romanian Catholic community, and to that of Csangoes.

This really helped me establish durable relations with my partners from both sides, except that one aspect I feel should be mentioned. The Romanians (here I refer to the representatives of civil society and catholic priests) generally behaved more formally to me, appealing to standard diplomatic discourse which obviously lacked spontaneity and affection. I interpreted this as a *front stage* (Saugestad Larsen in Cohen, 1982, p. 139) discourse, which was meant to render me just the official information that I could anyhow obtain from books of papers.

On the other hand, when working with representatives of the Hungarian supporters I felt a wider openness towards their privacy (*back stage),* both materially (they invited me in their

houses serving me wine, asking personal questions, provoking me to speak in Hungarian with them, even though I was mentioning that my master of the language was low), and intellectually, by providing me information that normally should be confidential, with the specific sincerity of the person who has nothing to hide.

It is also important the way the first approach is done. Besides the official introduction, approaching the topic was a challenge, as in cases of persons without an official status I could not predict on which side they were, therefore I could not know what type of approach I should use. In such cases, I make appeal to *side questions*, which referred rather to the general situation and the environment, and not strictly to the issue under debate.

3 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE MAIN CONCEPTS

3.1 Culture, Identity, Ethnicity, Nationalism

All modern anthropologists recognise that there is a link between the three concepts that are to be analysed in the following discussion. The questions that will be raised here refer to the manner the terms are defined in traditional perspective dominated by the structuralist view as opposed to the post-modernist approach, mainly voluntarist and agent oriented.

This dichotomization opens also the discussion about defining identity, as a marker for ethnic diversity, opposed to the nation state as an agent of homogenisation pursuing the monopoly of both economic and political capital in the benefit of the culturally dominant group.

3.1.1 The Importance of Culture in Ethnicity Studies

Culture, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture#Defining_culture). In the anthropological discourse, the concept of culture receives a key importance in the dialectic of defining identity, as a basic denominator of the human activity both at personal level and in terms of social interaction. In this context, it becomes both the product of agent activity in a given context and the framework in which the individuals carry out social activity and interprets signs as meaningful to them. As Erikssen suggested, one can talk about a certain culture only by specifying the context in which the term is supposedly meaningful; shared meaning has to be spatially, temporally and situationally bounded, and unceasingly perpetuated through shared or continuous practices (Eriksen, 1992, p.47).

Common characteristics and ideas may be clear markers of a shared cultural identity but essentially, it is determined by difference; we feel we belong to a group, and a group defines itself as a group, by noticing and highlighting differences with other groups and cultures. People define their culture in relation, or rather in opposition to other cultures. People who feel they belong to the same culture, have this idea because they rely partially on a common set of norms, but the awareness of such common codes is possible only via the confrontation with their absence, namely, with other cultures.

Another view with respect to cultural affinities of the members of specific groups refers to the grounded traits that define a culture from the inside. In this perspective, people are

attached to values and norms that are produced and shared inside the group, and which have been perpetuated throughout the history under the shape of a genealogical patrimony.

3.1.1.1 The Primordialist /Instrumentalist Debate

These two perspectives have led to an academic dispute in the field of anthropology designating the positions of the instrumentalists versus the primordialists.

The latter is historically rooted in the social theories of Max Weber who considered that a group is defined by the commonly shared belief of its members that they have a common descent; the social construction of groups and political structures are, in his view, the result of a previous commonality of action (Jenkins, 2003, p. 10). This perspective led to an enclosed study of culture as the basic ground for anthropological work on ethnicity under the label of tribalism. Nearly all the studies concerning ethnic identity considered the common culture or the sharing of objective cultural traits, together with the shared origin, as the central topic of analysis.

This perspective tries to stipulate the centrality of culture in defining ethnicity, and that of ethnicity in the set of values humans praise. The terms in which Clifford Geertz put the explanation of ethnicity are the ties of blood, language, and culture (Jenkins, 2003, p.45); he regards these aspects as being natural and obligatory in the creation of invisible bounds between the members of a community. In his study on nationalism, A D Smith recognises himself that the forging of national identities found a natural foundation in these variables. He further argues that the cultural continuity with the past demonstrates the existence of an objective, identifiable culture, which was by no means the invention of the modern nationalist project; the state and the national movements instead are artificial creations, but they find their inspiration in the objective traits mentioned above.

Opposing this traditional view about culture and its relevance, the first who challenged it was Fredrik Barth in the *Introduction* to the *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* from 1969. He is hold responsible for the shift from a static, homogeneous view on culture, to an interaction approach, which was accomplished through the liberation of ethnicity from the bounds of culture. Barth's theory, which will be later developed in relation to the definition of ethnicity, does not exclude culture as a genuine entity, but simply reassesses the role it plays in the equation of defining ethnicity. The perspective he suggests regards culture from outside the ethnic group and supports its irrelevance in relation with the identification of that group. The *cultural stuff,* that is the content, cannot represent a reliable variable as it is constructed and exposed to mutability; this represented a strong criticism of functional structuralism, which was still celebrated in his times, shifting the focus of study on the agent. The criterion of ethnic

identification is for Barth the ascription and self-ascription of the individual to a group. He does not focus on the cultural characteristics of ethnic groups, but on the relationships of cultural differentiation, free of the content that he called *cultural stuff,* and which become evident at the interface of groups that he called *ethnic boundaries* (Barth, 1969, p. 14).

On a more radical position is Abner Cohen, who denies the role of culture, as well as shared origin and metaphoric kinship from the definition of ethnicity, placing this into the pure realm of utilitarianism (Eriksen, 2002, p. 45). He reduces the cultural aspect of ethnicity as subordinate to the mechanisms of social functioning pending on the interest a group has to constitute its strength for a specific purpose. The ethnicity, in Cohen's view must have a practical purpose in order to be viable in the struggle for scarce resources, and he explains in the light of Social Darwinism the temporary fluctuation of ethnic groups (Erriksen, 2002, p.44).

Unlike Barth, who keeps an interest in the cultural variations on the fault-line of boundaries, Cohen attributes the construction of ethnicity to pure political reasons. In his view, the entrepreneurs use primordialist symbols, that are cultural content, in order to obtain the allegiance of potential followers (Eriksen, 2002, p. 54). Therefore, the political functioning of societies needs no historical or cultural explanation; in this model, it would be possible to create and recreate any identity through means of rhetoric and political manipulation.

Even though the instrumentalist view presented above has its own merit in explaining, the formation and functioning of ethnic corporate groups, especially in urbanised pluralist societies, most of the scholars acknowledge the importance of culture as a ground in the construction of the ethnic identity. Will Kymlika, for instance, supports that the natural bound between people and their own culture has deep ties in the human nature, as a means of understanding how the world is organised (Eriksen, 2002, p. 147). However, he rejects a static or essentialist view on culture claiming that the content may change with the environment that impacts on it. This explains Barth's scepticism about the cultural content, and about the importance of homogenisation within it. In the modern and especially post-modern societies, culture is flexible and has the tendency to fluctuate with respect to the physical location and the social challenges that the individual faces. The main causes of this phenomenon seem to be urbanisation, industrialisation, social mobility, and the development of communication means. These factors made possible both the fluctuation of cultural content due to a higher degree of interaction, but at the same time increased the awareness about differences among people with another cultural background.

For this reason, Barth's perspective, which was considered a post modern theory of culture, seems to fit well in my study about the Csangoes in assessing the role and the content of culture in the contemporary context, especially when it comes to socially displaced members of

the group – that is urban young educated people, young and middle aged people working abroad, and urban, usually young persons in mixed marriages, usually with a Romanian Orthodox.

The primordialist view will also be made use of when coming to interpret the cultural aspects of traditional Csango society, dominated by elders living in the countryside, in isolated villages, with a high degree of resistance to modernisation and cultural mutation. The geographic isolation together with the political lack of interest made possible the survival of archaic social relations, and the maintenance of a mentality that emphasises genealogy and the reliance on a static culture, as the historical analysis will depict later.

Nevertheless, the radical instrumentalist view will explain the attempt carried out by the political agents in certain historical moments to mutate the identity of Csangoes by alienating their culture, and imposing the allegiance to a culture of majority for pure political purposes.

3.1.2 Identity, Identification

It has been commonly accepted, since the publication of Durkheim and Mauss' study on classification that human beings have a natural tendency towards stereotyping and categorising in order to create at symbolic and social level distinction between kinds or classes of phenomena, in order to make the world less complex and knowledge more accessible.

In this category is also ranked the process of identification, which Erriksen has defined as the awareness of being the same as oneself as well as being different (Eriksen, 2002, p. 60). This implies both a personal and a social aspect, in terms of reporting to the personal consciousness and cultural experience, and at the same time placing the person into a social context, in the contact with alterity on different degrees.

This chapter will pursue the mechanism of de-constructing identity on more levels of analysis, based on similarities and differences, trying to capture how personal identity is defined and self-defined, which is the relevance of stratified identity, and how the politics have an impact on the settlement of identity.

3.1.2.1 Internal and External Identification in the Social Life

The first level of identification for a human being is the personal one, which can be translated as becoming aware of one's own existence. This can only be done in a context through reporting to other persons, as carriers of a different personality, of different values and information.

The second level of interaction is usually developed in the small universe of kinship, which is the most important marker for denominating the awareness of belonging to a common set of values, which is the cultural context. At this level, the person becomes aware of himself as being both a unique personality, and a member of a group. The sum of persons agreeing upon this commonality, accepting at the same time the individuality of each person, create a community of culture.

The contact with persons that carry a deeply different set of cultural traits (for instance speaking a different language), enlarge the counscientisation of difference, and marks out the borders Barth talks about at the intersection of culturally different groups. The interaction order is the point where the self-image meets the public image. Self-image is the way we see ourselves, and maybe more important, the way we want to be seen by others. As Goffman, quoted by Jenkins suggests, identity is a matter of performance (Jenkins, 2003, p. 59), in the sense that what we have culturally acquired, and what we think about ourselves does not count too much if others do not observe it. The sensitive issue at this level consists of resisting stigmatisation, and for this reason, usually people dichotomise their behaviour in front stage and back stage performance.

These three levels of identification are linked to culture and personality, and they represent the main impetus of internal definition of identity. A fourth level, strictly constructed would be at the intersection with the authorities, which is the state.

The question is how these categories develop and what lies behind their development. Jenkins explains that the first level is linked with the others, and implies a larger or a smaller degree of independence. He states that all the cultural background a person gets is a result of the process of categorisation – that is the child learns who he/she is as he/she is told so by others. This process is carried out only in an active social relation, and the person who does the external definition must be invested with a certain degree of power or authority (Jenkins, 2003, p. 53).

This model can easily be expanded from the personal level to that of a group. The definition of group identity is then a process of both self-ascription to a set of prior values, the councientisation of these at the contact with other group, and the assimilation of what others say about them. Keeping a balance among these variables, I consider, constitutes a sufficient and necessary condition for a group to be counted as legitimate.

3.1.2.2 The Impact of Politics on Defining Identity

As suggested in the previous subchapter, a fourth level of defining self- identity, respectively group identity, is the relation with the authorities. If at the first three levels, the identity took the shape of cultural traits communicated across-borders the relations with the state take the form of a social contract. A person can be recognised as belonging to a group by his cultural traits; the allegiance to a state is expressed by the possession of documents issued by the authority (passport, working contract, property acts etc.).

In the context of the state the issue that counts is related to the politics of recognition, more precisely, whether the state develops a bottom-top approach integrating marginalised groups and minorities without affecting their cultural identity, or an assimilation policy from above, meant to elude cultural differences.

The state policy is usually dictated by rational purposes, or as Erriksen suggested, the competition over scarce resources. He understands resources in the largest sense, ranking from economic wealth to political power, recognition, or symbolic power (Eriksen, 2002, p. 158). What triggers such a discriminatory attitude from the state, especially the modern state is the actualisation of differences that modernity brought in the industrialised societies. Former discrete groups could thrive non-observed until they became integrated into the common market of the state; this has made the differences among groups more evident, and developed the tendency of the culturally dominating group to impose itself over the others under the blessing of the state apparatus. The means for achieving this goal, as Erriksen suggests, is appealing to rhetoric, symbolism, and myth, emphasising the sufferings from the past, making individuals to internalise them as personal experiences (Erriksen, 2002, p. 159).

This process implies the construction of alterity in demonised terms; in other words, what is not similar to us, is the enemy, thus reducing the complexity of social life to a set of simple contrasts. In this context, the members of the oppressed group do not have much of a choice. Resistance implies being excluded from social privileges, while assimilation means that is giving away their own cultural heritage and beliefs, that is shifting identity in the manner the state dictates.

The discussion on this topic will be considered again in the chapter dealing with nationalism and the nation state.

3.1.2.3 The Alternative of Post Modern Identity

As revealed above, identity is not defined unilaterally, and does not take into account just one variable at a time. Eriksen supports the idea that individuals have many statuses and identities ranked on different strata (based on gender, social class, age, education, religion, or ethnicity), and their relevance shifts along with the social situation the person encounters (Eriksen, 2002, p.31). The question that rises from this context is what makes the ethnic identity become the strongest marker for an individual or a group, and how conflict situation caused by the clash between distinct groups should be avoided.

One possible explanation can be found in Jenkins' theory of stratified ethnicity, which asserts that ethnic identity is itself segmentary and hierarchical (Jenkins, 2003, p. 40), containing a communal stratum, a local one, a national, maybe regional or continental, and then a global one. The point where the local identity, backed-up by an ethnic marker to which the person ascribes, meets the national or the official identity of the state represents the spot where the conflict develops. These situations are usually solved through negotiation of identity, and the conflicts occur when the two sides cannot reach a common point in the negotiation process.

One likely result has been identified in the previous chapter referring to identity politics, and it renders the common standpoint of the nation state, which is considered a traditionalist perspective. The alternative is given by the post-modern model, which de-constructs identity to the level of cynical distance from all identifications in terms of ethnicity, where the values of consumerism and personal comfort replace the traditional values. This attitude was developed in the context of globalisation, which brought with it the devaluation of the nation state, stressing the neo-liberal values of the market, free movement, trans-national and supra-national co-operation at the level of politics and economy. The modern communication systems, and moreover the increasing social mobility, either for occupational or recreational reason, have made people more aware of the cultural diversity and more open to alterity than they used to be before. These transformations have definitely impact on the way identity and ethnicity is perceived, as well. The main reason that made this shift possible, I consider to be the openness the state showed towards the values globalisation brought with it, and which made possible a cultural homogenisation at both supra-state level, but also inside the state in the relation between the political authority and ethnic minorities.

The model discussed in this subchapter represents a theoretical ground in discussing the role of the Romanian State in the assimilation of Csangoes, which in spite of finding itself in the train of the European integration, continues to display a conservative policy on ethnic minorities, fact that contradicts the values and the legislation of the European Union.

<u>3.1.3 From Ethnicity to Nationalism; the Role of Nation State in Converting the Ethnic to the National</u>

This subchapter will put together a cohesive analysis of the link between ethnicity, as it is understood nowadays in scholar discourse, and nation and nationalism, in the context of the modern state. The main question rising in this respect is how the institutionalisation process carried out by the state influences the ethnic diversity within a political community and which are the solutions for surpassing the challenges posed by the nation building process over ethnic groups that tend to preserve themselves as different.

3.1.3.1 Ethnic Groups – Definition and Establishment

In everyday life, there are many debates over ethnicity mostly regarding its relation to minorities and race issues. Ethnic groups perceived as culturally homogeneous entities, having a self-dependant existence, represent the main category in this respect.

In order to clarify what exactly represents an ethnic group, one must first answer a set of questions with respect to their establishment, the criteria for definition, and its character in the dialectic of evolution in time.

The agent-oriented perspective, as suggested by Barth and the other instrumentalists explains the often-met social situations when individuals choose, more or less freely to declare themselves as belonging to a different group or another on the ground of their feelings, or personal attachment instead of the cultural heritage that they were exposed to through education. This phenomenon is common in modern societies where most often the cultural environment individuals grow in does coincide with the official culture of the dominant group, imposed through the construction of identity politics by the nation state, replacing partially or entirely the cultural traits an individual inherits inside the unit he or she expresses allegiance to.

3.1.3.2 The Ideological Establishment of the State

Modern anthropology has given away the type of discourse based on small communities and groups that could be studied through thorough observation, opening towards more complex studies such as ethnicity in the framework of nationalism and nation state, pointing to the reciprocal influence these categories establish on each other in social life.

This approach has also brought forward a new way of interpreting culture, both in terms of meaning, and value as established at the contact between the society and the political

body. As we have seen above, the interpretation given to culture in modern societies has placed it in a position prone to motion and mutability, instead of static, grounded perspective as the structuralists advocated it.

The evolution decoded by scholars with respect to the social communities has had the state as a key motivator. In the shade of the body politics, the ethnic groups have developed into nations due to a process of interpretation and re-interpretation of cultural content and meaning, which were meant to create homogenisation on the social level, and devotion and submission to the structure, on the personal level.

> *A Modern Concept – Nation*

Linguistically, the term *nation* comes from Roman Antiquity, designating the origin, or birth. It entered the Middle Ages as referring to the communities of foreigners in the universities, delimiting from any political or administrative signification. It was only in the 16th century England that it first was equated to public affairs, and it captured the meaning of sovereign people gathered under an administrative unit (Andreescu, 2004, p. 53).

In classic terminology of social anthropology, the term *nation* used to designate a large unit of people, or a group with a uniform culture. The difference between nations and ethnic groups or tribes, as suggested by I.M. Lewis, quoted by Eriksen, was rather one of size than structural composition or function (Eriksen, 2002, p. 97). Nevertheless, this idea suggests that the content of nation reside in the grounded culture of a community, which triggers a natural origin of nations.

Against this point of view, Benedict Andersen developed his theory on *imagined communities* pointing at the role of the state in the establishment of a nation. His definition of the nation, *as an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign* (Andersen, 1983, p. 28), does not suggest the abstract character of nations; *imagined* for Andersen does not mean invented (Eriksen, 2002, p.98), but it appeals to the imagination of the members of a community who, even though physically separated, share the allegiance to a common unit.

Andersen sees in the forging of a nation a process that has been conducted by the state, which is an agent of coagulation and a manipulator of an existing cultural ground, and not an inventor of the latter. In his view, the religious community and the dynastic regimes have preceded the nation state; the transformation he claims took place in a moment when the late organisation system did not correspond any longer to the requirements of the capitalist society (Andersen, 1983, p. 28). In other words, the class relations and religious cohesion specific to

feudalism were challenged by a new interpretation of the social order and of time perception. Mass education in the vernacular, the wide spread of printed books, as well as the faster circulation of information made possible and necessary such a project of homogenisation and universalisation of a dominant culture under the auspices of the state.

What Andersen hesitates to mention, but Gellner makes reference to, is the ideological character of the nation building process. He suggests that the process of nation formation must have as outcome a correspondence between the borders of the political unity and those of a self-defined cultural group (Eriksen, 2002, p.99), which is to be read as the nation.

Nevertheless, there is a question that this theory brings with itself; if he, as well as Andersen refer to nation as a group constructed under the patronage of the state on a given cultural ground, then what happens to groups that are not culturally homogeneous, and yet end up to form a single national body? This implies a cultural assimilation of minority groups that is an abuse directed by the political body against them.

A possible solution to such situations was suggested in the contemporary literature by the debate between the *canonical* (or *ethnic*) model of a nation and the *civic* model. Both authors discussed above referred to nation as an ethnic body, which is defined in terms of language, religion, customs, and traditions, and as it is accepted by the canons of international legislation. This type of nation is presumed as anterior to the state, and the ethnic component secures the unity of the community through the pre-existent ethnic characteristics (Andreescu, 2004, p.53). The basic components of an ethnic nation are the genealogy and popular mobilisation of the people, and historically it can be rooted in the enlightenment ideas that became widespread in the German society of the 17th century.

The status of national minorities in societies that internalise this model is most of the times insecure, exposed to assimilation and mutation, carried out in the pursuit of social homogenisation and stability in the realm of politics and economy. It implies, of course, advantages for the ethnic group designating the dominant culture, or the official trend imposed by the state, and this can be translated into economic and administrative privileges, better chances of social integration, and control of the political capital.

The alternative to this type of definition is contained in the theory of the *civic nation*, which derives from the French Enlightenment way of understanding the nation. The main characteristics of this model imply an understanding of the nation as a community of culture, laws, and citizenship that applies to a certain population on a given territory (Andreescu, 2004, p.51) defined as the state. The political community represents the subject of such a community, and the members perceive themselves as similar in the light of sharing the same political belief, irrespective of ethnicity, race, colour, sex, language, or any subtle cultural traces. The unity is

given by the attachment to a common set of rules, which makes them all equal as citizens under the auspices of the rule of law.

When referring to culture in the model of the civic nation, we point to all those components of civic culture, such as the respect for the national legislative body, the reciprocal recognition of equality for all the citizens, non-discrimination, and the self directed ascription (not imposed) of belongings to the nation.

It must also be mentioned that the civic and the ethno-national values, as presented above, are designated as ideal prototypes only in normative terms; as descriptive categories they never manifest themselves alone, or in pure form, but they always blend in different quantities and with different intensity.

➢ *Nationalism and the Nation State*

As suggested in the previous chapter, the shifts produced by modernity in the social life, in terms of market, information flux, spread of education etc., human communities gradually gave away the markers of identity specific to feudalism, that is religion, localism, and class relations. A new ideology has grown out of the mechanisms developed both socially inherent, and controlled by the state authority. As the above-mentioned categories lost their legal and psychological efficacy, they have been replaced by ethnicity, which was institutionalised under the shape of nationalism.

In the view of scholars, nationalism is defined as a principle of political descent that affirms the congruence of the national body with the state (Gellner in Eriksen, 2002, p. 98). This implies a link to ethnicity in the sense that a dominant cultural group or an ethnic group has legitimisation over the entire territory and resources of a state, by resources meaning economic wealth, cultural heritage, and political capital.

Nevertheless, there are views that deny the ethnic component as a key factor of nationalism that relates it to the process of state formation and the development of capitalism, like for instance Gellner. He argues that the rationale behind the state dynamic of reifying and homogenising national culture stays the need of the capitalist state to assure competent and skilled working force in the industrialisation process. Andersen, instead, puts the same process on the necessity of homogenous administration apparatus, which is the main incentive for capitalism (Verdery in Vermeulen and Govers, 1994, p.43). In his view, mass education represents the key process, or the most efficient means of establishing a standardised reification of culture, by using printings in the vernaculars and a school network enforcing a standardised curriculum.

Yet, these authors do not introduce the concept of ethnicity when they come to nationalism and cultural homogenisation. If we go back to Barth's theory on the role of culture in tracing and communicating difference, we may conclude that there is a clear link between the process of state formation, more precisely the nation state, and the homogenization of culture as a nation forging process. For him, ethnicity consists of a first order dichotomization of the social field, the establishment of a boundary between *us* and *them* (Verdery in Vermeulen and Govers, 1994, p. 44), and across this boundary, the cultural components are signalled and reproduced until they are internalised by the members of the community. Of a major importance in this process is the ideology, that is nationalism, which appeals to the feelings of people, in the manner religion, status and vocation used to do before the project of state making brought it to the fore.

In the largest acceptation, nationalism nowadays is perceived as cultural nationalism, in contrast to the type centred on the ideas of nation defined in terms of state (civic nation as discussed above). Nevertheless, in the former type, the state still plays a major role by creating and communicating the *myths of homogeneity,* (Verdery in Vermeulen and Govers, 1994, p.45) which are of critical importance for the administrative tasks and governmentality, to put it in Foucault's terms, to be carried out efficiently.

State makers form identities through cultural mutations in the benefit of the dominant ethnic group; alien cultures are not excluded, but included through assimilation and eventually denied as objective entities. The outcome is a mutation of identity from the minor ethnic group towards the majority, and at nation level, the result is a unique, homogeneous identity for all the members who share common cultural and ideological values. The categories of political exclusion and inclusion in such a group follow the boundaries of the nation, irrespective of social status or other variables.

This offers the ground to believe together with Williams quoted by Verdery, that nationalist ideology, via the state making authority, establishes what should be the homogeneous culture against which all the others will be rendered visible; thus, ethnicity is the product of state making, not its precursor. It is not from ethnic identities that nations develop, but rather the nation state is the framework that generates the former, and where it acquires social significance (Verdery in Vermeulen and Govers, 1994, p.47).

This explains the possibility of co-existence of Csango Hungarians and Romanians on the territory of Moldavia, and later Romania for a long period. The historical context of the period preceding the Romanian nationalist project of the 19th century did not make possible the awareness of cultural difference between the two ethnic groups and cultures, until the establishment of the nation state enhanced this evidence. For this reason, the status of Csangoes

oscillated from a cultural and ethnic group, which represented no threat for the unity of the medieval state to an undesired minority within the nation state.

At descriptive level, there are several patterns that nationalism follows in the process of state making. A first dichotomy establishes inside the state and it concerns the discrepancy between the *nationalism of the majority* and the *nationalism of the minority*. The former is perceived as oppressive, in the limits imposed by the terms of classic democracy, which states the rule of the majority, while the latter is self-protective. It corresponds to the model of civic nationalism, and grounds its existence on the national and international system of protection of minorities (Andreescu, 2004, p. 60). In this context, the nationalism of the minority may pose a challenge to the unity of the state in case it occurs in a radical form, denying the value of ethnic solidarity expressed by the majority. For this reason, it has to be linked to the values of the civic nationalism, which find strong allies in the principles of multiculturalism and tolerance.

Another dichotomy may be established between what I call *nationalism towards the inside* and *nationalism towards the outside.* The former contains activities and values carried out by the state makers meant to forge a cohesive cultural and ideological identity of all the members, through developing a strong self-esteem, internalising cultural and mental traits that are considered specific and unique in the their culture, or through assuming a common past and collective narratives. Among the visible signs included, here are the national symbols (the flag, the anthem, the coat of arms etc.), works of art included in the national patrimony, folk costumes and traditions, symbolic buildings and commemorative places, as well as the state institutions. Along with these come a series of non-material symbols, such as the national day and other specific holidays, ballads and folk songs, myths and beliefs.

On the other hand, the *nationalism towards the outside* uses images, most of the times distorted, of the alleged enemies, both actual and historical, with the clear purpose of inducing the idea of uniqueness, nobleness, and superiority as compared to the designated *others*. The initial argument for such a construction is to forge the cohesion within the nation, enhancing a patriotic feeling and attachment to the state.

Unfortunately, it is often used for other political reasons, such as distracting the public opinion from stringent issues concerning political or economic difficulties the state is facing at a certain moment. In such situations, state makers induce the idea that the enemies from the outside are to be blamed for internal policy failures, or in other situations, they praise the failure of the so-called enemy, in order to increase the morale of their own subjects.

Like most other social phenomena, these two models do not occur in pure form in social life, but they develop simultaneously with different intensity in one society or another.

3.2 Patterns of the Conflict

3.2.1 The Foundation of the Concept

Conflict is an ever-present phenomenon in the societies of people, and it is almost impossible to make rid of it in all the situations. Dahrendorf cited in Pfetsch and Rohloff, even asserts that conflict is the driving force of social development. This idea can be supported in the limits concerning the social conflict as an interaction of opponent forces, meant to end up in societal progress, as Marxists would sustain.

For a better understanding of the concept, we must try to search in its deep structure, with concern to the parties involved, the substance or content, causes, and dimension.

Taking into account Galtung's dual dialectic based on the inter/intra distinction, conflicts are located either within a person, and here we have a dilemma, or outside a person, at the intersection with the others, seen as concurents for the same goods, and here we have a dispute or contradiction (Galtung, 1996, p.70). This approach makes a clear separation between the personal, existential conflict, and the objective one, including inter/intra state and political conflict, which eventually is our target of analysis. And this type of conflict can be systemic (between states), and extra-systemic, as for instance the colonial wars, the civil wars or complex intra-states conflicts, among different ethnic groups (Hugh, Woodhouse, Ramsbothan, 1999, p.17).

With respect to intensity, we generally meet a scale of evaluation eventually reduced to that presented by Pfetsch and Rohloff, whose first step is latent conflict (which Galtung put in relation with structural violence – Galtung, 1996, p.31), crisis, severe crisis, and war (Pfetsch and Rohloff, 2000, p.30). The first two are also named non-violent stages, and the last two are violent.

Therefore, we can conclude with respect to the analysis above, that a conflict is a situation established between two or more sides, encountering clashing interests of various types, covering a wide or narrow duration in space and time, comprising manifest antagonistic behaviour directed towards the opponent party.

3.2.1.1 Structural Violence

Structural violence, as opposed to direct violence, refers to the infliction of avoidable insults to basic needs, and more generally to life, lowering the level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible (Galtung, 1996, p. 197), and which is directed by an agent, being it a

person or another structure, against a structure. The targets it aims at can be political, economic, or related to identity, and the form it can take refers to penetration, marginalisation, segmentation, and fragmentation (Galtung, 1996, p. 31).

On the conflict scale elaborated by Pfetsch and Rohloff, structural violence indicates the presence of a conflict in latent state, or in the extreme cases, it can take the shape of a crisis. Such conflicts have a long duration in time and a large area of development, and are supported by what Galtung called *cultural violence*. It refers to those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence, that serves the legitimisation of structural violence, appealing to cultural entities that deeply influence the constitution of a structure, such as religion, law and ideology, language, art, cosmology, and which are carried out by institutions – school, media, church, etc. (Galtung, 1996, p.31).

When structural violence targets the existence of a cultural entity, or of an ethnic group, in the institutionalised form, as in the case of Csango minority, then it takes the shape of *culturocide*, that is deconstructing all those aspects of social life that make a group ascribed to its ethnic borders, with the premeditated purpose of integrating it into the majority.

3.2.2 Intractable Conflict

Conflicts are inseparable part of inter-group relations, appearing as a result of the dispute over limited resources, and the common need for exploiting them. Many of them are temporary, touching unimportant issues, and they can be solved with institutionalised means. Others develop a higher resistance to resolution and are prolonged in time, have fluctuating intensity, and necessarily lead to deep animosity between groups and societies. This type of conflict is called *intractable conflict*, and its complexity requires a special analysis with respect to the causes, parties involved, and patterns of development.

2.2.1. What Makes Some Conflicts Intractable?

The main reason that makes a conflict resist transformation refers to what releases it. Intractable conflicts are disputes over essential and existentially contradictory goals (Bar-Tal, 2004, p. 258), which can be of socio-political origin with implications in the socio-psychological life of a community, among which are land, self-governance, independence, material resources, economic and cultural dominance.

In most cases, this type of conflict covers a large area of causes that seem to both sides as a threat to their basic survival needs, like political, economic, and cultural facets, creating an image of totality. This triggers the involvement of all the head institutions of a society (school, church, media), which become politicised and build a positive self-image,

motivation, and legitimisation, as well as in constructing as demonised image of the opponents. The conflict becomes a central issue in the public agenda of the community; no matter the degree of implication, everybody has an opinion on it, and makes it public in every possible situation.

Most of the scholars insist on the importance of violence in intractable conflicts, like for instance Salomon and Rouhana (Rouhana, 1998; Salomon, 1999; Salomon, 2003), stressing the implications it has over the public mentality of the involved parties. This assertion entails a discussion on what type of violence can be considered, as well as its occurrence. The authors mentioned above refer explicitly to physical direct violence, which is specific to armed conflicts of high intensity. As the definition of intractable conflict implies protractedness in time, it is likely to believe that direct violence fluctuates in time in terms of occurrence and intensity. What seems relevant in such situations, is not the existence of the violent acts in themselves, but their influence on the collective memory, which can bring justification for protracting the conflict, as the sides can accuse reciprocally of atrocious deeds the past.

In the case of structural violence, which is the case in the identity conflict of the Csangoes from Romania, it appears in situations of low intensity conflicts, has less impact on the construction of narratives, but at the same time it is omnipresent during all the period the conflict is there. In such type of violence, once inflicted the cause, the results can last for a very long time.

The involvement of violence, together with the cause that triggers the conflict is main incentives for creating the perception of irreconcilability. Each side perceives the dispute as a zero sum game, and the goals they follow as essential for their survival (Rouhana, 1998, p. 3). This leads to a biased interpretation of the past, resulting in the construction of two parallel histories meant to legitimise one exclusive truth. The means for achieving this include a biased selection and interpretation of events, which attempt to confirm their beliefs as the ultimate truth (Rouhana, 1998, p.10). The *others'* perspective does not count at all, being a forge, an artefact created against *us*. Such attitudes are meant to nurture the societal beliefs through motivational processes, meant to induce the idea that *we* are the victims, no matter the deeds and methods we have used, and by no means *we* are wrong, and the *others* are right. This implies an appeal to morality, in the sense that the omnipresent belief at societal level is that the own group holds all the positive moral values, while the enemy is the evil. Failures and immoral behaviour are explained through circumstantial accidents, or are caused by the undignified behaviour of the enemy.

The main cause of prolongation of such conflicts many scholars agree upon is the lack of communication between the sides. As long as both sides construct a personal view at the conflict's causes and development, which are fundamentally opposed, people have access to only

one official story, which they take for granted as being the truth. This lack of communication becomes in time the official policy of the leaders, and the general attitude of the people, increasing the degree of isolation, and hence the resistance to resolution.

This paradigm works to explain the prolonged character of the conflict established between the Csango minority representatives, and the state and church officials in Romania. Both sides perceive that attaining the goal they fight for is of high importance, as in the case of Csangoes it refers to their survival as an ethnic group, while the state fights for keeping its unitary character. The parts in the conflict separated themselves in hermetic units, avoiding communication through direct means. Even though the last period met a wave of reconciliation at institutional level, the deeply rooted narratives and prejudices at mass level give the incentives for a long way until a final solution will be reached.

4 THE CSANGOES OF MOLDAVIA.CASE STUDY

4.1. General Aspects

The implementation of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe created the illusion, into which many scholars fell trapped, that the era of ethnic conflict was over, being surpassed by the changes in the social structure referring to class equality, social justice, manifold development, and international co-operation. The ethnic conflict was, in their vision, linked to the bourgeois society, being nurtured by class inequalities and imperialist policies. Therefore, the four decades of Communist rule are considered a kind of historical blackout in terms ethnic disputes. It was just the failure of achieving the ambitious dreams of socialism that re-opened the gateway to ethno-national conflict after the fall of 1989, as the gaps that Communism could not fill in the process of eradicating medieval structures were reactivated, and thus emerged a fertile soil for the revival of ethnic ideologies and rivalries (Csepeli in Rupesinghe, King, and Vorkunova, 1992, p. 232).

However, if analysing the general theoretical framework, this point of view may stand, at least with respect to those countries that followed the canonical socialism in a larger extent. On the other hand, a structural analysis of the policies implemented by some actors in the realm of state theory, reveal a totally different reality. In the light of what many considered a theoretical anomaly, states like Yugoslavia and Romania stubbornly have carried out a blend between socialism, meaning internationalisation in terms of external policy, and a violent mystical nationalism at domestic level, pursuing the goal of ethnic homogenisation, and unique, strong identity forging. The scene of ethnic conflict has shifted from the inter-state level, to that of intrastate, and maybe for this reason scholars like Csepeli have been tempted to believe that Communist rule brought in Eastern Europe a period of relative peaceful ethno-national relations.

This chapter will analyse the case of assimilation of the ethnic group of Csangoes, carried out by the Romanian state[1] through specific processes of identity reconstruction and cultural relocation, pursuing the goal of integrating the minority group in the cultural and administrative body of the majority. s

The study will contain some historical aspects of the dispute, as it has been in the spotlight for more than a century, touching the critical issue of the Csangoes' origin, the

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[1] Romania became a nation state in 1859, when the principalities of Walachia and Moldavia formed a personal union. In 1918, with the dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, Transylvania joined the kingdom. This way, all the three main provinces with majority Romanian population made up an unitary nation state.

evolution of the group on the territory of Moldavia, and later on, in the Romanian nation state, capturing the period of nationalist climax in the inter-war period and nationalist-Communism of the last three decades of socialist rule. In this respect, I will focus on the way historical events and sources have been interpreted and made use of by both sides in dispute, in order to justify the process of identity mutation, especially those referring to the origin of the Csangoes. The actors that had a main role in this process are the state and the Catholic Church with its factions, some supporting obediently the endeavour of the state, and others, under the patronage of the Hungarian state, struggling for the maintenance of the genuine identity of the Csangoes.

This part will capture also the Communist period, which represent the climax of the assimilation process, setting the focus on the instruments used by the main actors above mentioned. Due to the authoritarian regime imposed by the state in this time, practically the conflict reached a diminished scale in terms of intensity, given the disproportionality of the sides. The dispute was carried out, on the one hand, at academic level, between Hungarian scholars both from Transylvania and Hungary, and Romanian scholars and Catholic clergy. On the other hand, the state was pursuing its social engineering process in the meanwhile, without any disturbance created by the academic agitation, ending up in a nearly complete success by the time of Communist fall.

The period immediately following the 1989 events met a process of slow, but dramatic structural transformations of the society. Democratisation, freedom of speech and thinking has replaced fear and totalitarianism, therefore a process of Csango identity revival has started. In this context, the conflict has taken a new shape, namely the civil society and political organisations became active in the process of conservation and revitalisation of the Csango culture and identity, getting significant support from the international bodies. The resistance of the state and Church structures to this movement lead to the escalation of the conflict at a scale that it has never reached before, meaning a constant media polemic campaign, political disputes, intimidation, and in some cases even physical aggression.

The analysis of this part will include the interpretation of data that I have collected in the field concerning the actual status of the Csango minority, the quest of the civil society for recognition and minority rights, as well as the patterns of reaction the state and Church have followed in meeting this movement.

4.2 The Dispute over the Csangoes' Identity. Typology of the Conflict

The main theoretical area this conflict subscribes to is the category of ethno-national conflict, given the source that has triggered it, that is the dispute over the identity and ethic origin of an ethnic group, claimed by both Romanians and Hungarians. At the same time, following the pattern described by Galtung, as the previous chapter shows, the physical boundaries are limited to the intrastate level, which includes it in the category of extra-systemic conflicts, between different ethnic groups within the state.

In what concerns the intensity scale, the conflict has met variations in time, mainly due to the different attitude of political regimes that have been in charge. This aspect, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, implies several patterns of relations that Csangoes used to have with the majority Romanians during long historical periods. Basically, the awareness of identity difference was implemented only during the 19th century, along with the nationalist movement, in spite of centuries of peaceful co-existence. Nevertheless, a score of events proved to be crucial in the trajectory of the inter-ethnic relations, escalating up to what Hugh, Woodhouse, and Ramsbothan consider a severe crisis (Hugh, Woodhouse, Ramsbothan, 1999, p.17). Otherwise, it subscribes mainly to the model of latent conflict.

This implies the implementation of structural violence in a process that has lasted since the middle of the 19th century until now. More specifically the penetration of the cultural entity of the minority through institutionalised means, that is replacing the native language with that of the majority through school, administration, and religious service imposed, and prohibiting the use of the former in any formal context.

Marginalisation was also activated, by excluding members of the Csango minority from any public position, unless uttering allegiance to the Romanian nation. This way, the state has practically eliminated any possibility of forging an elite capable to carry the cultural and identity values of the ethnic group. At the same time, the ethnographic content of the culture has been confiscated, and reinterpreted as being genuinely Romanian. These are aspects of cultural violence meant to justify the interference in the deepest structures of the Csango minority's existence as a cultural entity, subscribe to the pattern of *culturocide*, as Galtung has described it, given the premeditated purpose of reshaping the ethnic borders of the minority group
and assimilate it to the majority.

The protracted character of the conflict represents the main incentive to place it in the category of intractable conflicts, as it was described by Bar Tal. As I have mentioned before, the assimilation process of Csangoes is an extremely old phenomenon, having its origins in the nationalist project of the 19th century that managed to create a Romanian nation state. Even

though the official history did not mention most of the key moments of resistance to assimilation, trying to hide the artificial character of the process, there have always been voices that condemned it even starting with the end of World War I.

The apparent success of the Communist State nearly brought the conflict to an end, by the extinction in large amount of the Csango identity. The proper moment provided by the fall of Communism brought instead escalation without precedent, involving all the strata of the society. On the one hand, the Romanians and the Catholic Church, defend the achievements of the previous regime by using all the channels of communication at hand, raising the alert, at least at local and regional level, whenever they felt their authority was challenged. The target of these actions were both Romanian citizens, who show increased sensibility to issues concerning nationalism and threats of any kind to the nation state, as well as Csangoes that have already been assimilated, especially the younger generation who considers any reminiscence of their ancestors' heritage as a burden, or stigma, given the violent process of categorisation imposed on them.

On the other hand, the Csango activists today take advantage of all possible means guaranteed by the legal system in order to make their requests public. Political representation, media and academic publishing, a school network, first clandestine, and afterwards included in the national education system, cultural actions like folk festivals and museum inaugurations, petitions addressed to the Church authorities are among the most used instruments aiming at both making responsive the local and international authorities, and revive the identity of its own group members.

In spite of the massive involvement of both parts, the dispute follows a dialectic specific to cold conflicts, the parts avoiding any communication channel. They develop strategies meant to acquire adherents, claiming the truth on their side. Of course, the state reserves its right to such an attitude to a larger extend, given its degree of authority, and the fact that the impact of the propositions emitted via official channels (school, media, Church) has stronger impact on people. Therefore, it had no interest in settling at the table of negotiations, especially for the given moment, as long as no pressure was put on it.

What results from this type of attitude is a prolongation of conflict *ad libitum*, both at institutionalised level, and among the masses, due to the creation of narratives and strong beliefs in the direction dictated by the official authorities. It the leaders do not find ways of communication, no progress is done, and therefore the ideology the masses believe in will become more and more prone to irreconciliation, creating the precedents for irritation and ground for violent burst-outs.

4.3 Two Parallel Histories

In historical sources, the presence of Csangoes in Moldavia was mentioned since the early Middle Ages, mostly in the scripts of the Catholic Church. Afterwards, missionary reports and domestic chronicles made reference to them as a fast settled minority of Hungarian ethnic origin and Catholic faith. The questions rising in such a situation is how did their origin become a dispute subject between the Hungarians and the Romanian state, and what is the rationale behind claiming the allegiance to both ethnic entities in the modern history?

In order to clarify this aspect it is necessary to approach a research paradigm based on decoding the process of construction of dual histories, which is common in cases of ethnic conflict for serving the forging of adherence to the group one include himself or herself in.

In this respect I will submit to analysis some of the most representative materials referring to the history of Csangoes, belonging to both sides, trying to capture the interpretations that certain events and old texts have been submitted to, explaining the social and historical context that motivated the authors to write them, and for what purpose they may serve.

My purpose is to find out how the historical discourse of the present is used to legitimise the attitudes about the origin of Csangoes that both sides display, without pretending to assess the validity of a historical truth or another. The reader must take into consideration the fact that both versions of this history are highly politicised, and the dispute over the past of the Csangoes has strong impact on the process of identity establishment today. For this reason, both sides realise the importance of having the history on their side, therefore they do their best to come out with pertinent interpretations of past events meant to justify the discourse of the present.

4.3.1 Csangoes: Half-bred Population or Genuine Settlers?

The first task that this study requires is establishing what is the etymologic origin of the concept Csango, and how it came into use with the meaning that is common nowadays.

The term Csango is mentioned for the first time by Pater Zöld in a report he has written to the bishop of Transylvania, Batthyany in 1780, designating the Hungarian Catholic population of Moldavia, which descends from the Hungarians who settled down in the region in a time he does not specify, during the Middle Ages (Zöld, 2002, p. 70). The meaning of the word lead itself to a linguistic controversy between Hungarian and Romanian scientists, due to its ambiguous lexical component. Most of the Hungarian linguists attribute its origin to the verb *chang,* which the etymological dictionary of Hungarian language explains as *to wander, to*

change one's place. Hence the derivative *Csango*, which refers to a person who left its original, place, or migrated in a foreign land. This makes sense to understand the idea supported by Tanczos Vilmos, who finds that the same name designates the Hungarians from other regions of Romania, who fled from the area with compact Hungarian population in south-east Transylvania (Tanczos in Dioszegi, 2002, p. 117), and settled down in places with Romanian majority.

The Romanian scientists did not come out with a theory concerning this issue until 1985, when the celebrated book of Dumitru Martinas, *The Origin of the Moldavian Csangoes* was published. In his book, Martinas actually revisits an older theory developed by the Franciscan monk Iosif M. Petru Pal in the early forties, which explained the meaning of the term Csango based on the perspective introduced by the Hungarian linguist of the 19th century Mukacsi Bernat, who believed that the etymology of the word derives from the verb *csangani* coming from the Szekely dialect of Hungarian, which refers to cross-breeding. Mukacsi based his theory on the mixed character of the linguistic abilities of Csangoes, who are bilingual (Martinas, 1997, p.35; Pal, 1997, p.81).

What is interesting about this theory refers to the interpretation given in social context. First of all, the translation into Romanian offered by Martinas, inspired from Pal, uses a highly pejorative term – *corcit,* meaning half-bred, or degenerated. Leaving from the linguistic aspect, they expand the meaning to the social status of Csangoes, inducing at public level the idea that the term Csango is a pejorative one, that Csangoes themselves are ashamed of and reject. In this way, what used to be a linguistic marker to designate a Hungarian population territorially separated by the nation for many centuries, became under distortion of the Communist propaganda a social stigma, part of the program meant to assimilate that minority in the national body.

It is also meaningful to mention that even nowadays, the extremist Romanian nationalists hold this theory as valid, and moreover, successfully it propagate among less educated masses, both Romanians and assimilated Csangoes. The impact is more than immediate, in a country where the right extremism is highly appreciated, and the ethnic purity and homogenisation are the ground for a peaceful existence.

The conception about the etymology of the word Csango launched by Pal and Martinas is still persistent in certain environments, in spite of the fact that in the last sixteen years, most of the Romanian researchers in linguistic and social sciences agree on its futility. Even the explanation offered by all the Romanian lexical dictionaries, is explicitly linked to the understanding rendered by Zöld.

Even though the Hungarian population of Moldavia includes at least two distinctive groups, on the basis of their historical and geographical origin (the Siret Valley Csangoes and the

Tatros Valley Szekely), the common usage of the term Csango comprises both of them, in spite of slight linguistic and ethnographic differences, which made some researchers distinguish between Moldavian Szekely and Csango Hungarians.

At present, due to the process of assimilation and acculturation, these differences are unlikely to be noticed (Tanczos in Dioszegi, 2002, p.118). The struggle for ethnic and cultural revival, which started after 1990, has had a similar effect. It established a common denominator for both the groups, and found an institutionalised form in bodies that follow the same program.

4.3.2 Historical Origin of the Hungarians in Moldavia

One of the most persistent issues historians analysing the past of Moldavia have considered, is the question of the origins of the Hungarian population, who apparently inhabited the territory from the very beginning of the state foundation in the early Middle Ages. There is a large amount of documents mentioning their presence through the centuries, from the oldest correspondence of clergymen to the first chronicles and monographs written in the eve of scientific establishment of history studies in the 19th century. Documents referring to the modern and contemporary period are plenty, ranking from the official documents and studies of dedicated historians, to non-conventional sources, like oral stories, pictures, myths and ballads of the past, and documentary films.

The challenging task for researchers was interpreting all these sources in such a manner as to render the past realities as accurate as possible, in order to serve the scientific purpose or the political interest required by the juncture.

4.3.2.1 Old Certifications of Hungarians in Moldavia

Documents referring to the presence of Hungarians in Moldavia in the early Middle Ages meet a consensus in the interpretations of most historians nowadays[2], even though a series of controversial theories emerged in certain periods.

The Hungarians, a migrating people coming from Central Asia, settled in the Panonic Fields in the 10th century, being Christianised under the prince Vaik (Steven) in the year 1000. Soon after, they established an expanded royalty comprising more territories in Central Europe, including Transylvania, introducing at the same time Christianity in its Western form. Starting with the 12th century, the eastern border became more and more exposed to attacks from

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[2] Most of the great Romanian old or contemporary historians acknowledged in their works the Hungarian origin of Moldavian Csangoes. Among them Nicolae Sutu, Radu Rosetti, Nicolae Iorga, Dimitrie Cantemir, Mircea Eliade.

migrating peoples heading West. The Hungarian kings enforced the border line, designated by the Carpathian Mountains with troops that were positioned in the eastern territories, the actual Moldavia, starting with 1211 (Ferenţ, 2004, p. 66), some of them being of Szekel origin, others Saxons belonging to the Teuton Knights. The descendants of these colonies are the first layer of Hungarian settlers in Moldavia, out of whom, few have resisted, due to assimilation pressure put on them after the administrative withdrawal.

The main reason for abandoning this territory was the acceptance of Christianity by Cumans, under the Hungarian authority, which established a strong state in Moldavia, defending the eastern border of the kingdom until they were wiped out by the Tartar invasion in 1241.

The presence of Cumans led many researchers to conclude that the actual Csangoes descend from them (Pal, 1941, 85), given the links they had with the Hungarian state and the Catholic faith they exercised[3] (Horvath, 1994, p.13). Nevertheless, this theory popular in the 1930s was disconcerted by the linguistic and historical discoveries that proved them to be a people of Turkish origin (Ferenţ, 2004, p. 91).

This Cumanian origin attributed by Pal to the Middle Ages Hungarians, tried to establish the fact that originally Hungarians have been wiped out from Moldavia shortly after their settlement, founding the theory of the Romanian origin of Catholics. This theory he launched in the forties, claiming that after the schism of 1054, some Romanians in Moldavia kept Christianity under the jurisdiction of Rome.

As further theories have proved that the link between Cumans and Hungarians was more political than ethnic, the followers of Pal's theory, and among them is Martinas, tried to explained that the early Hungarian settlers vanished from Moldavia due to assimilation to the local Vlach (Romanian) population, or fled back to Transylvania integrating in the Hungarian population there. Thus by the 18th century there were no Hungarian residents left in Moldavia (Martinas, 1997, p. 49).

Martinas based his theory on interpreting a series of historical sources, some written even by Hungarian scholars in the late Middle Ages, who confirmed the dramatic situation of the Moldavian Hungarians during the 15th to 18th centuries.

The context these sources were written in, hint at the tense relations between the Hungarian minority and the full fledged Moldavian state[4], pointing mostly at the confessional

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[3] Between 1227 and 1241 a Catholic Bishopric of the Cumans functioned at Milkov, in central Moldavia, under the jurisdiction of the Hungarian Church.

[4] The establishment of the Moldavian principality goes back to 1350, when prince Dragoş founded a voivodat under Hungarian suzerainty east of the Carpathian Mountains, meant to defend the border of the kingdom from the Tartar attacks. It became independent in the 15th century, under the rule of Stefan cel Mare (Steven the Great), and it was dissolved in 1859, when entering a personal union with Walachia to form the Romanian modern state.

controversies between the Orthodox majority, the official religion of the state, and the Catholic minority, most of it Hungarian.

The historical context of the 14th century, led to important changes in the strategy of the Hungarian Kings. As Benda suggested, the settlement of Hungarian colonies in the 13th century shows their obvious military defence role (the Siret and Tatros valley, which represented natural borders against Tartar invasions), (Benda in Dioszegi, 2002, p.13; Năstase, 2003, p. 8). During this interval, the Hungarian population enjoyed plenty political and religious assistance from the Kingdom, which continued during the incipient period of the Moldavian State. Nevertheless, as the establishment of a strong voivodat east of Carpathians made futile the presence of Hungarian colonies in that area, the contact between them and the Kingdom decreased more and more. One of the main causes, as Benda suggests is the catastrophic defeat of the Hungarians at Mohacs in 1526, which practically brought to an end any Hungarian pretences of political domination in central Europe, and decreased dramatically its resources (Benda in Dioszegi, 2002, p. 15).

Coming back to the sources of Martinas' theory, one of the most celebrated books with respect to the history of Moldavian Hungarians in the Middle Ages, is the report of the Franciscan monk Marcus Bandinus, a missionary of the *De propaganda fide* congregation, who sat as bishop at Bacău[5] for four years. During his stay, he wrote a minute report on the state of the Catholic communities in Moldavia at 1646, after visiting all of them, concerning the number of people, the utilities and assistance they enjoyed, the number and quality of the churches, as well as the relations the Hungarian Catholics held with the political administration.

The report presents a dramatic situation of the 37 Hungarian settlements left in Moldavia, gathering around 5000 people, most of whom were lacking a priest of their language for many years in rank, as well as any administrative support from the Hungarian Church they were depending on. This determined a large number of them to become assimilated to the Romanian majority in terms of language and religion.

This state of facts is clearly demonstrated by other documents from the 16th and the 17th centuries, which, besides the natural decaying of the Hungarian communities, stress the pressure put by certain Moldavian princes who forcefully converted them to Orthodoxy (Horvath, 1994, p. 42). The demographic situation is captured statistically by Tanczos, who shows the decreasing number of Catholics in Moldavia, out of who most were Hungarians, to 5

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[5] The bishopric of Bacau served the Roman Catholics of Moldavia from 1590 to 1818. As the contemporary documents prove it, most of the bishops showed little interest in the administrative tasks, leaving vacant the seat for many years. For this reason, the Catholic community was decaying gradually until 1818, when the bishopric was officially closed.

577, as revealed by a Church census from 1646, down to 2 799 (see appendix IV B), as resulting from a Church census from 1694 (Tanczos in Dioszegi, 2002, p.132).

Of course, these figures do not represent an absolute truth, and analysing the context of collecting them one can draw this conclusion. The missionaries who were sent to Moldavia were of foreign origin, most of them coming for the first time in that country. Therefore, they hardly were used to the conditions of travelling and living, being tempted to do their job as quickly as possible, hence superficially. On the other hand, the moment Bandini took his visit (1646) represented the climax of the Thirty Years War, which caused huge damage to the economic and social situation in Moldavia, as troops of different powers were marching unceasingly on its territory, plundering all the resources. The same conditions were common for the entire 17th century, due to the never-ending wars between the Ottoman Turks and the western powers. In such conditions, most of the population fled from the original places for the woods, leaving deserted or barely populated most of the villages and towns. As these hiding places were not accessible for missionaries, they have only recorded the official information that they found in the parishes they had knowledge about. Of course, the same phenomenon was common for the other populations as well, being they majority Romanians, or other minorities.

This decrease in number of Hungarian Catholics must also be regarded in the general context of population decrease due to the above mentioned wars, which induced famine, deportations, and black death, so that the estimated population of Moldavia at 1700 was no more than 230 000 inhabitants (Benda in Dioszegi, 2002, p. 17). Considering that nearly half of this population left their original settlements, a number of 3000 Catholics registered represent a decent percentage which was constant in the population of Moldavia during the Middle Ages. Besides that, an important number of Hungarian Protestants (Calvin and Husites) were still there, but they do not appear in the registers of the Catholic Church at that moment. Later on, due to the victory of Catholics in Transylvania and Hungary, they all converted to Catholic faith, increasing therefore the number of Hungarian Catholics in Moldavia.

These approximate computations prove that the theory of Pal, which claims the extinction of Hungarian Catholics has not a realistic base, nor that of Martinas stating that all Hungarians were assimilated, as long as all the records of the time refer to an overwhelming Hungarian majority among the Catholics of Moldavia.

4.3.2.2 The Age of New Hungarian Settlements in Moldavia

The 18th century was a relatively peaceful period for Moldavia, given the end of wars among the great powers. Starting with 1764, more waves of Hungarian Szekelys migrated across the border from eastern Transylvania, in order to avoid the forced enrolment in the Austrian army, or just because of the economic opportunities Moldavia was offering.

The new Hungarian immigrants settled down mostly in areas less inhabited, making up new small compact communities. Others mixed with the remainders of the Middle Ages Hungarians, or joined villages and towns already populated by Romanians (Tanczos in Dioszegi, 2002, p.121). The main areas they settled in are the Tatros Valley and the Siret Valley, generically called the Western and Central areas populated by Csangoes. Less have chosen the northern part of Moldavia, and this is one of the reasons Catholics of this region have been easily assimilated to Romanian majority. The increasing number of settlers has given a spur to the conservation of Hungarian language among the central and western groups (Tanczos in Dioszegi, 2002, p. 123), also due to the religious assistance they were receiving from the Hungarian clergy in Szekely land.

This process was common until the middle of the 19th century, when a census of the Church showed a number of 52 881 Catholics in Moldavia, out of which 37 825, that is 71, 6% had Hungarian as mother tongue (see appendix IV A). The rest have either been assimilated to Romanians, or had a different origin (there were nearly 2000 Italian workers, for instance).

The end of the 19th century met a Catholic population of around 100 000 people, most of them belonging to what Peter Zöld had called in his report dated in 1790 Csango Hungarians. Therefore, this period can be considered the time when Csangoes have developed into a self-standing minority group living outside Hungarian territory, with particular cultural and linguistic characteristics, but still part of the large Hungarian nation.

The Romanian historiography has interpreted these phenomena differently, and the first author to approach the events was Iosif Petru M. Pal. In his book, he tried to prove that most of the Catholic immigrants from Transylvania were Romanian Catholics, who had been forcefully assimilated by Hungarians, and who fled their original place due to economic and political problems. He uses for this purpose a dubious interpretation of some historical documents, expanding the number of Romanian immigrants from a small group-he mentions two villages established by them- (Pal, 1997, pp.43-50) to a majority, while Tanczos, in his study, refers to nearly 55 main villages where Hungarians settled down, either making up new places, or joining the already existing Romanian communities.

The idea launched by Pal, that the majority of Csangoes coming from Transylvania in the 18th century were Romanians, who had been exposed to Hungarian assimilation, was taken over and developed some decades later by Martinas. The main argument he tries to build is linguistic[6]. He interprets a series of documents that claim the bilingual character of Csangoes, stressing their Romanian origin, as Romanian was their first language, and that the authorities in Transylvania had forcefully imposed Hungarian on them. The claim that after the settlement in Moldavia, the Csangoes were able to return to their customs and language, *recte* Romanian, in a short time proved futile as the documents dated at the end of 19th century demonstrate that most of them had kept the Hungarian language as mother tongue, and they used it in the Church and private life. Romanian was their second language, being used only in relation with the authorities, and mostly by grown up men, who came in contact more often with the state authorities (through school, military service, or trade relations).

The 19th century also meant the age of intense national activity on both sides. On the one hand, Romanian nationalists urged the state authorities to impose schools in Romanian for the Csangoes, as well as religious service (Pozsony in *Din Arini la Săbăoani* Review, p. 36), prohibiting thereby any institutionalised use of the Hungarian language.

A key actor in developing the conflict at that time was the Catholic Church, which were for many centuries the main guard of the Hungarian language, and the denominator of Csangoes' identity. As I mentioned above, in the period before the massive settlement of Hungarian population in Moldavia starting from the middle of the 18th century, the concern of the Hungarian Church decreased due to the diminished number of people, and of its own material capacities. As an aftermath of the establishment of new communities, the Hungarian missionaries intensified their activity.

Even though the number of priests was still insufficient, each community held a cantor, or *deak,* which became a crucial institution for the surviving of the Hungarian identity. The role of cantors was to replace the priest in his duties, holding the Sunday prayers, singings, as well as catechism for children in the native language (interview with 82 year-old man, former mayor of Sascut village). The publishing of a bilingual catechism by the middle of the 19th century represented an official recognition of the importance of the Hungarian language (Pozsony in Dioszegi, 2002, p. 103).

The establishment of a Roman Catholic bishopric in 1884 at Iaşi, as a result of an agreement between the Vatican and Romania, increased the tensions between the two sides. It is worth to mention that this period was the climax of nationalist dispute between Romania and

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[6] Dumitru Martinas was a high school teacher of Romanian language and literature, of Csango origin, and he wrote the book *The Origin of Csangoes from Moldavia* in the 1970s, being published after his death in 1985 by the

Hungary over Transylvania, and the assimilation of Csangoes became of critical importance for the Romanian nationalists. The appointment of an Italian bishop, Nicola Camilli, practically represented a victory in the centuries old dispute between the Italian and Hungarian missionaries over the Catholic community of Moldavia. Given the support of the state and of the Vatican, through its congregation *De propaganda fide*, a strong process of linguistic assimilation started by the end of the 19th century. Soon a seminary school was established where indigenous students were trained in Romanian language exclusively, also being indoctrinated with Romanian nationalism. The next step was to prohibit the use of Hungarian language in the service, in spite of numerous petitions written by community members to the bishop (Pozsony in Dioszegi, 2002, p. 104).

The process continued after World War I, which marked the transfer of sovereignty over Transylvania from the Austrian-Hungarian Empire to Romania, hence the nationalist extremism increased in the whole country. In this period, Iosif Petru M. Pal, with the support of his Franciscan congregation, was active in obtaining the right of Csango Catholics to be treated as Romanians. Some historians consider the compromise he and Bishop Mihai Robu made in the early forties with the Fascist leaders of the country, as a solution to resist deportation or other more severe consequences. Therefore, his book *The Origin of Catholics...* written in 1941 was crucial for the official recognition of the compromise between the Church and the state. This fact is obvious in the letter addressed by Pal on behalf of the Catholic clergy of Moldavia to Ion Antonescu, the Fascist Prime-minister of Romania during World War II, in which he pledges allegiance to the nationalist policy of the regime (*Din Arini la Săbăoani* Review, p.11).

During the war, Romania and Hungary established a diplomatic protocol, which permitted the Csangoes to immigrate to Hungary. The result of this action was quite small, as the Romanian bureaucracy was slow in issuing the papers for those who showed intent to move, and eventually the project was dropped.

4.3.2.3 The Climax of Csangoes' Assimilation During the Communist Regime

After the war, and with the Communist occupation in both Romania and Hungary, the repatriation project re-started timidly, and by 1947, some 400 people managed to move to Hungary (Vincze in Dioszegi, 2002, p.65). Starting with 1947, when the Communists gained complete power in Romania, emigrations were stopped once again.

Nevertheless, the first years of Communism brought a change in the attitude of the state towards the Csangoes. The Romanian Communist Party (RCP) decided to co-operate with

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Communist authorities as a reaction to the studies of Hungarian researchers on Csangoes.

the Hungarian People's Union (MNSZ), which Vincze considers an organisation led by Communists, in the struggle against a common enemy; the Catholic Church of Romania. Due to this co-operation, the Communist authorities recognised the Csango minority as official, organising schools in several Moldavian villages during 1947 and 1953. Vincze considers that this compromise was also part of the Stalinist policy towards minorities, which was applied also in Romania during the first years of Communism (Vincze in Dioszegi, 2002, p. 69), but it ended abruptly after the death of Stalin, when the Hungarian schools were closed. The official reason, as the propaganda pleaded, was that the parents asked for it themselves. This represents the official start of the most dramatic assimilation process any of the minorities in Romania has ever faced.

The state prohibited the use of Hungarian language in any official context, imposing on the other hand compulsory education for all the children in Romanian. Later on, the former enemy, which was the Catholic Church, became an ally, as the mass in Romanian became the only accepted, and the priests started a systematic propaganda based on the Romanian origin theory.

Social changes had a great impact in this period, as massive industrialisation made a large number of Csangoes relocate in cities, leaving their isolated community. In this way, they inevitably became assimilated in such a manner that the second generation were no longer able to speak Hungarian. The same happened with youngsters still living in their native places, but studying or working in large towns, in a Romanian environment.

One of the most successful propaganda instruments acting against these categories was the stigmatisation. During the last two decades of Ceauşescu's rule the use of the term Csango was prohibited, being categorised as such was a serious injury for any person; self-ascription to this category could be considered a crime, which came in the attributions of the *Securitate*, the former secret police.

The academic environment of the age was marked by the publishing of Martinas' book *The Origin of the Csangoes from Moldavia* in 1985, as the authorities felt bound to give an official explanation to the pressure put on them by the Hungarian Government and academics, with respect to the assimilation of Csangoes. The book, which can hardly be considered scientific, was written in the rhetoric-accumulative style, specific to books meant to serve a totalitarian ideology, obsessively repeating the hypothesis, without trying to support it with arguments. The politologist Gabriel Andreescu considered that Martinas' theory was actually launched by the *Securitate* in the early eighties, as part of the nationalist policy practised by the Ceausescu regime against the Hungarian minority in general, and the Csangoes in particular (Andreescu, 2003).

The assimilation policy of the Communist regime was a complete success. The census return of 1992 shows a number of nearly 4000 Hungarians among 240 000 Catholics in Moldavia, in the conditions that the 1859 census, the last one before the assimilation process began showed a Hungarian percentage of 71, 6 out of 52 881 Catholics in Moldavia (see appendix IV A). Since then, all the census returns show a gradual decrease in the number of Hungarians, in spite of the increase of Catholics, up to the present situation of nearly total extinction of the minority.

The assimilation of Csangoes was a historical process covering more that a century, touching also the problem of the historical presence of Hungarians in Moldavia since the early Middle Ages. Given the geographical isolation, and the difficulty of communication with the state and church authorities, Moldavian Hungarians were an easy victim to the tendencies of cultural, religious, and political assimilation the state exercised on them. This became even easier during the 20th century, due to the co-operation of the Catholic Church in the nationalist project, which created a Romanian Catholic Church with the consent of Vatican. The last decades, also known as the age of peoples' democracy, completed the assimilation process, due to the control exercised by the totalitarian regime over all the institutions of the state, and the policy of isolation, which allowed it to ignore the international legislation and the pressure put on by the Hungarian authorities and the human rights activists.

4.4. Reassessing the Csango Identity. Contemporary Trends of the Conflict

The period following the fall of the Communist regime made essential changes in the structure of the Romanian State, in terms of human rights enforcement and societal structure. Since then, the official minorities have increasingly enjoyed a relative extended amount of freedom and protection, also due to the harmonisation of the national legislation to the international rules.

The situation of Csangoes did not change much, however, as they were not perceived as an ethnic minority at official level. In this context, the struggle for the affirmation of their identity started, involving actors ranking from the civil society to political parties, leading to an open conflict with some of the state representatives, mostly those with a nationalist discourse, and with the Catholic Church.

This chapter will include a sectorial analysis of the patterns the conflict has followed, delimiting three main levels of debate. The first presents a ground perspective, that is the expression of identity at personal and group level, as it is perceived by the Csangoes themselves,

including a discussion over the main variables that define their ethnic identity, as well as the hindrances they meet in freely expressing what they feel.

The second level of analysis refers to the institutionalised framework the conflict takes through involvement of civic organisations, state institutions, and the church. This stage will reveal the mechanisms of identity negotiation held by the civil society and the political party of the Hungarian minority with representatives of the state and Catholic Church, in terms of cultural revival and freedom of choice when it comes to self-ascription of identity.

The third level of analysis places the conflict in an international environment, presenting the position and attitude the international society shows towards the status of the Csango minority. This includes the policy of the Vatican, as a supra-national body of the church, and the initiatives of the Council of Europe referring to the preservation of the Csango culture and identity.

4.4.1 The Debate over the Csangoes' Identity. The ground Level

As I have previously concluded, the identity of a person, and through extension, that of an ethnic group, involves a self-ascription process to a set of values, including culture that individuals learn and internalise through categorisation, together with the ascription by others of an ethnic origin, established at the intersection of culturally different groups.

The case of Csangoes of the Moldavia implies certain particularities when integrating the empiric data in the paradigm presented above, due to the assimilation policy they have experienced, which resulted in cultural mutations at the level of both individuals, and extended groups.

4.4.1.1 The Self-Perception of Different Social Categories

The main distinction I managed to make in the contact with Csango subjects was between those who acknowledge their Hungarian origin, and those who declare a Romanian identity. Both cases imply a special concern in analysing their behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes towards certain environments and events. At the same time, different social categories entail certain manifestations that lead to contradictory conclusions regarding the way people perceive themselves.

A first type of differentiation can be perceived between the domestic and public space, or *back stage vs. front state* as Goffman has theorised it (Goffman quoted by Saugestad and Larsen, in Cohen, 1982, p.145). This difference is marked by a behavioural aspect, as well as

a declarative one. The home is the place for most of the Csangoes to practice their language and traditions without any restrictions. This space can be extended to the level of community as well, especially in the case of closed communities, as the villages where all the practices involving communication reveal cultural traits defining Csangoes as an ethnic category.

It was interesting to observe a quantitative shift in what is perceived as the intimate space during the last years, as my respondents described it. If during the years of Communist obstruction, the Hungarian language was spoken exclusively in the family, or in intimate groups escaping this space, nowadays Csangoes feel free to express their culture in public places as well, like in public meetings for instance, in front of the church after the Sunday mass, or even in daily activities in which they are involved (interview with OHCM member; personal observations)

When referring to the Csango culture, I include here the visible traits of culture, like artefacts, but also oral culture. Many specialists say that Csangoes are among the ethnic groups who have most beautifully preserved their ancestral culture in Europe. The folk costume (see appendix V), which of course differs according to regions in respect of details, contains the same basic elements, as in the Balkan area the similarity of folk costumes is a common fact (*Din Arini la Săbăoani* review, 2004). What is special about this in the case of Csangoes, is that in rural areas the population still wears folk costumes as daily routine, especially old women. At special occasions, youngsters also wear it, especially during religious celebrations. This became during the last decades a kind of distinctive sign for the identity of Csangoes, as the majority Romanians gave away their folk costume after the World War II period.

Given the similarity with the Romanian old costumes, as it was confirmed by old documents too (Petras, 2004, p. 111), the present Romanian ethnography tries to prove that the Csango folk art is actually of Romanian origin, based on a comparative study, which reveals many common elements (Ciubotaru, 1998). This is one of the strongest arguments brought in supporting the Romanian origin of Csangoes, fact that also distorted the self-perception of people themselves.

But, if the folk costumes and architecture were interpreted, this was not possible with respect to the oral traditions, like folk songs, dances, and ballads. The ethnographers researching this topic, concluded that the oral Csango culture belongs to one of the oldest Hungarian cultural strata (Domokos, in Dioszegi, 2002, p. 155), as well as the dialect spoken in the central area inhabited by Csangoes.

All this patrimony receives a special value when it comes to represent the Csango identity in the contemporary world. Even though, due to the constant pressure of assimilation most people lost their awareness of these signs that make them distinct about the others, the fact

that the traditions survived in the genuine form represents a strong incentive for defining the Csango identity at present. People are aware that there is something special about their culture, about the way it is manifested, and they know that these things make them different. But given the predominant back-stage character of these manifestations, as it is the case with the use of Hungarian language, they simply are not able give their culture an official status, linking it to their ethnic identity.

Public space remains therefore the territory of contact with the official, such as administration, where written language is required, even though explanations and routine talking is still done in Hungarian. Another taboo is the Church space, the contact with the clergy members or other officials, given the rejection attitude the Church shows towards Csangoes' cultural affirmation.

The main reason for this shift is the liberation from the social stigma that the official discourse had put on them, especially during the Communist regime, as I have shown in the previous chapters. The decrease of the inferiority sentiment has brought with it an increase of the front stage cultural manifestations, which, following Barth's argument, creates the incentives for the conscientisation of ethnic identity at the contact with the culture of the majority, through understanding and marking the cultural boundary established at that contact.

Yet, the front stage attitude is manifested differently on criteria of age and social geography. In most of the cases I encountered, a larger contact with the authorities and the official culture affected the behaviour of people in the intimate space. Most exposed to such situations are children, who by attending school in Romanian still perceive the burden of the unofficial culture they receive at home, which comes into contradiction with the discourse and curricula addressed to them. Therefore, it is very likely to meet situations when parents would speak to their children in Hungarian at home, but receive answers in Romanian, due to the incapacity of speaking, or simply because of refusal to use the language of the parents. On the other hand, I met situations in which children acknowledge the value of the Hungarian language, being willing to use it, in spite of stigmatisation coming from their friends or teachers (interview with two 14 year-old children from the Galbeni village). Many parents, and especially grandparents are willing to teach them Hungarian under the utilitarian pretext of the advantage a second language can offer, especially as 'it is not forbidden anymore', as many claimed.

Besides this, a specific situation concerning the young generation refers to the impact modernisation has on the formation of their personal set of values. As the Csango culture is basically a past oriented oral culture, the appetite of youngsters to assimilate it is in many cases low, being replaced by modern and post-modern views and values manifested in the television and consumerism culture (interview with Benchea Pavel, president of DUHR, Bacău branch).

The same phenomenon is common among the young generation of workers who have a job outside the country, and the statistics reveal an ever-increasing number for this category. The trend of de-culturation is mostly high among the second generation, that is the children of the families who chose to live abroad for a period of time, as they usually take education in the language of the respective country, and use Romanian at home.

A positive aspect regarding the preservation of Csango identity can be noticed among older people, and the reasons for this state of facts are various. First of all, most of the generations coming from before World War II, have enjoyed contact with the genuine Csango culture in their early childhood, escaping the education imposed in schools, which was done in Romanian. Even when they followed this form of education, they perceived it as an alien implant, which lost its effect after graduation of four or seven compulsory school years.

In correlation with education comes the experience of a new social environment for those who got a job in industrial plants. Here a distinction is made between those who chose to live permanently in cities, and those who used to work in the city, but continued to live in their original villages. The impact of assimilation had different intensity upon these two categories; the town settlers, usually lived in a majority Romanian environment, which was crucial for the cultural formation of the young generations who practically kept from the identity of their parents or grandparents only the Catholic religion. In their case, the impact of stigmatisation was extremely high, in the conditions that allegiance to the Hungarian minority could result in exclusion from certain jobs or facilities. On the other hand, those who continued to live in their villages kept a clear distinction between front stage and back stage behaviour, but never gave away their identity traits.

Besides the impact of education and social environment, of special interest for the urban category are the mixed marriages a large number of Csangoes entered, in which the children resulted could not learn the Hungarian language as the parents used only Romanian in the family. Nevertheless, I also met cases when the parent of Csango origin did not deny his or her allegiance, but neither managed to pass on to the children the language or the sense of Csango belongingness (interview with two Csango women from Oneşti, engaged in mixed marriages).

These categories resulting from the process of modernisation had always problems of identity, as wherever they went they had to justify the cultural difference they entailed, especially in the period of Communist rule, when the Csango subject used to be a taboo. Therefore, even though many more than the official statistics show have preserved their cultural heritage, they are not aware of the ethnic difference between them and the rest, therefore they do not officially ascribe themselves as belonging to the Csango minority. It is worth to mention that

a large majority subscribes to this pattern, hence the explanation of the census' turnouts, which have been constantly used by the Romanian nationalists as an argument to prove that the Csango ethnic minority does not exist.

Gender is another variable, which determines differentiation in the preservation of identity, and this concerns especially the second and the third generations. As women were marginally involved in industrial work, most of them had rare contacts with the urban environment, and this fact allowed them to be less exposed to the assimilation process. This explains certain behavioural patterns nowadays, which prove that women are more likely to be involved in activities of identity re-affirmation, mostly when it comes to requests of religious service and education for children in Hungarian.

4.4.1.2. Choosing an Identity as a Conscious Problem

In modern societies identity becomes stratified, implying several segments, which include gender, social class, age, religion, and ethnicity. Most of the authors acknowledge that the criterion of ascription is the personal allegiance of the individual to a group he or she finds corresponding to expectations and personal interests.

All the sides in the case of Csangoes advocate this perspective, at the same time stressing the importance of conscience in the process of choosing an identity with respect to ethnic affiliation. Nevertheless, this attitude subscribing to the post-modern model of ethnicity, implies a series of challenges given the distorted self-perception people have about themselves, as well as the pressure put on them by the Church authorities under the patronage of the Romanian nationalists.

I met several cases when people were able to express openly their ethnic affiliation, either to the Romanian or Hungarian side, and this was common especially for those who are implied at organisational level in political or social activities. The interesting part comes when checking the opinion of common people with respect to their ethnic allegiance, as most of the answers one can meet are vague or contradictory.

It is for sure that Csango people have a perception of differentiation between them and the Romanian majority, which they justify in several ways. The explanation most often encountered contains the religious affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church, especially in the case of urban, male, and young groups, as shown in the previous chapter. Yet, this I consider a superficial and hasty explanation, as after further discussion I could find that most of the respondents acknowledge ethnic traces as well, either in their own case, or referring to their parents or grandparents. This lack of awareness can be explained in different ways depending on

the social inclusion of persons. Older people usually invoke the stigma and the ascription that has been put on them during the decades of strong assimilation, which made them believe about themselves as true Romanians, even though 'there is something strange about us' (interview with a 83 year-old Csango man from Oituz village), given the use of Hungarian language in back stage situations and the affiliation to a religious group different from that of the majority.

In the case of young generations the reasons invoked refer to the categorisation process they have experienced especially in the official environment, that is school and church community, but also in the family, as the parents themselves agreed to the construction of a Romanian identity, for utilitarian reasons; the children need a better chance of integration, they say, free of the frictions they themselves have experienced.

This type of situation is extremely common in urban locations, and nearly total in the cases of mixed marriages, where people gave away their Csango identity due to the pressure the environment put on them.

Geographical isolation functioned also in the case of rural communities, especially those belonging to the Northern group (Neamţ, Iaşi, and Suceava counties - see appendix II), which have been less under the impact of the late immigration waves from Transylvania which ended in the 19th century. Cultural traces can still be found in this area, but the level of self-ascription to Csango identity is lower than in other regions. If, for instance, in interviewing people from the Southern group or the Tatros valley, it was a common thing to hear from people the syntagm 'there is something different about us, but we are not like the true Hungarians in Transylvania' (interview with a Csango woman from Oituz village), people from the Northern group would often mention that they are different to the Csangoes from Siret and Tatros valleys, invoking for this the high percentage of people who no longer speak any Hungarian dialect.

In what concerns the collective narratives, most of the people do not hold any information or interest about their descent. The most common explanation when asked about their cultural heritage refers to a short line descent; this is what they learned from their parents, or this used to be common in the area they live, for a long time. Referring to the ancestral roots of their kin, some people invoke the settlement of the Huns in the Middle Ages who *csangaltok,* which means migrated, changed their original place ending up in Moldavia (interview with middle aged Csango man from Oituz village). Other stories refer to the 18th century migration from Transylvania, and many of the elder link this to the tradition of the Pentecost pilgrimage that Csangoes have done for centuries to the Şumuleu Ciuc monastery, which was for a long period the administrative centre of the Moldavian Catholic Church.

This practically confirms parts of the historical theories on the origin of Csangoes in Moldavia supported by the Hungarian scientists. On the other hand, a belief in a Romanian

origin from Transylvania was held only on the basis of the theory developed by Martinas in the late decades of Communist rule, no stories or oral references were made about such a descent.

In relation to the collective narratives, a rich ethnographic collection of ballads, stories and folk songs could be picked up by researchers, some referring to the medieval king Istvan (Steven) or other legendary leaders of Hungarian origin, others evoking the resistance of the Seklers in Transylvania against the Austrian oppression.[7]

Even though such a cultural heritage exists, the same mass phenomenon can be encountered in the case of the Hungarian language use, that is the very low degree of internalisation and adherence to what they are meant to transmit – the awareness of a different ethnic origin. This attitude is common even in environments less influenced by modernity or imposed assimilation, where people practise in a high degree the oral culture of the ancestors in Hungarian language, but still lack the civic conscience of belonging to a group rallying on ethnic considerations, or as Barth put it, to make sense of the existence of an ethnic boundary.

This situation apparently justifies the Romanian nationalist position, which tends to include the Csango group in the Romanian nation on the basis of self-ascription. Yet, this standpoint must be cautiously regarded, in the light of the assertions previously analysed. Even though the large majority of Csangoes declare themselves Romanian at census, one must bear in mind the fact that they do not do it because of a real conviction of their allegiance. Most of them, except certain social categories that responded positively to the assimilation process, are conscious about a cultural difference, but they just declare themselves Romanians because 'this is normal, as long as we live in Romania' (interview with a 82 year-old man, former mayor of Sascut village), fact which reveals the low civic awareness of the population. It is also necessary to mention that this attitude did not come naturally, as long as the 19th century reports confirmed over 70% Hungarian ethnics among the Moldavian Catholics, while the present censuses hardly indicate 4%, but it is the result of categorisation process coming from the state and church authorities during the last decades.

The state argues that the justification of this attitude finds theoretical fundament in the canonical model of the nation, which advocates the unity of the people given by ethnic homogenisation, against cultural and ethnic diversity, which pose a threat to the integrity of the state (Andreescu, 2004, p. 53).

This is practically the main incentive for Csangoes to lack awareness of a culture they hold and practice, but they are never able to affirm it officially. As many researchers noticed, and they themselves confirm it, Csangoes are obedient people, good citizens, with

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[7] Among the most representative scientists who researched the Csango traditions are Tanczos Vilmos, Kallos Zoltan, Baka Andras, Benedek H. Erika, Poszony Ferenc.

respect for law and especially for their Catholic belief. Such a psychological profile explains the facile duty the state together with the church had to carry out in the process of assimilation of Csangoes. The contradiction between the religious faith and the ethnic affiliation has created personal dramas for most of the people, in the sense that being rejected by the religious community for asserting Hungarian allegiance, made them rather decline the latter, in order to be able to hold good terms with the priest and the other peers. There are lots of cases I encountered when deeply religious persons complained of the refusal of spiritual assistance because of their activity in the Csango organisations[8]. Therefore, it is not easy to understand why common people usually avoid making public their beliefs regarding the ethnic origin, keeping the specific cultural practices only for the intimate space of the family.

The obvious conclusion nowadays is that the low degree of awareness among the Csango community with respect to their ethnic background, as well as about their civic rights, is a consequence of the state and church apparatus continuing a strict process of assimilation through de-culturation and ethnic categorisation. These phenomena are present in spite of a rich cultural heritage that represent a solid ground for the persistence of the Csango identity, creating the incentives for a long standing conflict both at personal level, for those who feel as a pressure the insecurity of a sound allegiance, and at group level, among the representatives of the Csango civil society and the state and church authorities for official recognition of the group as an ethnic minority.

4.4.2 The Impact of the Institutional Activity on the Csangoes' Identity

This second level of analysis implies the activity of the state, church, and civil society in the shaping of the ethnic identity of Csangoes. As references to the role of the state have been present in more chapters of this paper, the focus here will be on the dispute between the church supported by a series of civic organisations, on the one hand, and the NGOs and political representatives of the Hungarian side from within the Csango group.

4.4.2.1 The Activity of the Main Civic Organisations, Political Parties, and the Church

The most important actor in the field of civil society is the *Organisation of Csango Hungarians from Moldavia*, which was active all through the period after 1990. The main task

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[8] A member of OHCM related me how the parishioner of her village denied her the right to be godmother of a child due to her position in the organisation.

this NGO asserts is the conservation of the cultural patrimony of the Csango minority, implying language, culture, and the awareness of the ethnic allegiance (www.csango.ro/statutes.htm).

The main programs they have developed refer to the introduction of mother tongue study in the schools where Csango students are present, organising folk festivals, and supporting cultural activities related to the cultural traditions. Given the support of the Hungarian Government and a series of foundations, OCHM has managed to achieve relative success, as the number of schools where Hungarian is taught as native language has grown every year, from two groups in the beginning, up to 34 groups in 11 villages at present, gathering over 700 students (interview with Roca Silvia, president of OCHM).

It is interesting to notice that the education program was applied only in the rural environment, due to the homogeneity of the communities, as well as will expressed by the parents in numerous petitions towards the county Education Inspectorate.

Even though the legal context allowed such education activities, the local authorities resisted for a long time the request raised by the parents with the support of OCHM, until a jury pronounced their legitimate character after a trial that lasted for a couple of years.

An event of special significance took place in May 2005, when a festivity marked the establishment of a future Hungarian college, the first to be built in Moldavia, where Csango youngsters will have the opportunity to follow high school in their native language. The symbolism of this event refers to the presence of political county leaders, together with representatives of the Hungarian and Romanian governments and officials of the Church. This was interpreted in many milieus as one of the first steps towards the official recognition of the Csango minority, as part of an inevitable process. This is how Vladimir Petercă, a Catholic priest and theology professor described the events:

There was a series of declarations of intention, held in an official context, where was expressed the good will of constructing something... We have to try to accept what is happening nowadays world wide, where there is high regard for pluriculturality. We have to look towards the future, and not to make our history by looking towards the past. The future includes a united Europe, who recognises minorities and encourages the preservation of their cultural heritage, but in our case, things have to be properly assessed, and a wise path should be followed. (interview with Pr. Prof. Vladimir Petercă)

Still, most of the political and church officials show high reticence in joining the cultural activities organised by OCHM. As the leaders of the organisation assert, such activities

are meant to have a psychological impact upon the people, mirroring their cultural background, making them aware of what they possess, and also helping them to go beyond the boundaries from back stage manifestation in the realm of the official (interview with OCHM member). Nevertheless, this underground character cannot be surpassed but by the participation of officials, like the mayor or the priest, a fact that confers a legitimate character for the manifestations themselves, as well as for their identity claims.

In what concerns the doctrine of the OCHM, its members support the idea of free self-ascription to the Csango identity for the members of the community, free of any pressure. At the same time, they insist on preserving the values of belonging to the local community and the Romanian State insisting on a highly civic behaviour of all the Csangoes, and the rejection of irredentism or any other extremist behaviour (interview with OCHM member).

In spite of their efforts to keep the activity of the organisation within the legal frames, the OCHM are in many places perceived with reticence even by Csangoes themselves. This has been caused by the discreditation campaign carried out in the media and directly by the church officials, both having strong influence on the public opinion.

The main actor supporting the Romanian origin of Csangoes is the Church, which basically continues a policy, which became official at the end of the 19th century, after the establishment of the bishopric of Moldavia in Iaşi. As the catholic Church policy at that time included the establishment of national Churches, plan which coincided with the conditions posed by the national state for its continuity in Romania (Pozsony in Dioszegi, 2002, p 103), a systematic campaign of assimilation started being carried out by the two agents in order to homogenise the Catholic population of Moldavia, including the Hungarians who represented the majority.

The attitude of the church proved to be extremely effective, together with the education system, as it touches both to the cultural and spiritual life of the community. As previously shown, many people perceived the contradiction established between the church directives and their own cultural values, as a deep psychological conflict with equivocal outcome. Practically, the conscience of these people has been torn apart between the deep religious faith, which came along with the official designation of their Romanian origin doubled by the specific cultural activities carried out in the Romanian tradition, and the identity inherited from their ancestors, which was preserved in the intimate space under the form of oral culture. The church leaders have used this state of mind as a weapon against the activities carried out by the supporters of OHCM, inexorably dividing the community into two opposing sides. This is a strange phenomenon, maybe a trap of its own that the church has fallen into, given the explicit will expressed by all the clergy members I encountered, which refer to keeping the community

united (interviews with priests from Oneşti and Bacău; Gherghel, 1999, p. 4). This fear of the church, is a consequence of the support given by priests belonging to the Hungarian Bishopric of Alba Iulia, in Transylvania, to the OCHM activities, which was interpreted as a sign that once the Csango minority was made official in Moldavia, they would be willing to be transferred under the jurisdiction of the Alba Iulia bishop, resulting this way two catholic communities in Moldavia, one Romanian, and one Hungarian. For this reason, all the petitions of service in Hungarian have been rejected violently by the Iaşi bishopric, invoking the reason of fake signatures (interview with OCHM member), and condemning the pressure put by the alleged Hungarian extremists on the Csango population to ask something against their will.

Under these conditions, the church has orchestrated a constant demonisation campaign against the OCHM and other organisations, meant to create the perception among the masses that the Hungarians try to abolish the church, chasing the Romanian priests. This caused high tensions and even violent clashes in many villages, as common people show a tendency to uncritically believe what the priest tells them (interview with Csango folk dance instructor from Fundu Răcăciuni).

Yet, at official level, these events have been kept marginal, as the church officials do not want to create a scandalous image about them and about the community. Actually, they do not even recognise the Csango organisations as official, refusing any rounds of discussion or other initiatives coming from them. On the other hand, the media campaign carried out both at local and national level, with the support of right extremist journals and magazines, tries hard to create a demonised image of the Csango activists, categorising them as traitors and country sellers, denying by all means any public expression of the Csango Hungarian identity or activities carried out for that. Here is a sample of the numerous articles published in the local or central media, meant to discredit the education activity initiated by the OCHM:

In the villages Pustiana and Cleja from Bacau county a parallel education system was established in Hungarian...without authorisation from the Education Inspectorate ... The sponsor of this education system is a dubious personage, Attila Hegeli, the illegal schools functioning under the cover of the two NGOs (i.e. OCHM and Siret Foundation). Romanians were forcefully educated in Hungary, and now they teach Romanian children to serve the Hungarian ideals. (Curentul, The 30th of November, 2001)

The official discourse of the church asserts a firm Romanian origin of the Csangoes, as it was theorised by Dumitru Martinas in his book, and it wants to implement in the public

opinion the idea that Csangoes represent a religious minority with no ethnic variable implied (Gherghel, 1999, p.3; interview with the president of Dumitru Martinas Organisation). This type of discourse was expressed in most of the meetings I had with priests, especially in communities where the degree of tension is low, that is mostly in urban locations (interviews with priests from Bacau and Onesti). In villages, on the other hand, where more or less violent clashes took place, I have encountered different attitudes, mostly reticence or silence.

Village priests were mostly biased towards refusing to communicate, some trying to avoid contact with strangers they did not know what side represent, others simply because of fear. The latter case can be interpreted as a special type of avoidance, especially as it was the case of a priest who previously used to be implied in educational activities of Csango children, a fact which caused him repercussions from his superiors[9]. This example, and it is not single, shows that even inside the clergy there is a tendency towards openness with respect to the Csango issue, but due to the strict hierarchy established in the Catholic church, the priests have to avoid any implication in the activities of Csango organisations, or even more, express the official position of the church in any required circumstances.

During the last years, signs of openness have been noticed at official level, as well as among the church leaders. A progressive faction, under the influence of the European integration trend thrilling all the Romanian society, and which invokes the recommendations of the Vatican II Council[10], supports an approach based on dialogue and tolerance, in order to achieve the best for the community. In what concerns the means for doing that, they emphasise the right of people themselves to freely ascribe to what culture they want to practice, including here the religious manifestations. At the organisational level, this perspective implies independence for the church of Moldavia in deciding matters concerning its members, without the implication of the Hungarian church, either from Transylvania or from Hungary (interview with Pr. Prof. Vladimir Petercă).

Nevertheless, this type of attitude can be considered marginal, as so far it was not made public but in academic milieus, but it represents the incentives of a resolution in the intractable conflict on Csangoes identity, as the lack of communication has blocked for years any alternative for a positive transformation.

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[9] This priest first gladly accepted to meet me, but afterwards he changed his mind claiming that he did not understand well the topic. When explaining it again, he said he had nothing to declare about it, as there were already too many problems. Later on, I learned from other informants that he was indeed persecuted by the church superiors for his previous activity. Now he is a parishioner in the only village of Moldavia where none of the Catholics is Hungarian Csango.

[10] In the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes,* referring to the culture in the contemporary world, it is stated that the Catholic Church encourages cultural plurality, and supports the promoting of cultural rights of all human communities.

This state of affairs is anyhow still encouraged by the radical part of the clergy, which has supported the establishment of the *Dumitru Martinas* organisation, meant to represent the interests of the Roman-Catholics of Moldavia, as a religious minority of Romanian ethnic allegiance. The goal of this organisation is to promote the authentic Csango culture as part of the Romanian patrimony, through publishing a series of ethnographic studies that try to prove similarities of the Csango folk traditions to those of the Romanians. The official status of *Dumitru Martinas* organisation practically includes all the Catholics of Moldavia in the Romanian nation, on the basis of Martinas' theory, which states that all Csangoes have Romanian origin, but a Hungarization process has been enforced on them while still in Transylvania, and this explains the marginal use of Hungarian language and the Catholic faith nowadays (Martinas, 1997, pp.29-31).

Nevertheless, today most of the academics, both Romanians and Hungarians reject this theory as being fictive an politically biased, but it still stirs up the nationalist feeling of the right extremists, and also inducing most of the less cultivated people, as it is part of the doctrine the church spreads among the masses with respect to the origin of the Csangoes.

At present, *Dumitru Martinas* has partly lost the support of the church authorities, due to the political implication of the organisation's president, who ran for the elections in 2004 on behalf of the Catholic community of Moldavia, but mostly because of his sympathy for the extremist parties[11].

In what concerns the political support the OCHM receives, it comes mostly from the *Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania,* a party that represents in the Parliament the interests of the Hungarian minority, and which has joined a Governmental coalition for the last 10 years. In 2004, a branch of this party was established in Moldavia as well, as a result of the constant requests coming from local community members. Yet, the expectation of a massive support is unrealistic in the present conditions when the self-conscience of Csangoes about their ethnic identity is low. Therefore, the main program of the DUHR branch in Moldavia includes the creation of a proper social environment for the affirmation of the Csango identity in accordance with their cultural and historical traditions.

This level of analysis describes a struggle on the identity of Csangoes carried out by the elite, which represents extremely important social strata in the process of defining it, and ascribing a certain direction for common people. Even though soon after 1990, the establishment of organisations claiming a reassessment of the Csango identity looked like an exotic presence, during the last years their activity has started having more impact on the public opinion. The

resistance of the church, backed up by extremist organisations and political parties led to the escalation of a conflict which sometimes turned violent, but which at present seems to find a way out due to timid openness towards dialogue and conciliation.

4.4.3 The Inter-state Level

This level of analysis refers to the relations established between two main categories of actors: the Romanian state, on the one hand and the European bodies and Hungary on the other hand, and the national church and Vatican.

The first time the Council of Europe responded the requests of OCHM, which complained about the infringement of minority rights by the Romanian State was in 2001, when a commission led by the European deputy Tytti Isohookana Asumna started a research campaign in the Csango area. The result was Recommendation 1521, which encouraged the Romanian state to secure cultural rights for the Csango minority, education in mother tongue, respect for the minority members, and economic development opportunities (Recommendation 1521, 2001).

The impact of this document was quite unexpected, as it took the Romanian State by surprise. Therefore, a strong media campaign tried to distort the results of the field research, presenting it as a success of the supporters of the Romanian origin of Csangoes (Formula As, no. 715), or displaying violent attitude towards the Council of Europe and its reporter. Nevertheless, at official level, Romania gave a diplomatic answer, meant to keep the positive relations with the European bodies, in which it engaged to respond the request of the recommendation, after a scientific commission will have assessed the present situation in territory lived by Csangoes (www.mae.ro/index.php?unde=doc&id=21933).

Following the recommendation, which was issued in November 2001, the state authorities became more responsive to the requests of the Csango representatives, also due to the presence of DUHR in the government coalition. This positive attitude counted in the establishment of mother tongue classes in many locations (see subchapter 4.4.2.1), as well as the timid involvement of local authorities in the cultural activities of the Csango organisations.

In what concerns the public conscience of Csangoes, the recommendation did not have much impact, due to the media campaign as mentioned above. The church also displayed an attitude meant to distort the content of the text, re-affirming its official attitude against the ethnic character of the Csango minority. In a response that the bishop of Iaşi, Petru Gherghel wrote to

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[11] During the interview, the president of *Dumitru Martinas* was extremely critical towards all the political parties, especially those who showed sympathy for the Csango minority, praising in his discourse the *Greater Romania Party*, well known for its extremist views, who also supports the organisation.

the Council of Europe, before the recommendation was issued[12], he underlined the pure religious character of the Csango minority. He supported the futility of introduction of Hungarian language in church service, as 'all the faithful understand and speak Romanian, and it would be unjust to force them to declare themselves Hungarians, and make them adopt a language they do not understand' (Gherghel, 1999).

The results of the research contradicted him, however, recording a number of nearly 70 000 Hungarian speakers, and the existence of a specific, authentic culture on the verge of being extinct.

If the side supporting Romanian allegiance was extremely critical to the adoption of the recommendation, the OCHM and its supporters were partly satisfied with it. The positive aspect, as they assert, refers to the implication of the state authorities that became more sensitive towards the Csango issue, recognising some cultural rights and offering logistic support to the organisations defending the Csangoes' rights. On the other hand, they underlined the weak character of the recommendation, which does not have law power, therefore leaving its implementation at the will of the Romanian authorities. In what concerns the content, the recommendation does not specify the clear Hungarian allegiance of Csangoes, but rather perceives it as a self-standing minority, speaking an old Hungarian dialect (interview with Roca Silvia, president of the OCHM).

In relation with the attitude of the Vatican, the Recommendation 1521 had a positive impact. The official review of the Holly See, *Culture e fede* (Cultures and Beliefs) published an article, based on the text of the recommendation, which recognises the value of the Csango culture, and its importance for the European identity (*Din Arini la Sabaoani* review, 2004). This attitude was confirmed by the ambassador of the Vatican in Bucharest, who received a delegation of the OCHM, even though he did not confirm a firm support in the issue of religious service in Hungarian. This reticent attitude of the Vatican can be considered normal until the Romanian State takes a decision with respect to the recognition of the Csangoes as ethnic minority. Therefore, the Holly See officially perceives this issue as an internal problem of the state, and of the Romanian Catholic Church as well. Yet, the recognition of the Recommendation 1521 can be interpreted as a sign of openness, which contrasts the attitude displayed during the last two centuries, as I showed in subchapter 4.3.2.2.

In what concerns the relations between Romania and Hungary, it is necessary to mention that the Csango issue represents a part of the historic political dispute that marked the diplomatic relations between the two states.

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[12] This letter was sent soon after the investigations of the Council of Europe started, in 1999.

The Romanian historiography constructed a centuries lasting conflict between the two nations, based on the inclusion of Transylvania, a province with majority Romanian population, in the Hungarian kingdom since its foundation in the early Middle Ages, until 1918. Since that year, the revisionist project of Hungarian nationalists has created a latent conflict between the two states, or, at least this is what the Romanian propaganda advocated. This attitude is meant to increase the nationalist feeling of the population, following the typical discourse of the *nationalism towards the outside* theory, which I developed in subchapter 3.2.3.2. Such discourse has had great impact on the Romanian public opinion, as common people nowadays still perceive Hungary as a threat to the unity and integrity of the state, in spite of the political agreements singed by the governments.

In this context, it is easy to understand that the Csango minority represents an important stake at political level for both states, due especially to the geographic location. If the presence of 1 500 000 Hungarians in Transylvania is not perceived as a peculiarity, nearly a quarter of a million Hungarians in Moldavia represent a dangerous implant of the *enemy* in a historical province which represents the cradle of the Romanian state. For this reason, the geographic location represented both an inconvenient for Romanian nationalists, but, on the other hand, it was an advantage, as the weak contact with the consistent Hungarian group of Transylvania created the incentives for a facile assimilation.

The integration of Csangoes in the Hungarian minority also may create an electoral dis-balance in the distribution of MPs at national level. If Csangoes support the Democrat Union of Hungarians from Romania, this party would obtain a stronger support in the national Parliament, which parts of the Romanian political class perceives as a serious threat.

At present, given the context of the European integration of both states the legal framework of the Hungarian minority in Romania was established through bilateral agreements (Broşură informativă (Informative brochure), 2002, p. 22), which theoretically apply for Csangoes as well. A real enforcement of this accord depends on the disposition of Csangoes to ascribe to the Hungarian allegiance, a process which is complicated by the pressure put on them, both in past and in present, by the conservative position the church and certain state officials still display.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The dispute over the identity of Csangoes proves to be resistant to resolution as long as the two sides display antagonistic views, which are deeply rooted in the conscience of people. The fact that influent groups nurture these beliefs, such as the Catholic Church and Romanian nationalists, on the one hand, and the civil society supported by the European bodies and the Hungarian State on the other, can perpetuate this state of facts for an extremely long time. This is caused by the fact that dialog and negotiation are not included in the strategy of the radical Romanian nationalists, as for them a change in the actual *status quo* can equate with the exclusion from privileges and even extinction as social actors.

For these reasons, the conservative side struggles to carry on the dispute, as they find themselves in a comfortable position. The achievements of the assimilation process represent a guarantee for the success of their purpose. Given the nowadays situation, when the Csango culture is nearly extinct, buying time represents a crucial strategy. Most of those who still speak the Hungarian dialect, and preserve the genuine cultural traits belong to the old generation, which proved unable to pass on that heritage to posterity.

The young generations have only preserved the Catholic faith, which has been throughout the centuries one of the two main pillars of the Csango identity, together with the Hungarian language. Nevertheless, the religious allegiance has been confiscated through the compromise the church made with the state, which practically imposed this condition as an alternative to the survival of the community. The price the Csangoes had to pay for their faith was the extinction of the cultural heritage, together with the awareness of a specific ethnic identity. The events that marked the years of World War II, which led to the creation of Pal's theory about the Romanian origin, reveal the type of pressure the state put on the Csangoes: the state could not tolerate a consistent Hungarian minority in Moldavia, therefore they had to choose between becoming Romanians, and being extinct. And as they could not be considered good Romanians by both being Catholics, and speaking a Hungarian dialect, one of the two had to be dropped.

The historical context proved to be influential in taking the decision. During the war, the tensions between Romania and Hungary reached an extremely high scale, due to the Hungarian re-occupation of Transylvania, which lasted for three years. Therefore, the Romanian authorities considered that the presence of Hungarian ethnics on the territory of Moldavia was an

extremely serious threat to the unity of the state, and accelerated the assimilation process. As the Catholic Church struggled for its survival, it immediately became an ally of the state, engaging all its influence in the process of reconstructing the Csangoes' identity.

At present, the political situation of Romania requires a revision of the Csango identity issue, given the integration in the European bodies, and the harmonisation of the legislation to the international one. This implies a shift in the attitude towards ethnic minorities, implicitly the recognition of Csangoes as an ethnic group, part of the Hungarian minority. At theoretical level, this can be translated as the adoption of a post-modern perspective with respect to the establishment of identity, based on self-ascription of the people, in accordance with their feeling of belonging to a certain culture.

Reconsidering what professor Vladimir Petercă asserted with respect to the establishment of the Csangoes' identity, the people themselves must be the ones to decide upon their ethnic allegiance in the future. This is a moral duty that they themselves must be aware of, as well as the political authorities in the process of taking a decision with respect to the future of this, or any other minority.

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APPENDIX 1

A. Interview guide used for the Csango people:

1. Information about the interview:

- Presentation of myself and of the investigation topic.
- Explain to informants what I expected from them, and what I will use for the information they would provide.
- Asking permission of recording the discussion.
- Asking if they wanted or not their name to be published, or preferred anonymity.

2. Information about the informant:

- Sex, age, social appartenence (urban/rural), status (married with a Csango/mixed marriage).
- Knowledge and usage of Hungarian language. When and where?
- Self-ascription to the Romanian majority or Csango-Hungarian minority.
- Degree of involvement in the struggle for identity recognition of Csangoes.

3. Questions related to the oral history, folklore, and collective narratives:

- Do you have any knowledge about the origins of Catholics/Csangoes in Moldavia?
- What have you heard about ethnic origins from the elder in your family/village?
- How did you learn to speak Hungarian/have you ever spoken Hungarian? What about your ancestors?
- Did the people in the community speak Hungarian before? Do they still speak today?
- Do youngsters speak Hungarian? What is their attitude towards the use of the language? What about learning Hungarian at school?
- Which are the main folk traditions preserved in your area? Are they Hungarian or Romanian?
- Is it common that people practise Hungarian songs, dances, and ballads? If they do, is it part of organised festivals, or during the parties and daily activities?

4. Questions related to the self-perception of people with respect to the ethnic allegiance:

- Do you consider that as long as you speak Hungarian as mother tongue you belong to a different ethnic group?
- If you consider yourself Romanian, how comes that you speak Hungarian at home?
- Do you perceive yourself different from the others as a Catholic?
- Do you mind if others call you Hungarian or Csango?

B. Interview guide used for the civil society activists:

1. Information about the interview:

- Presentation of myself and of the investigation topic.

- Explain to informants what I expected from them, and what I will use for the information they would provide.

- Asking permission of recording the discussion.

- Asking if they wanted or not their name to be published, or preferred anonymity.

- Recording the name and the position of the informant.

- When and why they became involved in the civil society activity.

2. Questions related to the activity of the organisation:

- Which are the main projects they carried out in the past? At present?

- How people respond to their initiatives? Are they successful?

- How do people from the Csango community perceive them and their activity? What about Romanians?

- Which are the relations with the state and Catholic Church officials?

- How does the media present their activity? What is the impact of the media on the self-perception of Csangoes? On the relations with the Romanians? With the officials?

- Do they have contacts with other civil society organisations dealing with the Csango issue? Which side do these support?

- Do they get any support from the state officials?

- What relations do they have with the political parties? Which of these support them, and which are against them?

C. Interview guide used with the church representatives:

1. Information about the interview:

- Presentation of myself and of the investigation topic.

- Explain to informants what I expected from them, and what I will use for the information they would provide.[13]

- Asking permission of recording the discussion.

- Asking if they wanted or not their name to be published, or preferred anonymity.

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[13] I must mention that after the first attempt to interview a priest, I had to change my discourse with respect to the presentation of the topic and the research goals. As the most of the priests were reticent, or simply refused to approach the Csango issue, I had to ask them questions related to the Catholic community, and introduce in this context side questions referring the ethnic character of the Csango group.

2. Questions related to the Catholic community life:

- How large is the community?

- Are people attending church services?

- Do the church officials consider that the Csango issue implies an ethnic variable?

*3. Questions related to the Csango identity dispute*

- What is the church position with respect to the requests of some of the Csangoes to have religious assistance in Hungarian?

- Does the church consider that Csangoes have the right to decide upon their identity allegiance?

- Does the church support the maintenance of the Csango cultural heritage?

- How do they perceive the Csango culture? Is it predominant Hungarian, Romanian, or is it an original culture?

- Which is the official position of the Vatican regarding the Csangoes' struggle for cultural rights?

APPENDIX   II

APPENDIX III

Map of the area inhabited by Csangoes (www.ceangai.ro)
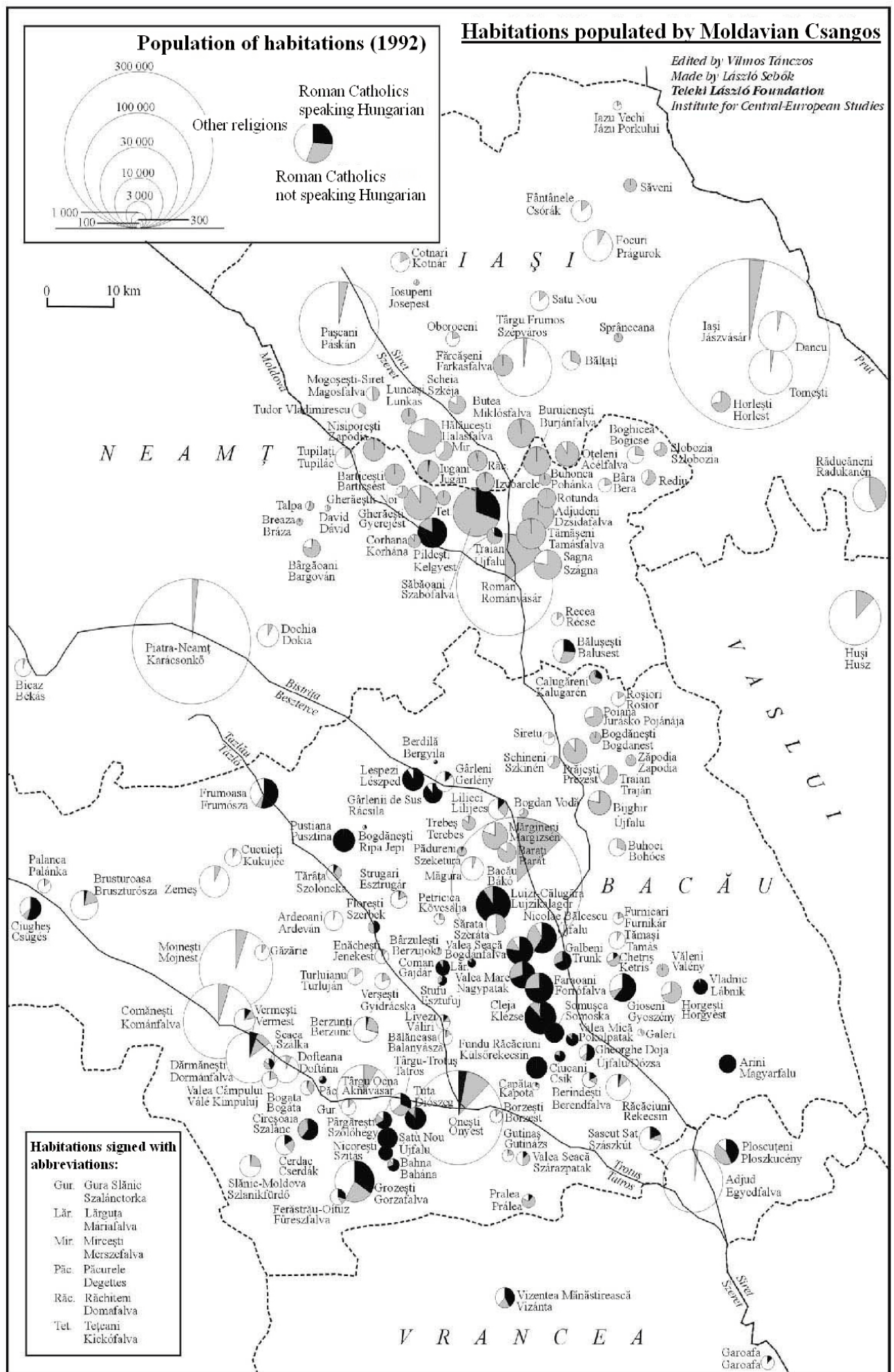
APPENDIX IV

A. Changes in the numbers and percentages of Moldavian Hungarians according to the official Romanian Censuses[14]

Survey Year	Population Total	Number of Catholics	Proportions of Catholics within Total Population	Number of Hungarians	Proportion of Hungarians within Total Population	Proportion of Hungarians within Catholics	Source of Data
1859	1,325,406	52,881	4,00%	37,825	2,90	71,6%	Szabados 1989,p.91
1899	1,848,122	88,803	4,80%	24,276	1,30	27,3%	ibid,p.94
1912	2,139,154	97,771	4,60%				Census return
1930	2,433,596	109,953	4,50%	23,894	1,00	21,7%	Census return
1941	2,769,380	9,352	0,30%				Census return
1948	2,598,259	6,618	0,30%				Census return
1956	2,991,281	8,829	0,30%				Census return
1966	3,391,400	4,748	0,14%				Census return
1977	3,763,221	3,276	0,09%				Census return
1992	4,079,046	240,038	5,90%	30,985	0,08	0,80%	Census return

B. Number of Catholics in Moldavia[15]

Time	Number of Catholics	Source
Early 16th century	ca. 25-30,000 (20-25,000 Hungarians)	Mikecs 1941, pp. 245-246 (estimation)
1591	15,000	Benda 1989, p.31 (Church census: B. Bruti)
1646	5,577	Mikecs 1941, p. 245 and Benda 1989, p.31 (Church census: B. Bruti)
1696	2,799	Benda 1989, p.31 (Church census: unknown)
1744	5,500	Auner 1908, p.48 (R. Jezierski Bishop of Bacău)
1807	21,307	Auner 1908, p.48 (Consul Hammer)
1851	45,752	Domokos 1987, pp. 116-119 (Church directory)
1859	52,881	Official census return (Quoted by Szabados 1989)
1875	58,809	Domokos 1987, pp. 116-119 (Church directory)
1899	88,803	Official census return (Quoted by Szabados 1989)
1902	64,601	Auner 1908, p.79
1983	109,953	Official census return
1992	240,038	Official census return

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[14] The source is *Tnaczos in Dioszegi, 2002, p.127.*
[15] The source is *Tnaczos in Dioszegi, 2002, p.123.*

APPENDIX V

Csango folk costumes[16]