

The Szekler *Tizes* as an Autonomous Village District and Neighborhood Community

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Received: April 1, 2022 • Accepted: May 17, 2022

Published online: October 5, 2022

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ABSTRACT

The Hungarian ethnographic group known as the Szekler people live in the Eastern Carpathians, a mountainous area that formed the eastern border of historical Hungary prior to 1920, and since 1920, with a minor interruption, the center of Romania. The traditionalist Szeklers designated those village districts that enjoyed ethnic autonomy by the name *tizes* (tenth). The author of the present study endeavors to illustrate, on the basis of written documents, the nature of the *tizes* as a Szekler village district and neighborhood community and how it functioned in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. In Szekler villages in the modern era, a village district was considered to be a genuine *tizes* if it had a tradition of self-governance and a variable level of autonomy, and if it was regarded as a self-governing unit of the settlement and society. The population of the *tizes* formed a local social, neighborhood group, whose sense of the *tizes* was consistent with the village-level consciousness of other, similar groups. From a settlement perspective, the village comprised several *tizes*, each one a unit of the settlement. In social terms, the village community was a combination of several *tizes* communities. In most cases, the Szekler *tizes* in the modern era had a distinguishing name, an elected leadership, property, basic self-governance, policing and penal jurisdiction, and its own records and administration. In the 17th to 19th centuries, the village districts and neighborhood communities designated by the word *tizes* may have owned property (e.g., forests, pastures, meadows), animals (bulls, boars), work-related equipment and objects (plow, drill, fire-fighting equipment, chest, stamp, documents), buildings and institutions (church, chapel, cemetery, school, cultural center, cross), and employees (bellringer, forester, herder). In most Szekler inhabited regions in the early 21st century, reminders of the former *tizes* are to be found only in the form of geographical names and vernacular data. The traditional form, role, and function of these historical autonomous village districts are best preserved in the region once known as the county of Csík in the former Kingdom of Hungary (now Ciuc, Romania). In the merged villages of Csíkszentgyörgy (now Ciucsângeorgiu, Romania) and Csíkbánkfalva (now Bancu, Romania) there are eight functioning *tizes* still in existence in the third decade of the 21st century. For this reason, the life of the *tizes* of Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva has been chosen as the subject of the present study.

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KEYWORDS

szeklers, village district (*tizes*) autonomy, neighborhood community, village district (*tizes*) property and its utilization, village district (*tizes*) identity

INTRODUCTION

Within the Hungarian language area that extends into eight countries in 21st-century Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia), Hungarian historical sources refer to village districts and town districts that enjoyed a greater or lesser degree of autonomy in the 17th to 19th centuries as *tized* [tenth], *fertály* [quarter], or *utca* [street] (BÁRTH 2015:911).

The Szeklers, a Hungarian ethnographic group with a rich tradition and distinctive culture, used the word *tizes*, a dialect variant of *tized*. The Szeklers live in Transylvania, among the valleys and basins of the Eastern Carpathian Mountains. Prior to 1920, the territory they inhabit formed the eastern borderlands of historical Hungary, while since 1920, with a brief interruption, it can be regarded as the center of Romania (EGYED 2006).

In the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, Szekler villages were, sooner or later, divided into village sections with a certain autonomy, which were designated in the historical sources and in everyday usage by the word *tizes*. From a settlement perspective, the village comprised several settlement units, each known as a *tizes*. In social terms, the village community was a combination of several *tizes* communities, while the village as a social and former administrative unit was made up of the inhabitants of several *tizes* districts.

In Szekler villages in the modern era, a village district was considered to be a genuine *tizes* if it had a tradition of self-governance and a variable level of autonomy, and if it was regarded as a self-governing unit of the settlement and society. Its population formed a local social, neighborhood group, whose sense of the *tizes* was consistent with the village consciousness of several similar groups.

As parts of the settlement representing different levels of administrative autonomy, the *tizes* districts that made up the villages present a morphologically diverse picture in the modern era. In some places, such as Csíkszentgyörgy for example, the *tizes* districts were connected as parts of a homogeneous settlement. In other places, such as Csíkszentlélek and Csíkmindszent, they were separated in the form of small hamlets, while certain groups of *tizes* districts formed a fragmented village that could still be regarded as a unified community (DUKA 1978). There were also villages, such as Menaság, in which three *tizes* districts formed a block, while two were separated from the others.

In the modern era, in most cases the Szekler *tizes* had a distinguishing name, an elected leadership, basic self-government, policing and penal jurisdiction, and its own records, administration, and property. In the 17th to 19th centuries, the *tizes* may have owned property (e.g., forests, pastures, meadows), animals (bulls, boars), work-related equipment and objects (plow, drill, fire-fighting equipment, chest, stamp, documents), buildings and institutions (church, chapel, cemetery, school, cultural center, cross), and employees (bellringer, forester, herder).

In the 20th century, in most of the areas inhabited by the Szeklers, reminders of the former *tizes* are to be found only in geographical names and vernacular data. The traditional form, role, and function of these historical autonomous village districts are best preserved in the Csík region.



The *tizes* districts in Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva, on the eastern margin of the Alcsík Basin, were particularly active before 1949. These two elongated villages, which were merged together, formed “one county,” meaning a single parish. The shared parish church stood on the border of the two villages. This large parish brought together the two communities and their *tizes* districts within one organizational framework. In the modern era, the village community of Szentgyörgy comprised *Háromtizes*, *Jenőfalva tizes*, and *Körösmény tizes*. Bánkfalva was divided into *Ittkétfalva tizes*, *Simószege tizes*, *Martonos tizes*, and *Altizes*, along with *Kotormány tizes*, which was separated from the others (BÁRTH 2007, 2014).

In what follows, I outline the life and activities of the *tizes* districts of Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva from the 17th to the 20th century, based extant documents among their own former records, mainly *tizes* minutes and *tizes*-related correspondence. Unfortunately, the written documents that serve as sources for the present study are not preserved in archives but are owned by village families and private individuals. In 2004/2005, after a great deal of research and investigation, I made photocopies of nearly 8,000 pages. For the time being, this collection of photocopies, which has been given the name *Tizes Archive*, is preserved as my own property (BÁRTH 2007:30–40, 382; 2008:152–153).

TIZES CONSTITUTIONS AND LAWS

The *tizes* districts of Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva created constitutions and laws for themselves, comparable to the village laws of well-functioning village communities (IMREH 1989). These were regularly referred to in their decisions.

In as early as 1,619, the Körösmény *tizes* drew up a constitution for itself in order to safeguard its protected forest. The document focused on regulating access to the forest and on the way in which the forest was divided. If someone failed to act on the *tizes* forest magistrates' orders to go out and apprehend anyone damaging or destroying the commonly owned forest, it was regarded as a punishable offence.

On March 22, 1700, landowners in the three lower village districts of Bánkfalva — *Altizes*, *Martonos tizes*, and *Simószege tizes* — compiled a common forest protection and forest utilization law. We learn from a comment in the introduction to the constitution that the above-mentioned *tizes* districts already had a law, but it had been lost, thus the new law had been written based on the old law while the members of the *tizes* were still able to remember what the old law contained. The relatively lengthy and detailed constitution of 1700 comprehensively regulated the manner in which the shared protected forests were to be protected and utilized. Those who drafted the law placed particular emphasis on the punishment of forest-related offences. The constitution was affirmed on several occasions, notably in 1744, 1753, and 1758.

Like the village laws, the Szekler *tizes* laws generally comprise a series of clauses containing prohibitions and the respective penalties for offenders. One slight exception was the 1795 constitution of the *Háromtizes* district of Csíkszentgyörgy, which, while also containing prohibitions and penalties, focuses primarily on the designation of a new protected forest, defined by geographical names.

On January 3, 1814, the farmers of Körösmény *tizes* held a meeting to elect a chief forest magistrate, at which they adopted a nine-point constitution. The points in the new *tizes* law were drafted with a view to protecting the *tizes* forest.



The 1820 constitution of Martonos *tizes* is a refreshing example in terms of the *tizes* laws, in as much as it primarily summarized rules governing the daily life and regular functioning of the *tizes* and only secondarily dealt with the safeguarding of the protected forest. This fine example of a *tizes* law covers, among other things, topics such as the *tizes* revenue, methods for being “acknowledged” at *tizes* meetings, the extent of the requisite internal plot needed to become a *tizes* member, the obligation to attend *tizes* meetings, punishments for failure to perform communal work in the *tizes*, the exploitation of the *Lófőréz* mountain pasture, the rules of conduct at meetings, etc.

The 1840 constitution of Háromtizes deals almost entirely with the issue of forest seizure. In this *tizes* law, the farmers of Háromtizes very clearly expressed the need for strict action against forest seizures as well as the ways in which those who cleared and occupied the forest in an attempt to reduce the size of the protected forest were to be punished.

On March 25, 1845, Altizes, Martonos *tizes* and Simószege *tizes* — that is, the lower three *tizes* districts of Bánkfalva — held a joint meeting at which the participating farmers declared in a joint constitution that one particular mountain area, which was referred to as a “forest of saplings,” was to be placed under protection. The young trees required care, attention, and tending in order to grow strong. For this reason, it was important to draw up duties, rules, and penalties to protect the growing forest.

Even after 1848, in the so-called civic era, the *tizes* districts of Csíkszentgyörgy created *tizes* laws known as “constitutions.” Some good examples include the *tizes* law of Jenőfalva *tizes* from 1860, and the Körösmény *tizes* laws passed in 1870 and 1882.

TIZES MEMBERS, REVENUE, AND RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Heads of families who “had themselves acknowledged” at a *tizes* meeting — that is, who enjoyed full rights to the protected forest of their *tizes*, were referred to various ways in the 17th to 19th centuries. They were most commonly defined as *bébíró*s or *bébíró* [admitted], *tilalmasba bébíró* [admitted to the protected forest], *tag* [member], *birtokos* [owner], *részes tilalmas jus-sában* [having a share in the rights to the protected forest], or *tizes kebelén való* [belonging to the *tizes*].

Even today, the word “right” (*jog*) in Szekler usage is used to indicate *tizes* rights and commonage. Possession of the right of *tizes* commonage and possession of 20th-century village commonage were not considered as a legal status of the same order. In the case of the *tizes* districts, “right” originally meant membership of the *tizes* and the possibility for and basis of a share in the common property of the *tizes*, while in the case of village commonage it indicated the extent of utilization of the common property.

The *tizes* right, which could be obtained by means of residence in the *tizes*, ownership of an internal plot of the required size within it, and the performance of the rite of “acknowledgement,” ensured “admission” to the usufruct of the common *tizes* property. In 20th-century *tizes* commonage, unlike village commonage that encompassed the entire village, the number of *rights* and the number of members were identical, with a few recent exceptions. The holder of a *tizes* right was considered as a member of the *tizes*, and as someone who had been “admitted,” who was able to cast one vote at *tizes* meetings regardless of social status or wealth. A *tizes* member enjoyed an equal share in the usufruct of *tizes* property as all other *tizes* members.



The fact of being resident in a *tizes* was of decisive importance in terms of gaining access to *tizes* property. A young man who was born in the *tizes* and grew up there could hope to acquire a right to the *tizes* protected forest as an adult farmer. However, anyone born in a different *tizes* or village, who had grown up outside the *tizes* but who had acquired property within it by means of marriage, inheritance, or the purchase of a plot and had thus become a resident of the *tizes*, could become a beneficiary of the *tizes* protected forest only at considerable financial expense, by paying a higher than average *acknowledgement fee*. In the 18th to 20th centuries, only someone who owned a plot of a certain size within the *tizes* could be a full beneficiary of the protected common property of the *tizes* and at the same time a taxpayer in the *tizes*. In 1846, the Kör-ösmény *tizes* required possession of an internal plot at least 16 acres in length and 8 acres wide in order to claim membership of the *tizes*.

No one, not even the male heir of a true-born member of the *tizes*, was automatically entitled to membership of the *tizes*. Anyone wishing to be admitted as a *tizes* member, providing the other conditions for the acquisition of the right were satisfied, had to “have himself acknowledged” at one of the *tizes* assemblies. On the occasion of the “acknowledgment,” at the proposal of the *tizes* magistrate the *tizes* members discussed the applicant’s wishes in meticulous detail, then, in the hope of receiving a payment into the *tizes* treasury and a drink at the assembly, in most cases participants voted unanimously for “admission to the *tizes*.” The *acknowledgment fee* set by participants at the meeting depended in equal measure on the applicant’s parentage, status, and the means by which he owned property in the *tizes*. The lowest fees were paid by the descendants of native inhabitants, who had inherited their internal plots and their rights to the protected forest from their fathers. In general, all applicants had to pay a “bull” contribution and buy a drink for everyone. The *bull contribution* was the money contributed, under a variety of titles, to the gradual procurement of the difference in price between the cost of an old *tizes* bull to be sold or slaughtered and the cost of the purchase of a young *tizes* bull. By way of a toast, applicants for membership of the *tizes* provided or paid for a glass of fruit brandy for participants at the *tizes* assembly.

A farmer who was accepted as a member of a *tizes* — that is, who attained the rank and status of “admitted” — was entitled to the benefits of the common lands and common properties of his *tizes* as follows: 1) He was entitled to the same share as the other *tizes* members of communal firewood from the *tizes* protected forest, which, because of its proximity, was relatively easier to transport to the village than wood from the distant mountain forests of the parish. 2) During the summer plowing season, he was allowed to graze his livestock in the temporary pastures cleared in the nearby protected forest. 3) As long as it was customary to fatten pigs on forest acorns, he could have one of his pigs fattened on acorns in the protected forest of the *tizes*. 4) He could use the *tizes* bull and boar for breeding his own cattle and pigs. 5) He could graze his cattle and pigs, without paying the meadow tax, in a herd organized by the *tizes* in the fallow land in the crop rotation system, or on the *tizes* pastureland at edge of the *tizes* forest near the village. 6) In an emergency, for example when building a house, or in the event of fire or flood damage, he could ask for and receive help from his *tizes*. 7) He could rest assured that, after his death, his remains would not be buried in the village cemetery but would be laid to rest in the “more distinguished” *tizes* cemetery.

A farmer with *tizes* rights was obliged to accept the burdens of the *tizes* in exchange for the benefits of ownership of the common property: 1) If necessary, he guarded the forest in the order of his house. 2) He regularly maintained and repaired the section of common



fence assigned to his family, even without being requested to do so. 3) He constructed and repaired roads, streets, bridges, ditches, and community buildings as part of his community work for the *tizes*. 4) He provided bull manure on an annual basis — that is, he supplied manure, in proportion to the number of his cows, to the land owned by the farmer who looked after the *tizes* bull. 5) He supported any of his fellow *tizes* members in financial difficulties by giving up his own wood allocation or by giving money when necessary.

FORUMS, OFFICIALS, AND EMPLOYEES OF THE *TIZES*

In the 17th to 19th centuries, important decisions affecting the life and property of the *tizes* were taken at the general assembly of *tizes* members. Commonly referred to as a *general assembly* or a *full assembly*, such meetings were held at the home of the *tizes* judge as and when necessary. The most important decision-making forum of the *tizes* typically met at the beginning and end of the year.

During the weeks and months between the general assemblies, decisions were taken on topical issues by the *tizes* council, which was known by a variety of names such as the *land-owners' council*, magistracy, or board.

For centuries, the people living in the Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva *tizes* districts referred to the elected head of the *tizes* as the *tizes magistrate* or *chief forest magistrate*. The two terms existed alongside one another. *Tizes magistrate* was used more in everyday speech, while *chief forest magistrate* was used in the minutes of *tizes* meetings and in official documents. The title *tizes magistrate* obviously referred to the primary function of the *tizes* official. The title *chief forest magistrate* was related to the fact that the protected forest was the most important property owned by the *tizes*, while the activities of its elected leader were primarily concerned with the fate, protection, and exploitation of the forest.

It is also worth looking at the duties of the *tizes magistrate*, since the list sheds light on the daily life of the neighborhood community known as the *tizes*. From the *tizes* minutes and documents, we can conclude that in the 18th and 19th centuries, the *tizes magistrate* was most often involved in the following tasks: as the head of the *tizes*, he presided over the *tizes* assemblies and the meetings of the *tizes* council, and he represented the *tizes* before the village; he managed the property and money of the *tizes*; he regularly lent surplus money, in return for interest, for the purposes of promoting the growth of the capital of the *tizes*; he raised funds in order to cover expenses and kept an accurate annual account of the incomes and expenditures of the *tizes*; he protected, safeguarded, and arranged for the safeguarding of the pride and joy of the *tizes*: the protected forest; he seized and fined anyone who damaged the forest and anyone who failed to perform communal work; he organized the share in the protected forest received by the *tizes* members; he directed wood and meadow auctions and conducted larger timber sales; he organized and supervised the state, community, and *tizes* communal work. In contemporary parlance, he *commanded* the members of the *tizes* to carry out community work when necessary; he was responsible for the purchase, sale, and raising of the male animals (bull and boar) of the *tizes*; he supervised the grazing order of *tizes* members' animals; he hired and supervised shepherds; he was responsible for maintaining the *tizes* chapel and the fence of the *tizes* cemetery; he was responsible for the roads and bridges of the *tizes*, as well as for the gates at the borders of the *tizes* and the mineral water springs. He also had them repaired if necessary.



The *tizes* magistrate was assisted mainly by the *vice forest magistrates*, who represented the smaller neighborhood groups within the *tizes*. Their most important task was to guard the *tizes* forests. The minutes of the *tizes* assemblies were recorded in the *protocol book* by the *tizes* notary. He also drew up the accounts of the *tizes* magistrates and drafted *tizes* contracts and letters.

There is some evidence to suggest that an elected person with the title of *fiskus* played a kind of judicial, punitive, and peacemaking role in the old *tizes* districts. His primary task was probably to ensure order and calm at the *tizes* assemblies.

As in the villages, the larger *tizes* districts in the second half of the 19th century also had their own *soot magistrate*, an elected person responsible for fire protection. He regularly inspected the operation, cleaning, and maintenance of the traditional combustion appliances in family homes, as well as the presence and functionality of fire-fighting equipment.

The elected official who dealt with matters relating to the *tizes* bull was known as the *bull magistrate*. The title *bull magistrate* was almost always used in the plural, as two bull magistrates were typically elected: one for the upper part of the *tizes* and one for the lower. Among other things, the *bull magistrates* were responsible for having the old district bull slaughtered, portioning out the meat, and collecting the price of the two or three pounds of meat from the *tizes* members who were obliged to purchase it. This was another way of raising the money to purchase a new *tizes* bull. When selling and buying bulls, the *bull magistrates* were the chief supporters and assistants of the *tizes* magistrate, who carried out this important task. The *bull magistrates* were responsible for the fate of the *tizes* bull. They regularly checked whether the bull's keeper was performing his task properly, whether he was respecting his contract for the keeping of the bull, whether he was giving the bull sufficient food and drink, and whether breeding was being carried out appropriately.

The *tizes* districts that owned a church, chapel, or cemetery usually elected a *chapel magistrate*, who typically remained in the role for many years. In the second half of the 19th century, the *chapel magistrate* mainly carried out the following duties: he managed, and if possible increased, the chapel's financial assets. To this end, he loaned out the chapel's capital at interest. He drew up annual accounts of the chapel's finances, revenues, and expenses, which he presented to both the parish priest of Csíkszentgyörgy and the *tizes* assembly. He monitored the condition of the *tizes* church, the *tizes* chapel, the church fence, the *tizes* cemetery and the cemetery fence. If he found any anomalies or defects, he had them repaired. He supervised the work of the bellringer; he supervised funeral arrangements in the cemetery and kept a list of those who were entitled to be buried there.

After 1949, when the *tizes* districts could no longer own forests and when their activities were largely confined to looking after their churches, chapels, and cemeteries, the role of the chapel magistrates became more important. Between 1950 and 1990, the chapel magistrate in some *tizes* districts replaced the *tizes* magistrate, whose function had become redundant.

In those *tizes* districts where several bridges over the Fiság stream required maintenance, the population of the *tizes* was divided into "bridge communities" in the 19th and 20th centuries. These bridge communities were headed by *bridge magistrates*, chosen by the *tizes* assembly from among the farmers who lived near the bridges and who had good organizational skills. The bridge magistrates kept a constant eye on the bridges that were entrusted to them. If they discovered any damage, they had the bridge repaired. For the repairs, they requested wood from the *tizes* and recruited men from the relevant bridge community (BARTH 2007:79–83).



In the second half of the 19th century, if a *tizes* had a granary, grain was loaned and the grain interest was collected by the elected *granary magistrate*. Summer pasture companies or fellowships of sheep farmers were organized by *tizes* or *tizes* division (BÁRTH 2017:217–220). These functioned as economic organizations. Their leaders, the *summer pasture magistrates*, were elected not by the *tizes* but by the summer pasture companies of sheep farmers. Thus, as the head of the *tizes* summer pasture company and the organizer of the summer and autumn grazing of sheep flocks in the *tizes*, the *summer pasture magistrate* was one of the elected officials in the *tizes*, even though he was not appointed by the *tizes* assembly.

The *tizes* “employees” were, first and foremost, those who tended the herds and flocks of the *tizes*, who were hired by participants in the *tizes* assembly and by the *tizes* leaders. Their wages were paid by the *tizes* farmers who drove their animals out to them. The shepherds’ wages comprised the following items: grain measured in cups, bread measured in pounds, and “boot money” measured in silver coin (*garas*). The *tizes* herd of cows and pigs, sometimes supplemented with horses and goats, grazed as a so-called homecoming herd on fallow land or at the edge of the *tizes* forests close to the village. The herds of the *tizes* farmers were tended by the *tizes* cowherd and swineherd. Sometimes, a separate horse herder and goat herder helped with the summer grazing. Some *tizes* districts would also hire a *winter swineherd* and an *acorn swineherd* to take the winter herd up to the *tizes* protected forest.

In the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, several *tizes* districts employed paid forest wardens to protect their forests from the theft of wood. Hár-omtizes, Kotormány, and Altizes also had their own bellringer. One important element in the bellringers’ contracts was their low wages, which were supplemented by additional benefits in kind, such as grass from the cemetery, or sometimes firewood from the protected forest. In addition to ringing the bells three times a day, the duties of the *tizes* bellringer included ringing against “strong weather” — that is, against rainstorms and thunder. The tariff for bellringing for the deceased was repeatedly regulated by the *tizes*, depending on the current financial situation.

TIZES PROPERTY AND ITS UTILIZATION

The *tizes* districts in Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva owned *tizes* forests in periods for which historical sources are available. Ownership of the forests has probably contributed to the fact that in the life of the two villages, the *tizes* is not merely a linguistic and local historical relic in the early 21st century but also a living social and neighborhood organizational structure.

With few exceptions, the mountain lands owned by the Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva *tizes* districts formed an enormous mass on the western border of the Csík Mountains, on the eastern side of the Fiság stream and the elongated inland area adjacent to it. This mass of *tizes* land was divided among the *tizes* districts according to their order in the valley.

The history of the *tizes* lands of Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva is lost in the mists of time, with no written documentation. At some unknown time, when drawing up the internal village boundaries, the past inhabitants of Szentgyörgy and Bánkfalva wisely thought of separating for the *tizes* districts the *tizes* forested areas in sequence from the rest of the areas on the



border, adjacent to the elongated settlement area in the valley of the Fiság stream, in addition to the fields and meadows belonging to the villages in the mountains that closed the valley of the Fiság stream from the east. Over the centuries, the locals have justified the designation, maintenance, and protection of the *tizes* forests outside the village by claiming that these forests provide the people of the *tizes* with firewood that is relatively easy to carry home, and that the cattle of the *tizes* districts feed in the forest clearings and undergrowth during the plowing season.

In 1,619, when the Körösmény *tizes* created its first written constitution, the forests around the village already existed, in the very same place where they would stand for the next four hundred years or so. One can assume that the other *tizes* districts in Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva also owned forests near the village at an unknown date in the early 17th century. Following well-documented ownership in the 18th and 19th centuries, the *tizes* forests served the farmers of the *tizes* until the mid-20th century, subsequently surviving half a century of state management before once again becoming *tizes* commonages in the early years of the 21st century.

At the end of the 19th century, the three *tizes* districts in Csíkszentgyörgy owned lands roughly equal in size. It was as if some invisible hand had measured the hillsides and ridges to ensure that Háromtizes, Jenőfalva *tizes* and Körösmény *tizes* would each own land of around 400 acres. The size of the land holdings in the Bánkfalva *tizes* districts presented a more varied picture. Ittkétfalva, the largest *tizes* of the village, owned more than 300 acres. It was followed by Altizes and Martonos *tizes* with over 200 acres and less than 200 acres respectively. Simószege *tizes* and Kotormány *tizes* had less than 100 acres.

Most of *tizes* holdings were forested land. The forestland that was declared protected forest by the *tizes* districts and safeguarded with great care was interrupted by clearings that could be leased for mowing or temporarily grazed by animals, with a strip of shrubs along the edge of the forest towards the village. It was from this strip of shrubs, or pre-forest, that the 20th-century *tizes* pastures were formed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, largely on the initiative of the higher authorities.

Forest management, including freedom of the forest, the distribution of wood allowances for *tizes* members, timber auctions, and timber donations, were themes that together constituted the most important element, driver, and motivation of *tizes* activities at all times. By analyzing 18th- and 19th-century district decrees, the order of timber allocation activities can be outlined as follows.

In the 19th century, the wood allowance for *tizes* members was mostly measured in terms of volume (*terű*) and number of trees (*szál*). The *tizes* districts repeatedly emphasized that at times when free access to the forest was granted, members were permitted to take one *terű* of wood. To prevent anyone from gaining an unfair advantage at the expense of others, the *tizes* districts: 1) determined in advance the type and size of cart permitted; 2) determined in advance the number of cattle permitted to pull the cart; and 3) assigned to the forest magistrates the task of checking the size of the *terűs*.

Over the centuries, many rules have been drawn up governing *tizes* members' access to wood from the protected forest. *Freedom of the forest* typically comprised three steps: 1) the marking of trees by the forest magistrates and their assistants; 2) the supply of the forest magistrates' timber allowances; and 3) the cutting and transportation of timber by the majority of *tizes* members.



On the first day of the *freedom of the forest*, the marking of trees was carried out by the forest magistrates, directed by the chief forest magistrate. In most cases, the *tizes* selected assistants in an effort to speed up the marking. Many different techniques were used to mark those trees that were to be felled and those that could not be felled.

In all *tizes* districts, the rational and practical custom was for the forest magistrates and their invited assistants to remove their timber from the forest a day earlier than the rest of the *tizes* members. Thus, on the day of the general timber removal, the forest magistrates did not have to bother themselves with felling their own timber, hauling it down the mountain, loading, and transporting it, since they were expected to fulfil the role of supervisors and controllers on that day.

For the majority of *tizes* members, the regular tree felling day was the busiest day in the life of the *tizes*. The *tizes* leaders insisted that everyone had to remove their timber allowance from the forest on the designated day. The felling, “finishing,” hauling, and loading of the timber might begin at dawn on the designated day, as the forest magistrates who were in charge would leave the village in order to arrive at the protected forest at sunrise.

The *tizes* districts expected farmers to return from the protected forest with their loaded carts and sleds at around the same time. In most cases, they also designated the route for the return journey. Any *tizes* member who did not keep up with the other farmers but strayed from the designated route or arrived home late, after dark, easily fell under suspicion. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the *tizes* districts sometimes sold large quantities of timber to sawmills and timber merchants. The proceeds were used to pay off debts and cover major expenses, and were more rarely distributed among the members of the *tizes*.

To protect the grass in the clearings and on the shrubby edges of the forest, all the *tizes* districts prohibited access to the protected forest in the first half of the summer. The ban usually began on around May 15 and ended on the feast day of St. John the Baptist, on June 24. No animals were permitted to graze in the protected forest during the period when the ban was in place. In the 19th and 20th centuries, one of the reasons for the ban was that the *tizes* districts divided the banned clearings and shrubland into “openings” and rented them out to contractors for mowing and haymaking. The lease of these forest mowing areas ran for the duration of the ban. The hay had to be mown in June, then collected and ideally removed by June 24, since around the feast day of St. John the Baptist, the day on which the ban was lifted, livestock owned by members of the *tizes* appeared in the area to graze.

In the 19th-century documents, the *tizes* districts repeatedly reiterated that the main purpose of the clearings in the protected forests was to provide grazing for the working animals of the families of *tizes* members before the ban and after the free access to the forest. The *tizes* resolutions repeatedly made it clear that no animals other than draft cattle were to be grazed on the pastures in the protected forest: milking cattle were to be grazed in herds organized by the *tizes* in the pastures on fallow land, and “resting cattle” were to be grazed along with the parish’s mountain herd during the summer.

TIZES SACRED SITES AND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

The parish or “county” of Csíkszentgyörgy united and still unites the populations of two villages: Szentgyörgy and Bánkfalva. Dedicated to the martyr St. George, the parish church, with its



medieval Gothic chancel, stands in the territory of Csíkszentgyörgy, but on the border between the two villages. In the 19th century, the parish of Csíkszentgyörgy was dotted with small churches and chapels. These small churches and chapels, located inside the village or close to it, were mostly linked to one or other of the *tizes* districts. Certain *tizes* districts could even be said to have their own *tizes* church or chapel. Towering on a hilltop, the Church of the Visitation belonged to the remote Kotormány *tizes*. The church of St. John the Baptist on the edge of the village was claimed by Altizes. The Church of the Discovery of the Holy Cross was built among the houses of Háromtizes and was regarded as the property of the *tizes*. Jenőfalva *tizes* maintained the Chapel of Our Lady on Pósa Hill. The fact that, at the end of the 20th century, Körösmény *tizes* celebrated St. Anne's Day (July 26) as its parish feast suggests that the *tizes* perhaps had some kind of spiritual connection with the small chapel of St. Anne. The *Church of the Passion of Jesus*, also known as the *Passion* or *Calvary* church, does not seem to have been connected with a particular *tizes*. However, the 19th-century public work reports of Martonos *tizes* suggest a connection between the people of Martonos and the Calvary Church (BÁRTH 2007:295–325).

The *tizes* churches and chapels were built, repaired, and maintained by the *tizes* members who were linked to them. Their bellringers received their remuneration from the *tizes*. The furnishings and religious items in the churches were installed and renewed thanks to donations by the *tizes* districts and their members.

Because of the long distances and difficulties in transportation, the priests of the parish of Csíkszentgyörgy made little effort to increase the number of liturgical services in the *tizes* churches in the 19th century. The *tizes* districts, on the other hand, sought to increase the number of services in their churches for the very same reasons. In other words, the church ministers urged people living in remote *tizes* districts, such as Háromtizes, Altizes, and Kotormány *tizes*, to attend mass in the mother church on feast days and Sundays, walking four to five kilometres to do so, even in adverse weather conditions. On the other hand, the *tizes* districts with their own church did everything they could to get the parish priest or chaplain of Szentgyörgy to conduct services in the church of their *tizes* as often as possible. This “conflict of interest” gave rise to many quarrels and disputes. Háromtizes in particular put up a strong fight, and its efforts were not in vain since it achieved far more rights than other *tizes* districts with churches. In the 20th century, the people of Háromtizes obtained the privilege of attending mass in their church every Sunday.

The mother church in Csíkszentgyörgy has two feast days: the Feast of St. George the Martyr (April 24) and the Feast of the Queen of the Rosary (October 7). The first is mainly a church event. The popular version of the feast day did not emerge until the early 21st century. The second is the feast day of the Bánkfalva side aisle of the mother church, popularly known as the “reading feast.” Ittkéfalva, Martonos, and Simószege *tizes* districts — that is, the three *tizes* districts of Bánkfalva without a church — consider this as their own, marking it with a joyful, hospitable church celebration.

Those *tizes* districts with their own church or chapel hold a joyous parish feast with invited guests on their respective saint's day: Háromtizes on May 3, the feast of the *Discovery of the Holy Cross*, the day after which the *tizes* church is named. Jenőfalva *tizes* on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the chapel on Pósa Hill. Körösmény *tizes* on July 26, St. Anne's Day, the patronal feast of the small chapel of St. Anne near the Calvary Church. Altizes on June 24, the feast of St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of the *tizes* church.



Kotormány *tizes* on July 2, the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the patronal feast of the *tizes* church.

Tizes festivals continue to be an excellent means of expressing *tizes* identity at the beginning of the 21st century, and a great opportunity for *tizes* members and those who have moved away to gather. Those who have moved to neighboring *tizes* districts, to nearby Szekler villages, to the bigger cities in Transylvania, to Bucharest, or Hungary, try to return home for the *tizes* festival. On the day of the festival, the current residents of the *tizes* are joined by approximately the same number of people who lived there formerly. The *tizes* feast is a symbolic representation of the district, a celebration of the everyday life and historical memory of the *tizes*. Most of the population of Alcsík are aware that the festival of St. John the Baptist is the feast of Altizes, and that the festival of the Discovery of the Holy Cross is the patronal feast of Háromtizes. These feasts are a reminder for the Szeklers of the Alcsík region of the Altizes of Bánkfalva and the Háromtizes of Szentgyörgy. For the inhabitants of the *tizes*, for those who originate from there, and for those living in the area alike, the *tizes* festival is a manifestation of *tizes* identity.

Besides the local public cemetery, there were three other cemeteries in the parish of Csíkszentgyörgy in the 19th and 20th centuries: two in the outermost *tizes* districts of the elongated clump of settlements (Háromtizes and Altizes), and one in the remote Kotormány *tizes*. The *tizes* cemeteries adjacent to the *tizes* churches were repeatedly enlarged by the *tizes* districts through donations of land or financial contributions. The repair and replacement of their fences was a regular aspect of *tizes* public works. Internal order was the responsibility of the *tizes* bellringers. In most cases, only true-born, admitted *tizes* members and their families were allowed to be buried in the *tizes* cemeteries.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva had an abundance of outdoor calvaries, as befitted a Roman Catholic village. These wooden crosses, with conical, shingled roofs, often featured inscriptions and ornate carving and were mostly erected by individuals, families, neighborhood groups, and *tizes* rosary societies. The *tizes* districts shared in the burden as well as the honor of erecting, maintaining, and renewing the calvaries. This is clearly reflected in *tizes* documentation and the inscriptions on the calvaries.

In the middle third of the 19th century, before the school in Háromtizes became a “parish” school, Háromtizes was already running an “unofficial private *tizes* school.” In the first half of the 1930s, at huge financial sacrifice and with a great deal of public work, Háromtizes constructed a *tizes* house that functioned as a community center.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE *TIZES*

In the second half of the 19th century, the majority of the Szekler *tizes* districts found it difficult to cope with the laws of the Hungarian civic era, which showed little tolerance for public property and village district autonomy. They gave up the struggle, and the number of *tizes* districts that ended up as historical relics, or survived merely in the form of place names, had risen by the end of the 19th century. Some *tizes* districts in Alcsík and Gyergyó, however, took up the fight, transformed themselves, as owners of public property, into *tizes commonages*, taking over many of the tasks of the earlier communities, and endeavored to integrate themselves into the civic order in the form of *tizes* landowners. The *tizes* districts in Csíkszentgyörgy



and Csíkbánkfalva belonged among this latter group. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, all eight *tizes* districts in the two villages were transformed into *tizes* commonages. In this way, the protected forests were preserved and successfully survived the first half of the 20th century, a period defined by world wars and the changes in empire.

What the Hungarian, and subsequently the Romanian civic legislature and public administration had failed to achieve was solved in a few strokes of the pen by the Romanian dictatorship of the proletariat. In 1949, the Romanian state seized the centuries-old common property of the *tizes* districts, making the *tizes* commonages unfeasible. Ironically, the *tizes* commonages that had survived the ideological individualism of civic society were abolished by a social system that proclaimed itself to be socialist, and which ideologically advocated the realization of communal wealth and collective management. Rather than learning from the *tizes* districts about their methodology for the collective exploitation of common property, and from experience accumulated over centuries, the prophets of the new society imposed collective farming, following foreign models and ideologies invented behind a desk, which were alien to the Hungarians, Romanians, and Saxons alike.

During the decades of Socialism, the *tizes* districts in Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva were stripped of their former economic role. Among their earlier diverse functions, it was primarily the sacral tasks that remained, especially the maintenance of *tizes* churches, chapels, and cemeteries.

In the 1990s, following the change of regime in Romania, the *tizes* districts in Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva awoke from their peaceful slumber, in which they had been restricted to sacral activities. The former *tizes* membership lists were found. Assemblies were held. The *tizes* commonages elected a new leadership. Former *tizes* members and their successors made huge efforts to reclaim the *tizes* forests and pastures. Persistent local and parliamentary struggles proved successful.

Under Romanian Law No. 2000/1 (BARTH 2010), the village commonages, like the *tizes* commonages, were gradually able to reclaim their forests and pastures. Uniquely in Szekler Land, in addition to the two village commonages, the eight former *tizes* commonages were also reconstituted in Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva. In October 2007, the Csíkszentgyörgy commonage comprised 3,635.12 ha of forest and pasture land, while the Bánkfalva commonage comprised 3,424.75 ha. The eight *tizes* districts of the two villages combined owned a total of 1,439.30 ha of forests and pastures. Following the successful recovery of the *tizes* lands, the economic activity and role of the *tizes* districts was revitalized and took on a distinctive character.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the *tizes* districts in Csíkszentgyörgy and Csíkbánkfalva remained unique in the Csík region. Because of their vitality, they have been transformed into living relics of the social organization, administrative history, ownership history, and settlement ethnography of the Szeklers' past.

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