

“They Spoke Hungarian but Were of a Romanian Faith.” A Greek Catholic Community in Székely Land in the First Half of the 20th Century¹

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Abstract: The present study examines the fate of a Greek Catholic parish in Székely Land, more specifically the inhabitants of Kostelek (Coşnea) based on the archival and anthropological field research of the author placing it within the context of the findings of earlier research on the 20th century identification struggles of Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholics in Hungary. For Greek Catholics of Ruthenian and Romanian origin assimilated to the majority Hungarians, their linguistic-national and religious identities were often incompatible during the 20th century. The problematic situations resulting from this “collision of identities” were treated by individual communities in a variety of ways, and Hungarian Greek Catholics living within changing state lines chose various identification routes. The case study presented here will demonstrate that all this, beyond the political changes, was closely related to the pastoral activity of the local priesthood and to particular local conditions.

Keywords: Greek Catholics, Hungary, Transylvania, 20th century, identification, rite change

INTRODUCTION – GREEK CATHOLICS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Greek Catholic churches were established between the 16th and 18th centuries in the middle of Europe, in the contact zone of Western and Eastern Christianity.² This fact has determined their operation until today, since the area often referred to in historiography

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² Greek Catholic churches were established primarily through the efforts of Habsburg rulers who, encouraged by the success of the Counter-Reformation, sought to promote the union of the Orthodox faithful with Rome. Some of the Orthodox bishops and priests accepted the Pope’s primacy in exchange for keeping their Eastern rites, their liturgical language, and for enjoying the same rights and privileges as their Roman Catholic counterparts. For an English summary of the history of Greek Catholic churches, see MAGOCSI 2008.

as In-Between Europe (SZŰCS 1988) is not only the meeting point of Western and Orthodox churches, but also the political buffer zone of the eastern and western part of Europe where different cultures and ethnic groups coexist. It is a “buffer” zone (BARTHA 2001:315; 2004:193–194; KEMÉNYFI 2001:106–107) in which not only the borders and political systems, but also the linguistic, religious and ethnic affiliations of the inhabitants were constantly changing.

The “Greek Catholic space” (KEMÉNYFI 2000:33; 2001; BARTHA 2001:314–330)³ lies in the northeastern and eastern part of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in today’s Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania and Hungary. Political determinism is basically a common feature in the fate of the Greek Catholic churches operating here: they were created through political intentions; the border changes following World War I and the prohibitions after World War II were a significant turning point for their communities; and still more political changes (the Eastern European regime changes) have created the opportunity for their reorganization (BARTHA 2001, 315–319).⁴ Besides the political factors, the ethnic character of the denomination was also decisive. Fundamentally, Greek Catholics were ethnically Ruthenian and Romanian (and Serbian, in a small number), and religious and ethnic affiliations were closely associated in their lives.⁵ Starting in the 19th century, the autonomous Ruthenian and Romanian Greek Catholic churches were central to the increasing political activity of these minorities, and their national movements started from these churches (NIESSEN 1994:240; BOTLIK 1997:66–86; MAGOCSI 2008:42–44).⁶

At the same time, the northeastern provinces of Hungary and Transylvania – mostly because of 18th-19th-century assimilation processes – had a significant number⁷ of Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholics who did not have their own church but were divided among Ruthenian and Romanian national churches. In the Ruthenian (and Serbian) eparchies, the language of liturgy was Old Church Slavonic, and in the Romanian eparchy it was Romanian (PIRIGYI 2001:56; NIESSEN 1994:240). Hungarian-speaking members of the Greek Catholic communities were often considered strangers – “Russians”, “Vlachs” – because of their religion and liturgical language (PIRIGYI 2001:56; NIESSEN 1994:240); in fact, in many cases, state organs also confused the Greek Catholic religion with nationality.⁸ The Hungarian Greek Catholics living within often changing borders during

³ For more information on the denominational space, see BARTHA 2000:508–509.

⁴ For an overview of these processes in English, see BARTHA 2004; MAGOCSI 2008:46–58. For detailed information on the Greek Catholic churches that have been reorganized in some countries since 1989, see MAHIEU – NAUMESCU 2008.

⁵ In historic Hungary, the religious distribution partially coincided with the national-ethnic division, i.e., individual nationalities in many cases formed closed denominational units, so from the early modern era onward, there were special correspondences between denominations and ethnic groups, and some churches – including the Greek Catholic – had a specifically national character (NIESSEN 1991:38–39; GERGELY 2008:15–17). The connection between ethnic and religious affiliation also played a major role in abolishing the Greek Catholic churches in the 20th century (KEMÉNYFI 2001:109–120).

⁶ For details on the role of Greek Catholic churches in Ukrainian, Belarusian and Romanian nation-building, see NIESSEN 1993.

⁷ According to census statistics, in 1890 their number was almost 200,000, which rose to 300,000 in 1910 (NIESSEN 1991:40–43; 1994:241).

⁸ See the example of interwar Romania SCHEFFLER 1942:9–11; HÁMORI 2007; LUKÁCS 2009:68–71; 2010:72–75.

the 20th century were discriminated against by different political systems because of their religious or linguistic-ethnic affiliation, so these two identity elements often became conflicting for the members of these communities. The most dramatic turn came with the abolishing of the Greek Catholic churches in the late 1940s, which resulted in some of the faithful joining the Roman Catholic (or, in a Protestant environment, a Protestant) church, and the rest joining Orthodox churches. This “collision of identities” and the related decisions resulted in the most varied forms of religious practice and identity, and often there was significant fragmentation even within a single community, which led to conflicts during the reorganization that was made possible after 1989.⁹

In my study, I present the fate of a Greek Catholic community of ethnically mixed (Hungarian and Romanian) origin on the eastern border of Hungary in the first half of the 20th century, focusing primarily on changes in local language use and the development of pastoral and denominational relations. To see these processes in a wider context, I will first discuss the national-level sociopolitical efforts aimed at resolving the conflict between Hungarian and Greek Catholic identities, then I present the narrower context: the assimilation tendencies in the parish of Csíkszépvíz, which includes the studied settlement, the roles of the secular and ecclesiastical elite, and the Greek Catholics’ local compulsion to conform.

However, it is important to note that, with regard to Kostelek and the wider region, other researchers have dealt with all this in more detail in several studies.¹⁰ My own research confirms but also supplements significantly their results, since I have added hitherto unexplored archival sources to the data they processed (census data, diocesan schematisms, parish registries and local press products), and I also relied heavily on the data of local interviews. Although I do not have the space here for a detailed micro-level analysis – the presentation of extremely diverse individual motives and decisions behind the religious and national choices – I believe that by publishing the results of my research, I can add nuance to the already existing image.

HUNGARIAN-SPEAKING GREEK CATHOLICS: A MINORITY WITHIN THE MINORITY

The case of Hungarian Greek Catholics living in a multiple-minority situation – being a linguistic and national minority in a minority church – was constantly on the agenda in ecclesiastical and political discourses in Hungary since the late 19th century.

Most Greek Catholics living in historic Hungary – of Ruthenian and Romanian origin but linguistically Hungarianized – lived on the periphery of the Hungarian language area, in ethnically and religiously mixed settlements. This, on the one hand, explains the greater

⁹ A non-comprehensive list of relevant case studies: PUSZTAI 1996, 1997; GESZTI 2001; DOMOKOS 2005; PILIPKÓ 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; PILIPKÓ – PUSZTAI 2008, 2010.

¹⁰ Zoltán Ilyés dedicated numerous studies to the correlations of exogamy and ethnic identity and language status, as well as the processes of identity change, based on marriage certificates, census statistics, and church schematisms of the Greek Catholic parish of Csíkszépvíz (and Csíkszék in the broader sense). A non-comprehensive list of these: ILYÉS 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2003a, 2003b, 2005. On the conflicts of the Greek Catholic communities in the former Csík county, see studies by Péter Hámori, Bertalan Pusztai and Zoltán Ilyés (HÁMORI 2007; ILYÉS 2007a, 2007b; ILYÉS–PUSZTAI 1994).

than the national average degree of linguistic assimilation among them (NIESSEN 1991:42), but, on the other hand, the Greek Catholic population was isolated not only in a linguistic but often also in a socio-economic sense. The Ruthenian and Romanian Greek Catholics who settled in Protestant or Roman Catholic Hungarian villages were mostly poor farmhands and day-laborers,¹¹ but over time, many of them not only assimilated linguistically to the Hungarians, but also acquired property and intermarried with members of the majority society, so their religion remained the only reference to their origins. In this situation, many opted to convert to the majority religion because it meant social progress and enabled them to fully integrate into the community (PIRIGYI 2001:56; NIESSEN 1994:240).

At the same time, starting in the late 19th century, the Greek Catholic secular intelligentsia tried a variety of methods to prove the “Hungarianness” of Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholics on a national level. This, on the one hand, is evident in the elaboration of a unique Hungarian Greek Catholic identity and historical consciousness,¹² which was disseminated through their publications and mainly in the contemporary press, and on the other hand, at the turn of the century, Hungarian Greek Catholics established national and local organizations¹³ and appeared at various events.¹⁴ In 1900, about 400 Hungarian Greek Catholics made a pilgrimage to Rome to obtain permission for the use of Hungarian in liturgy (PIRIGYI 1982:118–119).¹⁵ The Holy See rejected the Hungarian liturgical language at that time, but the issue remained on the agenda in Hungarian public life. The initiative, which was considered a national matter, was supported by the Hungarian government,¹⁶ thus, as a result of decades of political and diplomatic struggles, the Hungarian Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog was founded in 1912.¹⁷

The establishment of the new eparchy, however, did not meet the expectations attached to it. The Holy See ruled that the liturgical language was to be Ancient Greek,¹⁸

¹¹ Overall, Greek Catholics comprised the poorest and most marginal social strata of the country, and the other religious groups living alongside them often considered the Greek Catholic religion to be a “religion of the poor.” (PIRIGYI 1990.II:126; BOTLIK 1997:46).

¹² This was primarily a selective historical perspective in which they attempted to link important events of Hungarian history with the history of Hungarian Greek Catholics. More important is the development of the so-called continuum-principle, according to which the Hungarian Greek Catholics were not the descendants of Hungarianized Ruthenians and Romanians but descendants of Conquest-era groups that adopted the Eastern rite. (PUSZTAI 2002:24–25; 2004:215–218; 2005:125). For details on the process, means and goals of Hungarian Greek Catholic identity building, see PUSZTAI 2007.

¹³ The most important of these are two of their national organizations: the National Committee of Byzantine Rite Catholic Hungarians founded in 1898, and the Society of Hungarian Greek Catholics founded in 1902. PIRIGYI 1982:116–117; PUSZTAI 2005:121.

¹⁴ Of these, it is important to mention that in 1896 they celebrated a Hungarian-language Greek Catholic Mass in Budapest. PIRIGYI 1982:114; NIESSEN 1991:50.

¹⁵ The Memorial Book compiled for this occasion intended to introduce the Pope to the history of Greek Catholic Hungarians. For the discursive strategies used in the Memorial Book and the self-definition of the Hungarian Greek Catholic elite of the time, see PUSZTAI 2005.

¹⁶ Tamás Végheő demonstrated that the Hungarian government supported the case primarily to achieve some of its domestic policy goals (VÉGHSEŐ 2003:214–215).

¹⁷ For the struggles preceding the establishment of the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog, see PIRIGYI 1982:108–118; 1990.II:83–120. For the direct antecedents of the founding of the archeparchy, see NIESSEN 1994, VÉGHSEŐ 2013.

¹⁸ Like in the Roman Catholic religion, the use of vernacular language—in this case the Hungarian language—was allowed but restricted to sermons and church singing (PIRIGYI 1990:127, 131; ILYÉS 2007a:737).

which was disappointing to the Hungarian-speaking faithful and clergy, but in practice it did not suppress the use of the Hungarian language. The creation of the archeparchy led to serious struggles with the bishops (mainly the Romanian ones) who objected to the reassignment of certain eparchies, but it often gave rise to hostility among some Roman and Greek Catholic priests, too.¹⁹ The eparchy could not fulfill its role because the peace treaties that ended World War I resulted in the disintegration of the former borders, and some of the Greek Catholics living in historic Hungary became citizens of new countries, where they were reassigned to Romanian and Ruthenian eparchies. In the successor states, measures to counterbalance Hungarian nation-building efforts were introduced, while the linguistic and ethnic affiliation of Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholics led to numerous political and religious conflicts.

GREEK CATHOLICS IN THE PARISH OF CSÍKSZÉPVÍZ

Csíkszépvíz (Frumoasa) is a settlement in the eastern part of Székely Land near the former state line, settled by Székelys, Armenians and Romanians. The Greek Catholic parish of Csíkszépvíz is a *parochia antiqua* according to church schematisms, which means it was probably established in the first half of the 18th century (ILYÉS 1999:6). The parish had 19 filial churches (affiliates), but only 10 settlements had a significant number of Greek Catholics, and relatively few of them lived in Csíkszépvíz. The most compact and most populous affiliates were Kostelek (Coșnea), Bükklok (Făgețel), and Lóvész (Livezi).²⁰ Similarly to counties in Northeast Hungary, statistics show a significant increase in the proportion of Hungarian speakers in the 19th-20th centuries, although there were significant differences between the individual affiliates.

Most of the Romanians that settled in the Csík villages – just as in other parts of Székely Land²¹ – became Hungarianized by the 19th century and socially and economically fully integrated into the majority Székely society, their Romanian origin evoked only by their denominational divergence or perhaps by their Romanian-sounding name (ILYÉS 1998b:286; 1999:6–7). The Greek Catholics living in the mountains, in the cultural contact zone on the eastern periphery of Székely Land,²² were in a completely different position. Mainly due to the geographical isolation and the strict local and religious endogamy of the inhabitants, settlements established on the alpine estates of the Székely villages were until the middle of the 19th century linguistically and ethnically dominantly

¹⁹ In practice, the establishment of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Eparchy did not really change the social status of Greek Catholics, so the faithful continued to abandon the Greek rite – often not in concordance with church law – which caused many disputes over jurisdiction (ILYÉS 1999:9; LUKÁCS 2009:84–91; 2010:76–78). Furthermore, about 40% of Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholics remained outside the new Eparchy, which further complicated the situation (PIRIGYI 1982:133; NIESSEN 1991:51–52).

²⁰ Based on 19th- and 20th-century Greek Catholic Eparchy schematisms (ILYÉS 1999:6; 2003a:20).

²¹ As applied to certain regions and settlements in Székely Land, see HERMANN 1999. Cf. also OLÁH 1993, 1998.

²² Contact zone indicates areas where “the linguistic, folk and cultural interactions of two neighboring linguistic areas, populations or cultural areas are particularly strong”. (KEMÉNYFI 1994:13–14; ILYÉS 1998a:91; 2005:56–57).

Romanian and religiously Greek Catholic. In the second half of the century, this isolation slowly began to ease, and with more people moving in, the number of exogamous marriages growing, and new economic relations with the neighboring Székely villages, communities with different degrees of acculturation were created.²³

In addition to the spontaneous population and language change processes – especially since the end of the 19th century – the Greek Catholic population living in the contact zone, often of a mixed or dual identity, was also subjected to the efforts of the current ethnic-political elite to “tempt or force them to their national side” (ILYÉS 1998a:92). Around the turn of the century, Hungarian state efforts to homogenize and assimilate are marked by various public administrative reorganizations, and, in particular, the establishment of Hungarian-language public schools in border settlements (ILYÉS 1998a:92–93; 1999:11; 2003b:83; 2005:57). As a result, by 1910 the Greek Catholics of mostly Romanian origin had become Hungarian speakers, or at least bilingual, in the affiliates of Csíkszépvíz (ILYÉS 1998b:288–289; 1999:9–10; 2005:65–66; 2007a:739). The local Hungarian authorities have followed the activities of the Greek Catholic priesthood with keen interest in this era, and have tried, as far as possible, to make them serve their own national interests. Withdrawal of state aid from “untrustworthy” priests was typical, and the press provided extensive publicity for the activities of the clergy in assessing their loyalty to the Hungarians, so the local newspapers took on the role of a control mechanism.²⁴

In the decades around the turn of the century, the issue of Hungarian liturgy led to serious conflicts. Even though by the end of the 19th century the majority of the faithful who had become Hungarian speakers no longer understood Romanian liturgy, the growing Romanian national movements instructed the leadership of every parish to insist on its use.²⁵ Nevertheless, several Greek Catholic ministers in Székely Land “preached in Hungarian, and adapted to the mother tongue of their faithful in the liturgy” (ILYÉS 1999:8; 2007b:167). In 1912, 35 mostly Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholic parishes in Székely Land, including Csíkszépvíz, were reassigned to the just established Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog (PIRIGYI 1982:130; GERGELY 1991:110; ILYÉS

²³ Zoltán Ilyés analyzed the effect of exogamy on mother tongue and ethnic identity in three Csík county settlements: ILYÉS 1998b. At the same time, it is important to point out that, unlike the Romanians settling in the Székely-majority villages, the populations living in the alpine settlements were considered strangers not only because of their ethnic origin and religion, but also because of their land tenure (i.e., they did not own land, but rented the alpine areas of the Székelys), which significantly influenced their relationship with the majority society. (ILYÉS 1997:73–75; 1998b:286; 1999:6–7; 2003a:18).

²⁴ For an analysis of these aspirations, as well as the discourse of the county elite and the Greek Catholic priesthood, the priesthood’s compulsion to conform, and the tropes of “nationalist rhetoric” in the contemporary press: Ilyés 2007b. The local intelligentsia also follows a discursive strategy perceptible at the national level; in the press, it tries to distance Hungarian Greek Catholics from the “Romanian” marker, calling them “Greek Catholic Székelys” and even “pure Hungarians” who have adopted the Eastern rite at the time of the founding of the state, and who now suffer under the oppression of Romanian churches.

²⁵ They did so, even though the Archeparchy was well aware that the majority of the faithful in Székely Land were Hungarian-speaking – which is corroborated, for example, by the Greek Catholic schematisms showing the Hungarian and bilingual parishes. At the same time, various statements by Romanian church leaders in the discussions surrounding the establishment of the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog also reference this. LUKÁCS 2010:76–77. In Csík county, there have also been instances where the entire Greek Catholic population of a village adopted the Roman rite, mainly because of the imposition of the Romanian liturgical language. (ILYÉS 1998a:95; 2005:68–69; 2007a:748–751).

2007a:738; LUKÁCS 2010:75–76). The local press reported the “victory of Hungarians” and celebrated the new eparchy for “rescuing” the Greek Catholics of Csík for the Hungarians. (ILYÉS 2007a:740–742). At the same time, the Romanian archeparchy tried to prove the harmfulness of the reassignments, and encouraged the Greek Catholic priests in Székely Land to collect signatures of protest from their faithful that wanted to keep the Romanian liturgical language.²⁶ In response, the local secular elite tried to sideline these “nationally objectionable” Greek Catholic priests,²⁷ filling the vacant parishes with priests that were loyal to the Hungarians.²⁸

The above assimilation and acculturation processes took a completely different direction upon the border changes following the First World War. Transylvania became part of Romania, and a Romanian nation-building that wished to counterbalance the Hungarianizing tendencies of the previous era commenced in the region, trying to put religious life, among others, at its service. The Romanian Constitution, sanctioned in 1923,²⁹ ensured the freedom of religion, in principle, but declared only Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches to be “Romanian” churches, thereby indicating that the members of these two Churches are considered Romanian by the state.³⁰ Under the pressure of the new laws, people throughout Transylvania converted or returned to the Greek Catholic (and Orthodox) religion in great numbers. The Greek Catholics living in the parish of Csíkszépvíz responded to the situation in various ways: while in certain settlements the proportion of those who chose or retained the “Romanian” religion because of economic or other considerations grew, in many communities the assimilation tendencies of the earlier period just reached their end, that is to say, despite the expected disadvantages, they converted to the Roman Catholic or Protestant religion (ILYÉS 1999:11). At the same time, the interpretation of religion as an ethnicizing, classifying category became also more pronounced, which is well illustrated in the denominational and national statistics of the 1930 census in the region I have studied: the majority of the Greek Catholics of Csíkszépvíz who considered themselves Hungarian in 1910 were registered as Romanian speakers and nationalities (ILYÉS 1999:12, 15; 2003a:27–28).

During World War II, in the autumn of 1940, Northern Transylvania was reassigned to Hungary, which once again created a difficult situation for the Greek Catholics in Székely Land. The new state authorities uncritically accepted the earlier Romanian position that correlated the Greek Catholic religion with Romanian nationality (HÁMORI 2007:196). Due to various discriminatory and coercive measures, Greek Catholics, having been deemed unreliable by the state, started abandoning their religion in massive numbers.³¹

²⁶ NIESSEN 1991:11; Rev. Elie Câmpeanu, for example, wanted the faithful of Lóvész and Kostelek to sign a protest against unification with the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog, which, however, failed because of the intervention of Hungarian authorities. (ILYÉS 2003a:26–27; 2007a:743–745).

²⁷ In Csík county, for example, a lawsuit was filed against four priests for “ethnic incitement”. GKPL I.1.a. 85:1912. The case and its antecedents are also mentioned by Zoltán Ilyés: ILYÉS 2007a:743–746.

²⁸ GKPL I.1.a.53:1913; GKPL I.1.a.372:1917.

²⁹ For the full text of the Constitution: *Monitorul Oficial*, No. 282, 29.03.1923.

³⁰ SCHEFFLER 1942:9; LUKÁCS 2010:72–73. The 1928 Religious Act, which classified the Orthodox Church as the dominant church and the Greek Catholic Church as the national church, made conversion to these churches significantly easier.

³¹ For the Székely Land settlements affected by the wave of rite changes, see the map by Zoltán Ilyés (ILYÉS 2005:64).

In the parish of Csíkszépvíz, only a part of the alpine affiliates remained Greek Catholic, while the majority of Byzantine rite Székely villagers converted to the Roman Catholic religion (ILYÉS 1999:12; 2003a:29–30).

After World War II, some of the parishioners returned to their Greek Catholic religion. In 1948, however, during the abolishing of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania, they too had to choose between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches. The outcomes and consequences of these choices varied by settlement, depending on the different effects of the assimilation and acculturation processes presented above, as well as diverse individual motivations (ILYÉS 2003a:30–32). In the following case study, I would like to examine – based on archival sources and my own fieldwork – how and to what extent did the processes outlined here affect the Greek Catholics living in Kostelek, one of the affiliates of the parish of Csíkszépvíz. I focus primarily on the process of language change, the identity-forming role of religion, the role of pastoral care in the lives of the locals, and I present in detail the development of the community between 1940 and 1948.

CASE STUDY: GREEK CATHOLICS IN KOSTELEK IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Kostelek (Coşnea) became a settlement in the 18th century on the alpine estates of Székely villages in Csík, its first inhabitants being probably Moldavian Romanians and Csángós and, in part, Székelys from Csík. (SZÓCS 1999:126; TAKÁCS 2001:37–69; ILYÉS 2003a:12–15). 19th-century censuses reflect the settlement's uniformly Romanian ethnic and Greek Catholic religious character, which, besides the Greek Catholic religion of the majority of those settling here, can be attributed to the very strict endogamy prevailing both in terms of residence patterns and from a religious and cultural point of view, which can be documented up until the second half of the 19th century. Starting in the 1870s, Kostelek became more open in terms of marriage practices. Up to the turn of the century, the number of locally exogamous marriages is high, and until the Second World War, approximately half of the marriage partners came from outside the settlement. These marriages brought mostly Hungarian-speaking or at least bilingual people to the village, some of whom were Roman Catholics (ILYÉS 1998b:287–288; 2003a:22–25). The language change process, which was primarily the result of this, was facilitated by the Hungarian-language state school established in the early 20th century, so much so that according to the data of the 1910 census, the population became completely Hungarian-speaking.³² However, it is apparent from the accounts of the locals that during the period before World War I, the people of Kostelek might have been more bilingual, (ILYÉS 1998b:288; 1999:9; 2003a:25). using both languages in everyday contact, but Hungarian and Romanian speakers diverged based on the language used within the family.

Nonetheless, the religious character of the settlement has only changed very little in this period, the reasons for which can be found in pastoral relations and, in this context, in local customs concerning mixed marriages. Kostelek was an affiliate of the Greek Catholic parish of Csíkszépvíz, but due to the remote location of the settlement, pastoral

³² Source of census data: <http://varga.adatbank.transindex.ro/?pg=3&action=etnik&id=7070> (14.03.2013), cf. Ilyés 2003a:47.

care was quite haphazard even in the first half of the 20th century.³³ The inhabitants of the village built a Greek Catholic church in 1875, but despite petitioning several times along with the inhabitants of the neighboring Magyarcsügés to have an independent parish established in one of the two villages, this never came to be (primarily because of the financial and economic interests of the mother church).³⁴ At the same time, Roman Catholics have also moved to the village over time. However, due to their small number and especially the long distances, no attempt was made to administer and care for their souls up until the end of the 1930s either by the parish priests of Szépvíz or by the nearby Roman Catholic parish of Gyimes; consequently, they integrated religiously into the local community and church registers listed them henceforth as Greek Catholics, even if they did not necessarily change rites as prescribed by church law.³⁵ It is apparent from the sources that the regionally competent Roman Catholic clergy was aware of this practice, but they did not complain, and sometimes even urged the Greek Catholic pastoral care of distant settlements.³⁶

This practice began to change in the early 20th century. The 1910 census and the diocesan schematisms published at the beginning of the century already show Roman Catholics in Kostelek, suggesting that instead of the rite change that had been a common practice, the model of remaining in one's rite also began to gain force among the Roman Catholics settling in the village (ILYÉS 2003a:25). Basically, however, the people of Kostelek insisted on their Byzantine rite, which was an important part of their identity. In concert with other researchers, I think that the most important component of the identity of the people of Kostelek, to this day, is the awareness of their *divergence* from neighboring communities, a local identity that is not necessarily tied to ethnicity.³⁷ At the same time, the other important factor of identification was the Greek Catholic religion, both for the inhabitants of the villages and of the surrounding settlements. Like with other communities in Székely Land, the Byzantine rite was also considered a *Romanian religion* and distinguished from other Catholic rites. Because of the Romanian mother tongue and the Byzantine rite of the majority of the population, the inhabitants of the area considered the people of Kostelek to be Romanian, and they themselves defined themselves mostly as Romanian as well, regardless of their origin or mother tongue.

After the imperial change following World War I, both linguistic and religious fragmentation intensified within the community. These processes are pretty much

³³ In several late 19th- and early 20th-century petitions, the faithful indicated that they only saw a competent Greek Catholic parish priest twice a year, and in the case of death, baptism, or marriage, they could only acquire a priest for a high transport fee. Their school-age children do not receive religious education, so they cannot partake in confession or communion (HMÁL F 685/10. 16–17; HMÁL F 685/10. 76–77).

³⁴ HMÁL F 685/10. 52; HMÁL F 685/10. 69–70

³⁵ This is also indicated by the fact that the Greek Catholic parish register of Csíkszépvíz, which in the villages of Csík usually documented mixed marriages very accurately, has no records of mixed parents in Kostelek until the end of the 19th century. HMÁL F 47/251: *Parish Registers of the Greek Catholic Church of Csíkszépvíz*; (ILYÉS 2003:23).

³⁶ GyÉL bishopric documents 13.1981/1941

³⁷ The people of Kostelek distinguish themselves from the Székelys of Csík, the Csángós of Moldavia and Gyimes, as well as the Romanians of Moldavia, and simply call themselves the *people of Kostelek* or the *people of Patak*, reflecting on the unique character of their culture which differs from each of the above cultures, but also incorporates certain elements of each one. (TAKÁCS 2001:29).

contradictory to what we would expect based on the change of political and power relations and the increasing Romanian nation-building efforts, since, on the local level, this was more related to demographic factors and further changes in language use and language competences. According to the parish registers, between 1921 and 1930, the ratio of mixed, exogamous marriages was significant, and the number of mixed marriages within the settlement increased in comparison with the previous period, indicating an increase in the local Roman Catholic population sticking to their rite (ILYÉS 1999:12; 2003a:27).³⁸ According to recollections, in this period there were more and more Roman Catholics in the village who, on bigger holidays, and especially for confession, preferred to visit their own priest, despite the long distances.

At the same time, the community became perceptibly divided on linguistic grounds, too, for by now there were a good number of people in the village who did not or just barely understood Romanian. While, according to sources, before World War I the people of Kostelek did not – or at least did not always – require the use of the Hungarian language in church ceremonies that would have been possible within the framework of the Eparchy of Hajdúdorog,³⁹ during this period the Hungarian language came to prominence in terms of religious life, too, and the presence of the clergy providing Hungarian-language liturgical services also became important. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Greek Catholic parish priest of Szépvíz went to Kostelek once a month, but in many cases the people of Kostelek sought out the priest of Gyimesbükk, who provided pastoral care to the neighboring Magyarcsügés (Cădărești). While from the mid-1920s Csíkszépvíz was served exclusively by Greek Catholic parish priests that used Romanian as the liturgical language – often described as being “anti-Hungarian” in the recollections – the priest of Gyimesbükk heard confessions of the faithful who requested so in Hungarian, and, if necessary, performed baptismal and funeral ceremonies in Hungarian, too.

Kostelek, remote and difficult to access, was also significantly different from the Székely affiliates of Csíkszépvíz in that very little, if any, of the nation-building efforts of the ecclesiastical and secular elites made their way in here. The locals did not encounter directly the heated debates about Hungarian Greek Catholics that were taking place in the newspapers and public discourse, there were no compulsory rite changes in the village, nor religious or (related) ethnic conflicts within the community. According to the reminiscences of the locals, during the Romanian regime, “*everything remained as it used to be*”, there was no significant change in their everyday lives compared to the previous period. At the same time, the changed aims of state politics had a great impact on the clergy serving in Csíkszépvíz, which in time influenced the life of the people of Kostelek.

In the 1930s, a kind of *pastoral rivalry* began between the parish priests of the two Catholic churches who, until the end of the 1940s, tried various arguments and accusations to enforce their faithful’s belonging to one or the other side with the ecclesiastical and state authorities. In Csíkszépvíz, there used to be some unwritten norms – at times diverging from official regulations – about the coexistence of the different churches: priests of Greek, Roman and Armenian rites often baptized, married and buried each

³⁸ I must agree with Zoltán Ilyés’s conclusion that the interconnection of village endogamy and religious-cultural exogamy may also reference the baptism of some of the children born of mixed marriages from the previous decades in the Roman Catholic faith (ILYÉS 1998b:288).

³⁹ GKPL I.1.a. 443:1942; published in: HÁMORI 2007:219.

other’s faithful;⁴⁰ reciprocally visited each other for the New Year’s blessing of homes; and, in many cases, the question of mixed marriages and the religion of the children born thereof was settled not on the basis of state regulation but on the understanding of the faithful and the two parish priests.⁴¹ The pastoral practices, sometimes different from official regulations, that had evolved over a long period of time first led to conflicts amidst the intensified Romanian national aspirations of the 1930s. Although this cannot be detached from the individual local Greek and Roman Catholic parish priests – it is clear from the sources that both were agile and ambitious people – it was mainly due to the political atmosphere of the era: the priest of the “Hungarian” (i.e., minority) religion became very defensive vis-à-vis the Romanianizing state authority, as if he felt that he had to defend, even “get back” his faithful.

Understandably, this was more of a concern for the inhabitants of the affiliates of Csíkszépvíz, because the mother church and the neighboring Székely villages had fewer Greek Catholics who, moreover, and for the reasons outlined above, often converted to the Roman rite, while the alpine population often stuck to their religion, and many of the Roman Catholics who moved there also converted to it. Besides the local affairs in the strict sense, the rivalry of the two parish priests spiked primarily over the pastoral care of the affiliates and, above all, the “baptisms away”.⁴² The first to call attention to the neglected situation of Roman Catholics living in the affiliates was the Roman Catholic priest of Gyimesbükk. In 1937-38, he reported several concrete cases to the competent parish priest of Csíkszépvíz, where Roman Catholics became Greek Catholics because of their unresolved spiritual care.⁴³ The Roman Catholic priest therefore sought to take the faithful neglected by the representatives of the Roman rite church under his spiritual care, or at least register them. According to his later reports, this was classified as a Hungarianizing, therefore anti-government action in the eyes of the current state authority, and he was repeatedly prosecuted following the allegations of the Greek Catholic priest.⁴⁴

In the dispute between the two parties, the Roman Catholic parish priest was citing church law, while the Greek Catholic priest was citing Romanian state regulations – which put him in a more favorable position in that situation. Instead of the details of this litigation, however, I would like to emphasize the evolution of the perspective of the Roman Catholic parish priest. While in the initial stages of the dispute he complained only of the irregular rite changes of the few Roman Catholics married into the Romanian population of the affiliates,⁴⁵ in 1939, after compiling detailed accounts of the Greek and Roman Catholic records, he wrote to his superiors that a “whole series” of originally

⁴⁰ The relevant entries of the parish registers always include the name and denomination of the officiating priest (HMÁL F 47/251).

⁴¹ GyÉL bishopric documents, 28.208/1941

⁴² “Baptism away” (*elkeresztelés*) is a legal/canonical term that, in a strict sense, denotes the baptism of the children of parents of mixed marriages not conforming to the principle of “gender follows gender”. Since in Kostelek this principle was not followed in the baptism of children born of mixed marriages anyway, in our case, this term refers to its broader meaning of a baptism (or marriage, funeral) performed by a priest of a denomination who, according to current church and/or state law, is not entitled to it.

⁴³ CSP 54/1937; CSP 329/1938

⁴⁴ GyÉL bishopric documents, 10.1021/1940

⁴⁵ CSP 44/1939

Roman Catholic faithful have been “Romanianized” in name and religion as a result of the above-mentioned baptisms away expressly supported by contemporary laws.⁴⁶

The dispute of the two sides took a completely new direction after the Second Vienna Award of August 30, 1940, since the reassignment of North Transylvania to Hungary brought about fundamental changes not only in the lives of the two states involved, but also in the two denominations discussed here. The Greek Catholic parish priest of Csíkszépvíz left in the spring of 1940,⁴⁷ thus, the Greek Catholics of Kostelek were served the following year, whenever possible, by the Greek Catholic parish priest of Gyimesbükk.

Until November 26, there was a military administration in effect in the reassigned areas, and in Kostelek – since the new border was only a few kilometers away – gendarmerie and border patrol offices were also installed. The population of Kostelek, partially Romanian-speaking and largely Greek Catholics, were subjected to extremely violent discriminatory measures by the armed forces. The gendarmerie and military installed in the village viewed the locals with suspicion from the start: they were considered Romanians and therefore untrustworthy. For many, it was a decisive experience in this regard that since the entry of Hungarian soldiers, “no Romanian word could be heard” in the village – for the military and the school teacher demanded that local people speak only Hungarian. But the most dramatic consequence of the changed political power relations and the anti-Romanian public sentiment was the large-scale rite changes of the local Greek Catholics. According to archival data, in October-November of 1940, most of the population reported to the public authorities their conversion to the Roman Catholic rite.

Although there were certainly some Roman Catholic individuals and families who welcomed the change, pretty much all related reminiscences allude to the fact that the majority of the rite changes were forced, since all who intended to remain in the Greek Catholic rite were threatened with being transferred to Romania. The Roman Catholic parish priest of Csíkszépvíz firmly took the spiritual care of the affiliates upon himself: from December 1940 onward, he made great efforts to establish a permanent Roman Catholic ministry in Kostelek.⁴⁸ Naturally, his request aligned with the current goals of Hungarian national politics (which paid special attention to diaspora and border communities), thus, because of the “religious and racial vulnerability” of the people of Kostelek, the ministry outpost (*expositura*) of Kostelek was set up as of January 1, 1942, led by a Franciscan Pater assigned by the procurator for the bishop.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ GyÉL bishopric documents, 28.208/1941

⁴⁷ GyÉL bishopric documents, 28.208/1941

⁴⁸ In this respect, it is worth pointing out the transformation of the discourse on the Kostelek faithful in the wake of this changed political situation: in comparison with his earlier complaints, in the early 1940s the parish priest had already argued that most of the Greek Catholics of Kostelek were people of Hungarian origin from Székely villages, who, because of the difficulties of Roman Catholic pastoral care and the unlawful “baptism away” and re-registration practices of Greek Catholic priests, have over time become Greek Catholics. GyÉL bishopric documents, 28.658/1940; GyÉL bishopric documents, 10. 1021/1940.

⁴⁹ GyÉL bishopric documents, 32.778/1942; CSP 17/1942, 18/1942

Naturally, the Greek Catholic parish priest of Gyimesbükk⁵⁰ could not ignore this: starting in November 1940, he sent a series of complaints to the leaders of both churches about the atrocities, forced re-registrations and the illegal use of Greek Catholic churches in his neighborhoods.⁵¹ The tension between the two parish priests was also compounded by the division of the parishioners. Although officially most of the people of Kostelek were members of the Roman Catholic Church, many regarded the Greek Catholic religion as their own despite the formal policy. The masses of the Greek Catholic parish priest were visited in large numbers; alongside some of the families remaining in the Greek Catholic rite, occasionally families that converted to Roman Catholicism still wanted him to baptize their children or bury their dead, and some would only confess in front of him. Many described the activities of the parish priest of Gyimes in Kostelek as some sort of a secret, almost underground activity: to avoid conflict, the participants often opted to hold the ceremonies at someone’s house, in secret. In addition to the religious divisions, the litigation documents of this time reveal some Greek Catholic – Romanian and Roman Catholic – Hungarian correspondences in the testimonies of the locals who often reported each other by projecting their personal conflicts onto the two denominations (and onto the nations associated with them).⁵² Although in most cases these seem to be more the opinions of the priests of the two denominations “fed” to the parishioners, it is important to note that in the situation of the early 1940s, the correlation of religious and ethnic categories prevailed on the local level as well.

The ecclesiastical-political power relations, however, soon changed radically again, as the end of World War II brought the Romanian administration back to Northern Transylvania. I have very few data from the post-war period, but in any case, there were three important events in the religious relations of Kostelek: 1.) According to the sources, the majority of Kostelek’s rite changers returned to the Greek Catholic faith in the first half of 1945.⁵³ 2.) In 1946, the Roman Catholics commenced the building of a church, which some of the local Greek Catholics had burnt down in a semi-finished state, but the fire was extinguished in time and eventually the work was completed. In my opinion, it is important to point out that the conflicts between the two denominations – formerly merely theoretical-political and perceptible only on the clerical level – had at this point already escalated to blows among the locals, and this event had affected the relationship between the two local churches for years to come. 3.) In December 1948, the government abolished the Greek Catholic Church by decree and transferred

⁵⁰ The story of Viktor Gergely, the Greek Catholic parish priest of Gyimesbükk, is a good example of the 20th-century fate of Greek Catholics in Székely Land: while before the First World War, the county elite referred to him approvingly as a patriotic priest (along with his father, György Gergely, the parish priest of Csíkszépvíz, see ILYÉS 2007a:742, 746-747; 2007b:175), during the Romanian era, he was subjected to a series of attacks by his own church and the press because of his loyalty to the Hungarians, and the returning Hungarian power also considered him a potential enemy because of his being a Greek Catholic priest. All this is revealed in detail in his letters sent in 1942 to the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog (GKPL I.1.a.443:1942, published in: HÁMORI 2007) and from other archival documents. See, for example: GyÉL bishopric documents, 8.208/1941, GyÉL bishopric documents, 28.3515/1942.

⁵¹ GyÉL bishopric documents, 32.778/1942; CSP 17/1942, 18/1942

⁵² See, for example: GyÉL bishopric documents, 10.151/1942; GyÉL bishopric documents, 28.131/1944.

⁵³ GyÉL bishopric documents, 32.778/1942; CSP 17/1942, 18/1942

all its movable and immovable property to the Orthodox Church.⁵⁴ The mostly Greek Catholic inhabitants of Kosteleg were thus faced with a dilemma. Contrary to the other Greek Catholic communities of the parish of Csíkszépvíz in the same position (Lóvész, Bükklok), where the majority of the community became Orthodox (ILYÉS 1999:13; 2003a:30) in Kosteleg, one half of the population became Roman Catholic and the other half Orthodox, so the community was permanently split.

The period following the dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church is described by most like a political campaign: the “recorders” went from house to house and tried to persuade the locals to join one or the other religion. Certainly, there must have been some that they managed to compel to make a decision in this way – through persuasion or intimidation – but in general, people were guided by far more complicated considerations, revealed only in the light of individual life paths and motivations. Although the detailed presentation of these may be a topic of a separate study, it is worth briefly reviewing my relevant data.

For locals not speaking or barely speaking Romanian, an important argument for the Roman Catholic church was the language aspect, which is the same reason Romanian-speaking families became Orthodox without exception. It is an often-repeated story in Kosteleg that some of the confused faithful turned to their former priest, the parish priest of Gyimesbükk, who suggested they “remain Catholic”. This latter aspect, i.e., whether the Orthodox or the Roman Catholic religion is closer to the Greek Catholics – often appears among the arguments of both sides: while the Roman Catholics converted into another Catholic rite, the Orthodox continued to follow their former Eastern rite. The former Greek Catholic church of the village (and the cemetery and rectory) was given to the Orthodox church in 1948. Many have chosen the Orthodox Church simply out of attachment to their temple or to their family tomb. However, the most important factors influencing the decisions regarding religion were kinship and fictive kinship relationships, and different individual or family alliances; the importance of social relationships often overrode individual preferences in denominations. Conversely, some people or groups decided along their conflicts of interest, that is, they chose a denomination not on the basis of positive arguments, but to avoid their nemeses. The choice of denominations, however, has in many cases proved to be disruptive to the former unity of families and kinship networks. Brothers and close relatives choosing different paths in the new situation were going to separate masses, celebrated holidays at different times, buried their dead away from one another, etc., which in many cases led to serious conflicts even among family members who had up until then been on good terms.

Apart from the friction among individuals or within families, the community, as a whole, was not left untouched by the changes either. At the time when the Greek Catholic Church was abolished, an ethnic division based on religion was also established, or rather reinforced: Orthodox people were considered Romanian and Catholics Hungarian (ILYÉS 1997:78; 2003a:30; TAKÁCS 2001:109). The relationship between religious and ethnic identities is, however, much more complicated, and in everyday life it is more about symbolic division, not true interethnic coexistence. Moreover, both religious affiliation⁵⁵ and ethnic identity can evolve and change in the life of a single person, so

⁵⁴ For the full text of the Regulation, see *Monitorul Oficial*, No. 281. 02.12.1948.

⁵⁵ I have addressed the local social practices and norms regarding mixed marriages and religious conversion in a separate study (GYÓRFY 2017).

it can only be described through a detailed analysis of life paths and intra-community distancing practices. All in all, however, the boundaries between denominations can easily be transcended on a day-to-day level: relationships of kinship, matrimony, and godparentage are independent of denominational affiliation, and the interactions of the two religions in both formal and lay religious practice are conspicuous (ILYÉS 2003a:21–22, 30–37). The presentation of the interpretation of religions as an ethnicizing category and of the many other aspects of denominational coexistence, as well as the analysis of the effects of Romanian and Hungarian nation-building efforts observed in the second half of the 20th century and nowadays are beyond the scope of this study.

CONCLUSION

Significant assimilation and language change processes took place among the Greek Catholics of Ruthenian and Romanian origin living in the northeastern and eastern part of historic Hungary during the 18th–20th centuries. Having remained “suspect” and in an intermediate position in public opinion because of their religion, Hungarian Greek Catholics have tried many ways to prove their Hungarianness and to integrate into the majority society. Starting in the second half of the 19th century, the Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholic secular elite sought to communicate the Hungarian *and* Greek Catholic identity and the Hungarian origin of the group with the help of its national organizations and events, and later primarily through the press, to remove the “stigma” of nationality from the group (ILYÉS 2007a:747). Their greatest achievement was the establishment of the Hungarian Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog set up in 1912, which, however, could not fully fulfill its role. On the one hand, despite the positive attitudes of the Hungarian secular elite and the press, the memory of their “foreign” origin prevailed among the Protestant and Roman Catholic Hungarian communities sharing spaces with Greek Catholics, hence many saw the conversion to the religion of the majority society as the only possible way of their social integration. On the other hand, after the First World War, some Greek Catholics came under the jurisdiction of new states, where they continue their identification struggles to this day.⁵⁶

A smaller group of Hungarian Greek Catholics lived in Transylvania, in the mostly Hungarian-inhabited Székely Land. Unlike Transylvanian Greek Catholicism, which played a prominent role in Romanian identity building, the Hungarian secular elite of Székely Land, in concert with national tendencies, attempted to distance the linguistically assimilated Greek Catholics from the Romanians by both practical (Hungarian-language education) and symbolic (media disputes) means. The activities of the local Greek Catholic priesthood were closely monitored, and Romanian-sympathizer priests were dismissed. The establishment of the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog was not able to properly solve the situation of the Hungarian-speaking faithful that professed a Hungarian identity,

⁵⁶ After the First World War, the Archeparchy of Hajdúdorog continued to operate with the parishes that remained in Hungary, as it does today. Although Greek Catholics in Hungary, like the people of the successor states, struggled to have their Hungarianness, their Hungarian and Greek Catholic identity acknowledged (PUSZTAI 2002, 2004), since the end of the Second World War, these two identity elements have been coexisting mostly unproblematically.

and after the First World War, even the former parishes of Hajdúdorog were returned under the authority of Romanian bishops. In Interwar Romania between the two world wars, Greek Catholicism appeared as a “national church”, its followers were considered Romanian irrespective of their mother tongue, and the tendencies of Romanian nation-building continued among them. During the period between 1941 and 1944, Northern Transylvania was reassigned to Hungary. Although the official conception of Hungarian Greek Catholics returned to pre-war positions, in practice, the invading military saw them as Romanians and therefore considered these communities untrustworthy and forced them to convert to “Hungarian” religions (Roman Catholic, Protestant) by various means. Consequently, the early 1940s brought the mass and almost complete abandonment of the rite by Hungarian Greek Catholics in Székely Land.

In the first half of the 20th century, for the Hungarian Greek Catholics in a multiple-minority position, the only way to fully integrate with Hungarians was to abandon their religion, for their religious and linguistic-national identities were incompatible in all political arenas. At the same time, in the case of partially Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholics living in the cultural contact zone of the eastern part of historic Hungary, a kind of double attachment was characteristic (ILYÉS 1999:12–13; 2003a:25–28), which resulted in very diverse routes of identification. Moreover, the identity-building aspirations observable at the level of the ecclesiastical and secular elite did not always reach the level of a local community. To illustrate this, I presented the fate of the Greek Catholics living in Kostelek, one of the affiliates of the parish of Csíkszépvíz.

Of the Greek Catholics in the Greek Catholic parish of Csíkszépvíz, linguistic-cultural assimilation was already advanced in the 19th century among the ones living in Székely villages. Greek Catholics here often established marital relations with Roman Catholics, and from the turn of the century, many of them even converted to the Roman rite. Their integration between the two world wars was stalled (in some communities even reversed), but after 1940, Greek Catholics completely disappeared from these settlements. In contrast, the alpine settlements far away from the mother church were characterized by a kind of seclusion: marriages with those of the Roman rite were rare, and the proportion of Romanian speakers and bilinguals was high. The Greek Catholic religion and a connection to Romanians were an important part of the identity of the people here. During the years of Hungarian sovereignty, some of the Greek Catholics had stayed on these settlements, and after the war, those who had been forced to convert returned to their original rite. In 1948, when the Greek Catholic Church was abolished, most of them became Orthodox.

Kostelek can be placed roughly between these two types. The Greek Catholics living here had a strong connection with the Hungarian villages in the area, there was a large number of marriages with Roman Catholics (most of whom were religiously integrated into the Greek Catholic majority), and before the First World War, speaking Hungarian had basically become the norm in the village. At the same time, a sense of attachment to Romanians remained an important part of the identity of the locals in the largely uniform Greek Catholic community. After World War I, certain linguistic and religious fault lines appeared in the community: on the one hand, Roman Catholics living here became more “visible” because of their increased adherence to their rite; on the other hand, because of changes in language competencies, the presence of the clergy who provide Hungarian-language ecclesiastical services became important to some of the

Greek Catholics of Kostelek. Although locals did not perceive much of this at the time, a kind of rivalry began in the 1930s between the Roman and Greek Catholic priests of the mother church over the pastoral care of the people here. While the Hungarian language and the Greek Catholic religion – deemed Romanian in the perception of locals and neighbors – did not really pose a conflict in the identity of the people of Kostelek, the strife of the local priests disrupted the established traditions of the coexistence and spiritual care of the faithful of different rites. The correspondence of linguistic-national and religious affiliations – perceptible at the state level, too – was becoming more and more prevalent in the conflicts of the rival priests serving the Romanian and Hungarian aspirations of “national strategy.” Although religion and language were not originally indicators of ethnicity in Kostelek and did not cause internal conflicts in the community, in the 1940s, the events presented above and the ethnopolitical ideologies mediated by the local intelligentsia – primarily by the priesthood – reinterpreted local identities and transformed the traditions and norms of coexistence. In the litigations of the 1940s, and then in the religious decisions of the people of Kostelek, one can already distinguish the new contexts of religious and national categories that evolved and further changed in the second half of the 20th century. Although the people of Kostelek were more passive sufferers than conscious participants in the events presented here that forced them to choose religion and identity (ILYÉS 1999:10; 2003a:29), all in all, it can be said that, throughout the 20th century, the attachments and affiliation of the people living here were constantly relativized by the changing context, and it was these different “perspectives” that created the diversity of local identity patterns still observable today.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR ARCHIVAL SOURCES

CSP = Roman Catholic Parish of Csíkszépvíz (Csíkszépvíz / Frumoasa)

GKPL = Archives of the Greek Catholic Archeparchy (Nyíregyháza)

GyÉL = Archives of the Archdiocese and Cathedral Chapter of Gyulafehérvár (Gyulafehérvár – Alba Iulia)

HMAL = Harghita County State Archives – Direcția Județeană Harghita a Arhivelor Naționale (Csíkszereda – Miercurea Ciuc)

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