

# REVIEW ARTICLES

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VILMOS TÁNCZOS

## An Unusual Study of the Csángó

Valentin Stan and Renate Weber,  
*The Moldavian Csango*, 32 p.

On June 16, 1998, at the Szabadság Square headquarters of the Inter-Európa Bank Co., an English-language booklet on the Csángó of Moldavia, by two Romanian authors from Bucharest, was presented in the presence of the President of the Republic of Hungary and representatives of international diplomacy and human rights organizations.<sup>1</sup> The study, of which 3000 high-quality copies were published, was commissioned by the Budapest-based *International Foundation for Promoting Studies and Knowledge of Minority Rights*. The production and printing of the summary was supported by the Inter-Európa Bank Co., which operates the Foundation.

We generally do not expect such summaries to provide new scientific results, but instead we await primarily correct orientation and information through which the publication, in an indirect manner, can contribute to the preservation of minority identities and cultural values. The study at hand is particularly important as it will undoubtedly influence those international political and human rights organizations whose activities affect, or may affect, the Csángó of Moldavia.

Below, I will voice some of my reservations regarding the study by the two authors from Bucharest, foremost in order that I may draw attention to the misinformation it contains, and thus alert public opinion and political elites of such.

### 1. *To Whom Exactly Are We Referring?*

The authors should, before anything else, clearly answer the question of which minority is being studied. The definition of the subject of the study may be approached through classical means (which, in my opinion, could have been utilized in this case), for example, declared identity, linguistic-, religious-, or other culturally-unique traits, the origin of the ethnic group, or geo-historical divisions or definitions. The authors use none of these approaches to state a definitive position, and thus their summary does not shed light upon who exactly the Csángó are. In one passage (p. 8, note no. 4.) they seem to suggest that the Csángó must be sought among the 250,000 Moldavian Catholics, noting that some researchers put their number at 200,000.<sup>2</sup> If this is the case, then they must answer why the remaining Moldavian Catholics are not Csángó, and must address the mother-tongue divisions of those labeled Csángó, in light of their assimilation into Romanian culture. It appears that the authors want to hide the fact that a significant portion of the 200,000 Moldavian Catholics considered Csángó speak Hungarian to this day. According to my own calculations, those Csángó who speak Hungarian (among other tongues), i.e., those who are not fully assimilated, number over 60,000 in Moldavia.<sup>3</sup>

If there exist no Csángó of Hungarian origin, or who speak Hungarian, then there is no linguistic or cultural assimilation to speak of – this is a quite logical consequence of the position of the authors. One of the most significant gaps in the study is that the authors make no mention of the rapid assimilation of the Csángó – be this forced or spontaneous integration – which threatens the unique, if archaic, culture and language of the ethnic group. Naturally, missing is the mention (or admission?) of the fact that this process of assimilation, which is in its final phase, strengthened at the time of the birth of the modern Romanian nation-state, i.e., the second half of the 19th century, and is today not independent of Romanian nationalism.

But if the authors do not wish to acknowledge the existence of Csángó with Hungarian-style traditional culture in Moldavia, then who exactly is the summary about? Which minority is it meant to defend? It appears the answers to these questions is in the chapter on demography, where the authors treat declared identity as an objective and authoritative starting

point. They state that in the 1992 census the majority of Csángó declared themselves to be Romanian, while a smaller portion declared themselves Hungarian, and further, 2165 Romanian citizens were found who claimed they were Csángó (p. 11.). This statement, however, is rather unclear. First, the 2165 individuals claiming to be Csángó were registered in the *area of the entire country*, meaning this number included self-declared Csángó from Transylvania (e.g., from the Gyimes, Hétfalu and the Déva areas, and Csángó who had settled in Transylvanian cities). Thus, according to official data, the number of *Moldavian* Csángó should be even lower. Further, the study does not state how many Csángó claimed to be Magyar, compared to the number of those claiming to be Romanian. To supplement the work of the authors, I add that the 1992 census found 525 Magyar-origin Catholics in the villages of the Moldavian Csángó settlement area. If these two numbers (2165 and 525) are compared to the number of Moldavian Catholics (close to 250,000), then the following quotes from the study must be viewed as misleading: “Generally the Csángó claim to be Romanian (the majority) or Magyar.” (p. 11.) “Populations in other villages are mixed, where some Csángó claimed to be Romanian, while others claimed to be Magyar or Csángó (these latter two groups speak the Csángó dialect).” (p. 18.)

The publication then clouds the fact that the number of those officially claiming to be Magyar or Csángó is quite insignificant. The authors themselves, at one point, note that the credibility (impartiality, reliability) of the census data is questionable (p. 24, note no. 57.), but when trying to define the term Csángó, they use declared ethnic identity as found in the census, and use no other approaches. This leads to a rather rough simplification of the question of Csángó identity, because, as we see, the official 1992 Romanian census – which reports 525 Magyar and two-thousand Romanian (non-Magyar!) “self-confessed” Csángó – practically leads us to the “zero-version”.<sup>4</sup> This official stance is accepted by the authors, which is odd in light of the fact that we would expect something different from a human rights publication. In fact, we might expect such a study to *shed light on the nature of the unique Csángó identity*, and to explain why a significant proportion of Csángó is linked to the Hungarian language and culture, despite the fact that practically the whole of the Csángó identify themselves as Romanian. If only those identifying themselves as Csángó (maximum 2165 persons) or Magyar (525 persons) speak the Moldavian “Csángó dialect”

(i.e., Magyar vernacular), as stated in the study, then how is it possible that folklore researchers and linguists studying Moldavian Catholics have collected such a large mass of Magyar material in recent decades? (It is well-known that Moldavian Csángó folklore has preserved some of the most archaic elements of Magyar folk-poetry. A large number of publications are testimony to these cultural characteristics. To our knowledge, there are to date no publications on Romanian-language Csángó folklore.) If there exists no unique Csángó identity tied to Magyar culture, then how is it possible that a portion of Moldavian Catholics to this day demands Magyar-language education and church services? If we use exclusively the official census data as a starting point, how do we make sense of the fact that while the 1948 Romanian census reported altogether 6618 Magyar-speakers in Moldavia, the Magyar People's Association supported numerous Hungarian schools in Csángó villages?

One of the relevant passages of the publication also presents misleading information: "In the first years of the Communist dictatorship, from 1947-1959, the Magyar Csángó living in Moldavia had Magyar-language education, and were able to practice religion in their mother tongue," write the authors (p. 21.). The Hungarian schools of Moldavia – with the exception of the Lészped school, which was shut down in 1960 – were open only until the summer of 1953, and the majority of them were closed even before then. Religious practice in the mother tongue never existed among the Moldavian Csángó, particularly not under the time noted above, as after 1940, as a counter-effect of the Vienna decision, the opportunity to sing in Hungarian was closed even in the churches of those villages where this practice had survived the anti-Magyar acts of the 1920s and 1930s.

According to the official census, Moldavian Catholics today have completely lost their mother tongue and Magyar-consciousness: this, however, is naturally not the case in reality. *The authors play into the hands of Romanian state-nationalism when they use declared identity of the Csángó as a starting-point and further refuse to acknowledge those linguistic and cultural peculiarities which do not appear in official measurements.*

The publication – which takes the declared identity of the Csángó to be authoritative – neglects to note the widely publicized fact that the 1992 census was preceded in Moldavia by the strong propaganda of the Catholic church. The gist of this is to be found in the false etymology dating back to

the last century, whereby, as the *Roman Catholic* (in Romanian: *romano catolic*) faith actually means *Romanian Catholic* (in Romanian: *român catolic*), the Csángó ought to identify themselves as Romanian. Magyar publicists and researchers were also aware that in certain villages the census data-collectors, without even asking the question, automatically marked everyone as being Romanian in the national identity category. Further, they even refused to mark down certain individuals as Magyar when these census subjects insisted upon it.

The publication makes mention of a dozen or so “Bákó County” villages where, according to the authors, the Csángó speak the “Csángó” or “Csángó-magyar” dialect at home in the family. (p. 18.) In light of the above, this is self-refuting, as the study indicates that the number of those who do not speak Romanian cannot be merely 2000-2500 persons. The “geographic approach” utilized in the study contains what we must consider a “minor” mistake, whereby of the listed villages, four are not to be found in Bákó County: Szabófalva (Săbăoani), Kelgyest (Pildești) and Újfalu (Traian) are in Neamț County, while Jugán (Iugani) is in Iași County. Further, with the exception of one or two elderly individuals, no one in Jugán knows Magyar, and very few speak it in Újfalu. There are, however, a number of villages in Bákó County where Hungarian (or, using the authors’ terminology, “Csángó” or “Csángó-Magyar”) is known and well-spoken, but which were not listed: Trunk (Galbeni), Lujzikalagor (Luizi Călugăra), Forrófalva (Faraoni), Somoska (Șomusca), Csík (Ciucani), Külsőrekecsin (Fundu Răcăciuni), Gajcsána-Magyarfalu (Arini), Lábnik (Vladnic), Szászskút (Sascut-Sat), Frumósza (Frumoasa), Lárguca (Larguța), Gajdár (Coman), Diószeg (Tuta), Szőlőhegy (Pârgărești), Újfalu (Satu Nou), Szitás (Nicorești), and Gorzafalva (Grozăști). These are all villages not mentioned by the authors, but which are well-known by those researching the Csángó.

One of the ideological-tactical premises of Romanian nationalism takes aim at dividing the Magyar ethnic community, and thus nationalism likes to speak of Romanian-Magyars, Seklers, and Csángó. The authors of the study use this ideological approach when they write of the speakers of the “Csángó dialect.” This rather unclear and contradictory term is used to further divide those identifying themselves as Magyar (whose number, as we have seen, is hardly more than 500). They make the following confus-

ing statement: “Those Csángó who identify themselves as Magyar are further divided. One part of them feels they are members of the Magyar minority, while they speak an archaic Magyar language, which we know as the Csángó dialect; others, who also speak this old Magyar language, consider themselves Magyar-origin Csángó.” (pp. 10-11.) On one hand, they acknowledge that the Csángó dialect is a version of old Magyar, yet on the other hand, based on the uniqueness of the “Csángó tongue” – following D. Martinas – they conclude that the language is that of those Romanians who were forcibly Magyarized in Transylvania (pp. 15-16). Whatever the situation concerning the uncertain term, there is no mention in the study of the large number of those officially identifying themselves as Romanian who speak this “Csángó dialect”.

## 2. *The Csángó Past and the Question of Origin*

The authors feel that, from the viewpoint of the protection of minorities and human rights, the origin of a group is irrelevant when we are speaking of the community’s actual civic, political, economic, and cultural rights. (pp. 19-20.) If this were actually the case, it would not make knowledge of the origin and past of the minority redundant, because a completely ahistorical approach would make the understanding of factors defining contemporary identity rather difficult. The authors themselves share this understanding when, in the first half of their study, they write about the minority’s linguistic and ethnic origins, its geo-historical divisions and historical demographic developments, the etymology of the term *Csángó*, etc. As researchers of the Csángó have aimed most of their attention at these ‘traditional’ scientific questions – while very little research has focused on the ‘modern’ problems of the factual existence of Csángó identity – we should expect the authors to state a position based on knowledge of the latest scientific results.

Instead, what is presented to us is a mixed bag of varied scientific and pseudo-scientific stances. The authors attempt to introduce theories on the Csángó ethnicity in both parallel and soma form, but unfortunately they are unable to comfortably navigate through the literature. They know only a portion of credible Romanian and Hungarian scientific results, and they list

refuted romantic theories (e.g. the Kunnian theory of E. Geró and G.D. Ciroeanu, the Turk theory of N. Iorga, or the theory of Atila de Gérando or Jean Tatrosi, who think the Csángó are ancient inhabitants of Moldavia) and newer, completely unscientific theories alongside credible scientific results.

Neutrality and impartiality on the part of the authors is, however, only superficial. It is conspicuous that whatever detail is being discussed, the greatest emphasis and space is given to the points of D. Martinas' infamous book, which the authors introduce with minimal commentary and criticism. (According to the theory, the Csángó were Transylvanian Romanians who were Magyarized while in Transylvania, but only with partial success – explaining the mixed nature of their language – and who, because of national oppression, left in the 17-18th centuries for Moldavia.) The authors do not write one sentence which would distance themselves from this dilettante, nationalistic theory, and in some areas they adopt certain positions of the book without referring to the source.

The Martinas theory is “supported” by the linguistic characteristics of the Csángó dialect, which can be found among Transylvanian Romanians, but not among Moldavian Romanians. As the support of the theory in the study is limited to only some pieces of linguistic data, let's review the argument.

a) One of the pieces of evidence is that in certain Csángó dialects the *sh* sound is pronounced as *s*, while the *zh* sound is pronounced as *oo* (!), which “indicates their non-Magyar origin.” (p. 16)

Magyar linguistics shows that the so-called ‘hissing’ pronunciation (*s* instead of *sh*) is a Magyar linguistic characteristic from the Middle Ages. According to one theory, two forms of Magyar dialect existed in ancient times, one using *s* and the other using *sh*. The existence of the two dialects is indicated, for example, by the related etymologies of *sző-sővény*, or *szőr-sőrény*. The inhabitants of Middle Ages Moldavian Magyar villages – the northern and southern Csángó – carried with them the *s*-dialect, whose traces are to be found not only in Moldavian Magyar, but in Slavonian and Burgenland Magyar as well, i.e., they are preserved in the most archaic linguistic islands of the Magyar language. Thus, the study's position that this characteristic is not to be found in the Hungarian language is untrue. The replacing of *sh* with *s* is not found as characteristic of Romanian

Transylvanian dialects – refuting the position of the authors – not even in Bânság or Oltenia. (p. 16.) This unique Csángó characteristic is thus one of the pieces of evidence supporting the theory of the Middle Ages Magyar origin of the Csángó.

The pronunciation of *zh* as *oo* (!) (Ibid.) is characteristic of neither Moldavian Csángó-magyar nor Transylvanian Romanian dialects. Such a phonemic twist would go against the very nature and laws of phonemics, and is a linguistic impossibility. (The study does not provide any examples of this occurrence.) It appears that this is a case of the sloppy handling of sources, as the Romanian linguist Mircea Borcilă did write a study reporting the pronunciation of *sh* as *s*, and of *zh* as *z* (and not *oo*!). (Un fenomen fonetic dialectal: rostirea lui *s* ca *s* și a lui *j* ca *z* în graiurile dacoromane. Vechimea și originea fenomenului. *Cercetări de lingvistică*, X. 1965. 2.) D. Martinas did not even get the title of this study right (he was the first to see *zh* as *oo*, in his well-known book; p. 175.), and by following his footsteps, the Bucharest authors have made the same mistake.

b) Another piece of “evidence” supporting the relationship of the Csángó tongue to Transylvanian Romanian is based not on sound, but on lexicology and morphology, whereby the Csángó has “preserved some Transylvanian archaisms.” (p. 16.) The authors of the study use only one example to support this: the word for “brother-in-law” in Csángó is *ler*, which derives from the Latin word *levir*, which – with the exception of Csángó – “is extinct in all Romanian dialects,” including Transylvanian (Ibid.).

The Csángó word *ler* is very well known in both Magyar dialects and in the historical Magyar tongue. Following Dezső Pais, Magyar linguistics – including all the Academic publications and dictionaries – indeed traces the origin of the word to the Latin *levir*, meaning ‘husband of the older sister or of the mother’s aunt’, which was directly transplanted into the Magyar language of the Middle Ages. The first written instance of the work is from 1395, in the Beszterce Glossary. (To avoid misunderstanding: the glossary was found in Beszterce, but its origin has nothing to do with Transylvania.) Other historical Magyar sources are from 1405 (Schlagli Glossary), 1418 (János Rotemburgi, Magyar Linguist), 1570 (will of Ferenc Petőpolyai Tyukovit Horvát, captain of Eger, in *Régi*



*Magyar Nyelvenlékek*, II. 216.), 1572 (Zsélyi Glossary), and other sources from the beginning of the 16th century (Peer Codex, Leveles Tár I.).<sup>5</sup> The only dialect to have kept this word (in the form *rer*, which also means ‘brother-in-law’) outside of Moldavia is the Slavonian.<sup>6</sup> It is then appropriate to ask the question: how can one single word constitute the evidence of the Romanian origin of the Csángó ethnic group, especially given that it is not found in any Romanian dialects or Romanian historical sources, but has existed for centuries in versions of the Magyar language? One piece of evidence does not make for scientific evidence. This is especially the case for a false piece of evidence.

The most respected Magyar linguists (Gábor Szarvas, Bernát Munkácsi, Mózes Rubinyi, Bálint Csűry, Attila T. Szabó, Gyula Márton, Loránd Benkő, György Wichmann from Finland) have studied the Moldavian Csángó dialect, and they all expressed their positions in professional scientific journals. It is thus impossible to understand why the study makes uncritical references to a dilettante Romanian nationalist propaganda publication (D. Martinas) but makes no references to the work of the scientists listed above.

There are, further, several Romanian authors who have studied Moldavian Catholics, whose names are not to be found in the study. Without claiming to be comprehensive, I list a few, in order of the dates of their publications, whose ideas I would gladly have read in such a summary: D. Cantemir, G.I. Lahovari, Gh. Rosetti, C. Auner, C.I. Filitti, R. Căndea, Gh. Năstase, Gh. Călinescu, Gh. Moisescu, P. Râmneantu, C.C. Giurescu, M. Crăciun, etc.

### 3. *How Should We Handle Historical Sources?*

The authors do not feel it is justified to use the term *Csángó-magyar* to describe *Moldavian Catholics*. They state that throughout history this ethnic group has been bilingual, i.e., that it has always used the Romanian and Magyar languages equally. “It is an old confusion to mix the Moldavian Catholics with the Magyars. The two terms, to a certain degree, naturally overlap, as all the Csángó (who are considered Magyar by many authors) are Catholic. But the great portion of Moldavian Catholics are Romanian,

and it was this way quite some time ago as well” – claim the authors in note no. 29 (p. 14.). They try to support their position with a historical piece of data, a passage from a report by an Italian missionary named Del Monte, written in 1671. The text is paraphrased as follows: “For example, in 1671, the Italian missionary Del Monte showed that the mother tongue of the Moldavian Catholics was Romanian, adding that the Magyar language was also necessary.” (Ibid.) As this is one of the key sentences of the study, it is worth quoting the original Italian text: “...7. La Provincia di Moldavia, subiace al domino di un Prencipe della natione Vallacha; ma tributario al Turco. 8. Che linguaggio vi sij necessario. Il Vallacho e proprio il nativo; ma perche anco in detta provincia vi sono dei Ungheri, ancora vi e necessario la lingua Ungarica.”<sup>7</sup> In English: “...7. Moldavia’s ruler is from the Romanian nation, and pays taxes to the Turks. 8. The country’s language is Romanian, while, given that Magyars also live here, the Magyar language is necessary as well.” Therefore, the source referred to makes no mention of the mother tongue of Moldavian Catholics being Romanian, but instead refers to the use of the Romanian language *over the entire province* (la Provincia di Moldavia), noting that given the presence of Catholics, knowledge of the Magyar language is also necessary.

In a similar manner, the authors misinterpret a passage from another report on Moldavia from 1781, which reports to Ignác Batthyáni, the Bishop of Transylvania, that the “Csángó-Magyars” (!) speak a unique style of Magyar. The term “*multo blesus*” in the original Latin refers to the “hissing” dialect of the Csángó (recall the pronunciation of *sh* and *zh* as *s* and *z*), and can in no way be interpreted as saying that the Moldavian Catholics speak poor Hungarian because their mother-tongue is Romanian. (p. 15.) The latin term means hissing, or lisp. The ‘missionary’ traveling through Moldavia thus was able to distinguish between the archaic Moldavian Magyar and the common Transylvanian Magyar dialects, which is natural, given that the person at hand is the Sekler Catholic parish priest Peter Zöld, who hid in Moldavia for four years after the Madéfalva Sekler murder (1764), and who, in his report commissioned by the Bishop, stated his position that Magyar priests should be sent in the place of Italian missionaries to the Moldavian “Csángó-Magyars”.<sup>8</sup>

Referring to refugees from Transylvania in the 17th and 18th centuries, the authors make a baseless claim that “the majority were Csángó, but some were Sekler.” (note no. 29.) With this they try to indicate that beside the Catholic Seklers, “Csángó” Romanian Catholics also arrived in Moldavia. However, historical sources of the time make no reference to Catholic Transylvanian Romanians before the religious union at the beginning of the 18th century, nor do they make mention of the need for Transylvanian Romanians who had taken on the Greek Catholic faith to escape to Moldavia. As historians have shown, the religious union – just as the establishment of the border guard at the end of the 18th century – was an opportunity for the social and spiritual development of the Transylvanian Romanian serfs.<sup>9</sup>

While the publication – unconvincingly – uses the misinterpretation of historical sources to show the historic presence of Moldavian Romanian Catholics, it does not mention that a mass of data from these same sources shows that from the 17th to 19th centuries, Moldavian Catholics insisted on having priests who spoke Magyar, and that the *De Propaganda Fidei* organization in Rome wanted to send Transylvanian Franciscans instead of foreign missionaries to Moldavia. Data indicating the above is to be found in the following 17th century documents, just to name a few: the letters of the Bákó, Tatros, and Románvásár Catholics to the *De Propaganda Fidei* congregation in 1653<sup>10</sup>, the request of Tatros to the visiting Archbishop of Bandinus in 1648<sup>11</sup>, the Magyar language complaint of Szabófalva and surrounding villages to the same organization in 1671<sup>12</sup>, the requests of Csöböröcsök to the Jesuit missionary Pál Beke in 1644, and to the ambassadors of Ferenc Rákóczi in 1706.<sup>13</sup>

These sources have been published in volumes edited by Romanians – foremost in the four-volume collection of the *Diplomatarium Italicum* series from 1925-1939. Antal Horváth, a parish priest of Csángó descent, recently published a Romanian-language collection of documents (*Strămoșii catolicilor din Moldova* (Sf. Gheorghe: 1994)) which presents basic and significant documents pertaining to the history of Moldavian Catholics. This publication was not used at all by the authors of the study.

#### 4. *How Should We Use Historical Data?*

The use of demographic data is also rather selective. In the chapter on demographics, the authors use only post-1930 census data, and they do not note that according to the 1859 Romanian census, 86.6% of the Catholic population of Bákó County (22,426 of 25,896 Catholics) and 94.6% of the Catholics population of Roman County (14,736 of 15,588 Catholics) identified themselves as Magyar.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, in the middle of the 19th century, the ethnic proportions of the two large Csángó masses were comparable to those in Sekler country, given that the vast majority of Catholics saw themselves as Magyar, according to the data of the Romanian census.

Unfortunately, the next Moldavian census, conducted in 1899, did not examine mother-tongue and ethnicity. But the shortcomings of the census are somewhat compensated for by the five-volume *Marele Dicționar Geografic al României* (Romanian Grand Geographical Dictionary), published between 1898 and 1902, which is a well-edited scientific piece, and which presents ethnic data from official sources by locals. Based on the demographic data in the volumes, we can conclude that the number of Moldavian Catholics declaring themselves as Magyar dropped in the second half of the 19th century, but was still very significant.<sup>15</sup> This fundamental Romanian source book was not used in the study, as knowledge of the official 19th century Romanian data would have forced the authors to conclude that the earlier spontaneous assimilation of the Moldavian Magyar Catholics sped up as a result of the assimilation policy of the modern Romanian state established at the end of the 19th century.

The census data used in the study, from 1930, 1956, and 1977 (pp. 12-13.), must be handled with care, as the authors did not note that the borders of administrative territories shifted between census years, therefore demographic data from various geographical areas cannot be compared across time. (e.g., the provincial boundaries of 1956 cannot be compared with the county boundaries of 1977; the 1977 and 1992 census reports list a part of the Gyimes Catholic Csángó among Moldavian Catholics, which had not been the case previously. The statement that in 1977 only 3813 people declared themselves as Magyar in Bákó county can only apply to

Moldavian Csángó if we subtract the 3000-person Catholic population of the Gyimesbükk community, as well as the county's Magyar Calvinist residents.)

The selective use of demographic data means attention is diverted away from those assimilation processes which have taken effect on the Moldavian Magyar ethnic group since the middle of the 19th century. These processes are in rather advanced stages today, to the point where currently only one-quarter of the Csángó understand and speak (to varying degrees) their ancient mother-tongue.<sup>16</sup> In order to stress the ratios of the process (which is unacknowledged by the study), I present the following table, showing the development of the Csángó's numbers.

The table clearly shows that the number of Moldavian Catholics increased almost five-fold between 1859 and 1992 (from 52,881 to 240,038), and that their proportion within the larger population also grew: while in the middle of the 19th century they constituted four percent of the Moldavian population, their proportion in the province today is six percent. This population increase is particularly worthy of attention given the increase in population of other Moldavian groups and the exodus of 65,000 Csángó over the past few decades.

At the same time it is clear that in the studied time the Magyar-origin Csángó – at least according to the census data – have completely lost their mother tongue and Magyar identity. In the middle of the previous century 71.6 percent of them (37,825 of 52,881 Catholics) declared themselves to be Magyar, while today only 0.8% (1826 of 240,038 persons) does so. If we note the geographic distribution of Moldavian Catholics in 1826, we see that the census found 1301 Magyar Catholics in the cities, while the number of Catholics declaring themselves as Magyar in villages was altogether 525 (excluding Gyimesbükk, which was later annexed to Moldavia). Therefore, according to census data, *the number of Magyars in Moldavian Csángó villages dropped to about 500 at the end of the 20th century.*

*The Number and Proportion of Moldavian Magyars  
According to Official Romanian Census Data:*

(1 = year of data collection; 2 = total population; 3 = number of Catholics; 4 = proportion of Catholics within the total population; 5 = number of Magyars; 6 = proportion of Magyars within the total population; 7 = proportion of Magyars among Catholics; 8 = data sources, all from census)

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1859	1 325 406	52 881	4,0 %	37 825	2,9 %	71,6 %	f.c. <sup>17</sup>
1899	1 848 122	88 803 <sup>18</sup>	4,8 %	24 276 <sup>19</sup>	1,3 %	27,3 %	f.c. <sup>20</sup>
1912	2 139 154	97 771 <sup>21</sup>	4,6 %	—	—	—	f.c. <sup>22</sup>
1930	2 433 596	109 953	4,5 %	23 894 <sup>23</sup>	1,0 %	21,7 %	f.c. <sup>24</sup>
1941	2 769 380	—	—	9 352 <sup>25</sup>	0,3 %	—	f.c. <sup>26</sup>
1948	2 598 259	—	—	6 618 <sup>27</sup>	0,3 %	—	f.c. <sup>28</sup>
1956 <sup>29</sup>	2 991 281	—	—	8 829 <sup>30</sup>	0,3 %	—	f.c.
1966 <sup>31</sup>	3 391 400	—	—	4 748 <sup>32</sup>	0,14 %	—	f.c.
1977 <sup>33</sup>	37 63 211	—	—	3 276	0,09 %	—	f.c.
1992 <sup>34</sup>	4 079 046	240 038	5,9 %	3 098 <sup>35</sup>	0,08 %	0,8 %	f.c. <sup>36</sup>

The authors not only *cloud the processes of assimilation* which are clearly visible in the official statistics, they also refuse to inform international public opinion of current assimilation, as they are unwilling to acknowledge the unique Csángó identity as described above.

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To summarize, I evaluate the publication as follows:

1. The authors have incomplete and superficial knowledge of the literature on the Csángó and the Moldavian ‘field’ and thus suffer from insecure orientation.

2. The reliability of the data in the publication is decreased by the inaccurate and incautious handling of sources (e.g., missionary reports, census data) and the refusal to critique references (recall the inaccuracy of the quoted Csángó linguistic ‘data’).

3. The listing of the most varied views, without taking a stand, results in a clouding of the issues, which means that an under-informed reader, who may be reading of the term ‘Csángó’ for the first time, *will not receive answers to basic and expected questions*: what is the origin of the ethnic group? how many people speak the Csángó language? how is this language related to the Magyar and Romanian languages? to what degree is the community assimilated? what are the most important cultural characteristics of the group? how are language use and ethnic identity related? etc.

The most surprising aspect is that the infamous fallacies of one of the leaders of the Romanian legionnaire movement, D. Martinas, is used over and over again as if it were the Romanian scientific position (pp. 15-16.), and is never refuted, even though this theory is not supported by any other Romanian researchers.<sup>37</sup> (The book was published in 1985, at the time of the Ceaușescu-period’s frenzy, and its contents are deemed scientific only by the most unscientific nationalist propaganda publications.) In truth, Romanian researchers do not have a consensus view of the Csángó. Some agree or partially agree with Hungarian researchers concerning the question of origin (D. Cantemir, A.D. Xenopol, C. Auner, Gh. Rosetti, Gh. Năstase, etc.). The names of these researchers are either unmentioned, or mentioned just rarely, by the Romanian authors. It is unfortunate, for example, that Gh. I. Nastase’s 1935 piece is not mentioned in the study, in which the author reports results matching with those of Gábor Lükő regarding the origin of the Csángó and their geo-historical divisions.<sup>38</sup> (Because of this study, his name was left off the Romanian historians lexicon.<sup>39</sup>)

4. At several points, the study leads one to conclude that the ‘impartial’ handling of sources is purposefully causing confusion: *by presenting ‘information’ in the way it does, the study serves Romanian nationalist interests striving to assimilate the Csángó*. I find it unfortunate that many people – because of their lack of orientation – did not notice this.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Valentin Stan and Renate Weber, *The Moldavian Csango*, p. 32.
- <sup>2</sup> Among such researchers, they mention *James Kapalo*, whose name is mis-spelled throughout the study, as James Kapdo. (J. Kapalo, a British citizen, is, to my knowledge, of partial Hungarian descent.)
- <sup>3</sup> See Vilmos Táncoz, "Hányan vannak a moldvai csángók?," *Magyar Kisebbség, Új folyam*, III. évf. 1-2., pp. 370-390. An English translation of this piece, with a map appendix, was published (100 copies) by the Teleki László Foundation. Vilmos Táncoz, *Hungarians in Moldavia* (Budapest: Teleki László Foundation, Institute for Central European Studies, 1998).
- <sup>4</sup> Professor Vladimir Trebici, president of the Romanian Academy's Demography Committee, writes the following in one of his studies: "According to some Magyar sources their [the Csángó's] number is between 50-100,000. Yet the 1992 census recorded only 2100 Csángó, who were found under the "other nationalities" category." Vladimir Trebici, *Revista de cercetări sociale*, Anul 3., 1996, 1., p. 110.
- <sup>5</sup> See Jolán Berrár and Sándor Kárloy, *Régi magyar glossarium* (Budapest: 1984), p. 592, and Gábor Szarvas and Zsigmond Simonyi (eds.), *Magyar Nyelvtörténeti Szótár II.* (Budapest: 1891), p. 1417.
- <sup>6</sup> See Gábor Szarvas, "A slávoniai tájészolás," *Magyar Nyelvőr*, 5. évf., 1876. p. 12; József Balassa, "A slávoniai nyelvjárás," *Magyar Nyelvőr*, 23. évf., 1894, pp. 307-08; Olga Penavin, *Szlavóniai (kórógyi) szótár* (Újvidék: 1978), p. 27; Réka J. Lőrinczi, *A magyar rokonsági elnevezések változásai* (Bük: 1980), esp. pp. 77, 80, 88-92, 209.
- <sup>7</sup> Kálmán Benda (ed.), *Moldvai csángómagyar okmánytár* (Budapest: 1989), p. 641. Also in Gh. Călinescu, "Alcuni missionari cattolici italiani..." in *Dimplomatariu Italianicum I.* (Roma: 1925), p. 109.
- <sup>8</sup> Péter Zöld wrote of his Moldavian experiences in two pieces. The first was written in 1780, and was published in 1783 in Pozsony in János Molnár's volume entitled *Magyar Könyvház*. The German translation is to be found in *Ungarisches Magazin*.
- <sup>9</sup> See István Imreh, *Látom az életem nem igen gyönyörű: A madéfalvi veszedelem tanúkihallgatási jegyzőkönyve* (Bük: 1994), pp. 15-18; László Makkai, *Magyar-román közös múlt* (Budapest: 1987), pp. 885-89, 1032.
- <sup>10</sup> Kálmán Benda (ed.), *Moldvai csángómagyar okmánytár* (Budapest: 1989), no. 87, pp. 495-508. The translation of the details of the Románvásár letter is available in Antal Horváth, *Strămoșii catolicilor din Moldova: Documente istorice. 1227-1702* (Sf. Gheorghe: 1994), pp. 95-96.
- <sup>11</sup> *Okmtár* no. 76, p. 366.
- <sup>12</sup> *Okmtár* no. 119, pp. 667-69; Horváth, op.cit. pp. 113-15.



- <sup>13</sup> *Okmtár* nos. 56 and 141; Horváth, op.cit. pp. 62-63.
- <sup>14</sup> *Population de la Moldavie*, 1859 (București) (Populațiunea după naționalitate și cult). See Mihály Szadabos, "A moldvai magyarok a román népszámlálások tükrében," in Gy. Kiss (ed.), *Magyarságkutatás: A Magyarságkutató Intézet Évkönyve* (Budapest: 1989), pp. 89-102.
- <sup>15</sup> According to the calculations of Mihály Szadabos, in the 31 Magyar-inhabited communities of Bákó and Román counties noted in the *Nagy Földrajzi Szótár*, the proportion of Magyars in the last four decades of the 19th century went from 89.6% to 71.1%, thus "in 35 years, one-third of ethnic Magyars became Romanian." (Szadabos, *Ibid.*)
- <sup>16</sup> See the data in my study, footnote #3.
- <sup>17</sup> Szadabos, 1989, p. 91.
- <sup>18</sup> One part of them – at least 15,000 persons – are foreign (see the 1912 data).
- <sup>19</sup> The *Marele Dicționar Geografic al României* counts this number of Catholics as having Magyar as their mother-tongue in the 19 communities of Bákó county and 12 communities in Román county. (Szadabos, 1989. p. 94.) Others with Magyar as their mother-tongue lived in some other villages as well (e.g., the Catholic villages around Aknávávár), whose Magyar populations are not mentioned in the dictionary. Based on local experiences, these settlements – which are often completely Magyar – are marked accurately by Pál Péter Domokos (Domokos, 1938. pp. 304-08.) In the majority of these villages the Magyar language is alive even today. Thus, the number of native Magyar speakers at the turn of the century was larger than that stated in the dictionary.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> Of these, 77,227 are Romanian citizens (3.6%), 19,429 are foreign citizens (0.9%, of which there are 8,226 Hungarian citizens, i.e., 0.4%), 1103 have no citizenship (0.1%), while 12 are of unknown citizenship (0.0%).
- <sup>22</sup> Source: I. Scarlatescu, *Statistica demografică a României: Extras din Buletinul Statistic al României*. 1921, Nr. 6-7. 55. 70.
- <sup>23</sup> According to mother tongue. When using nationality, 20,964 residents were found to be Magyar.
- <sup>24</sup> Source: Manuila, 1938.
- <sup>25</sup> According to ethnic origin.
- <sup>26</sup> *Recensământul general al României din 1941 6 aprilie. Date sumare provizorii* (București: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1944), XI.
- <sup>27</sup> According to mother tongue.
- <sup>28</sup> A. Golopenția and D.C. Georgescu, *Populația Republicii Populare Române la 25 ianuarie 1948. Rezultate provizorii ale recensământului*. Extras din Probleme Economice. 1948. Nr. 2. 38.

- <sup>29</sup> According to the 1992 public administration boundaries, excluding Suceava county and Gyimesbükk.
- <sup>30</sup> According to nationality. The number based on mother tongue would be 15,000. (Using 1992 public administration boundaries, available data for 1956-1977 is based on nationality. Mother tongue data in 1956 and 1966 is based on the county boundaries of the time.)
- <sup>31</sup> According to the 1992 public administration boundaries, excluding Suceava county and Gyimesbükk.
- <sup>32</sup> According to nationality. The number based on mother tongue would be 7,000.
- <sup>33</sup> Excluding Suceava county and Gyimesbükk. The number of Magyars according to nationality.
- <sup>34</sup> Excluding Suceava county and Gyimesbükk.
- <sup>35</sup> According to nationality. (The number based on mother-tongue would be 3,118). Of these there are 1,826 Roman Catholics.
- <sup>36</sup> Source: *Recensământul populației și locuințelor din 7 ianuarie 1992. Structura etnică și confesională a populației*. București, Comisia Națională pentru Statistică, 1995.
- <sup>37</sup> The newest of these is a recently published volume: Bucur Ioan Micu, *Încercări violente de maghiarizare a "ceangăilor" români. 1944-1997* (București, 1997).
- <sup>38</sup> Gh. I. Năstase, "Ungurii din Moldova la 1646 după "Codex Bandinus", *Arhivele Basarabiei VI*. 1934. 397-414 and VII. 1935. 74-88.
- <sup>39</sup> Ștefan Ștefănescu (ed.), *Enciclopedia istoriografiei românești* (București: 1978).