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EMIGRATION TO AMERICA FROM THE CENTRAL PART OF THE ZEMPLÉN

(Sketch for the ethnographic problems of economic emigration
at the beginning of the century)

(Abstract)

The complex problem of connection of different cultural systems has gained special interest in the ethnographic research of Hungary. The best reproach to changes caused by the contact is given by the notion *acculturation*, a special case of which is provided by the analysis of economic emigration at the beginning of the century. For the ethnographer the emigration and the remigration mean two sides of a special migrational phenomenon. The transmigrants and their culture are influenced far from their homes or even on an other continent. To ensure their vital conditions their aim is to integrate with the receiving society with the least possible disagreement. This way the culture of the social groups, on the broadest scale, get in contact with each other. The most pregnant representation of the total contact between different cultures is the immigration. In this case the cultural systems meet on their total surface, thus in the first phase of the acculturation the context of the emigrants' culture changes. In case of those who do not want to return the later development of the acculturation process deserves attention, the last phase of which may reach the cultural assimilation as well. Those who return meet the circumstances of their starting point. From the aspect of the Hungarian research the remigration and the problem of re-adaptation

arising from it seem to be the most interesting subjects. The cultural re-adaptation means less conflicts among the cultural touches, and the most important question will be *what influence* had emigration caused in the life and the cultural tradition of the people. These are special material and mental influences, appearing first of all among the active participants of the migrations, but is present in the receiving community, too. Thus the total emigration-remigration process contains double cultural influence, the complex phenomenon of accommodation: on one hand to the new social-cultural conditions, on the other hand to the left, earlier circumstances. The notion of acculturation is capable to express the moments of the special movement of people present in the emigration, and its different phenomenons can be understood as different phases of the acculturation process.

Very complex source material had to be used for the study of emigration so far in time from the people of our days. The bases of the study are provided by the personal recollections, being more and more difficult to collect. This group of sources is to be completed with indirect data which have become largely confused due to the contemporary articles, actual political analyses, reports, later historical analyses, scientific studies. A special difficulty arises from the fact that in Hungary at the time of the emigrations no ethnographic descriptions were made, and only slight interest was paid even later towards this phenomenon.

The reproach of the appointed theoretical tasks could be realised in the paper only partially. The study is based on the material collected in some villages of the Zemplén mountains in North-East Hungary, and it was completed, as mentioned earlier, with secondary data, such as the articles of contemporary papers about migration. The villages (see: footnote 9.) in question belonged to the former Abaúj-Torna and Zemplén counties (now: BorsodAbaúj-Zemplén county); they were in the centre of emigration showing the greatest intensity of emigration. According to *statistical* calculations made after the critical analysis of statistical evaluations the emigrants of the two counties gave 13% of the national emigration to America between 1899 and the 1st World War. In accordance with the data the remembrance of the emigrations is still living. The remigration ratio is similarly high: they constitute somewhat more than the 10% of the cca 450 thousand remigrants of the country. Thus the study of the territory can yield such a representative material which is valid not only for the given territory but also indicates tendential movements in the country.

We endeavour to give a unilateral system of the complex and manifolded problems of causes of emigration on the basis of *G. Germani's* theoretical model. Modifying the model to a slight degree, three main aspects are to be viewed to reveal the causes of emigration: 1. *objective* (objective, economic-social push and pull forces, the system between the mother country and the receiving country that mediated the push and pull forces: the emigrational routes, the correspondance, the agents etc.); 2. *cultural* (migrational tradition developed in the traditional peasant life being characteristic of the given territories, and the disintegrational process caused by the slow capitalisation); 3. *subjective aspects* (personal reasons of emigration: e.g. illegal marriage, wish for land, fleeing from military service, thirst for adventure etc.). From the three constituents it can be told that the *emigration unfolded in course of the mutual influence of objective push and pull forces through the sieve of the norms and values defined by the culture of the communities, from personal decision.*

The main aim of the emigrants, the material enrichment, determined their way of life and actions. For those, who planned to return, the New World meant but a new possibility for work, and the need of total adaptation to a new society and culture did not arise. The

emigrants of the territory of Zemplén, as it was generally the practise, settled in the eastern industrial centres of the US, where they went on for jobs which were hard, thus paying much, and did not need special technical knowledge. There were some people only, who dealt with agricultural work, since permanent settlement was against their original plans. In the newmilieau the emigrants turned inside, and endeavoured to keep the home relations. The most significant help was provided by the different forms of community life. Its most important form was the "burdos" (*boarding*) system. The societies, religious organisations also had importance helping the everyday life of the emigrants through their well determined ethnical feature. Thus the first generation of the emigrants had no closer connection with the receiving society and its culture. The cultural-social differences were so great that the first generation, especially those, who spent just a short time in America arrived but to the door of the acculturation process, and leaving the process could return with actually unchanged culture.

The influence of the emigration movement on the home peasant life can be divided into two great groups. One is the direct *material* influence, the other is the uncertain, not well, detectable *mental* influence. The material influence is doublefolded: there were people, who returned without success (or did not return at all), for whom emigration meant more outlet, debt; the majority of those who returned strengthened, more or less, financially, sometimes could save up considerable amount of money. The American money was used for buying land, building houses. The new houses were larger and moderner, and the ones covered with tile were called "amerikás" (*American*) houses. They modernised agriculture as well, sometimes bought machines. The bravest emigrated more than once (even 10-15 times) to develop their farm. The better life mirrored back on the persons as well, even if only for a short time, in the American suit. Beside money and suits they brought smaller objects, among which generally only the religious ones have been preserved. Thus the material influence of the emigration is the financial increase even if it is not valid for all the emigrants, and did not cause significant financial or social change.

The re-adaptation to the home milieau was easier than adaptation to the American circumstances. As they left their peasant life just for a short time the return did not cause break. The mental and cultural change appeared just in minor cases. Returning from the American community life they became independent peasant farmers again. This is the cause why the returners felt themselves free and independent. The American speed of work made them busier. In the everyday connections they showed up the selfestimation of the man that had seen the world. The American atmosphere, being more democratic than the Hungarian one, has been preserved in traces up till now, but its conflict can be felt only in case of children who were born and educated in America till their return to the mother country. The returners often used English words and idioms, some of which have been preserved. They kept up their interest in the American life, and America became built in the consciousness not only of the emigrants but through them in the countrymen, too.

Acculturation changes, according to this, were not significant in time, they reached just some elements of the culture and not the whole system. The weakening of the memory of the emigration was hastened by the 1st World War and the series of changes following it. In the same time the phenomenon of emigration plaid its role, beside other factors, in the disintegration process of the traditional peasant culture. This role is to be considered, but never as the basic factor of the disintegration process.

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