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Several sciences and disciplines have proven that the deepest cultural borderline inside Europe is drawn between the Eastern and Western Christianity. This line starts from Northern Europe, Eastern Finland, from the succession states of the former Soviet Union and draws on through the Baltic states, Poland and Western Ukraine, through the Eastern regions of the present Slovakia and Hungary and mostly through the Transylvanian parts of Romania for thousands of kilometres long and reaches its Southern end in the succession states of the former Yugoslavia. From the part of Western Christianity, mainly the Roman Catholic religion, Evangelicalism, Calvinism and other forms of Protestantism have been and are in contact with the orthodox religion and its national churches by the cultural borderline. Along this contact-line so-called contact-zones have been formed that can be regarded regions of transition from the aspect of few or more elements of religious life and culture.

One of the most important historical consequences of the meeting and co-existence of Catholicism and Eastern Christianity is the coming about of Catholic churches with the Eastern liturgy, together with all the cultural aftermath. The union has come about in several Central European regions, several times, among similar historical conditions. The result of this process is the Hungarian Greek Catholic Church with its 350 year history. Partly because of the historical circumstances at its birth, the often troublesome events of its 300 years long past, and partly because of the various ethnic origins, the Hungarian Greek Catholic people have regarded the question of their own identity, and their relationship to the other neighbouring and co-existent ethnic and religious communities, to be a matter of great interest. That defines a possible direction of investigation. However, an ethnographic research of identity of this kind could provide important aspects to investigate other denominations, other kind of communities in a similar way. The research of identity of Hungarian Greek Catholics has just begun. The relevant data, with those I am going to use, have mostly appeared as "by-products" of researches of different kinds.

One of the most important components of the religious and ethnic identity is the shaping of historical consciousness. It has a special significance

among the Hungarian Greek Catholics though, since they have often faced with the unexplained questions of their ethnic affiliations and origins throughout their history.

Church historiography is one of the main impacts on historical consciousness, where the question of the ethnic origins of the Hungarian Greek Catholics is often raised.<sup>1</sup> Ideas from church historians concerning the continuity of the Eastern Church<sup>2</sup> reached a wide range of believers through the minor orders. Results of field-works show that many of the believers have heard about the question and take sides in a way, usually by declaring the Hungarian origin, the Hungarian continuity. However, the scientific observations concerning different ethnic origins, and the results confirming these observations<sup>3</sup> have not reached a wide range of believers.

However, the image created by the communities about their historical past is different. Several Greek Catholic villages know ethnographic works about themselves and works about the local history and vernacular of the village; and they are often familiar with facts about the settlement of the village. Since investigations on the Greek Catholic topic are rather in an early state in most of the specialities, most of the work is the collection of materials on the field. As a result based on experience, there is a strong relationship between researchers and the local people. And that also leads to a quick feed-back of the local research results. So, the knowledge of the Greek Catholic villagers, communities and congregations about their history is much more grounded than their knowledge about the history of the whole Hungarian Greek Catholicism.

The name *orosz* (Russian) applied to Greek Catholics by co-existing or neighbouring communities, and the name *tót* (~ Slovak) applied by several Greek Catholic congregations and villagers to themselves can be associated with ethnic affiliation and self-identification.

The Greek Catholics of Carpatho-Ukraine were often called *orosz* (Russians), *magyar orosz* (Hungarian Russians) in 19<sup>th</sup> century portrayals, returns and scientific publications. The *orosz* term appeared in the vernacular, too. In those villages of Transcarpathia with mixed confession, the term *orosz* was often applied by Roman Catholic or Calvinist Hungarians to the often also Hungarian Greek Catholics, usually with a pejorative meaning and often with negative attributes. Most of such data were collected among the Transcarpathian Hungarians in the years following the political change.<sup>4</sup>

Other data show, however, that the term *orosz* applied to Greek Catho-

lies refers primarily to their liturgy.<sup>5</sup> It's worth noting that the observation had been taken before the political change, in the era before a larger-scale of data collection in Transcarpathia was started and before the rebirth of the local Greek Catholic Church that had been abolished for decades.

The term *tót*, according to my research, is unique. I believe that certain Hungarian Greek Catholic congregations prefer to apply it to their own members, differentiating themselves from the neighbouring, mainly Roman Catholic, Slovak inhabitants. The non-Hungarian, but according to them and the researches not even Slovak, language used by previous generations is part of the collective memory of most of the Greek Catholic congregations of Northern Hungary that are totally assimilated as regards their language and ethnic identity. The language is usually known as the language of the grand- and great-grandparents.<sup>6</sup> In connection with linguistic identity, I refer back to the Greek Catholics' use of language, and the language of the liturgy and practising, later.

As a given ethnic community's self-identification against the neighbouring ethnic groups is a fundamental part of ethnic identity, the relationship of the members of a certain congregation with other congregations and their members is a similarly important part of religious identity. The Hungarian Greek Catholic Church has such specific traits in this topic that are only typical of this congregation and that make the investigation especially justified.

Mainly Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans and orthodox people live together with and next to the Hungarian Greek Catholics. There are areas where the co-existence with the orthodox people is recent, the result of the decades-long incorporation of the Greek Catholic Church after World War II. No wonder that the prevailing attitude in these areas is the rejection of orthodoxy. In the 80s, the era when, according to the soviet example, the Greek Catholic Church had been incorporated into the Orthodox Church was still fresh in the memory in the eastern parts of the present Slovakia. Those priests who refused to accept the incorporation were not allowed to continue their service and they either gave up their vocation or continued it in secret. As a reaction, the Greek Catholic inhabitants of Csicsér, that lies near to the present Slovak – Ukrainian border, did not let any orthodox priest in the village for 18 years, and all the exercises were done with the help of laymen, without a priest. Many received the sacraments in secret. Because of the well-known historical facts, the re-establishment of the Greek Catholic Church in Transcarpathia and in Transylvania was

started later, happened parallel with the political changes and in various ways. The still unclear questions of the Church's possession cause a lot of problems in many places. The few data concerning the process do not give a basis enough for an adequate evaluation. One thing is sure, though, that in many re-established Hungarian Greek Catholic communities the utmost enemy is the Orthodox denomination.

The notion of togetherness and yet the need to differ in many points are both significant of their relationship with the Roman Catholics. There were periods in the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the Greek Catholic Church when the liturgy and the feasts were modified according to the Latin ceremony.<sup>7</sup> But the adherence to and pride about the Eastern ceremony have always been present. For example, from the sacramentals known from both of the ceremonies, those performed according to the Byzantine ritual are considered more effective (eg.: the holy water). After the incorporation, the Greek Catholic believers went to Roman Catholic churches in many places.

There is not much known about their relationship with the Protestant churches and inhabitants, and even that information is rather one-sided, concerning such occasional events when Calvinists and Lutherans have had recourse to certain services and benedictions of the Byzantine rite.

Besides the denominational endogamy, the most important point of collision in being in contact with both the Roman Catholics and the Protestants was the different ecclesiastical chronologies. It is still fresh in the memory, even today, that the great feasts of Christianity were held on different days. These time shifts caused a lot of problems in mixed families. The same phenomenon lead to new conflicts in certain Transcarpathian congregations and in the otherwise also troubled relationship with the Orthodox Church.

The most important element of religious identity is practising for the Greek Catholics. Church ceremonies, feasts, customs, the sacral layers of text-folklore and a wide range of liturgical texts belong there. The primary significance of the ceremony and the custom-system existing and evolving around it is that the Greek Catholics join to the Eastern tradition through it, that is what they know as their own, and that draws a distinction between them and the Roman Catholics. The spectacular ceremony is mentioned in the interviews several times and the Greek Catholics often emphasize their pride in and adhering to it. These statements can be illustrated with lots of examples, that are to be presented later.

In the religious layer of the customs, there are feasts, high days and

traditions connected with these days that are only or primarily characteristic of the Greek Catholic religion. For example, the blessing of the crops and the fruits on the day of the ÚR SZÍNEVÁLTÓZÁSA, the blessing of the herbs on the day of St. John the Baptist or the cock-blessing on St. Michael's day.

For a long time, the difference from the Catholics was manifested in the different times of the common feasts as well. This has already been mentioned before, but since it applies to the most important religious feasts as well, time-shift as a denominational speciality deserves attention.

Even the feasts and high days common with the Catholics have their special traditions often exhibitively only of the Greek Catholics. However, these cannot always be regarded as customs characterizing all the denomination, since these are often regional or ethnical characteristics. Such customs can be found in the Christmas and in the Easter tradition, or in the ceremony of the wedding and of the funeral.

Besides the features mentioned above, the Greek Catholic tradition keeps or kept such elements that had fallen out of the Latin ceremony earlier or have survived in it only sporadically, or only in the folk tradition. Practically there is not any Greek Catholic congregation without food-blessing on Easter-day; house-blessing on Twelfth-day is practised in many places as well as the cantor's singing funeral oration. These and similar customs have ceased to be found among the Hungarian Roman Catholics in most places, or can only be found scarcely and isolated.<sup>8</sup>

The procession is an important constituent of several types of identity. Its religious importance is well-known, similarly to the fact that processions, especially those with great traditions, often appear as national pilgrimages, while certain places of worship appear as national places of worship. These statements are justified by the earlier studies of Sándor Bálint and the more recent researches of Gábor Barna, Gábor Tüskés, and of mine. Since places of worship provide points of contact for several cultural fields, their influences can only be revealed through individual and complex investigations. Nevertheless, some common traits can easily be found, especially in connection with the Greek Catholics.

The procession places that specifically belong to the Greek Catholics should be mentioned first. Máriapócs is such a place of worship. It has been playing a central role in the life of the Hungarian Greek Catholics for a long time. Its traditions cover several fields of the folklore and religious life, from the official liturgy to popular religiousness, from the custom-tradition to the folklore.



Onehundred-thousand believers of different ethnic origins appearing in the more significant processions were not rare before the party's official persecution of religion. The number of participants in itself is a very important factor that cannot be disregarded. The phenomenon called muster-concentration, the term borrowed from the ethnography of trade, has an important role in every kind of information-flow, in the direct contact between individuals and communities, in the temporary elimination of spatial distances, not to mention the ground of the connecting functions and its importance in religiosity.

Similarly to most of the important Greek Catholic places of worship in the Carpathian Basin, Máriapócs has been an international procession place from the beginning. It has been regularly visited by Ukrainian, Romanian, Serb, Armenian and Slovak pilgrims besides the Hungarians, and Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans and Orthodox people have also come. According to data from 1940, pilgrims from 93 villages of Galícia started off that year to participate in the procession held on the day of the Feast of the Assumption in Máriapócs.

Since the political change, Máriapócs's importance has increased again in the confessional life of the Hungarian Greek Catholics. This is partly manifested in the growing numbers of pilgrims, and partly in events like the Pope's visit, when 300,000 people came to the mass, or other international events like the recent international European congress (held in August, 1996) titled "Places of Worship and Pilgrimages", where the Orthodox churches were present together with the Latin ones. Although there are no factual data for the present, one could boldly infer the effects of the facts mentioned above on denominational identity and religious consciousness among the groups of different qualification and profession.

Those Roman Catholic places of worship with greater areas of attraction that are visited by large numbers of Greek Catholics should also be mentioned. Beyond the borders of the present Hungary, it is primarily in the eastern parts of the present Slovakia where the Hungarian Greek Catholics consider the visitation of places of worship in Northern Hungary to be the manifestation of national affiliation as well. Here, Mátraverebély-Szentkút should be mentioned in the first place. Among the functions connected to processions, here we should mention first the regular maintenance of connection with individuals and communities of the same ethnic group, but with Latin liturgy; and through the place it is the maintenance of relationship with the motherland. Further additional elements are the

acquisition of hymn-books and religious prints in Hungarian, the direction of the sacral material culture's relationships with places of worship, and so on... Similarly to other fields of identity, without sufficient data, there is no possibility of even just proposing the important entries.

Linguistic identity is strongly related to ethnic identity, and from many aspects it can even be regarded as part of the latter. Religion has an effect on the linguistic identity in many fields, first of all in practising, in religious information, in the field of education – catechesis and in the sacral folklore. For a long time, the use of the mother tongue has been the most important and most conflict-burdened question for the Hungarian Greek Catholics, and it is by no accident that the monographer of the topic called this issue “the last way of the Cross” for the Hungarian Greek Catholics.<sup>9</sup>

I have already elaborated the topic of the relationship between practising and linguistic identity in an earlier work.<sup>10</sup> However, this phenomenon is more significant in the lives of Greek Catholics than the general problems. The issue deserves special attention in areas with mixed ethnic groups, since there are very few data about it from the reorganized churches of Transcarpathia and Transylvania.

The sacral custom-folklore is part of practising. In some of the Greek Catholic communities its linguistic manifestations have preserved linguistic traces from the times before the assimilation. The Carpatho-Ukrainian dialectical ritual words usually termed *tót* by the performers and presented at Christmas, New Year's Eve, Epiphany or at other occasions still keep the memory of the ancient ethnic group in the communities that became wholly Hungarian by now. The same applies to some of the folk terms that refer to certain elements of religious customs (*szirik*, *hrutka*, etc.).

The written language, that contains texts with religious meaning, is a means of linguistic identity. The language of acquiring and constantly supplying the information essential to religiousness has a special importance, since it works in a different kind of external context and with a different kind of internal meaning than the everyday language because of its sacral nature. Written sacral texts can be ranged into different types according to their nature and function that influence identity differently.

It is well-known that the language of liturgy could not officially be Hungarian until the turn of the century. However, the ban of the Holy See was evaded long before in practice and Hungarian was used in the liturgy to some extent in several villages. There are data proving that “home” translations of liturgy texts were passed round from parish to parish, and cer-

emonies in Greek or in Church Slavonic were carried out in Hungarian in the village by the village priests. The unsettled state that characterized the Hungarian liturgical language for long generated a kind of defensive attitude in the Greek Catholic priests that was complemented with the feeling of indignity. Greek Catholics felt to be insulted in their Hungarian nature, but it only intensified their national consciousness. Ethnography investigates these phenomena because such questions and ideas that kept the minds of the major orders and the intelligentsia occupied reached the people through the minor orders and appeared as powers shaping the mind. Such data are often found during local researches concerning religious experiences.

Books in Church Slavonic have reached our country in great numbers during the last centuries. Travelling booksellers carried these books from printing-houses of Galícia and Volhína through Eastern Hungary to the Balkans. Such prints were found in great numbers in the Basilitan library of Máriapócs.<sup>11</sup>

The most important occasions of the circulation and acquisition of non-liturgical religious books and prints were the processions mentioned above. In the processions of Máriapócs or Szentkút, the Greek Catholic Hungarians of the neighbouring countries could obtain religious literature written in their mother-tongue, that they could read at home or could use individually or commonly in practice in different forms of prayer-meetings. A direct relationship with practising is clearly traceable here as well.

Researching folk-hymns is also promising. Experiences show that church hymns belong to those layers of individual knowledge that are considered the most abiding. The prayer and the hymns often sung represent a strong bond, and live in the memory of those who get away from their community for a long time. I am not a specialist in this topic, but I see great possibilities in it. The foregoing investigations have mainly focused on the tunes that are the most varied church music tradition among the Hungarian churches and also the most articulated by the local tune-variants.

One cannot talk about religious identity and its correspondences without mentioning the question of endogamy. The tendency to endogamy is still strong among the Greek Catholics. Although I have not done explicit investigations in the question, experiences of other field-works support this latter statement. At times it is difficult to differentiate between local and denominational endogamy, especially in pure Greek Catholic communities. I believe that more profound investigations of endogamy cannot be evaded



in the near future.

However, the Greek Catholic Church also supports another kind of endogamy: professional endogamy. Among the families of Greek Catholic priests, it is common to choose the spouse from another priest-family. For a long time, a traditional occasion of this practice has been the Máriapócs-procession on Elijah's Day, where the youth of the Greek Catholic priests, who often lived isolated from each other, could meet.

There is a lot to be done in the research of the Greek Catholic Hungarians. One of its broadest and most promising field is the research of identity, although the data available is insufficient to have an overall picture about this topic. The political change, the re-organization of the Greek Catholics of the neighbouring countries have led to fundamental changes in this field, and these changes are too close to have a clear view of them. As I mentioned in the introduction, my purpose was not to elaborate and analyse the topic indicated in the title, I only tried to delineate the problems and the possible directions of further studies for myself and for other researchers.

## Notes

1 See, more recently: Berki 1975, Pirigyi 1991, Timkó 1971, etc.

2 Timkó 1971. 436.

3 Cp. Eg. Paládi-Kovács 1973.

4 Lots of data can be found in Erzsébet Pilipkó's handwritten notes. The material is under publication as well as my notes collected in Transcarpathia.

5 Bartha 1990. 427.

6 According to the information given by Anna Gyivicsán, a further investigation of the question from another aspect would not be promising.

7 Cp. Bartha 1990. 427.

8 Cp. eg. Bálint 1976. 163.

9 Szabó 1913.

10 Bartha 1992. 109.

11 Ojtozi 1982. 20.

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