

Identity crisis – cultural reflexion:

Crisis management samples in a local community of a Hungarianised Swabish settlement

Since the 18th century several cultural, economical, social and environmental factors have been affecting the Swabish people and their descendants in the historical county of Szatmár. During the last 300 years this ethnic group has changed locations several times. What's more the interethnic relations that have developed with other ethnic groups has resulted in an exchange of cultural ideas which has had a radical affect on ethnic characteristics of the groups involved. Nowadays we can witness the imprints of these interactions which form the basis for the manner of the mechanisms involved in the preservation of identity. In this paper I would like to discuss the historical background and also ethnographical dimensions of the process that influence cultural identity.

Seeing as how a presentation of all the data concerning all of the Swabish settlements in Szatmár would exceed the limits of this work, I have instead chosen a more localized case study, one village, Mezőpetri (Romania), which will better illustrate the appearance of an identity crisis and the forms of the cultural responses given for the management of the crisis. I present the social, sociocultural rearrangements that in this case have taken place in stages during the 20th century which have significantly defined the present attitudes of identification, through an understanding of the present social processes. So I sketch each phenomenon separately that might have formed the identity crisis for the individual and also the local communities. During the presentation a sort of case study I would like to catch those so to speak micro-level of crisis situations, that have lead to the development of the multiple bonding that we can see today. At the same time I interpret the modification of the individual and community roles inside the local society during the juxtaposition of those preferred consciousness-building activities as well as representational modes, which helps them to assign their place in the region of Szatmár, identify their position in the world and also through the internet.

My paper is based on synchronic and diachronic research, on the one hand it consist of the narratives of the Swabiens of Mezőpetri. On the other hand there is a decisive emphasis on primarily, regional historical issues as well as local historical

concerns, and secondly, ethnographical descriptions, like primary sources that were made by the Swabish writers. My goal is to outline a nuanced ethnographical and historical picture about those events, phenomena and consequences inside the local society, like the populating of Mezőpetri with swabish settler, then staying at the same place for a longer period of time, or the name-changing in the beginning of the 20th century, and also the deportations after the World War II, which implied a whole range of cultural and social changes. During the interpretation of the restructuration inside the group we can learn those casual factors which had a clear influence on Swabish identity constructs also to the loosening of group cohesion and thereby the creation of novel existence. And seizing the preserved traditions we can witness a new enfoldment of the social life strategy that exemplifies the communal attitudes of several similar minorities who pursue the preservation of traditions that are formed in the minority position.

The identity crises mentioned among the swabians of Szatmár and due to the formed cultural reflections well reflect the nature of the appeared survival strategies. The emerging crisis situations are treated differently by each successive generation. The examination of the cultural phenomena in further generations shows the mosaic pieces of the society as a whole, so if we put together the pieces it can result in a big picture of the current identity problems and their solutions. The interpretation of the above can assist in the treatment of alienation in a new or similar crisis situation for those who, on the first hand are outsiders, and on the second hand, the group members inside their ethnic groups and the up and coming generations, and also those who emigrated but then later returned to their former ethnic groups.