

Minorities History

*Sándor Horváth***Examples of the Assimilation
of the Gradistye Croats from the 16th to the 20th
century****1. Introduction**

There are living a considerable number of Croatian inhabitants in the villages of County Vas: in Felsőcsatár, Horvátlovő, Horvátzsidány, Narda, Ólmód, Peresznye and Szentpéterfa. Felsőberkifalu, Bozsok, Harasztfalu, Horvátnádalja and Tömörd can be claimed to have reached the last stage of Magyarization. The process can be observed in the language the speakers use in various situations.

The language corruption of Croatian speakers was already noted by 18th c. sources. SOSTERICH wrote in his prayer book published in 1781: "...many will say: this is not the real Croatian tongue ... since our language is very corrupted in the Hungarian Kingdom, so mixed that they speak it in a different way in every village, as we ourselves can testify – here it is mixed with German, there with Hungarian, elsewhere with Slovak, or some other language. the language is in decay and decline. The same happens in the written form too...in writing and printing everybody writes the Croat words differently."¹ Indeed, it would have been possible for all the villages to Magyarize during the following 200 years; but it has not happened. One village is Magyarized the other is not. Why? What was there to favour Magyarization in the one case? What was different or missing in the other? The present research has not confined itself to the usual stereotypes like: the more conservative a village community, the better the ethnic characteristics are preserved; the change in work conditions hastens assimilation; mixed marriages accelerate the loss of the (minority) mother tongue, etc. Accepting there is truth in the stereotypes,

¹ Sosterich, Jeremias: *Marianszko czveche (...)* Soprun, 1781. Published by László Hadrovics: *Schriftum und Sprache der burgenlaendischen Kroaten im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert.* (Writing and speech of the Croats of Burgenland in the 18th.–19th. cc.) Budapest, 1974 pp. 523–524. – the corrupted speech of the Croats was also described as a macaronic language.

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the task is to find out what are the factors encouraging preservation, loss or change of minority identity and how do these operate.

2. Ethnically mixed marriages and assimilation.

To some extent Magyarization can be explained by mixed marriages. WWII and the introduction of the collective farm system have usually been named as turning points, when members of the older generation remember how it was against custom to marry from outside of the village. This can be regarded as the ideal of a community sharing a traditional culture, however, reality is modified by necessity. The community adheres to the ideals in mind, keeps referring to it, while reality of everyday life does not necessarily follow it. Some earlier times people mentioned that every young person in Narda wanted to marry from the village only, it was declared if someone married from or into an other village that there was no one who had wanted that person in Narda. The "Research Of The Micro Regions of Transdanubia" inquired about where the spouses came from. There were hardly any villages where the informants would state that only endogamous, i.e. in-village marriage was customary, and it was only in Horvátlövő, Harasztifalu and Horvátnádalja where the informants stressed the requirement of in-village marriages.

The people in Harasztifalu claimed that they preferred to marry locally, it was rare to take a spouse from other places; in Horvátnádalja 'local' included the neighbouring settlements. In Horvátnádalja the population was more conservative, kept a closer order so much so, that the house of the girl who turned down her suitor was 'chaffed', i.e. marked with chaff strewn about it. A girl was expected to accept her in-village suitor or the whole family had to suffer of the shame. In all the villages only ethnic Croatian speaking settlements were mentioned as possible places to marry from. In Horvátzsidány it was stressed that up to 1945 they only married Croats and Catholics. It was important to marry from the neighbourhood, was explained in Narda: 'Even the book advised: choose your spouse from the neighbourhood, the godparents from as far as possible.'² The following non-Croatian villages were mentioned: in Bozsok they were Perenye, Velem, Kőszegszerdahely; in Narda they were Vaskeresz-

² In Croatian: Zeni se iz cin blizega a kumi se iz cin daljega. Sad je pont fordítva. (Sic! The last two words are in Hungarian).

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tes, Ólmod. Kiszsidány; in Szentpéterfa they were Kertes and Ják. The ideal must be contrasted with reality, by checking the data of the parish registers. The matriculae of the examined villages – with the exception of Horvát nádalja – were inspected for the purpose.

The results were drawn from the diagram representing the proportion of exogamy. Szentpéterfa is the odd one out where the proportion of local exogamy was about 20–25% between 1831 and 1895 while in the other villages about 50%. After 1950 there was an increase in outside marriages in Nagykölked and Ólmod, to a lesser degree in Harasztifalu and Horvátzsidány. (The diagram representing the situation in the first half of the century is not yet ready for all the villages); concerning the 18th c., Julianna Őrsi's remarks seem to have been justified: 'as to the main tendency, we can state that in Hungary the settlements were more open in their marriage relationships in the 18th c. Endogamy proves to be strongest in the second half of the 19th c. Nowadays there is a return to exogamy.'³

Some facts should be considered before arriving at any hasty conclusions about the relative openness of the settlements under discussion (with the exception of Szentpéterfa). The diagrams testify that there is not only regional-local exogamy but ethnic exogamy as well.⁴ According to the figures in Szentpéterfa the outside marriages were only 1–2% between ethnic Croats thus local exogamy was ethnic exogamy at the same time. Harasztifalu shows a similar proportion of ethnic exogamy; but in Narda, Ólmod and Horvátzsidány it is much lower (the tokens for Narda were so few they could not be plotted on the graph.) It is characteristic of Harasztifalu that though the average is low, the swing is big: from zero to 40%. The graph for Ólmod can be explained by the fact that it is a very small village with few marriages thus the percentages are more extreme. This way the 14%, i.e. the smallest proportion of ethnic exogamy means 13 couples between 1870 and 1880; at the same time 23%, the highest rate of Ólmod means just two couples between 1800

³ Őrsi, Julianna: Exogámia és endogámia Magyarországon a XVIII-XIX. században. (Exogamy and endogamy in Hungary in the 18th-19th cc.) In: Novák, László – Ujváry, Zoltán. Lakodalom (Folklor és etnográfia 9.) Debrecen 1983. 36.

⁴ Lacking more exact definitions, for the 19th c. marriages between inhabitants of Croatian villages were treated as endogamy. On the correlation between family name and ethnicity cf. Horváth, Sándor: Házassági kapcsolatok a horvátok lakta Nardán (Marriage relationships in Croats inhabited Narda). Vasi Szemle 1989. 192.

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and 1820. This is the danger of numeric analysis where several aspects have to be taken into account at the interpretation.

There is a third factor of modification, which can distort the diagram. In the matriculae of the Catholic Church only those marriages are registered which happened in the settlements belonging to the various mother-churches. If a man or woman was married in a church belonging to another parish, they are lost from sight. However, this is exogamy too; it is to be considered though, whether living away from their birthplace did they play any role in the life of their birthplace. Emigrants and those who joined the church – e.g. nuns – had special influence upon their birthplace (Szentpéterfa offers good examples, as shown below).

While the above-mentioned villages are examples for ethnic endogamy, in Tömörd, Nagykölked and Horvátlövő the mother tongue was greatly mixed within the families. In Tömörd ethnic exogamy does not mean couples with mixed tongues, but men and women from Hungarian villages. The shaded parts of the diagram show the proportion of marriages where neither the groom nor the bride were Croats; they were employees of the local Guary and Chernel estates. This is confirmed in the register: 'servants, serve at Tömörd, day labourer, farm hand'. According to the testimony of the graph, the number of Tömörd's inhabitants almost doubled when the number of exogamous marriages increased, and with the sudden increase of doubly exogamous marriages the number of the population stagnates, the proportion of the 'indigenous' population decreased. This leads back to the analysis of the project.

Analysing above the marriage relationships at Narda it was analysed what were the influencing factors, which played a role in the area choice - what kinds of exogamy were possible if the terminology set down by Julianna Őrsi was consistently adopted.⁵ The same points will be considered in the case of the other villages under investigation.

When marrying religion is the first and foremost consideration. Nemescsó and Meszlen by Tömörd as well as Kőszegdoroszló, Cák, Lukácsháza by Bozsok were strongly populated by Lutherans, while Calvinists live at Nagykölked, Kiskölked by Harasztifalu and the villages called Rádóc. In the 17th c. there were attempts at reforming the Catholic Croats but without success. Understandably religion meant a strong divi-

⁵ Cf. Őrsi, Julianna 1983 and Horváth, Sándor 1989. p. 89.

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sion line in the social relationships of the Croats. Even if they were ready to marry from neighbouring Hungarian villages it was extremely rare if they accepted Lutherans or Calvinists. In answer to the questionnaires the inhabitants of Bozsok named Hungarian villages as Perenye, Velem and Kőszegszerdahely, but excluded Kőszegdoroszló, Cák and Lukácsháza. The eminent importance of the same religion was also stressed in Tömörd. In Bozsok, which is exceptionally open to exogamy, the southern neighbour Bucsú was not mentioned; it belongs to another mother-church.

The district of Tömörd parish did not exceed the village limits thus it is frequent that exogamous marriages with Horvátzsidány, Peresznye and Harasztifalu are ethnically endogamous. Tömörd was forced to open up since it was not only surrounded by villages with Hungarian speakers but they also were Lutherans and Calvinists. At the other limit of Tömörd was the county border: Bük, Csepreg, as well as Horvátzsidány and Peresznye belonged to County Sopron. Ethnic endogamy became more important than county limits and distance (Harasztifalu is about 40 km away). The major reason in the Magyarization of Tömörd lies in the frequency of exogamous – especially of doubly exogamous – marriages. In the case of Felsőberkifalu and Horvátnádajla the church played a decisive role. These villages were attached to the parish of Körmend where there was no Croatian priest, whereas in 1646 the inhabitants of Horvátalja, Felsőberkifalu, Harasztifalu and Nagykölked employed a Croatian priest who became the parish priest in Nagykölked.⁶

In the 16th–18th cc., even in the 19th it was not infrequent for priests and schoolmasters born or educated in Croatia to come to work in the settlements of Gradistye. Grgur Mekinich-Pythiraeus whose name has been preserved as the first publisher of a book written in Croatian (his protestant prayer book was first published in 1609) probably came from the area over River Mura; before him 'Juraj Zywanych', the Glagolyte priest of Kelénpaták also is believed to have come from Croatia to the Croats of Gradistye in 1561. From Croatia came the schoolmaster of Tömörd: Thomas Frantic mentioned in 1647; the parish priest of Nagynarda: Georg Pribanics (1755–1790), Michael Zdravec (1830–1863, who was also parish priest in Rohonc) and György Frideczky. It was during his being a parish priest in Nagynarda when Frideczky published his prayer-

⁶ Völgyes, Ferenc. Harasztifalu története. Az iskola története. 1987. MS. SNAA-1633. Szombathely Archives of the Folklore Department of Savaria Museum. p. 4.

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book *Angjel cuvar* (Guardian Angel) in 1869, a remarkable event for the folklore history of Gradistye as this is the first book to use the diacritical Croatian letters (with 'hacek') introduced during Croatian language reforms.⁷ Forced Magyarization should be assumed in the villages near Körmend and in Bozsok from the beginning of the 18th c. 'The manorial court in Körmend ruled that the three Croatian villages belonging to the estate could go for confessions and baptisms only to the priest of Körmend.'⁸ Fran KURELAC warns us in his book published in 1871 that the directories were misleading about the mother tongue of the people at the settlements. The Croatian patriot collected information in the years of 1846 and 1848. As he wrote 'no one can rely on the Hungarian directories because they write 'Lingua Croatica' only if the preaching is in Croatian; but there are villages with pure Croatian speakers without a Croatian priest and preaching. Such places are Bozsok, Nádálja, etc.'⁹ Kurelac's references are obscure but most probably he referred to Horvátnádálja when he wrote that the people had complained at the church festival in Szentkút that they themselves financed a young local man in his studies to have someone to preach them in their own language but this man was forbidden to preach in Croatian.¹⁰ Something similar happened at Bozsok where there was no Croatian-speaking priest; their schoolmaster was not allowed to accompany them to the Croatian church festival in Incéd (Dürnbach) only to a German village, which usually was frequented by Hungarians.¹¹ Kurelac also told the story when he was on his way to Rohonc, he met a woman who talked to his little son in Croatian and a town employee scorned the woman for talking in that 'dog's language.'¹²

The data of the daughter-churches of the parish of Szentpéterfa explain why it is that apart from the strong tendency for local endogamy

⁷ Bencsics, Nikolaus: Einige Bemerkungen zu älteren Beziehungen der burgenländischen Kroaten zur alten Heimat. In: *Burgenland und seiner pannonischen Umwelt* Festgabe für August Ernst. /Burgenländische Forschungen. Sor darband VIII/ Eisenstadt, 1984. pp. 14–18.

⁸ Kállay, István: *Üriszéki bírásokodás a XVIII–XIX. Században*. Budapest 1985. p. 97 (Legal processes before manorial courts in the 18th–19th cc.)

⁹ Kurelac, Fran: *Jacke ili narodne pjesme prostoga i neprostoga puka hrvatskoga po zupan Soprunskoj, Mosonskoj i Zeleznoj na Ugrih*. Zagreb 1871. xiv. and ff.

¹⁰ Kurelac 1871 xxx.

¹¹ Kurelac 1871 xxix.

¹² Kurelac 1871 xxx.

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the few instances for exogamy represent ethnic exogamy at the same time. Monyorókerék, Kolom, and Tótfalu appear frequently in the cases of exogamous marriages. These settlements belong to the Szenpéterfa parish. When discussing exogamy in Narda it was pointed out that beside ethnic endogamy administrative regions also define the area for exogamy. According to the *matriculae* Felsőcsatár, Alsócsatár, Kiszarda, Csém and Incéd belonged to the marriage region of Nagynarda, but Horvátlövő did not, because Narda and Horvátlövő belonged to different administrative regions at the beginning of the 20th c.: Narda to the notary-district of Felsőcsatár; Horvátlövő to that of Németlövő. Moreover, Horvátlövő belonged to the Erdődy estate, while Narda – together with Incéd and Csém among others – to the Batthyány estate.¹³ The area of the notary-district with Kőszegszerdahely as its centre, was the same as that of the parish, thus Magyarization was easier as was also in the case of the Croatian villages belonging to Kőszeg.

In Horvátlövő there is no such overlapping of marriage area and parish boundaries, neither that of marriage and administrative district limits. During the 16th c. it was infrequent for Croats to settle in ethnically closed, all Croatian settlements. According to what we now know about the villages under investigation, it was only Tömörd, which was completely settled by Croats: all the names registered in 1569 were Croatian.¹⁴

There was a considerable population of Germans in Horvátlövő from earliest on. This is why the people from Horvátlövő married more frequently from Németlövő, as well as Magyarkeresztes, Németkeresztes, Pornó.

The choice of a spouse was also determined by the social, economic status as well as the financial situation. This can be best observed in the case of the special trades (cf. the marriages of the servants in Tömörd). Material considerations strengthened endogamy in the second half of the 19th c., as cited from J. Őrsi. In the analysis of the situation in Narda it has been indirectly connected to the emancipation of the serfs, directly to the intention to prevent the decreasing, dividing, selling of the landed property.¹⁵

However high were the graphs for exogamy, they invariably decline by the end of the 19th c. 19th c. registers testify that it was Felsőcsatár, Szenpéterfa, Harasztifalu, and Horvát nádalja where numerically the more cot-

¹³ Horváth, Sándor 1989. pp. 200–201.

¹⁴ Hajszan, Robert: Die Herrschaft Güns im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert. Güttenbach/Pinkovac, 1993. p. 138.

¹⁵ Horváth, Sándor 1989. p.195.

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ters, farm hands and servants lived belonging to the poorest strata. It means that material situation did not play a decisive role whether a community lost its ethnic identity or not.

3. Work and assimilation

Work usually is claimed to be the second decisive factor next to ethnic exogamy: in situations where people work away from home or when at home, they work together with people coming from elsewhere. In our villages only the big estates received work force from other regions as, was reported in the questionnaires for Bozsok, Horvátzsidány, Nagykölked, Tömörd and Narda. Big farms too, like the families Mazalin and Károlyi, employed sharecroppers. The informants from Bozsok, Harasztifalu and Tömörd denied to have taken up work away from their village. May be it is not a controversy in the case of Tömörd, since they denied to have worked in the farmsteads, though informants in Meszlen and Kőszegdoroszló claimed to have worked there together with people from Tömörd.

The inhabitants of the other Croatian villages went to work not only to the neighbouring farmsteads, but also to Steiermark and to Vienna. Though there is not enough evidence¹⁶, it seems that commuting, guest working is much older than has been believed, being fairly common at the beginning of the 19th c.¹⁷ Dániel BERZSENYI remarked: 'the best areas of the counties of Vas and Sopron are the most densely populated but the Hungarians even there cannot manage to work their land, Henczes and Croats are harvesting there too, and I have seen Bohemian scythe-men near Kőszeg.'¹⁸ Elek Fényes described the Croats as good servants and famous carters.¹⁹ Recent research has given detailed infor-

¹⁶ Horváth, Sándor 1989. p.195

¹⁷ Horváth, Sándor: Kölcsönhatások a nyugat-magyarországi horvátok népi kultúrájában. II. In: Eperjessy, Ernő – Krupa, András eds. A III. békéscsabai Nemzetközi Néprajzi Nemzetiségkutató Konferencia előadásai. Budapest-Békéscsaba 1986. p 744. (Reciprocal influences in the cultural life of the Croats of Western Transdanubia. Proceedings of the III. International Conference on Folklore Minorities research).

¹⁸ Berzsenyi, Dániel: A magyarországi mezei szorgalom némely akadályairól. 1833. p. 209. In: Berzsenyi Dániel összes művei. Published by Döbrentei, Gábor. 3. Edition Buda, 1842 (On the obstacles in the way of Hungarian agricultural business. In: The collected works of B.D.).

¹⁹ Fényes, Elek: Vas vármegye. Mostani állapolja statisztikai és geographial tekintetben 1836. Vas megyei levéltári füzetek4. Szombathely. 1991. p. 14. (County Vas. Its present situation from statistical and geographical points of view.)

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mation about Croatian carters who went as far as Varasd (Varasdin), Zagreb, Fiume (Rijeka) and in the other direction, through County Vas to the shores of Lake Balaton. People going to markets were also exposed to town influence. Coloman CHERNEL wrote about the clothes worn in and around Kőszeg in the 17th c.: 'women's wear is very simple without any special characteristics; they do not care for luxury, though the women coming from the neighbouring Hungarian and Croatian villages, who favour rich colourful clothing, show enough tempting example.'²⁰ The women of those Hungarian and Croatian villages probably frequented markets and if their 'rich colourful' costumes did not influence town's wear, that of the towns most probably influenced theirs.

In the 20th c. it must have been a great experience for the girls to go into service to Budapest. There were hardly any women among the oldest generation who would not have taken up service from autumn to the 29th of June. Nuns originating from Szentpéterfa found work place for them.²¹ However, no direct connection can be detected between Magyarization and any type of work away from home. It is noteworthy that Károly GAÁL in Pásztorháza, a Gradistye Croatian settlement in Burgenland, observed something similar: 'Unmarried women went regularly to serve into Hungary or out to Austria. While the men spoke three languages, most of the women spoke only the Croatian of their own village; they had forgotten the language learnt during their work'.²²

4. Analphabetism and the role of schools in Magyarization

It is usual to believe that analphabetism is a preserving factor in traditional culture while learning, or at least literacy hastens assimilation. During the reform period of the 19th c. teaching the Hungarian language in schools in minority regions was regarded as an important task; there were laws to encourage Magyarization. György TILCSIK explains that these laws and the accompanying efforts, movements 'served the Magyariza-

²⁰ Chernel, Kálmán: Kőszeg sz. kir. Város jelene és múltja. I. Szombathely, 1877. p.16. (The present and past of County Vas).

²¹ Personal information from Kurz, Ferencné Harangozó Mária 1912 and Geosits Károlyné Rumpell Julianna 1912. Fieldwork: 11. 06. 1992.

²² Gaál, Károly: Megjegyzések a stinátzi (Burgenland) hílmestojás kialakulásához. In: Dunamenti népek hagyományos műveltsége. Budapest, 1991 p. 44. (Remarks to the development of painted eggs in Stinatz, Burgenland. IN: traditional folklore of the people along the River Danube.)

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tion of public life, appealing to the intelligentsia speaking other languages, in short to achieve their assimilation.' Later he adds: that 'in the 19th c. it was the first time that on the 24th April 1820, that the general assembly of County Vas dealt with the language of education...and decided to employ only such schoolmasters who speak Hungarian.'²³ At the time the argument was that there were schoolmasters in Hungarian settlements who did not speak Hungarian. A couple of years later the endeavour was directed toward the Magyarization of the ethnic groups, the Croats among others. It is no coincidence that the county opened kindergartens first of all in minority settlements at the second half of the 19th c. Especially in the 1920s were many instances of irredentist Magyarization. The case of Szentpéterfa comes to mind. The village with an almost all-Croatian population was split into a pro-Hungarian and a pro-Austrian part. The leader of the Hungarian 'party' was a Croatian schoolmaster from a neighbouring village. Szentpéterfa was annexed to Hungary and earned the title of 'the most loyal village'.

The role of the trio of teachers – priests – notary could have great influence upon the process of Magyarization. Horvátnádalja near Nagykölked, a village completely Magyarized by now, provides an example. At the consecration of its new school in 1894, Vasvármegye, the daily newspaper of County Vas reported: 'The original mother tongue of the inhabitants of the village was Croatian, even now they speak Croatian at home. When children start school they only know Croatian, but both at school and in church Hungarian is the language, now they are on their best way to complete Magyarization; in this grand national mission the church dignitaries and teachers have a credit who were employed in this village and who are working here... what a great national service is that of a teacher who educates the children of 900 people to be Hungarian in language and sentiment and increases the prestige of the Hungarian state as well.'²⁴ Franko Zenko DONADINI was in Körmend as a soldier during WWI. He published a pamphlet in 1916 with the title 'Croats in the neighbourhood of Körmend (Hungary)' in which he wrote: 'In Horvátnádalja there live four Hungarian immigrant families: that of the teacher, the notary, the inn-

²³ Tilcsik, György: A magyar nyelv iskolai oktatása Vas megye nemzeti-ségi vidékein a reformkorban. In: *Előadások Vas megye történetéből*. Szombathely, 1990. pp. 232–233. (The teaching the Hungarian language in the schools in the minority regions of County Vas. In: *Lectures on the history of County Vas*).

²⁴ Iskola-szentelés. Vasvármegye. 5. December 1894. (School consecration).

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keeper and the proprietor.²⁵ The above four persons, or the already mentioned trio of teacher – priest – notary – played, however, an important role in the preservation of the national identity of the Gradistye Croats. If we examine the manifestations of language and ethnicity or their disappearance, schools are the most important factors either in teaching Croatian or in Magyarization.

The Hungarian language foundation promoted the successful teaching of Hungarian language in schools. In special regions teachers successful in Magyarization was awarded special premiums. Alajos Tárnok, the retired steward of the Zichy-estate started a foundation to forward the teaching of Hungarian in the Némétújvár district.²⁶ All the Croatian speaking pupils of the Catholic School of Inczéd were presented with textbooks in Hungarian because the priest of the above village aimed at the Magyarization of the young generation.²⁷ 'Since the Bach-era more than seven Croatian and Wendish villages had been Germanised and topographically the process is in progress what is against the interests of the Hungarian state; this is why it would desirable – and it is justified by the patriotic feelings of the inhabitants of county Vas – that no teacher ignorant of the Hungarian language should obtain employment in any elementary school in this county, - neither anywhere in Hungary; and the situation observed in the district of Szt. Gothard should be given an avoidable example, where 18 of the 28 teachers of the district are unfamiliar with the Hungarian language.²⁸ As stated in the report, there were 30 Hungarian, 150 German, 14 Wendish, 16 Croatian, 1 Hungarian-German, 4 German-Hungarian, 17 Hungarian-Wendish, 4 Croatian-Hungarian and 1 Wendish-German public elementary schools in County Vas.

When in the school year 1874/75 the schools were examined, the major interest of the evaluation of the Croatian teachers was their command of the Hungarian language and whether they were prepared to teach Hungarian. The school in Horvátnádalja was found 'Excellent in

²⁵ Krpan, Stjepan: Franko Zenko Donadini – malo poznati pohoditelj zapadnougarskin Hrvata. Migracijske teme. Casopis za istrazivanje migracije i narodnosti. Zagreb. 199. p. 359.

²⁶ VaML IV. 401/b. 339. 1887/123.

²⁷ VaML VI. 502/b. 364. Doboz. Évi jelentés a vas megyei tankerület népoktatásának állapotáról 1874/75 tanévben. Előadva az isk. tank. 1876. március 30-ai gyűlésén. 5. (Annual report on the situation of public education in the school district at the meeting on 30th March 2876).

²⁸ Ibid.

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teaching Hungarian'; the one in Felsőberki: 'Well organized school, teaching results especially good in Hungarian'; the teacher in Csátár: 'Young and eager Croatian teacher, however not enough trained. Prepared to teach Hungarian'. There are other illuminating remarks, as in the report on Pószaszentkatalin: 'The parents would be willing to have their children taught Hungarian but the teacher cannot do it. The people cannot understand Croatian neither the Croatian spoken in Hungary' (remark crossed out). Remark about Nagykölked and Nádálja: 'This village is being Magyarized by the school.'²⁹ After 1850 schools in Croatian villages of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy should have used textbooks from Croatia, however, the Croats of Gradistye preferred books written in their own local dialect. The Austrian historian, Johann Seedoch regards it as the beginning of the ethnic consciousness of the Gradistye Croats.³⁰ The ministry asked for the approval of the bishops to introduce the textbooks from Croatia; the bishop of Győr, following the advice of the Croatian priests disagreed, the bishop of Szombathely did not answer at all. It was in the reply from the diocese of Győr where the demand for the use of the local language was expressed. In the diocese of Szombathely the textbooks from Croatia were officially introduced in 1853, however, there are no indications whether they were indeed used.³¹ The following quotation is taken from the minutes of the meeting of Croatian teachers published in the correspondence column of contemporary newspapers: 'finally, wishing that the ideal to Magyarize our Croats and elevate our schools to up-to-date standards must not falter on the parsimony and withdrawal of some. The people would be glad if their children would learn Hungarian alongside their mother tongue especially as we do not have adequate textbooks in Croatian and the common public, instead of sitting at home reading, spends the Sunday afternoons in taverns carrying on not exactly edifying palavers; this great shortcoming could be mended by learning the Hungarian language {...}'³² It is still not known what language was used in Szombathely between the Croatian teachers and their pupils, probably they spoke Latin even out of the classroom. 'It

²⁹ VaML VI. 502/b Cs. Vasm. Tanfelügy. (School-inspector of County Vas).

³⁰ Seedoch, Johann: Razzdoblje Franje Josipa. In: Povijest i kultura Gradiscanskih Hrvata. Zagreb, 1995. p. 146.

³¹ Tobler, Felix – Seedoch, Johann: Skoltvo od 16. stoljeca do 1921. godine. In: povijest kultura Gradiscanskih Hrvata. Zagreb, 1995. p. 242.

³² *ibid.*

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is noteworthy that in the 16–17th cc. the schoolmasters of Szombathely were mainly Croatian speakers, even born in Croatia – remarks Tibor Antal HORVÁTH. 'Kitonich János' of Kosztajnica exemplifies the case, who was the first secular head of the grammar school in Szombathely – in the summer of 1591 he was mentioned as director for several years past. Croatian teachers are reported to be active in Szombathely from 1570 onward.³³ At the time this did not lead to national dissension or to linguistic overpowering. It also means that Croats in the villages were not lacking in teachers and most probably literacy was far greater in the 17th c. than presumed, as is confirmed by visitation reports.

Returning back to the initial statement that 'in contrast to analphabetism, education furthers assimilation', the correct answer is that sometimes it is true, sometimes it is not. The counterexample is Kópháza near Sopron. There was vivid local literacy early on but this was not the reason why the Croats there became Magyarized.

5. The role of the Church in Magyarization

Ethnic identity – in a national sense- is especially strengthened by religion, language and politics. This is why three chapters carry these ideas in the titles of the volume, Ethnicity, nation, identity. Croatia and Europe published in Croatia which analyses the ethnic processes of recent years, mainly from the social point of view.³⁴ Another volume about ethnicity published in Oxford contains similar sections.³⁵ It is therefore worth considering these points when analysing the assimilation of the Gradistye Croats.

If a Hungarian-speaking priest was appointed to a parish, who did not speak any Croatian, the possibility of Magyarization became stronger. This is what happened in Bozsok. Already in 1846–48, when Fran Kurelac was collecting folksongs among the Croats of western Hungary, there were complaints that even the gravest sins could be confessed to their priest and they would be absolved without any remonstrance and appropriate penance because the priest did not understand any Croatian.³⁶

³³ Horváth, Tibor Antal 1993. p. 330.

³⁴ *Etnicnost, nacija, identite.* (Hrvatska i Europa). Priredili: Cicak-Chand, Ruzica – Kumpes, Josip. Zagreb, 1998.

³⁵ *Ethnicity.* Eds Hulchinson, John – Smith, Anthony D. Oxford – New York, 1996 (Oxford Readers).

³⁶ Kurelac, Fran: *Jacke ili narodne pesme prostoga in neprostoga puka hrvatskoga po zupah Soprunskoj, Mosonskoj i Zeleznoj na Ugrih.* 1870. xxix.

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József Góczán from Káld could take up his position only after a delay on the 22. November 1852, because as he wrote in the parish chronicle: 'the congregation was agitated by my Croatian -speaking rivals to apply for a Croatian-speaking priest, which they had done'.³⁷ Afterwards Bozsok ceased to be a local parish and became the out parish of Szombathely.

'The priest assaulted for his patriotism' was the title of the report of the daily of County Vas in March 1895: 'Ferenc Szamálovics, the eager young parish priest of Tömörd had the children to sing and say their prayers in Hungarian. Recently the judge of Tömörd and a certain Vlasics kicked up a row during mass and reprimanded the priest and when the latter left the church, they led a mob against him, grabbed him by the arm and shoved him about. The judge and Vlasics threatened the priest with throwing him out of the church if he dared have the children to pray in Hungarian again, not caring if they were sentenced to 10 years for their deed. The parish priest, Szamálovics reported the incident to the right honourable Bishop who gave his sympathy to the young priest telling him "don't mind my son if like St. Sebastian you are stoned for your country and being Hungarian!". We note the beautiful and memorable words of the bishop gladly and enthusiastically.'

József Schápy, the parish priest of Narda had trouble with his congregation in Nagynarda over the issue of Magyarization. 'The war in Narda' was the title of the leading article of the daily Vasvármegye on the 12. January 1902. 'There are phenomena among the Croats on their way towards Magyarization which give reason for concern. In Nagynarda, where József Schápy, the parish priest, who in spite of being of Wendish descent, has always been a dedicated propagator of the Hungarian language and culture; at the beginning of the Millennium year introduced singing in Hungarian in the churches of Nagynarda and Felsőcsatár.³⁸ But what did actually happen? Introducing the Hungarian language in church, during the vespers on the 29th December 1901 'the congregation of Narda interrupted the Hungarian singing, it was repeated the 31 December when priest Schápy appealed to their patriotic feelings and asked them to allow the Hungarian language in church as before. ... at present, waiting for higher disposition, there is no singing in Narda either in Hungarian or in Croatian. ...It is not permissible that the church of the Hungarians which

³⁷ Kuntár, Lajos: Bozsok. Szombathely. N.d. p.58.

³⁸ A nardai háború.

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was built with so much work and cost should be destroyed by some unruly persons wishing to fish in troubled waters.³⁹ The county's daily supported the priest of Narda in spite of the fact that he had been their worst enemy as an adherent of the people's party. The paper declared that 'Considerations of Hungarians are the most important idea for us this is why we support the populist priest in this question and protect his truth because he is right when he wants the hymns to be sung in Hungarian in our churches.' The article ends with the declaration: 'It must not be and we would not allow to happen that the priest, though our sworn opponent, should fail in the cause of the nation and that of the national language. This is how we judge the war in Narda, which must end in honours for its standard bearer.'⁴⁰ A paragraph in the January 8. issue of the paper *Vasvármegye* seems to try to divide opinions about the war in Narda: 'The seed sown found fertile soil especially in the souls of the congregation in Felsőcsatár who are soberly thinking citizens adhering to the Hungarian race and cultivating Hungarian ideas and as such should be regarded as examples for the other non-Hungarian speaking villages. They condemn the disorder in Narda and distancing themselves from similar acts are eager in propagating the Hungarian language; therefore they deserve the warmest and undivided praise.'⁴¹

6. The role of the press in Magyarization

The strong nationalistic feelings of some members of the press have already been seen from the quotations, e.g. the way they defended the priests in their efforts to Magyarization. In the second half of the 19th c. the press took an active part in moulding national-ethnic opinions. In 1867 the county organ propagated the exchange visits of children which in their opinion would help Magyarization: '... there will not be any Wendish, German, Croatian person who would not be able to speak Hungarian in addition to his mother tongue and would not claim the one learnt to be his own.' – are the closing sentences of the article 'Let's Magyarize!⁴² There are further examples in the 1884 issues of *Vasmegeyi Lapok* in favour of Magyarization: 'At the end of the previous month

³⁹ A nardai békéllenkedők. *Vasvármegye*. 1902. Január 8. 3 (The malcontented of Narda).

⁴⁰ A nardai háború. *Vasvármegye*. 1902. Január 12. 1. (The war in Narda).

⁴¹ *Vasvármegye* 1902. Jan.8.

⁴² *Vasmegeyi Lapok* 1884. Május 22.2.

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was the closing examination in the school of Németh-Gyirót; it was a pleasant surprise for the audience to listen to the children's pure Hungarian speech, and when they sang "God bless the Hungarians" there were tears of joy in the eyes. Keep at it!⁴³

7. The stratum orientation of Magyarization and its relationship to mobility

Pilgrimages and local church festivals have further demolished the myth of closed societies existing before 1945. There were participants at the St. Jacob festival in Ják from Horvátnádalja in 1751, as recorded in the proceedings of a witchcraft trial.⁴⁴ The women of Szentpéterfa told how they went to the St. Anna festival to Kertes on a carriage in great secrecy; they stayed for one dance and then returned back home. They were afraid their parents would have learnt about it. "We did not go anywhere; we were not allowed. 'Why? Was it forbidden?' – 'We could not do it. What our parents said was sacred.' This is still the model of the old traditional society, the generations were subordinated and superordinated, the norms being set by the elders. There are more than one factors, which describe Szentpéterfa as a conservative society. The constantly high proportion of endogamy can be one of the reasons that have encouraged the preservation of traditions in a conservative village community. However, this was also the place where many enterprising persons were born who emigrated to America especially at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th cc.

The emancipation of the serfs with its bipolar aspects resulted in the mobility of a great portion of society. This did not only facilitate ethnic mixing but incited it as well. Such processes were not in the accord with the idea of nation-state. Communities are preserved by group-consciousness. The 'we' frequently means contempt against 'them'.

In the case of the Gradistye Croats Magyarization became an issue in those communities where Hungarian was not spoken at all or only to a small extent. The area was a fairly stationary conservative peasant society. Other groups could become mobile more easily because in addition to their Croatian mother tongue they could speak Hungarian and/or Ger-

⁴³ Vasmegyei Lapok 1884. Május 22 2.

⁴⁴ Schramm, Ferenc: Magyarországi boszorkányperek 2. Budapest, 1983. p.731. (Witchcraft Trials in Hungary)

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man as well. They became carters and merchants. Pásztorháza or Stinác (Stinatz, Austria) became the carting centre.

Traditional belief has it that it was an 18th c hermit who launched vegetable gardening in Hidegség and Homok; according to others it was István Csetkovics, parish priest of Hidegség in the middle of the 19th c.⁴⁵ The hermit might have been the instigator but the villages became full blown vegetable gardeners only at the second half of the 19th c.; there is no mention of growing vegetables in these villages in the mid 19th c. description of the county, whereas all special activities were duly listed.⁴⁶ Selling their vegetables meant greater mobility, which in turn helped Magyarization. Péter HANÁK's observation has been justified who points out the close relationship between production for market and urbanization as well as urbanization and Magyarization. However, in his opinion industrialization is more important than agriculture, but the example of Homok proves that non-traditional agricultural production is closely connected to commerce and thus increasing mobility.

Tourism in the neighbourhood of Homok started first in the first half of the 19th c. when István Széchenyi had opened his spa for the public in Fertőboz on Lake Fertő.⁴⁷ There are no direct proofs of its influence in the Magyarization of the area. At the end of the 20th c. the increase of tourism in the neighbourhood of Lake Fertő may help Magyarization because a new tourist village has been built next to the old one; it seems, however, that tourism encourages the community to enhance their Croatian background; especially folklore is an inviting feature offering novel experience to the visitors. There is a new folklore museum where local crafts programmes tempt even those who otherwise would not visit the museum.

⁴⁵ Kelemen, István: Fertőhomok 1274 – 2001. p. 151.

⁴⁶ Horváth, Zoltán 1976

⁴⁷ Tilkovszky, Lóránt: Széchenyi István fertőbozi fürdője. Soproni Szemle 1960/2. pp. 181–185. (The spa of István Széchenyi at Fertőboz).