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The Representation of the Self-Concepts Within the Adventist Romani Community from Etéd

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Abstract. In this paper I will present the process of representing concepts of the self within the Adventist Romani community from Etéd (Atid, Romania). I especially draw attention to the religious and ethnic aspects of these self-representations. My questions are closely related to the attitude of the Romani community towards their own tradition and culture, more specifically, to what motivated them to convert and how this fact affects their self-image and lifestyle. The starting point of this paper is the assumption that if a community that is stigmatized by society joins a religious group, then not only their religious identity changes but also their lifestyle. Through this process we can observe the changes to the old, stigmatized lifestyle that occurred through the process of conversion.
I consider the self-representations as *collective representations* because the members of the community (Adventists and non-Adventists alike) show the same positive shift of the Romani self-image. They regard themselves as religious Romanies. In my paper I analyze the main points of the collective representation which are close to a positive self-image. These are: 1. the changed moral figure 2. the altered image of the institiution of marriage 3. the Romani who can write and read 4. the rich Romani 5. the Romani who distances himself from other Romani communities 6. the Romani who shows a uniform image of his community.

Keywords: Gábor Romani, self-concepts, collective representation, ethnicity, religion

Introductory remarks

The following article is a shortened version of a case study in my PhD dissertation that deals with the influence of religious conversion on the value-system and life-conduct of Romani communities in the Transylvanian village of Kőrispatak

1 The quotes from Hungarian specialist literature have been translated by the author.

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(Crişeni) and its surroundings.[2] The main question of my dissertation was whether and in what ways will customary forms of Hungarian-Romani relations change under the influence of religious conversion, and how these changes relate to the changed mentality and life-conduct. While the village of Kőrispatak has only about 600 inhabitants, the three main historical churches (Protestant, Unitarian, Catholic) have coexisted there with three important small religious communities for the last 100 years.[3] These are the two splinter groups of Jehova's Witnesses and the True Faith Jehova's Witnesses (unified until 1962 as Jehova's Witnesses)[4] and the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. The Baptist Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement[5] were also present in the village earlier, but they are not anymore. Confessional diversity becomes even more accentuated when one takes into account that the Romani community representing 60% of the village population is deeply involved in the life of these small churches. The Romani gave half of the 60 Jehova Witness members in the 1940s, and while the congregation[6] today is smaller (12 members), these ethnic proportions remained the same.[7]

Adventist Gábor Romanies from the nearby village of Etéd[8] represent a separate case in the ethnic and congregational map of the region, since neither congregation was present before in this predominantly Protestant and Unitarian village.[9] However, Gábor Romanies living here started to join en masse Seventh Day Adventist Church after 1989, and they exercised their new religion in the neighboring congregation of

2 My main fieldwork site was Crişeni, Harghita County, Romania, but I conducted fieldwork in the following locations also: Kőrispatak (Crişeni), Etéd (Atid), Bözöd (Bezid), Bözödújfalu (Bezidu Nou), Szolokma (Solocma), Erdőszentgyörgy (Sângeorgiu de Pădure).

3 Both Jehova's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement made its appearance in the village in the 1920s, and by the 1930s they already managed to alter the religious map of the area significantly.

4 True Religion of Jehova's Witnesses is a local name that members of this congregation use for differentiating themselves from others. Officially the term Jehova's Witnesses remains in use, it is from this group that the group named True Faith separated.

5 The congregation called Reformist is a splinter group of the Adventist Church.

6 All religious communities discussed here use *congregation* as a term to denote an assembly of the believers in a given village, taking place in a regular manner, once or twice a week. Besides this event, *congregation* is also used to denote the small group of believers in that village or city.

7 The conversion of various Romani persons and groups to Neoprotestant religions represents a significant global phenomenon since the middle of the 1900s. Several studies discuss the role of Pentecostalism in the life of Romani communities (Thurfjell 2013a, 2013b, Ries 2007, Williams 2000), this religion often becomes part of Romani political identity, transforming into a sort of ethnic religion. It should be clear, however, that Romani communities living in various regions prefer a variety of religious communities, and these preferences are often related to the desire of creating a boundary between them and other groups. In Romania Pentecostal communities have the largest Roma membership; they are followed by Jehova's Witnesses, the Baptist Church, and Adventist communities. One finds this conversion and membership pattern in the majority of European countries.

8 Etéd (in Romanian Atid, Harghita county) is a village situated 9 km away from Kőrispatak.

9 Similarly to Kőrispatak, various religious congregations have deep historical roots in the villages of the region.

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Kőrispatak in the periods they spent in the country. Currently the congregation has 50 members, half of them being Gábors from Etéd. My article will investigate the ways in which this Adventist Gábor community builds its collective self-image, and how this image relates to the Hungarian society living around them.[10]

In this introductory part I would like to reflect briefly on the personal side of my involvement with this topic, the nature of my relationships within Kőrispatak, its believer (*hívő*)[11] and Romani communities. I can safely state that I grew up in this village as my grandparents lived there, and I spent most of my childhood years, later my school holidays with them. My grandfather was leader (*csoportszolga*)[12] of the True Believer Jehova's Witnesses, twice a week the community congregated in the house in which I was living. I often participated in these congregational meetings, as it was my grandfather's declared aim to draw other members from the family towards his faith as well. In this he did not succeed. These meetings, however, with their long readings of biblical stories instead of bedtime stories created a sense of naturalness, just as the fact that there were Romani and Hungarian people together, calling each other brothers (*testvérek*).[13] Long time had to pass until this sense of naturalness became a question, a research topic for me. In fact, it was due to my university studies that I started to look at this lifeworld, perceived until then as natural, as to a possible topic of research.

Combining longer and shorter breaks, I conducted my fieldwork between 2006 and 2012 in this region. Between 2008 and 2010 I spent longer periods among the Gábors in Etéd, mostly from autumn to spring, as this is part of the year when the majority of the community can be found in Etéd. My methodology was based on participant observation and interviews, I regularly participated in the Adventist 'congregational hours' (*gyülekezeti órák*), in the life of Gábor families, I observed and interpreted various events going on during the years, and completed this material with targeted interviews. The main aim of the interviews was to clarify and deepen my understanding of some aspects that I found problematic during my observations, I also wished to reveal and articulate the defining and changing relationships and systems of prejudices that characterise the coexistence of Romani and Hungarian communities. All in all, among the Gábor community I conducted 14 interviews with 22 persons.[14]

10 After the opening of Romania's borders in 1989 the majority of Gábors went to Hungary for seasonal work, and in many cases, using Hungary as a transit country, even beyond, engaging in a wide range of commercial activities. The first religious conversions occurred here. The lifestyle of the Gábors, and the role of faith in their life will be discussed in what follows.

11 Inhabitants of the village indiscriminatingly name everyone who is member of some small religious congregation a believer (*hívő*).

12 The term *csoportszolga* means "servant of the group," the leaders of the congregations are named like this.

13 Members of these churches consider each other as 'brothers in faith' (*hittestvérek*), both on local and global level, calling each other 'brothers' (*testvérek*).

14 There were interviews conducted in the presence of several persons who participated

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In what follows, I will briefly present the theoretical framework that serves as the theoretical context of my interpretations. Next I will present the ways Gábors in Etéd and in Transylvania relate to religion in general and to Adventist faith in particular. Finally, I will turn towards some thematic central points in their self-image that reveal the influence of Adventist faith on their life.

Theoretical considerations

My interpretations and analyses in this article are grounded on those studies of interethnic relations that attempt to use the idea of the "encounter" in order to grasp the notion of ethnicity and its various changes.[15] Additionally, I tried to focus my study even more on giving central place in my interpretations to the problem of how religious life and culture influence these relations.

My starting point is the concept of *ethnicity*, as it was developed by Fredrik Barth. This notion emphasizes the processual character of boundary-making that takes place in the interactions of neighboring communities, over the apparent stability of cultural content (Barth 1969, 1996).[16] During their "encounters" such groups articulate *images* of the others and themselves, representations that help them in creating a self-definition, and a way to relate to the other through establishing and maintaining a boundary. The notion of *images* refers to symbolic representations (mental or material) that play an important part in various processes of identification on an individual or collective level.[17] With respect to the role of representations in creating identity I follow the ideas of Anthony P. Cohen, who understands identification processes as continuous interplay of internal and external pictures, representations created by others and by ourselves (Cohen 1997: 101). These pictures most often manifest themselves as components of a culture (languge, clothing, gastronomy, etc.),[18] and point towards "culture as

in the discussion, and for this reason the interviews may be best considered as a variety of communicative gestures around a given topic.

15 My use of this notion relies on the work of Zoltán Biro A. "Encounters" are situations, events occurring between persons who are members of different ethnic communities. They can be physical or mental, but in each case the expression of ethnic belonging has to be significant enough for the participants to influence the behavioural patterns of the encounter situation (Biró A. 1996: 249).

16 For a discussion of Barth's approach see Roosens 1990 and Jenkins 2002.

17 I use the notion of *identification* rather than the somewhat devalued concept of *identity* in order to emphasize the processual and situated character of the phenomenon. "Let's not consider identity as a closed substance, let's name it instead identification, and consider it as a process. Identity does not come from the completed identity, the one all of us already possess as individuals, but from the lack of completeness, a lack that has to be filled from external sources, while adapting ourselves to the images that we think others have formed of us" (Hall 1997: 65).

18 These are symbolic constructions of value that are the result of interaction taking place on the border of two communities. Their meanings are not fixed, but changing, flexible, situationally

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indentity." I agree with Cohen that this relates to the ways in which persons and groups attempt to manifest themselves through an objectified and emblematized culture. These are in fact political practices appearing in processes characterized as "ethnic," their components one may call symbols (Cohen 1997: 101). My aim is to answer the questions posed in the introduction through investigating such pictures or representations. I consider that creating images of self and other, as well as perceiving images of our group created by others are symbolic gestures that reveal the relations between two "worlds," mentality-systems, with their internal structures and positions. In this article I will discuss only the self-image of the Adventist Gábor community. This self-image, however, cannot be separated from the self-image of other groups around them as well as the images these group hold of Gábors, as well as of the situations in which these images are created and manifested. Therefore I will make comments on these as well.

The Transylvanian Gábors

Scholars place Gábor Romanies among the Oláh Romani, Kalderash tribe (Vajda – Prónai 2000, Tesfay 2007a, Pozsony 2009), but Gábor Romanis view themselves as a separate tribe and they distance themselves from other Romani communities. They introduce themselves as Gábor Gyspy, hatted Gábor (*kalapos gábor*), or Hungarian Gypsy. Besides these ethnonyms, the Hungarian and Romanian population use the names *tinker Gypsies, Gypsies with eaves (csatornás cigány)* and *tent Gypsies* (*sátoros cigány*, *sátoros*). These names refer to traditional Gypsy occupations, as well as to the way of life of these groups around the beginning of the 1900s. They mainly live in Transylvanian cities[19] (mainly in Marosvásárhely, Kolozsvár,[20] Nagyvárad,[21] Temesvár[22]) and villages. We can find a great number of Gábors in Nyárádkarácsonyfalva,[23] they are also Adventists and the Gábor Romani conversion to Adventist religion also comes from here.[24] An Adventist preacher explained the conversion of Gábors in Transylvania as follows: "*Their*

dependent. These meanings are actively manipulated by the contexts, and the actors populating these contexts (Cohen 1997: 102).

19 Based on an earlier study (Zamfir – Zamfir 1993), Gardner and Gardner (2008: 155) assessed their numbers to 14,000; Péter Berta estimates the number of Gábors somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 (Berta 2013: 2). It is very difficult to arrive at an exact number, as their self-definition varies in different contexts (such as *cauldron makers, braziers, tent Gypsies*). However, these names are used also by another Roma community in Romania, the *corturars*. On the intricacies and context-dependency of particular denominations see Berta 2013: 2-3.

20 In Romanian: Cluj-Napoca (Cluj county)

21 In Romanian: Oradea (Bihor county)

22 In Romanian: Timişoara (Timiş county)

23 In Romanian: Crăciuneşti (Maros county)

24 About the Adventist Gábor Romanies you can read more in Gagyi (2002), Simon (2006, 2007)

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greatest conversion was... evangelist Imre Petrik […]. This was around the regime change, in 1992, 1993. And, for example, the Gábor Adventist house of prayers in Karácsonyfalva, Nyárádkarácsonyfalva... Under his influence many conversions took place. There was an evangelization center in Nyárádkarácsonyfalva where he organized a week long meeting, and so many Gábors were interested that in one single occasion they baptized about 60 persons. […] And so you may say that here in Karácsonyfalva a Gábor congregation came into being. Someone who goes there sees only hatted congregations. And I see how they are evolving. On the one hand, they are becoming more open, by the influence of the preacher, on the other hand, their encounter faith during their travels, in Hungary. And so on, one brought the other into the community after that.[25]

Although the Gábor Romanies' lives are linked with particular home cities or villages, their work requires them to travel around Europe where they form small communities. Their lifestyle constitutes a bridge between the settled and migrant Romanis. Their traditional crafts are copper-work and tin-work and they still teach these to their children, but nowadays they also get income from other commercial sources, too. They work in the field of constructions and plumbing in larger Romanian cities and neighbouring countries as well.[26]

The Gábors is a traditional Romani community which expresses its group identity and at the same time its distinction from other Romani groups. This is characterized by the use of the Romani language, preservation of their 'folk costume' which has symbolic meaning,[27] strict endogamy[28] and respect for tradition. In the last two decades this has been further extended with particular symbols of wealth,[29] with the help of which they distance themselves not only from the point of view of social background, but also material hierarchy. After the end of communism they joined Adventist[30] groups the dogmas of which

25 About the Adventist Gábor Romanies you can read more in Gagyi (2002), Simon (2006, 2007).

26 On the economic systems and living strategies of Gábors in Transylvania see Berta 2013.

27 In the case of men the folk costume consists of a big rimmed black (grey or light brown) hat, beard, waistcoat and leather jacket. The elder generation may also wear a silver buttoned jacket and pocket watch, which they inherit. In the case of women, colourful multilayered skirts with an apron and a shawl are worn, girls wear long plaits with red ribbons. On Romani folk dress see: Tesfay (2005.)

28 The Gábor Romanies distance themselves from other Romani groups, they occupy a higher social and material place in the social hierarchy and they also only marry among themselves. On the institution of marriage see: Berta (2005a).

29 We can list here their multi-storey houses and expensive cars, which constitute valuable goods in relation to broader society. At the same time, trade in silver, glasses and spoons have the function of showing their place in the hierarchy of the community. On this see: Berta (2005b).

30 The great "awakening movements" that started in the 19th century in the United States reached the economic and political spheres, the sphere of religion. Among the many religious societies that were formed in this period was the Adventist movement of William Miller (1789–1849), preaching the second coming of Christ. The Seventh Day Adventist Reform Church was founded on this movement between 1848–1849, rethinking and theologically substantiating Miller's teachings. The basic tenets of the Church were developed by Ellen Gould White (1827–1915),

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encouraged them to rethink and reshape their traditional culture.[31] Adventism today has become an ethnic symbol which is part of their self-representation.

The *Gábors* from Etéd

The ethnic structure of Etéd in Hargita county is made up of Hungarians, *Home Romanies,* and *Gábor Romanies*, or as the Hungarian community calls them, *Tent Romanies*. The Home Romanies live in the outskirts of the village in very poor conditions. They earn their income from agricultural work and some of them go abroad (mostly to Hungary) for seasonal work. The Gábor Romanies live in the street leading towards the village of Küsmöd and have a comparatively wealthy lifestyle.

Sociologist István Vass gives the following characterization of the Gábors: "The tent Romanies constitute a colourful group in the village. Their homes on the edge of the village show their wealth even to an outsider. They give the impression of a friendly, communicative and well-informed people. We counted 20 families, each having 3-5 children. Their main occupation is trade or 'bargain', as they call it, and the size of their homes and equipment is representative of their wealthy lifestyle. Modern machines, colour TV, and even computers can be found in their houses, bathrooms and also clean and well-clothed children and adults, and in the garage one can find the latest trade-name cars. [...] There isn't any material diversification within this group, they are considered to be the wealthiest families" (Vass 2002: 90). Although István Vass shows a general view of the Gábors from Etéd, which is his aim, this image needs to be widened by taking account of religion. Vass mentions 20 families out of which 10 are Adventist and together with children that is altogether around 70 people[32] who constitute 60% of the Gábor community. In his presentation of the Gábor Romanies, this viewpoint defines not only the outsider's views but also their own self-representations. Their own ethnic identity is not only expressed through language, or on cultural and economic levels, but also on a religious level. In

his teachings being accepted as prophetical until our days. Since the 1880s the Church has built significant bases in Europe, has founded educational and medical institutions, as well as publishing ventures (Szigeti 1981: 8). The content of their faith and their ceremonial regulation may be described as follows: belief in Christ's second coming; the mortality of man, and the possibility to reach immortality solely through Christ; the celebration of the Sabbath; puritan lifestyle (avoiding excesses in clothing and jewellery, as well as in entertainment, etc.); the renewal of healthcare; avoidance of unclean food, such as pork and rabbit, tobacco and alcohol.

31 On this theme see: Gagyi (2002), Koncz (2006), Simon (2006, 2007), Tesfay (2007a, 2007b), Eparu (2008).

32 The Adventist Church practices adult baptism. While children do attend the religious gatherings on Saturdays, and there are special programmes organized for them, they are not considered to be fully part of the Church.

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the case of the Gábors from Etéd this can be regarded as an important aspect of *group identity*. Whenever the Gábors have to talk about their identity they talk about a community which distances itself from the Hungarians and from the Home Romanies. The most important fact in this distancing is that they define themselves as Adventist Gábors. Those who are not baptized also state the same, they lay emphasis not on the religious orientation but on the changed lifestyle, on the fact that they are "different" Romanies. Adventist members also define themselves in the name of the broader community as Adventist Gábors.

Members of the community denote eaves-making (*csatornázás*) as their main occupation, commercial activites (*üzletelés*) appear as a secondary source of income.[33] They work mostly abroad, in constructions, leaving their villages with all their family for a longer time. However, they invest their foreign earnings at home, mostly in housing. It is the woman's role to lead the household and educate the children, as an additional income they sell utensils, clothing, mostly textile elements of home decoration. For winter they move back to their home village, and the family stays there, while men may depart for several weeks for works. Important family events (marriage, baptism) are always organized during winter, long distances are covered in order to attend these. While working in Hungary, they rent a house in a city, send their children to a local school, and men travel to work from there, in some cases even beyond the borders. These trips serve as occasions for conducting commercial activites as well. When abroad, they look for the nearest Adventist community, they keep the Shabbat rigurously, they do not work or touch money, sing together and read the Bible.

In the following, I analyze the thematic points of this collective representation through which, as a consequence of religious conversion, a positive self-concept emerges. Within this, the main focus is on processes of change.

The changed moral person[34]

The self-image that the Gábors from Etéd have created over the years, more precisely, the one that they show to the outside world and in line with which they define themselves as a uniform group, is in fact a reaction to the expectations which come from the outside. I have already mentioned the main aspects of this self-image (folk costume, language, economy, mobility), now I would like to focus on being an Adventist and its implications. The ground of this self-

33 The Hungarian inhabitants of the village maintain that the order is reverse, commercial activities is the main activity, while eaves-making at construction works the second, its function being more significant as a sign of attachment to their traditional craft.

34 I borrow the concept of *moral person* from László Fosztó (2007), who states that this means self-representation through communicative gestures by which a person or a community can define themselves.

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representation can be found in the fact that they define themselves as members of a religious community, that of the Adventist Gábors – compared with the past this represents a shift towards a positive path – moral people, who live their everyday life according to the rules, regulations and values of this religious group. Being a member of this community requires a specific religious training based on the teachings of the Bible and this also neccesitates a special lifestyle and set of values. At the same time, it means that they live by the rules of strict puritan values, which prohibit the consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, pork, certain forms of recreation, and even social relations and interactions are monitored. These aspects of their current identity do not harmonize with the traditional customs of the Gábors and neither do they fit with the stereotypical image held by the inhabitants of the village according to whom the Gábors are roisterers, loud, nasty and tricky people. An Adventist Gábor must not drink or say nasty things or fight with people who offend him.

The Gábors are aware of the negative preconceived ideas which are held about them, and this is why, when they talk about themselves and about what being an Adventist means, they always take into consideration these prejudices. They do not deny the stereotypes but they emphasize the process of change in mentality and ways of life, the moral person, who is now different. Identification with a group and a system of ideas that goes beyond the nation means that both human frailty and the stigma explicitly or implicitly projected on them by the Hugarian context loses its ethnic context. It appears as a universal human problem, independent of any national or ethnic particularity, one that may be overcome through joining the community of God as well as the conscious internal (spiritual and intellectual) and external (lifestyle and behavior) transformation. They attempt to challenge negative images associated with Romani and the Gábors through not accepting this image as an ethnic characteristic, but transposing it as a general negative human characteristic that has to be overcome by approaching God, by conversion and the salvation it offers for everyone. This is exemplified by the statement of an interviewee: "*The person changes in the soul. It changes in the soul, in a way that he is with God, and thinks about everything that it is not allowed, because he is different, he is with God. [...] It does not matter that he is a Gypsy, a Hungarian, a Romanian or a German, or whatever, he can be even American, because this is decided by faith, by the soul...*"

During the interviews with families I noticed that they lay emphasis on the fact that their lives changed a lot in a positive way after they became Adventists. This sort of life helps them fit into the broader society and adjust to this coexistence. Regarding the Adventist Gábor teachings, they create a self-image that takes into consideration the Gábor traditions but at the same time it also deconstructs the negative characteristics, which may aggravate their coexistence with their environment.

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The altered moral person's characteristics can be summed up in the following terms: he (she) does not drink, does not smoke, leads an austere life, tries to live in peace with his family, does not steal, does not lie, does not cheat on others, believes in God and respects His laws. All these changes can be viewed as a reaction against the negative stereotypes of the broader Hungarian community.

The altered form of the institution of marriage

The Gábors emphasize the fact that conversion and the expectations of the religious community are not easy in all cases, there are Gábor customs which Adventist teachings do not accept, but they regard these as essential parts of their ethnic identity which they do not want to abandon. Take, for example, marriage at a younger age. According to the Gábor tradition, girls get married at the age of 12 or 13 to a 15 or 16 year old groom, a match which has already been decided earlier, when they were under age. They strictly marry only another Gábor, and the families must be at the same level of wealth.[35] The matchmaking strategy is part of parental duties. Next to the wealth aspect, another one emerged: a girl from an Adventist family should get married with a boy also from an Adventist family. After the wedding, the young couple at the age of 18 get baptized. The Adventist church tries to control early marriage, they accept it when the girl is 16 and the boy is 18. This is the case not only with the Gábors from Etéd but with all the Gábor communities in the country. However, the Gábors want to keep their tradition, because marriage at an early age is important from the point of view of collective identity and this is linked with other traditions such as the education and socialization of children.[36] As an example I mention the fact that the preparation of girls for housework (cleaning, cooking) is the duty of the mother-in-law, because the girl has to learn these according to the regulations of her husband's family. Because of the influence of the Adventist regulations, the Gábor community has to reinterpret its traditions, which is hard, and this is the reason why the Adventist Gábors accept a one-year expulsion from the Adventist community as penalty, after which they have to confess their sins in front of the whole congregation in order to be accepted again. Despite this, the Adventist Gábors try to respect the regulations and there are fewer underage marriages among them. This is well exemplified by a small debate that took place in a family around this topic:

Well, it was like marrying the girls at the age of 13, and the boy was 16, 17. This was the custom. It is the custom now as well [Zsuzsi intervenes] it's not exactly

35 On the institution of marriage see: Berta (2005a).

36 "School attendance in the case of girls usually ends with the beginning of menstruation, due to reaching marriage age, and fear from a possible elopement" (Berta 2010: 240).

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like that anymore, not anymore. Nowadays we have to wait until the girl reaches 16 and the boy 17. At least those who are Adventists.

T.L. Is this expected by the Adventist community?

Yes, yes. [István intervenes] If someone breaks this, he is suspended. He is suspended from the Church for a year.

T. L. And do you accept this?

Well, what could we do? We accept it. It is not bad. We accept it. [Zsuzsi intervenes] There are some who do it accordingly, there are some, who do not. People are not the same. It would be vain to say anything, as I don't know it and I will lie. [A young girl intervenes]. There are some, Tünde, who do not care about her being 13, they marry her. But that for whom Chirst our Lord is important, he will wait until the girl is 16 and the boy 18.

If the young couple wants to get baptized, they have to prove their marriage with an official certificate and earlier this was not part of the traditions of the Gábors either. Weddings also used to last for a few days, but nowadays they are simple with only a modest dinner where they do not serve alcohol, pork and dancing is also missing, instead they sing religious songs.

The institution of marriage changed from traditional culture to a more religious and bourgeois culture, at the same time by preserving some traditional customs (endogamy, economic views, offering presents) marriage customs preserved some aspects of "Gábor" culture.

The Gábor who can read and write

The shaping of the self-image in the view of religious belonging can occur not only on the level of values and lifestyle but also on an intellectual level. The practice of Adventism implies a rational and theoretical attitude, which is based on reading and interpreting the Bible in the broader community as well. The fact that someone is a Gábor means that he or she can read and write, and read the Bible and its teachings and discusses it with the other members of the congregation. So he or she does intellectual work. It is a common phenomenon that adult people learn how to read after joining the religious group in order to be able to read the Bible.[37] Reading and commenting the Bible offers an interpretive frame for Gábor believers that offers meaning for their changed lifestyle and value system. It offers the possibility to reinterpret their traditional culture in the frame

37 According to Sorin Gog, within the neo-Protestant congregations it is quite common for convert Romanies to learn how to read from the Bible. They also find it important to educate their children, which, beyond religious aims, also has mundane roles, for instance, to get a better job (2008: 70).

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of a transcendent worldview.[38] An illiterate Adventist Gábor woman talked to me about the disadvanteges of illiteracy when I asked her about how her life has changed after conversion:

T.L. And what changed after you became a believer?
I don't know. You see, I cannot read, so I cannot explain to you everything.

The Gábor families, even in cases where the parents cannot read or write, lay emphasis on the fact that their children should attend school and learn how to read, write and count and also to learn Romani, Hungarian, Romanian and other foreign languages. They think of these as necessary tools to succeed in life and at the same time they think that it is enough. Even though among their children there are some with outstanding skills,[39] they believe that 8 classes are enough (in the case of girls 4), because during this time they learn the elementary basics that they will need. They think that studying further is not important as one of my informants said: *You don't need school for business. One should know how to write, read and count money and speak wherever one is. 8 classes are necessary, most of them finish it, mainly for boys, because they need a driving license.*

The attitude of the Adventist Gábors towards intellectual work, writing and reading is, on the one hand, useful for religious purposes, but on the other hand, they regard it as an important tool for surviving in the practical side of life. Religious and profane roles are built on one another, they form a whole.

The rich Gábor

If we analyze the theme from an economic point of view, we cannot ignore the fact that the Gábors from Etéd (and the Gábors more generally) are among the wealthiest people in the village. Wealth is an ethnic symbol for them, which plays an important role in their self-definition against other groups. The multi-storey houses and expensive cars show that they belong to the higher class in the hierarchy of Romani groups. The houses, the cars, the expensive household objects, the spacious rooms, the silver jewellery are all markers of the Gábor culture. In addition to the "ethnic goods" (for example, silver prestige objects, women's folk costume, Gábor hat), Berta (2010: 236) takes into consideration "ethnic consumption" (huge houses, brilliant furniture, spending money on

38 Examining attitudes towards writing among Pentecostal Romanies, László Fosztó draws attention to the fact that "written/printed text creates the possibility of a novel publicity" (Fosztó 2007: 39).

39 Studying the position of Romani children in the Romanian educational system István Vas mentions the Romanies from Etéd, emphasizing that these children achieve impressive results (Vass 2002).

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useless goods) as well. These also constitute symbolic practices through which their ethnic identity can be expressed. Consumption in "Gábor style" reflects value preferences through which they can represent the position they wish to occupy in social hierarchy, the attempt to gain social respectability and separate themselves from other Romani groups.

Faith and economy appear in harmony within the symbolic representations of the Adventist Gábors. According to them, through conversion they become people who are afraid of God and God helps them, at the same time they quit drinking, smoking and socializing, thus they earn more money and as a consequence of rational thinking they can make better deals. This linking of religion with the economic dimension is central to the work of many scholars,[40] but here I would like to emphasize the thought of Max Weber, according to which religious belief has an impact on lifestyle and economy as well. His thesis holds that religion often serves social and economic interests, thus it can be placed in the duty of non-religious concerns too (2005: 55). Similarly to Jewish religion, many ascetic trends of Protestantism interpret wealth as the earthly sign of God's mercy. This sort of understanding of wealth may prevail even in cases when the religious aim and significance of economic activity is explicitly rejected (2005: 184). My research findings suggest that this may be the case among the Gábors from Etéd as well.

Being a member of the Adventist congregation does not just mean that they do not drink or smoke anymore, but it also means that they do not cheat on their business partners and they close fair deals, but if not, then God punishes them. Through faith the image of the *reliable Gábor* gains legitimacy, which contradicts the non-Romani people's opinion according to which the Gábors are tricky and they cheat on their business partners. The good side of this on a material level is that people of other nationalities prefer to close deals with the Adventist Gábors because they trust them. Thus they get better jobs.

Moreover, they prove their trustworthiness and attachment to their congregation – their economic and social position – through generous donations, paying the tenth,[41] which in the Kőrispatak congregation is three-quarters of the income. They are proud that they can support the churches with their donations and this way help the advancement of the congregations, and they are regarded as keystones. A determining fact in the economic growth is that the social web built by the religious communities can be used outside the boundaries of the village, too, for instance, in the shape of work relations.[42] The importance of the social web within Romani communities is stressed in the works of many researchers

40 Among others: Robbins (1996), Hamilton (1998), Kamarás (2003), Kinda (2007), Tesfay (2007b).

41 The Adventist Church does not receive any material support from the government, it is self-supporting. The overall expenses are paid from members' donations, which is called a "tenth", meaning ten percent of their salaries.

42 Krisztián Eparu follows the life of an Adventist Gábor family in Budapest, where the role of these relations is very clear (Eparu 2008).

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who analyze the economic strategy of Romanis,[43] and which first of all mean the use of relation capital within the group. Whenever an Adventist Romani joins a new religious community, these strings widen because the Adventist members belonging to another ethnic group help their Romani brethren. The feeling of belonging to a congregation exists not only on the local level, but also beyond its boundaries, thus the mobility of the Gábors and their work culture in other cities and countries can add to the helping and coherent force of the religious communities, and this way the social webs can be more useful.

Their attitude towards wealth remains an ethnic symbol due to its closeness to religious values (God helps them because they converted), and it has washed away all the negative stereotypes about them (they do not earn their living in a fair way and they scam their business partners) through the fact that they have became reliable, trustworthy Gábor people in the view of society and they are also afraid of God.

The Gábor who distances himself from other Romani communities

Among the converted Adventist Gábors there are some who distance themselves from other Romani groups. They do not belong to a popular and ordinary religious congregation but they belong to the highly respected and more intellectual Adventist Church. They think that Pentecostal congregations are on a lower level where feelings, spontaneity and the spirit is decisive (for example, speaking in tongues through the spirit, wondrous healings) and in opposition to this the Adventist church is rational (for example, the importance of health, the support of education). They stand for an ecumenical intellectuality as they accept the Pentecostal congregations, they think of it as a positive influence on other Romani groups but they place themselves on a higher level. One of my informants, for example, was a young woman from Szőkefalva (Seuca, Mureş county) who came to Etéd following her husband, her parents are Pentecostal. She did not join any congregation yet, however, she accompanied her husband to Adventists, "cordialized" with their teachings. She compared the two congregations in the following manner:

T. L. Which one did you like most among the two faiths?
Well, I know now how they are, and I like it more here, at the Shabbat believers.
T. L. Why?
I like it more here at the Shabbat believers, relations with God are better here.
T. L. But why, what makes them better?

43 Among others: Stewart 1997.

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They put their soul more into it, when there is this tenth, the money, they always give it back, while those who believe on Sundays, many of them do not. Here it is not allowed to eat pork, while the others eat anything.

T. L. Their faith, what it is about?

It's only about going to pray on Sundays, and that's all. I mean, the bottle and the cigarette, they have to put it down as well.

The placing of the Adventist faith on a higher level among the Gábors is linked to the fact that its teachings and rituals are similar to the Jewish religion[44] that they respect and they think of the Jew as having the same fate (they are everywhere in the world and they are stigmatized) and they have to follow them in order to survive. The Gábors' sympathy towards the Jews existed even before they converted, and nowadays through the similarity of the rituals and dogmas it has also acquired a religious meaning which has strengthened it. According to them, throughout history they learned a lot from the Jews, they borrowed their ethnic symbol, the black hat, which is also called the Jewish hat, and according to tradition they also learned the spirit of business from them. They regard the Jewish nation as the one which stands above all, people from whom they learned a lot and with whom they share the same fate. They compare their persecution and exclusion to the Jewish nation, and they regard their religion similar to Jewish religion. This manifests in the fact that they think of themselves as Sabbatarians, and when I asked them about the differences between Sabbatarianists and Adventists, they could not distinguish one from the other, they said it was two ways of expressing the same faith.

The Gábors perceive the Adventist faith as an ethnic sign with the help of which they distance themselves from other Romani communities. In this sense we can view it as part of building their boundary. Within the Kőrispatak congregation there are no Romanis beside the Gábors from Etéd, and also in other Adventist communities the presence of the Gábors is characteristic, while other Romani communities join different religious groups, mainly the Pentecostal congregations.

The Gábor who perceives his own community as a standardized unit

As I have already stated at the beginning of this paper, the practice of self-representation among the Gábors is a *collective representation* because every person within the ethnic group defines himself as being a member of a uniform community having a *positive self-image*. Being an Adventist also means that

44 For example celebrating Saturday, respecting the laws of Moses, paying the tenth.

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lifestyle and a set of essential values change and this is the case not only with the Gábors who converted but also with the Gábors who did not. Quite often I met this sort of situation. The community showed me such a collective self-image within which religious and non-religious people too lived in harmony, the strength of the ethnic community held them together. Differences in religious culture and practice seemed of secondary importance in the unified, well-organized, dense kinship networks among the Gábor community. The Hungarian people, who live close to the Gábors, drew my attention to the fact that the Adventist Gábors "look down on" non-Adventist Gábors who are not baptized, and in some cases this even leads to exclusion (they do not talk with them, they do not invite them to family celebrations, they do not include them in work processes) and in this way they bring pressure on them, they want them to convert because only this way can they become members of the Gábor community. Because of the fact that I heard this from other members of the Hungarian community that "the Adventists look down on others" I asked many the Adventist Gábors many times and also the non-adventist Gábors, but they did not state this, they even highlighted the opposite of this. In the discourse of the Gábors these boundaries are continuously demolished in their self-representations. Being together and being a uniform community are important elements of the self-image which they want to show to the outside world. An example of this is the opinion of a Gábor man:

The one who is baptised has the same relations, it's just that he does not eat pork.

Summary

With regard to the self-representation practices of the Gábors from Etéd we can generally state that they try to show a collective self-image that keeps the main elements of their ethnic identity whilst at the same time they downplay the negative characteristics with which the surrounding society stigmatizes them. Belonging to the Adventist congregation, the practice of faith, the changes in mentality and lifestyle give the proper framing and create integration for them so they can preserve their own ethnic identity. We must see the reversal of the stigmatized state in this self-representation because "the thought stigmatization of belonging to a lower cultural status becomes the emblem of belonging to a higher status" (Cohen 1997: 104). Borrowing Sába Tesfay and Patrick Williams's concept of "to settle on" for this change in ethos we can understand this process better as the Adventist dogmas are taken from the outside (not from the view of the ethnic community) and, as a consequence, they reinterpret their own traditions (Tesfay 2007b: 409). I think that instead of "to settle on" it is better to use the concept of *double identity* because the Adventist Gábors belong to and represent themselves

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as being members of two different communities at the same time, and this double identity forms a unit. The Gábors are proud that they have kept their own traditions, language, folk costumes, endogamy, but they let go of their negative customs such as drinking, smoking, having fun and at the same time they have learnt how to write and read and they have even improved on an economic level because they do not live in tents anymore like their ancestors did, society can trust them because they have become trustworthy and upright religious people.

At the same time it is important to emphasize the fact that being an Adventist Gábor is an ethnic boundary within their representation practice which distances them and creates differences from other ethnic communities (Hungarians and other Romani communities), and it also creates uniformity within the boundaries, among the Gábors.

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