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Abstract: This paper describes the identity, assimilation and loyalty issues concerning the Croatian community in Hungary. In the regions of Central Europe and the northern Balkans, several Catholic southern Slavic ethnic groups have developed, each with their own identities, and throughout the 19th and 20th centuries most of them joined the national integration of Croats. However, this integration process has not been completed in all cases, and several groups remain the subjects of political games between Croatian-Serbian and Croatian-Serbian-Hungarian players. The paper analyzes the national integration process of mainly the Bunjevci and Bosniak groups of the Croatian community in Hungary in the new re-bordering period.

Keywords: border, identity, Croatian minority, Hungary, assimilation

Introduction

The temporary barrier consisting of a fence constructed along Hungary's southern borders in the summer of 2015 to halt and screen migrants from the Balkans heading for the core areas of Europe has also had an impact on the ethnic communities living in its vicinity. Borders in Central Europe and the Balkans have not been consolidated. During the last 30 years, a new system of borders of significant length has been created, as the national communities living in the area established their nation states one by one. Ethnically mixed regions are

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found along the borders, and national centers aim to integrate the ethnic groups friendly to the nation state on both sides of the border. The newly constructed border fence poses new challenges to the national integration policies of the last few decades in several affected states (Hungary, Serbia and Croatia).

These nations are at different stages of national integration processes and they face different problems. The identity of minority groups with certain specific ethnic and religious characteristics is not always clear. In certain ethnic contact zones, the nation to which the members of a given minority community belong is not entirely unequivocal. Are they Hungarian, the Croatian or Serbian? The different states compete to integrate, assimilate and earn the loyalty of minority groups. In this paper we are going to examine the anomalies related to groups falling within the scope of Croatian national integration.

1 De-bordering and Re-bordering

● In Hungary, the role of borders is traditionally considered important by the society, and each social group reacts sensitively to related issues. The Asian origin of Hungarians, their Finno-Ugric language and a culture distinct from that of neighboring peoples all mean that borders play a major role in national identity.

The western border have often been characterized by a sense of getting closer to the European center, a feeling of belonging to Europe as the right direction of development. Hungarians traditionally see and envision a civilizational divide along the eastern borders. This is linked with disorder, backwardness and other characteristics they intend to leave behind. The peoples of the north have been allies and competitors as well, throughout history. Today, this border is also the border of the Visegrad Group (V4). All Hungarian borders, especially the southern one, have been locations of military clashes. Hungary's "soft bottom", forming the northern border of the Balkans, has often been impacted by threats and conflicts throughout the history of the Hungarian state. The Ottoman Empire, very distinct from the Kingdom of Hungary in religion and culture, was the country's neighbor for a very long period. When it invaded Hungary, the country split into three and the conflict threatened the total occupation and destruction of the state.

Hungarian national identity is also a product of conflicts with Turks during the 15th to 17th centuries. Major participants of battles at the border fortresses are considered to be national heroes, although many of them had multiple identities and many nations and ethnicities of the region were represented in their families. Therefore, some of our national heroes are shared with neighboring countries.

Efforts to re-border (mostly state efforts with many aspects and layers, aimed at strengthening the borders) and de-border (personal, community and state efforts to dissolve borders) the Hungarian frontiers in the 20th century took place against different historical backgrounds. The Treaty of Trianon concluding the First World War remains a source of trauma for the entire society, with two thirds of the area and population of the state transferred to outside of the new borders. In the first half of the 20th century, the main issue of Hungarian national integration was territorial reintegration, the dissolution of existing borders (de-bordering) and the creation of new, just borders at the external areas of the ethnic areas. This historical period was closed by the treaties ending the Second World War, and, during the Cold War, borders were deemed to have been strengthened. Along the western border an “Iron Curtain” was constructed, a defense system was established along the border with Yugoslavia, society was enclosed within the state, border control was strengthened and Hungarian irredentism was persecuted, thus contributing to the creation of a new, government-controlled re-bordering stage. De-bordering efforts were continued by civil society and mostly the communities of the diaspora, partially through personal visits to the communities living on the other side of the borders.¹

After the Cold War, the new political climate enabled Hungarian national reintegration to be carried out by state and society without the need for territorial changes, by disassembling the separating function of borders. Therefore, Hungary’s ascension to the European Union (EU) was also the implementation of an important national integration objective. Hungary became one of the staunchest supporters of

1 A. Léphaft and P. Reményi, ‘Transforming borders—changing development potentials—the case of Vojvodina’, in: N. Drešković (ed), *Zbornik Radova Trećeg Kongresa Geografa Bosne i Hercegovine: Book of Papers [of the] Third Congress of Geographers of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo: Geografsko društvo u Federaciji Bosne i Hercegovine, 2014, pp. 295-302.

expanding the EU to the south, and the Hungarian presidency of the Council of the European Union (2011) played a key role in completing the ascension negotiations with Croatia and supporting Serbian efforts to join the bloc. This all reflected the demands of the Hungarian economy and efforts to improve Hungary's security and reintegrate the Hungarian communities living in Croatia and Serbia.² The law on dual citizenship (2010) allowed Hungarians living in neighboring countries to cross the borders easily and, by supporting personal de-bordering efforts at the personal level, became a means of national reintegration.

In the summer of 2015, the measures introduced to manage international migration opened a new, controversial stage in the history of Hungary's southern border. The construction of the border fence has multiple possible interpretations and a wide range of impacts. Internationally, the Hungarian government emphasized the protection of EU (Schengen) borders, but in its communication with the domestic public, and in reality, the intention to strengthen Hungarian sovereignty was also clear. These processes indicate the creation of a new re-bordering stage, which will in turn influence the integration efforts of the nations along the border, as well as the cross-border relationships of national minority groups and the members thereof. This impacts Croats and Serbs living in Hungary, as well as Magyars (ethnic Hungarians) living in Croatia and Serbia.

2. Croats in Hungary and their Attitude to State Borders in the 20th Century

The newest nation state of Croats was born in 1991 after winning independence in a war of liberation with the People's Army of Yugoslavia. At the same time, significant areas populated by Croats were left to other states along the borders of the newly created Croatian Republic, and in many cases these have become involved in international conflicts.³ The fate of Croats living in the neighboring countries is of pri-

2 N. Pap, *Hungary, the Balkans and the Mediterranean*, Pécs: Publikon Books, 2013.

3 An extremely bloody internal war took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995, in which Herzegovina and Posavina Croats were also affected. Croatians also live in Vojvodina within Serbia, several ten thousands left the area during 1990s wars, which NATO forces bombed in 1999. The Croatian minority living in Montenegro and Slovenia is lesser in numbers, but in-

mary interest to the Croatian public and politicians. The program of unification of Croatian territories into one state has become a key issue for the far right, while the completion of Croatian national integration is a focus across the entire Croatian political spectrum. Compared to other neighboring countries, Croatia's relationships with Hungary were balanced and cordial⁴ until the construction of the border fence, but harsh political declarations have been made since 2015. The long-term consequences are not yet clear, but international relationships have become more complicated, and minorities living on both sides of the border have clearly felt more distanced from their mother states by the high-tech protection system protecting "Fortress Europe". However, it is primarily not the existence of the physical border barrier, but the related regulations, the symbolic and mental effect of the protection system and different border management practice and approaches that distance these minorities from their mother states.

The group of Croats living in Hungary is not large, but their importance and role as a "bridge" between the two countries is significant. Their attitude toward Croatia includes linguistic-cultural distance to different degrees, different ethnic foundations and certain specific elements of identity. The distinction between the different Croat peoples living in Hungary is not clear in the professional literature. It is hard to implement a classification that is optimal from each point of view, which is mainly attributable to the border provisions of the Trianon Peace Treaty of 1920, as well as to the domestic re-organization of counties (Somogy and Baranya) in 1950. The former separated single areas of Croats settled in Hungary through newly created state borders, while the latter also isolated unified groups of people, although only within the country, re-organizing them into separate counties. These changes also effected Croats in Hungary at the church level, and through different practices of the archdioceses and dioceses it also had major impact on the lives and identities of Croats.

ternal disputes have arisen for not national issues, but for the control of the Prevlaka peninsula and the control of Piran bay between the countries.

4 The most significant issue of the relationships between the two countries is the so-called MOLINA case, which the Croatians consider a Hungarian intervention into Croatian affairs, and a corruption scandal at the same time.

Living along the border and being divided by the state borders have both been significant characteristics of the Croatian minority groups since 1920. The only Hungarian Croat group not living along the border is the Danube Croats. Starting from the north-western border between Slovakia and Hungary and the western border between Austria and Hungary, our analysis first details the group of west Hungarian or Burgenland (*Gradisce*) Croats. Gradisce is the Croatian term for the Burgenland state of Austria. The peace treaty of 1920 divided their population areas between Hungary, Austria and the Slovakian part of the then Czechoslovakia. Therefore, the *Gradiscanski Hrvati* in Hungary today are the Croats living in Győr-Ménfőcsanak and Vas county.

Proceeding to the south, the second group is the *Pomurje* Croats living along the Mura river. For historical and migration reasons, *Međimurje* Croats should also be considered (on the Croatian side of the border) in this group, since until 1920 both *Međimurje* and *Pomurje* were parts of Zala county in Hungary.

The next is the *Podravina* Croats (Drava Croats), whose series of settlements lie directly along the northern side of the border river Drava. They had been part of Somogy county until 1950, since when they are divided between Somogy and Baranya counties. Therefore, some researchers still consider them a sub-group and classify them among a larger unit, the *Somogy* Croats, as well as the northern *Somogy* Croats living around the municipality of Buzsák almost totally assimilated, near Lake Balaton.⁵

The successors of *Bosniak* Croats live in Szigetvár, Pécs and the vicinities thereof. The former was part of Somogy county before 1950 and has been part of Baranya ever since. In addition to the *Bosniak* Croats are the *Sokci*, whose areas in Hungary extend to Baranya county in Croatia. The *Sokci* have also settled in Bács-Kiskun county with the *Bunjevci*, who are present in larger numbers not only in Hungary, but (with the *Sokci*) also on the Serbian side of the Serbian-Hungarian border, in Vojvodina.

5 M. Kitanics, *A Magyarországra irányuló horvát migráció a 16-18. században*, (PhD-disszertáció) [Croatian migration targeting Hungary in the 16-18th century, (PhD dissertation)], Pécs: University of Pécs, 2014.

Finally, the settlements of the Danube Croats lie entirely within the present borders of Hungary. Their chain of settlements between Tolna county and the town of Szentendre has shrunk in number.

3. Identity, Integration, Assimilation and Loyalty along the Border

A key point of our analysis of Croats living in Hungary is our position that certain groups of the community identified in the 20th and 21st centuries as Hungarian Croats have evolved in the territory of Hungary, also assimilating other ethnicities. However, this is not the only factor shaping their identity. The specific historical/political relations of the Balkans and their delayed and incomplete national developments have also had a major impact and contribute to this day. The history of these groups of Croats is significantly affected by the fact that they lived in the turbulent northern border area of the Ottoman Empire for a long time, and were forced by struggles between Ottoman and Christian powers to migrate on many occasions, often changing states as well.

It is certain that, in their early periods, the Catholic southern Slav community living in many municipalities of Hungary had been heterogeneous, not only comprising Croats. This is partially because Hungarian immigration target areas often overlapped each other, because of the rigidity of migration channels, active government involvement and a combination of the local opportunities. Accordingly, Catholic *Vlach* groups also settled with Burgenland Croats, while Vlachs are (from the ethnogenetic perspective) also a major component of the *Bunjevci*, along with a smaller number of Catholic traders from Belgrade (arriving from Serbian territories and of multiple ethnicities) and Ragusa traders with Dalmatian-Slav ethnicity. In the case of the *Bunjevci*, we could also highlight the *Vlach-Serb* groups leaving the Backa in the late 16th century and partially returning in the 17th century, the assimilated groups of Serbs settling in the late 17th century, and the assimilated, formerly Muslim southern Slavs who converted to Catholicism. This category also includes the Paulician Bulgarians who converted after the Chiprovtsi Uprising (1688) and settled with Croats in large numbers in Baranya, Backa and Buda. The migration bases of the *Pomurje* Croats were mainly the Slovene-Croat ethnic

contact zone of Zagorje, and the Magyar-Croat-Slovene ethnic contact zone of Međimurje. Therefore, their ethnogenesis included major Hungarian, Slovenian and German elements. For all these reasons, the settlements of Hungarian Croats include different combinations of Croatian, Dalmatian and Bosnian Croats, Poturs (a Slavic population that acquired Turkish customs, who converted to Islam and then to Catholicism), traders⁶ from Belgrade and Ragusa, *Vlach-Serb* people who converted to Catholicism, Catholic Bulgarians and Albanians.⁷

Primarily because of their denomination, these different ethnicities were in the end assimilated by Catholic Croats instead of Orthodox Serbs. Croatian speaking Franciscans, providing spiritual guidance, played a major role in this assimilation. Their activity is apparent considering that certain originally Paulican, Muslim and Greek Orthodox groups, along with members of the Bosnian Church, in the end joined the Hungarian Catholic southern Slav community, i.e. Croats. Many Franciscans already had a Croatian identity in the 17th and 18th centuries, and provided spiritual care to believers accordingly. Therefore, they also played a major role (together with certain secular priests) in guiding their communities toward Croatian identity during the times of national awakening, and strengthening this notion in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, we should emphasize that this search for and development of identity was primarily important to Croat groups living in the southern border region, against Ottoman and Serb efforts, and it therefore mostly affected *Bunjevci*, *Sokci* and (to a lesser extent) *Podravina* Croats (in this sense, the *Pomurje* Croats speaking the Kajkavian dialect played no major role).

The ethnic Croat groups settling from the early 16th century found their place in the Kingdom of Hungary without any major conflicts. This was supported by the Catholic faith as well as the composition of society. They were mostly farmers and peasants, considered necessary in those regions in which populations had been wiped out by the

6 Some scholars emphasize the importance of Vlachs in the ethnogenesis of the ethnic Croats (sometimes called *Rascians/Rác*) population in the surrounding of Pest, J. Szilágyi, *Tukuljski Rascovi—Egy rác népcsoport és rokonai múltja régi dokumentumok tükrében* [Rascians who live on Tököl—The history of a Rascian ethnic group and its relatives, in view of old documents], Tököl: Private Edition, 2016.

7 M. Kitanics, op.cit.

wars, but there were also significant numbers of other social groups, such as aristocrats, artisans, traders and soldiers. A full social structure was only found among the Burgenland Croats and *Bunjevci*. Only these had a significant number of aristocrats, and only the *Bunjevci* had a bigger group of town citizens than Burgenland Croats.

Both peoples also played significant military roles, with many Burgenland Croats served in the fortresses of western Hungary, while the *Bunjevci* played a major part in the protection of the southern border until the mid-18th century. It is therefore safe to say that borders, living along the border and the protection of borders all played a significant role in developing the identities of these groups.

The Magyarization (Hungarianization) of Hungarian Croats proceeded according to their social structures and status. Their aristocracy with Hungarian identity underwent this process first, followed by the assimilation of the citizens in the 19th century and the early 20th century. This does not mean that, in border towns during the first half of the 20th century, most of the aforementioned were not bilingual (or trilingual), but their identities had mostly become Hungarian by then, and in the mid-20th century homogeneous Croat communities were only found in rural environments. The split between Hungary and Yugoslavia (1948-1963) hit the language and identity of these Croats hard, because a certain notion of a single Yugoslav national identity emerged in Hungary as well, and was sustained until the dissolution of Yugoslavia. This resulted in the introduction of the unified Serbo-Croatian (Serbian) language in Hungarian institutions. Nevertheless, minority language radio and television programs did exist, and official statistics preserved the option of Croatian nationality and language, including *Bunjevci* and *Sokci* in each census. After the transition to democracy (1989), new opportunities were also seized, as the Alliance of Hungarian Croats was established (1989/1990). After the establishment of Croatia (1991), which could act as a “mother country”, Croatian schools and media also separated from their Serbian counterparts. Since 1994, national and local Croatian self-governments have been elected, a Croatian Theater was established in Pecs, and in the same city, the Association of Croatian Scientific Researchers (1995) and the Scientific Institute of Hungarian Croats (2004) were set up. Additionally, numerous other Croatian-language publications were also relaunched or created. Compared to the period before 1989, theoret-

ically there were no restrictions imposed on the spread of Croatian culture in Hungary by the late 20th century and the early 21st century. However, while teaching of the Croatian language as a force to preserve identity and culture is available through bilingual elementary schools (Hercegszanto in Bacs-Kiskun county and Pecs in Baranya county, Budapest), secondary schools (Pecs and Budapest) and universities (Pecs, Szombathely and Budapest), fewer students of Croatian ethnicity or origin participate in such classes each year.

Finally, we should also review the most important historical and political crossroads which had a powerful impact on identity, integration, assimilation and loyalty, especially considering the border changes. The Kingdom of Croatia formed a personal union with the Kingdom of Hungary after the early 12th century. After the 15th century, different states (Venice, the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire and Austria) ruled ethnic Croatian territory, and the division of the aforementioned empires by borders did not support Croatian national integration or the development of a single national identity. This division was sustained in the 19th and 20th centuries, and made worse by Serb dominance in the first and second Yugoslavia and the violent experiment to create a “Yugoslav” nation and language. Still, by the turn of the 19th and early 20th centuries, a single Croatian national identity had been created from the Adriatic Sea to the Drava river, with separate local and group identities of peoples constituting the Croatian nation.⁸ This especially applies to Hungarian Croats, because Zagreb focused less attention and resources on them, while it had to establish its own national unity.

During Rakoczi’s War of Independence (1703-1711), armed members of the Hungarian Croat community, especially the *Bunjevci* of Backa, mostly fought against the Hungarians, together with the Serbs. It is obvious, however, that during the 1848-49 Revolution and War, they all joined the Hungarian side against the Habsburgs, and some Burgenland Croats also fought the Croatian border guards from the Military Frontier (fighting for the Habsburgs), while the *Bunjevci* fought against

8 D. Sokcsevits, ‘A horvátság csángói—a bunyevác népcsoport a horvát nemzeti integrációs folyamatban’ [The “Csango people” of the Croats—the ethnic group of Bunjevci in the Croatian national integration process], *Limes*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2003, pp. 67-82.

Serbian rebels.⁹ This was partially because Croats living in Hungary did not subscribe to the idea of southern Slav unity, and because the national awakening (which eventually led to Croatian national integrations) only affected certain groups (the *Bunjevci* and Burgenland Croats) in the late 19th century.

It should also be added that, for different reasons, many Hungarian Croats also imagined their future within the framework of the Hungarian state, even after this national awakening. As a consequence of the First World War, Hungary had lost Međimurje, the southern part of Baranya county, the middle and southern part of Backa and other areas in western Hungary. However, some parts of the western Hungarian territories which were to be annexed (the town of Sopron and its vicinity) remained part of Hungary because of the majority of the Burgenland Croats (among others) support for the Hungarian state. Burgenland Croats also rejected the plan for a Slavic corridor connecting the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes with Czechoslovakia, based on their population of “50 to 70,000.” Additionally, even though by this time a significant part of the *Bunjevci* intelligentsia supported the Croatian and southern Slav unity causes of Zagreb and had become supporters of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (also opting for separation), the majority of the *Bunjevci* did not really support Serb occupying forces.¹⁰ Some of the compromised Hungarian Croats moved to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes after the Serbs exited the territories returned to the Hungarian state, while some Serbs, the *Bunjevci* and the *Sokci* also opted to resettle in Yugoslavia after the new state borders were introduced according to the provisions of the Trianon Peace Treaty. Many of these, however, later returned.

Because of the trauma caused by the Trianon Treaty and revisionist efforts, Hungarian Croats were not trusted in the interbellum period. During the Second World War, new immigrants of the Serb *dobrovol-*

9 V. Kolnhöfer, *A gradistyei horvátok és a magyar-osztrák határkijelölés*, (PhD-disszertáció) [Burgenland Croats and the designation of the Hungarian-Austrian border, (PhD dissertation)], Pécs: University of Pécs, 2008.

10 After the First World War, Serbian troops occupied southern Hungary with their centres in Baja and Pécs, and they remained in the area until August 1921, when the Trianon Treaty ordered the return of the region to Hungary.

jaci (who had been volunteer soldiers in the First World War) living in areas of Prekmurje and Medimurje, the Baranja Triangle and Backa returned from the southern Slavs in 1941 were interned. However military bodies treated Croats more cordially than Serbs. Notwithstanding the cordial treatment, members of the Croatian intelligentsia, politicians, priests who pursued active anti-Hungarian policies in 1918 and the subsequent first Yugoslav era were also interned, and Hungary also considered repatriating the *Bunjevci* to Croatia.

Another key issue of loyalty was the split of the Eastern Bloc, including Hungary, with the second Yugoslavia on an independent course (1948-1963). The consequences of this split included the construction of the 600 km long Southern Protection System (bunkers, trenches, barbed wire barriers and mines) along the Hungarian side of the border. Although tensions eased somewhat in the early 1960s, by that time several discriminatory measures had been introduced against Hungarian Croats. People considered to be untrustworthy were repatriated from the border region, and some southern Slav leaders were arrested and imprisoned. This atmosphere also led to a decline in Hungarian Croat identity and increased assimilation. The situation only improved after the early 1970s, when bilateral relations returned to normal and Yugoslavia started to play a more active role toward the “Yugoslav ethnicity” of those living in Hungary.

During the Yugoslav War (1991-1995), the Hungarian government faced a difficult situation. When Croatia declared independence, Hungary was not among the first or the last ones to recognize the Croatian state. Although covert support was provided to Catholic Croats, partially because of the context of Hungarian-Croatian and Hungarian-Serbian history and in order to avoid atrocities committed being against the Hungarian minority in Serbia, the Hungarian government had to act very carefully. In this new constellation, the situation and role of Hungarian Croats was highlighted. With the independence of Croatia, an independent Croatian mother state was born, which required the new establishment of relationships, according to new principles. In this task, Hungarian Croats were an important “bridge.” On the other hand, in tense periods, such as the split with the second Yugoslavia (1948-1963), their language skills, relationships and first-hand information also encouraged many Hungarian Croats to engage in intelligence and counter-intelligence activities. This situation later

only changed in intensity, focusing on Serbia, standing outside of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and with historical ties to Russia. Such knowledge and skills are also relevant today, though the migration crisis remains unresolved.

In summary, it is safe to say that the Catholic southern Slav ethnic groups in Hungary became, during Croatian national integration, parts of the Croatian nation, crossing the borders of Croatia. Although the majority have since assimilated, the remaining Hungarian Croats are today integrated and loyal citizens of the Hungarian state, and members of their groups living outside of the country are also loyal to neighboring countries. However, some such groups are in a special situation, due to their historical and geographical position. Because of specific group characteristics, there are indications of multiple identity and complex systems of loyalty. *Bosniak* Croats fall within the category of unique ethnicities, while the everyday life of the *Bunjevci* is impacted by the integrating efforts of the Serbian state, which also aims to divide the Croat nation. Therefore, the following section of this paper presents the special situation of *Bosniak* Croats and the issue of the *Bunjevci*.

4. The Uniqueness and Complexity of Bosniak Croat Identity

The identity of the *Bosniak* Croats living in Szigetvar and its vicinity, as well as Pecs and environs, raises many questions, some of which can be answered directly, and some which raise a certain degree of uncertainty. The *Bosniak* Croat group shrank during the late 20th century and the early 21st century, as its members underwent assimilation. As of today, they only have significant communities in the Baranya county villages of Ata, Kokeny, Pecsudvard, Pogany, Szalanta, Szemely, Nemeti, Szoke and Szoked.

It is of great importance to recognize that, among the *Bosniak* Croats, most had lived in Hungary since the Turkish era, and considering all the Hungarian Croat ethnic groups, the Turkish impact was the most prominent in these circles; strong enough, certainly to preserve some traces until the late 20th century and even today, in the case of some elderly members of the community. The depth of the Ottoman

impact is related to the fact that some *Bosniak* Croats were surely Muslims, even after arriving in Hungary.

The famous Turkish traveler, Evliya Celebi also describes Muslim Bosnians living Szigetvar, from the time he visited the fortress and settlement in the 1660s. "The residents have white faces; the people are Bosnians but speak Hungarian and Croatian very well," he notes.¹¹ However, since he mentioned five Christian districts in the outskirts, it is possible that Christian *Bosniaks* also lived in the complex comprising the internal fortress, middle fortress and outskirts. The presence of Muslim *Bosniaks* is also proven by the popular surnames observed after the liberation of the fortress and the town in 1689, preserved in Szigetvar in the Turkish reality (Delibeli, Abdula, Oszman, Karapanca, Haragovich, Karacsovich, Harasich, Turcsin, Karanovich, etc.).

The case is likely to have been similar in Pecs, where *Bosniaks* populated the Budai kulvaros part of the town. Their influence remains apparent, and Puturluk still preserves certain characters of the Balkan atmosphere, most widely known in the street names *Also-Puturluk utca* and *Felso-Puturluk utca*. The Muslim *Bosniaks* (Poturs¹²) who lived in the Puturluk area during the Ottoman period were considered by the Christians to be renegades. They also erected a mosque there, which was reconsecrated as a Catholic church after the Christian reconquest of the town (1686) and continued to be used. The church building with certain mosque characteristics also provides Croatian language mass to the Catholic Croats living in the city.

Although many of the Muslim *Bosniaks* who remained quickly converted to Catholicism after the liberation from the Turks, they preserved the memories of their special status and separatism until the end of the 20th century. According to data collected by Valeria Kovats, *Bosniaks* living in Szigetvar still expressed reservations against other residents of the town in the late 1950s, as they considered themselves the oldest residents of the town, having lived there since the Turks.¹³

11 I. Karácson, *Evliya Cselebi török világotutató magyarországi utazásai 1660-1664* [Evliya Cselebi's Turkish globe-trotter's journeys in Hungary between 1660-1664], Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1904, pp. 481-494.

12 Poturci = "like the Turks".

13 V. Kováts, 'Szigetvári történeti néphagyományok I.' [Historical folklores traditions of Szigetvar I.], in: Gy. Szabó (ed), *A Janus Pannonius Múzeum Évkönyve 1961*, Pécs, 1962, pp. 129-138.

In this regard, they decried others since “they don’t even have Turkish blood in them.” Similarly to *Bosniaks* in Pecs, they mostly married within the community, and avoided mixing with other ethnicities. In addition to Hungarians and Serbs, they also distinguished themselves from the *Podravina* Croats living around the nearby Drava river, of whom they said: “They are rayah, we are from Sziget. They are miserable, don’t have anything, beggars, how could we be related?”¹⁴ It is telling that they distanced themselves from *Podravina* Croats, considered them rayah, Christians paying tax to the Turks, and also considering themselves privileged (Muslims), based on prerogatives from the Ottoman era. The authors of this paper have encountered this. During our work in Szigetvar, an elderly *Bosniak* a local historian living there explained the tradition of using Turkish nicknames in the family instead of Hungarian first names in the first half of the 1900s.¹⁵ It is also interesting to note that *Bosniaks* living in Szemely referred to the aristocrat Batthyany family in the 20th century as *spahije*, i.e. the southern Slav version of the Turkish word *spahi*.¹⁶

By the 18th century, these *Bosniak* groups had assimilated completely into the Catholic Church. However, their integration with the Croatian national community had not been completed. In order to identify themselves, similarly to the Catholic *Bosniaks*, they emphasize their relations and origins mostly linked to the Bosnian Catholic Croat population. Regarding their religious practice, the significance of the cult of Mary should be emphasized. After several centuries and the progress of assimilation, *Bosniaks* living in Somogy and Baranya had arrived at the same state framework as the Muslim and Christian residents of their place of origin by the time Bosnia and Herzegovina was occupied in 1878. Wandering *Bosniak* salesmen must have reached towns and villages of Baranya county as well, but we have no data about any impact they had on them. After the Austro-Hungarian Empire dissolved, this connection was once again terminated and

14 Ibid., p.132.

15 The authors talked to Szigetvár local historian József Kapronczai, an 80-year-old man in 2015, and he explained that his family used to call him Jusuf when he was a child, similarly to other *Bosniak* families that used Turkish nicknames to refer to their children, in addition to their official first name.

16 Verbal expression of Balkans researcher Andor Végh. Spahi is originally a member of the Ottoman cavalry who got a land for his military service from the sultan.

the region became parts of two opposing states and alliances, causing a disruption of relationships.

Then the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s created a new and interesting situation. The towns and villages of Baranya provided shelter for thousands of Bosnian (mostly Muslim) refugees for years, as the closest safe territory to their home. From 1992 to 2001, the refugees were hosted right in these *Bosniak* villages and a small group also settled here after 2001, sometimes marrying locals. They kept their Muslim faith and they assemble every Friday in the memorial mosque of Siklos, named after Malkoch Bey. When Husein Kavazovic, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina, visited Hungary in April 2016, he also visited this group and prayed with them in the mosque.¹⁷ The cleric also negotiated with local leaders about developing Hungarian and Muslim relations.

Another important event involving much publicity was when a research group identified and excavated the Szigetvar tomb complex of Suleiman Sultan between 2013 and 2016.¹⁸ The work at the burial complex and the adjacent pilgrim settlement established after the siege of 1566 gained attention globally, but especially so in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the settlement developed under the supervision of the Bosnian Sokollu family, while the residents moved in from Sarajevo and other Bosnian territories. The Bosnian press covering the research emphasized the importance of the link to Bosnia, the values and relations of Ottoman/Muslim sites to Bosnia, and highlighted that a *Bosniak* minority has lived in Baranya for centuries.

The impact of the latest immigration from Bosnia cannot yet be assessed, but this small group of settlers are not expected to change the community's ethnic and religious identity, which has developed during the last 300 years. The research conducted at Szigetvar can also have an impact on Bosnian identity, but due to the great distance in time this should not be overemphasized. Increasingly intensive cultural, economic and political ties can clearly shape the identity of *Bosniaks*

17 'Siklóson járt Bosznia-Hercegovina főmuftija' [The Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina visits Siklós], *Siklósi Hírek*, 29 April 2016, <http://siklosihirek.hu/sikloson-jart-a-bosnyak-fomufti/> [2017-10-17].

18 N. Pap et al., 'Finding the Tomb of Suleiman the Magnificent in Szigetvar, Hungary: Historical, Geophysical and Archeological Investigations', *Die Erde*, vol. 146, no. 4, 2015, pp. 289-303.

living in Baranya and increase their historical embeddedness, but it is still not expected to change the direction of their national integration.

5. The Issue of the Bunjevci

The Hungarian *Bunjevci* currently live in larger numbers in Bacs-Kiskun county, in the municipalities of Baja, Bacsalmas, Gara, Csavoly, Katymar, Bacsszentgyorgy, Csikeria, Matetelke, Bacsborsod and Melykut. The issue of their ethnic identity became especially important after the national awakening period in the 19th century, not among Croats, south-western Bosnians and western Herzegovinians, but among the “most remote” Backa *Bunjevci*. This is because Serbian researchers have identified this group as Catholic Serbs originally from the region of the Buna river. By contrast, Croats have made significant efforts since the late 19th century to ensure that the *Bunjevci* intelligentsia is oriented toward Croatia. Therefore, due to relations developed with Zagreb, an elite group of *Bunjevci* considering themselves Croats had also evolved in Backa by the early 20th century, although some representatives also supported a program of unity with Serbs.

After the Treaty of Trianon, the assimilation of the Hungarian *Bunjevci* was also expedited. On the southern side of the border, most of the *Bunjevci* remained on the Croatian side, and the operation of the Hrvatska Matica¹⁹ played a major role in this. In Tito's Yugoslavia, the *Bunjevci* were recognized as Croats, and this became the official position of Hungary as well. During and after the Yugoslav War, Serbian academic circles (fueled to a high degree by nationalism) also started to emphasize the theory that the *Bunjevci* (and the *Sokci*) were indeed Catholic Serbs. Zagreb interpreted (and continues to interpret) this, and the establishment of a *Bunjevci* category in the census, as a Serbian attempt to divide Croats living in Vojvodina. Serbia has allowed *Bunjevci* to appear as a category in each census since 1991. We are probably not wrong to presume, in relation to the aforementioned divisive policy of the Serbs, that efforts in the town of Baja to recog-

¹⁹ The most important Croatian cultural association. Its headquarter is in Zagreb.

nize the *Bunjevci* as an independent ethnicity have become a Croatian-Hungarian problem.

The popular initiative in Baja, launched by private individuals, requested the Hungarian National Assembly to “recognize the ethnic group of *Bunjevci* as a national ethnicity based on the Minorities Act, and to add the *Bunjevci* ethnicity to the list of nationalities living in Hungary”.²⁰ According to the provisions of the law, Szilveszter E. Vízi, then president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, published a position statement based on an expert review, stating that the *Bunjevci* community did not satisfy all the criteria set forth in Act LXXVII of 1993. According to the official position, the *Bunjevci* ethnicity is one of the regionally distinct, historical ethnic groups constituting the Hungarian Croat national minority. In December 2016, based on this statement, parliament voted overwhelmingly to refuse to grant independent national minority status. However, this battle is far from over. In 2009, they requested Jozsef Palinkas, the new president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, to reconsider the issue. In his response, Palinkas made special reference to language, the free choice of the community and the situation in Serbia to state that it was indeed possible that the *Bunjevci* could be granted independent national minority status. Although the effort had numerous supporters, in the end the Academy also recognized that overturning the former decision would cause serious domestic issues and even more drastic international tensions. In the end, they announced that Palinkas had not in fact issued an official position statement, only his private opinion. The effort of *Bunjevci* in Baja earned support once again in 2010, but a second vote in the Hungarian parliament in May 2011 upheld the original position, and the issue seems to be off the agenda for the time being.

It is therefore clear that the issues of the *Bunjevci* (and thus of the meanings of identity and ethnicity) have not disappeared. Although there have been and still are many people who do not consider themselves Croats or Serbs, but identify as *Bunjevci*, the truth of the matter is that there are several rational barriers to creating a separate *Bunjevci* nationality. On the one hand, it should not be forgotten that *Bunjevci* are from ethnic Croat regions, and are estimated by some to make up

20 The Hungarian Parliament was dealing with the initiative (OE-276-1/2006; H/960. 1 p.).

at least 1 million of the Croatian population of 4.3 million. They are also Catholic, which meant that most of them integrated with the Croatian nation. On the other hand, if some of the *Bunjevci* could really achieve independence and thus separate from the Hungarian Croats, then the *Sokci*, the *Bosniaks* or the *Rascians* living on the eastern side of the Danube (Batya and Dusnok) could also rightfully have such claims. This could obviously be linked to the phenomenon of “ethno-business”, since it would enable some people access to government funding provided to minorities, whereas this would not be possible in the Croat minority self-governments. It is also apparent that the viability and attractive force of the Hungarian Croat community, comprising several ethnic groups and shrinking in numbers, would significantly reduce or even cease to exist, if additional southern Slavic categories seceded from the existing ethnic groups.

The effort seems to have failed for a while, and experts who have recently published studies and articles on the ethnogenesis, migration and history of the *Bunjevci* played an important role in this. In our opinion, if a different decision, unfavourable to Croatia, had been reached, the problem would have been elevated to an intra-state level, only profiting Serbia, which supports the independence efforts of the *Bunjevci* and groups active in “ethno-business” in Hungary.

Conclusion

In the regions of Central Europe and the northern Balkans, divided by many borders, several Catholic southern Slavic ethnic groups has developed with their own identities, and throughout the 19th and 20th centuries most of them joined the national integration of Croats. However, this integration process has not been completed in all cases, and there are several groups with incomplete status who have become the subjects of political games between the Croatian-Serbian, as well as the Croatian-Serbian-Hungarian players.

From the point of view of Croatian national integration, the situation of the *Pomurje* Croats and the *Podravina* Croats (living along the Hungarian-Croatian border) is absolutely clear. The situation of the Burgenland Croats living in the Hungarian-Austrian-Slovakian contact zone is a bit more complex. Their identity, integration and assimilation have been shaped and influenced significantly by living

along the border. In the 20th century, the “Iron Curtain” and the three-party division of the region by state borders played a major role, right until the de-bordering processes commenced in the 1990s prevailed.

Along the southern borders of Hungary, further sharp political and military contact has developed. The fortress system used against the Ottomans, the Military Frontier, the standoff between Yugoslavia and Hungary after the Trianon Treaty (1920), the Southern Protection System established in the 1950s, the Yugoslav War of the 1990s and the NATO’s bombing campaign against Serbian targets in 1999 all preserved the sense of a war border zone and threats. Along the southern border, in the Hungarian-Serb-Croat ethnic contact zone and its northern extension along the Danube migration route, integration, group and ethnic identity, as well as group, state and national loyalty have become central issues. Among these groups, loyalty of the intelligentsia and the majority is typical, and at the same time they generally stand by the concept of Croatian national integration. There are, though, some members of the *Bosniak* Croat, *Bunjevci*, *Sokci* and Danube Croat communities who consider their ethnic group to be their exclusive and primary self-identification and a reference point for isolation from the Croats. In this context, the *Bunjevci* are the most special case, because of their large population and their primarily Hungarian and Serbian areas of settlement. Since the 1990s, they have been treated in Serbia as a separate ethnic group, in order to break the Croatian national integration process and encourage the “Serbification” of Serbian Croats, or at least to divide and thus weaken them. This process also caused some waves in Hungary, only being halted after decisions of the National Assembly. The *Bosniak* Croats living in Baranya county are also a unique group, partially because of their attitude toward the Turkish occupation of Hungary. Although Bosnian Muslim refugees were in a special situation in some settlements in the 1990s, this fact is unlikely to over-ride their identity and integration.

The temporary border barrier newly constructed along Hungary’s southern border could lead to a new re-bordering stage. It is not currently entirely clear what consequences it will have on the life and identity of Hungarian Croats. However, it is certain that the symbolic and mental effect and the different practices of managing and viewing borders have a negative impact on Croatian cross-border national integration efforts.

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