



Eötvös Loránd University

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# **Changes in the Culture of the Slovak Settlements in the Pilis Region**

Doctoral Dissertation

Theses

Doctoral supervisor:

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## **Introduction - Justification of the Choice of the Research Topic - An Overview of the Dissertation**

The thesis analyses the culture of two Slovak communes from the Pilis region, Kesztlőc and Piliscsév which is traditionally closely connected to the Slovak language, but is mainly living in the memories of the communes' inhabitants. However, these traditions were recently revived in the region. The research specifically deals with the relationship between culture and the community.

The author chose the analysis of the cultural changes in Piliscsév as the topic of her thesis for several personal reasons. Both her parents and grandparents are Slovaks from Csév<sup>1</sup>, and she is also living in Piliscsév, and was working for the maintenance of the culture, language and traditions since her early childhood. The reason for choosing the commune of Kesztlőc to the comparison was the fact that there are frequent marriages between the members of the two communes, and the people of these communes have similar job opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis is based on field work conducted in the two communes and the literature of the specific field, and it is focusing on the structure of the traditional Slovak culture and that of today's Slovak culture.

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<sup>1</sup> Until 1954 the settlement's official name was Csév and then it was changed to Piliscsév. For this reason, the author uses the adjective "Csévi" (from Csév) to describe the communal traditions from the period before that year.

<sup>2</sup> In connection with other Slovak block settlements in the region (Piliscsaba - Pilíščaba, Pilisszántó – Santov, Pilisszentkereszt - Mlynky, Pilisszentlászló – Senváclav, Pilisszentlélek – Hute) the above mentioned relations are less typical

The dissertation aims to present the ethnic and communal cultural life of the 20th century and the years after the regime change (1989), and to summarize the work of researchers<sup>3</sup>, previously conducting data collection in the region. It analyses the traditions of different festival days of the year, and those relating to the turning points of one's life, their present existence, and their ties to the Catholic faith, respectively the different organizations of the Slovak communities of the two communes, and their activities for the maintenance of their traditions.

The thesis investigates how the inhabitants of the Slovak communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century maintain their identity, based on more than 300 years Slovak cultural traditions, what they are doing in order to transfer their culture, traditions and language. How do the different generations, kinship groups, organisations live together on local, communal level, experience their Slovak identity, which strategies do they know for the maintenance of their identity in the face of assimilation.

At the beginning of the 21st century the maintenance of the national language, of the continuously moving (global) culture, and traditions appears in a different way in the life of the communities than some decades ago. The thesis tries to go back to the past, and collect the Slovak ethnic traditions, today only living in peoples' memories, to communicate the history of the two communities, the local language, the traditional culture and its present existence, and beyond that the Slovak identity of our time.

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<sup>3</sup>Anna Gyivicsán: The First Half of the 1980s (Piliscsév), 2001 Ethnic Spiritual Life (Keszölc); Béla Kálmánfi: 1962-1968 (Keszölc, Piliscsév); István Lami: 1979-1980 (Keszölc, Piliscsév), 1981, 1985 (Keszölc)

The **dissertation aims**, by the means of the collected material and the literature published on the subject, to revive and compare the nurturing of the Slovak cultural traditions in the two Slovak communes in the Pilis region, their collective cultural communication, and the existence of the Slovak cultural elements. It also wants to draw conclusions about the role, the importance and the changes in the nurturing of the Slovak culture in Kesztlőc and Piliscsév, in the families and in the broader community. It is looking for answers on the question which positive or negative geographical, historical-social factors determine the existing, current minority culture and the language. The main focus of the analysis is on the relationship between the traditional culture and the research of the community behaviour, respectively on the alteration in the value of the Slovak culture in, and the changes in the cultural behaviour of the community.

The ethnic communal habits, containing the so called “cultural interventionist” and the “transitional” type of folklorism, are present in both communities. The aforementioned concepts were first used by Anna Gyivicsán, and are regularly used in the dissertation.

The **source material of research** is constituted mainly of the authors own research which was completed with previous collections from Kesztlőc and Piliscsév, associated in the first place with Béla Kálmánfi, Ildikó Klauszné Fuzik and István Lami.

Further research and data collection also demonstrate that, among the Hungarian Slovaks, the Pilis region was able to preserve the traditional

culture for the longest time, and that the people of the region in some places are still preserving the earliest strata of the folk culture.<sup>4</sup>

The key **scientific innovation** of the thesis, compared to the previous literature, is that the author conducts a chronological process analysis of the traditional culture of the research area and its continuation, and the phenomenon of folklorization experienced even today.

The author deals separately with the role of spiritual life in preserving the Slovak language, respectively with the use of the Slovak language in different generations.

**Publications:** The author has already published 15 studies in the topic of the thesis: 4 editions and 11 publications in the local paper. The author was quoted 7 times in different publications about the culture of Slovaks in Hungary.

### **Contents of the thesis**

In the introduction, the author situates the two villages of the study (Kesztölc and Piliscsév) in the system of Slovak settlements in Hungary, discusses the history of the settling of Slovaks in the area, the different religious groups, the social structure of the communities, the inter-ethnic relations as well as the dialect features. The thesis gives an in-depth view in the history of the communities, their schools and churches.

The first chapter of the main part presents the calendar customs and believes

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<sup>4</sup> Gyivicsán Anna (ed.): 1996.; 15., 46.

in the villages of the study area as well as the **cultural changes**, emphasizing the similarities and the differences.

The thesis then concludes with a summary in which **the author** summarizes the results of the research, the typical cultural trends, the criteria of the use of language, the role of spiritual life in preserving a language as well as the living memory of the past and the present-day habits and believes. The author also presents the ethnic organisations and their networks whose main role is to nurture the ethnic culture.

The annex contains the list of informants, a bibliography and a list of photos.





