

Csángó seminar

6-7 March 2012, Jyväskylä

You are cordially welcomed to the international and multidisciplinary seminar on the Moldavian Csángós. The seminar is jointly organized by the Department of History and Ethnology and the Department of Art and Culture Studies at the University of Jyväskylä.

The aim of the seminar is to serve as a springboard for international research on the current situation of the Moldavian Csángós. A part of the seminar will chart the chances and challenges for fieldwork among the Csángós. Introducing new researchers to the theme, the purpose of the seminar is also to get familiar with the current life of the Moldavian Csángós and to discuss the state of art in contemporary research as well as in the policies concerning the Csángós. There will be 40 minutes for each presentation, followed by 10 minutes for discussion. Time is reserved for refreshments between the presentations. The basic language of the seminar is English.

Please register at <http://r.jyu.fi/1Qdm> for the conference!

The seminar is chaired by professor of Ethnology, Hanna Snellman.
For more information, contact the project coordinator, Dr Petteri Laihonen (petteri.laihonen@jyu.fi, 040 805 3838).



Photo by István Kinda

Detailed programme

Tuesday, 6th March 2012, Historica 320

11.30 am, Opening addresses

Chair of the Department of History and Ethnology *Jari Ojala*
Head organizer, professor of Ethnology *Hanna Snellman*
Coordinator, Department of Art and Cultural Studies, *Petteri Laihonen*

12 am, plenary session by *Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa*

What changes did the European Council Recommendation 1521 (2001)
bring to the Moldavian Csángós?

A period of ten years should be long enough to look at results and answer the question: Does the Council of Europe have any influence on the lives of people in the Member States? In more than twenty Csángó villages the mother tongue is now being taught, even though education is not yet available in all public schools in these villages. The local Romanian authorities have finally approved everyday use and education in the Hungarian Csángó's language for this minority. A short while ago the first course in teacher training was arranged. Young Csángós today are no longer ashamed of their background. The opposition of the church surprised me the most, and not much progress has taken place. On what grounds do the priests forbid the Csángó Hungarians to use their language? I wrote among others to the Secretary General of the World Council of church's language.

We still have a long way to go before Hungarian is taught in all villages. The parents need to be better informed about their rights to promote their own language and culture. They should know that belonging to the European community gives them security. Problematic is how long the young will remain in their modest villages. Vocational schools should be established and jobs created. The Romanian government does not have to fear the Csángó becoming Hungarian. My dream is to one day enter a Csángó school where the education is exclusively in Hungarian. Then this small minority could feel completely equal among the nations of Europe.

1 pm, *Iancu Laura*: Fragments From My Life in a Csángó Village

I was born in 1978 in Magyarfalu to a family of 6 children of Hungarian nationality and Roman Catholic religion. Magyarfalu is situated in south-east part of the region inhabited by a Hungarian speaking ethnic group in Moldavia. I lived there until the age of 12. The language of the school and church was Romanian, while that of our everyday life was Hungarian. We could read and write in the former, but only speak in the latter. As soon as I had left this "closed world", I started to look at it as an interesting ethnographical phenomenon, which I would like to explore through the means of prose, poetry and science. A fundamental dimension of the Csángó culture is bilingualism. Thus, I will focus on memories related to language(s) from my early years in Magyarfalva. Finally, I will argue that researcher's own linguistic and cultural background (e.g. Csángó, Transylvania, Hungary) has a clear effect on her/his position towards the Csángó culture.

**2 pm, *Lehel Peti*: Studies on the Moldavian Csángós in Romania
and their impact on the local population**

First, the current situation of the Moldavian Csángós is briefly described. The most important changes will be discussed which have taken on the institutional level (education, safeguarding of interest, ecclesiastical matters) after the Recommendation of the European Council adopted in 2001. The increased external interest in the Csángós has inevitably affected the local communities of their society, and has resulted in new and changed attitudes at the local level. The second part of the paper will focus on the influence of scientific and political activity on the local communities of the Csángós. On one hand, the paper presents the “structure” of this external interference in the local societies, and on the other hand, it analyzes the local effects of this activity on the Csángós themselves, as well as on the attitudes of the co-inhabitants towards the Csángós.

3 pm, *István Kinda*: "Under control": Fieldwork among the Csángós

I will describe the main aspects of anthropological fieldwork since 2001 concentrating on topics difficult to approach: social control, its forms and institutions that assure stability in the Moldavian Csángó communities. I consider myself especially fortunate, since in several cases I was able to experience the monitoring and sanctioning role of social control *in situ*. I witnessed active or demonstrative expression of controlling factors, and in a few cases I was the one to be measured by local norms and habits.

**4 pm, A documentary ‘The Miraculous Fountain of Doctor Benedek’ (2007, 28’)
presented by *Lehel Peti***

In the Moldovan region of Romania, people still talk about a saintly doctor who suffered reprisals from the Communist authorities for his faith. Benedek Márton’s problems started after his visit to the Pope, and led soon after to his death. A few days after his death miracles began to happen in his village...

7 pm, *A reception for the participants at Lyhty*



Photo by Lehel Peti

Wednesday, 7th March, Historica 320

10 am, Veronika Lajos: The Imaginary Csángó and Reality as Experienced

It is a widely known fact that the perception of the scholarly findings on an ethnographic field is significantly defined by the actual discourse of the discipline. In the case of the Moldavian Csángós the discourse is also heavily loaded with Hungarian and Romanian political intentions. In my paper, I draw attention to the interconnectedness of the ethnological discourse on the Csángós and the results of a research (esp. a fieldwork), the instrumentalization of an ethnic group and the ways in which the discourse writes itself right into the Csángó field.

11 am, Iancu Laura: Fieldwork Among the Csángós

The centre of my fieldwork has been one village, Magyarfalu. My aim has been to give a holistic picture about its cultural system. As a local inhabitant and a researcher at the same time, I found myself in a peculiar situation, because the general anthropological research methods cannot always be applied in this case. A consequence of the double position is that the researcher interprets present phenomena on the basis of its past. That is, the local researcher has access to the premises of the phenomena. I would like to point out some examples of this experience from my fieldwork.

12 am, István Kinda: The Csángó Ethnographical Museum (Zabola, Romania)

In the course of the past eight centuries, Hungarian communities living in the Carpathian Basin have been continuously settling over the territory of Moldavia, where they have to this day preserved several archaic layers of Hungarian, Romanian, and other European cultures. The international trade of antiquities has already reached this region and dealers have been consequently robbing the Csángó villages. Thus the conscious collection, documentation and museal representation of Csángó culture has become even more urgent. In 2001, the Kriza János Ethnographical Society initiated the process of establishing a Csángó Ethnographical Museum in Zabola, a village in the neighboring region to Moldavia, Szeklerland.

1pm – 2 pm, lunch break

2 pm, Lehel Peti: “Wearied respondents”: Fieldwork among the Csángós

This presentation describes a sample of the author’s experiences and adventures during fieldwork among the Csángós since 2001. The presence of the author in the Moldavian Csángó villages was accomplished through two roles: as a researcher, and as a member of a documentary team, which resulted in different perspectives to the field. The paper will also show the author’s attempts to find a suitable methodological framework to local realities. The circumstances which make the ethnographer’s job difficult will be discussed next. That is, the prejudices of the representatives of the local church and civil authorities as well as the fears of the community members. Lehel Peti will also reflect on the ethnographer’s position in local communities, where the increased interest on their culture may produce negative attitudes towards the ethnographer’s work.

3 pm, *Veronika Lajos*: Teaching Hungarian among the Csángós

Teaching Hungarian in one of the Moldavian Csángó villages (in Luizi-Călugăra, Bacău, Romania) might be seen as a useful and, at the same time, a controversial means to be frequently present in the researched field, as well as a socio-political act to save the Csángó dialect, culture and minority from fully assimilating into the Romanian nation. In my paper, I present details of events that occurred during my teaching period to highlight some theoretical issues about the ways native people and outsiders consider the possibility to learn Hungarian as a “mother tongue”.



Photo by Lehel Peti

On the speakers

Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa (b. 1947) is a doctor of political sciences (Univ. of Turku) and holds a docenture at the University of Oulu. She was a member of the Finnish parliament for 20 years, and a minister for cultural affairs between 1991 and 1995. In 1996 she became the Finnish delegate to the Council of Europe. She considered that the most important tasks of the Council of Europe were to strengthen human rights and democracy, respect the mother tongue and promote multiculturalism. One of her major achievements in the European Council was the Recommendation 1521 (2001) on Csángó minority culture in Romania.

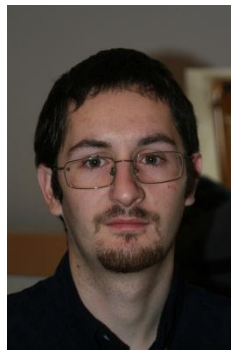
In 2005 Isohookana-Asunmaa gave up her post as a lecturer at the University of Oulu and became a free researcher and writer. She has been active in civil organizations, Isohookana-Asunmaa has chaired many of them during her career. She has published numerous newspaper articles, several histories, a biography and poems. Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa is the author of *Pieni tarina csángóista* (Mäntykustannus Oy, 2011), which describes her relationship to the Csángós, the political process that led to the EC recommendation 1521 and its aftermath. Her several journeys to Moldavia are documented in this book, too.



Laura Iancu was born in a Moldavian Catholic, Hungarian speaking community, Magyarfalu (Arini) in 1978. At the age of 12 she left to Csíkskereseda (Miercurea-Ciuc) in Transylvania where she attended a Hungarian high-school. In 1997 she moved to Budapest and Szeged, where she received her MA in ethnology in 2007. Laura Iancu has published also poems and prose. Also as a literary author she has written on the life of Moldavian Hungarians in Romania and Hungary. Her latest works include: *Névtelen nap* (poems, 2009) and *Szeretföld* (novel, 2011). Iancu Laura has a wide record of publishing on the Moldavian Csángós, among others she prepared a monograph on feast customs in Magyarfalu (Lucidus, 2011). Laura Iancu defended her doctoral thesis: *Ethnographic Research on Local Religion in a Moldavian Village, Magyarfalu* in February 2012. Since December 2011, she works in Budapest at the Institute of Ethnology for the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Between June and September 2011, she gathered materials on the Csángós in public records offices in Moldavia (Iași, Piatra-Neamț and Bacău). Laura Iancu's current research is based on this data.



Lehel Peti (b. 1981) graduated from the Babeș–Bolyai (Romania) University in 2004. He specialized in ethnography and Hungarian language and literature. He was awarded a PhD-degree by the Hungarian Department of Ethnography and Anthropology at the same university in 2010. Between 2006 and 2008 Peti was appointed as an assistant lecturer at the University of Szeged (Hungary), Department for Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. There he held courses on the anthropology of religion. Since 2007 he works as researcher at the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (ISPMN) and as a lecturer at the Babeș–Bolyai University. His doctoral thesis investigates the religious mentality of the Moldavian Csángós. That is, their experiences and rituals ensuring contact with transcendence as well as the visionary forms of the transcendental communication. Furthermore, it discusses the contexts of the supernatural experience in these communities and the historically changing functions of the religious experience present in visions and dreams. That is, it covers the role of religiosity unsupervised by the church had in the time of the communist dictatorship, as well as in the time of the social insecurity following the system change. Peti Lehel has published on a wide range of other topics too, most of them connected to the Moldavian Csángós.



István Kinda (b. 1981) graduated from the Babeş–Bolyai University at Cluj-Napoca, Romania. He specialized in Hungarian ethnography and literature. In 2009, Kinda defended his doctoral thesis at the University of Debrecen (Hungary) with the title: *Controlled Societies. Norms, sin and punishment in Moldavian Csángó villages*. Since 2005, Kinda works as an ethnographer in the Székely National Museum (Sepsiszentgyörgy – Sfântu Gheorghe). He is the head of the Csángó Museum in Zabola. István Kinda's research focus is on the following fields: social change, traditional crafts, strategies and models of life in Hungarian, Csángó and Roma communities.



Veronika Lajos (b. 1979) defended her dissertation at the University of Debrecen, Hungary in 2011. Her topic is the clash between traditional and modern systems of values in a peasant society undergoing the process of modernization. More specifically, she investigated the conflict between 20th-century modernization and the Moldavian *Csángó* socio-cultural system, which has multiple cultural and linguistic layers and continues to display archaic features even today. The objective of the dissertation is to examine the quality and means of culturally encoded adaptation through the interpretations of the symbolic and the “real” instances in the social transition that has taken place in the Moldavian *Csángó* peasant society during the past 60-80 years. Lajos' research is based on empirical observation conducted during a 10-month stationary fieldwork in *Lujzikalagor* (Luizi-Călugăra, Bacău, Romania) in 2006-2007. Since 2007, Veronika Lajos has been working as a research assistant for the Ethnology Research Group at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The research team is placed at the University of Debrecen, where she also teaches. Lajos' main fields of interest are: modernization, strategies of cultural adaptation, social and cultural fields of transition, glocalization, transnational migration, ethnicity, national and ethnic minorities and contemporary history and historiography in Romania and Hungary.

