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Ethnic categorization practices and boundary (re)making in a multiethnic borderland of Ukraine

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Abstract:

Multiethnic borderlands, like Transcarpathia in Western Ukraine, are characterized by ethnic-linguistic-confessional complexity where ethnic boundary-making and ethnic categorization are constructed and rooted in politics. The present study aims to analyze how the mechanisms of ethnic categorization and boundary-making play out on a local level. Based on data analysis and fieldwork conducted in Hudya/Gődényháza in Transcarpathia, a village with ethnically, linguistically, and denominationally diverse population, we describe how "ethnicity" is getting blurred and reconstructed in the narrative strategies of residents. We examine the characteristics of the various classification systems (external classification, self-reporting) and their relation to each other. It is found that the ethnic, linguistic, and denominational affiliations in the village (and its wider region) are often divergent, which is reflected in the significant discrepancy between the data gathered in various ethnic classification systems. We argue that denomination is the prime factor of both self-identification and external classification, obscuring the boundaries between religious and standard ethnic terms. We further point to the formation of new boundaries between autochthonous and allochthonous populations. Although this cleavage emerged a few decades ago and has been transgressed by dozens of marriages among autochthonous and newcomers, it can easily get ethnicized, thus it adds an extra layer to the existing distinctions.

Keywords:

ethnic classification, ethnic identification, census, Greek Catholics, ethnic-religious contact zone, Transcarpathia, Ukraine

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Introduction

An example occurred in Satu Mare during the last census collection before 1989 [i.e. in 1977 — the authors' comment]. The census taker asks what language is spoken in the next house. He finds out Hungarian. In the next house, he asks for the data in that language.

- What is your nationality?

- Greek Catholic.

- I did not ask about your religion, there is no such box in the census questionnaire. […] Hungarian or Romanian?

- Romanian.

- Why did not you say? – He continues in Romanian.

The respondent: - Please say it in Hungarian, I do not speak Romanian.

- You have just said you are Romanian.

- I am a Greek Catholic from Botiz [village in Satu Mare County, Northwest Romania — the authors' comment].

- I did not ask about your religion, I asked about your nationality.

- Please write Romanian, so as not to get into trouble.

(Bura, 2001: 117.)

The above scene — quite typical for any nationalizing state in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) sharing the same context in terms of both historical developments until the WWI and multiethnic and multiconfessional population — illustrates perfectly the complexity of ethnic identification and ethnic categorization. This quote calls attention to how the official, top-down (census) categorization relates to the individual's ethnic identity, and how the entire region is characterized by ethnic-linguistic-confessional complexity. Additionally, it exemplifies how ethnic boundary-making and ethnic categorization are constructed and rooted in power relations.

In various fields of life, we might encounter ethnic categorization. For instance, census, as a form of official categorization, is one of such settings of classifications. In Jenkins's (2008) view, these settings form a continuum between formal and informal contexts, in which census is considered as one of the most

formal ones. Towards the informal end of the continuum, one can find less formal contexts like labor market, education, marriage market, or everyday interactions in the local neighborhoods. Nevertheless, conscious or unconscious ethnic categorization occurs in all the above situations permeating everyday life.

Beyond the individual significance, ethnic categorization and self-identification has relevance at the community's level. The statistical (census) number of an ethnic group has an impact on ethnic hierarchy, affects possibilities for minority advocacy both locally and on a country level, and in some cases it would even have an impact on political autonomy and the possession of various resources — i.e. power relations in general. Censuses have become the grounds for rivalry between nations and ethnic groups, which, not surprisingly, have resulted in direct or indirect political pressure on gathering ethnic data (Kertzer and Arel, 2002). All this underlines that ethnicity is not a simple statistical category, but an assigned status, a power position that is often shown even in individuals' identity documents (Brubaker, 1996).

In CEE context, the issue of ethnic classification appears mainly in relation to the Roma (Boda 2019; Csata, Hlatky and Liu, 2020; Csepeli and Simon, 2004; Kiss 2018a; Ladányi and Szelényi, 2006; Rughiniş, 2011; Surdu and Kovats, 2015). Meanwhile, examining the classification of ethnic groups that cannot be visually distinguished and that, in many cases, have been living together in the region for centuries would be equally important — yet it has received far less attention. In Transcarpathia, the western borderland of Ukraine, which is the broader research area of the present study, ethnic categorization has so far analyzed only through ethnographic approaches, in relation to the Hungarian Greek Catholic population (Domokos, 2005; Geszti, 2001; Keményfi, 2004; Pilipkó, 2007), or dealing with Rusyn identity (Cantin, 2014; Dickinson, 2010; Halemba, 2015). At the same time, the exploration of ethnic categorization practices in multiethnic settings, and the comprehensive study of various ethnic categorization systems (e.g. external categorization vs. self-identification) is yet to be completed.

Our paper aims to reveal the practices and micropolitics of ethnic categorization and boundary making in a multiethnic/multiconfessional setting. The article offers an analyzis of the various classification systems (hetero- and auto-identification) and examines their relationship to each other. We seek to explore the way the fixed, rigid top-down categories are used individually and communally in an ethnically and denominationally diverse setting. How and to what degree do these external categories influence individual self-identification? How does denominational diversity interfere with ethnic identification? What other factors are present in the local boundary making practices? The analyzis points to the fluid

character and blurred nature of standard ethnic categories, which are additionally constantly recreated in interlocutors' narratives. We argue that denomination is the prime factor of self-identification and external classification, obscuring the standard ethnic categories.

The research is based on the field work conducted in several phases between 2017 and 2019 in a multiethnic/multiconfessional village, Hudya (Ukrainian: Гудя, Hungarian: Gődényháza) located in the Hungarian–Ukrainian ethnic contact zone in Transcarpathia, Ukraine. Over the course of centuries, both the changes in local demography and external geopolitical factors (such as shifting state borders, nationalizing states) contributed to the formation of complex identity constructs that are in the process of making to this day. This, and its impact on individual identification, renders Hudya a promising research location.

We first arrived in Hudya in 2017 to carry out a survey measuring the ethnic, religious and age group distribution of the village's population. We applied external categorization via a person who was deeply familiar with the village. Our results were comparable with the data gained from the demographic survey 'SUMMA 2017'[4] based on ethnic self-identification. Inconsistencies — i.e. divergences of denominational, ethnic and linguistic boundaries — derived from our survey led us to spend a week in the village again in 2018 and return multiple times in 2019 as well. During our fieldwork we conducted semi-structured interviews both with the local elite and with ethnically mixed couples to understand the everyday practices of ethnic categorization. In order to possibly minimize or as far as possible overcome the ethnic lens effect (Brubaker 2004; Glick-Schiller, Çağlar, and Guldbrandsen, 2006) we made efforts to avoid using the standard ethnic categories, like Ukrainian and Hungarian; and asking directly about (inter-)ethnic issues in the interview situation. Instead, we were interested in the experiences of cohabitation, and asked about concrete examples from everyday living experiences in the village (e.g. how do they celebrate a wedding, which language do they speak in different contexts, etc.), allowing the interlocutors to apply the terms/categories they wish to describe themselves and others. In all cases, our respondents were free to decide which language (Hungarian or Ukrainian) to use in the interview situation. This was important because it allowed our interlocutors to tell their stories in the language they feel the most comfortable with, without the help of an interpreter.

4 The aim of 'SUMMA 2017' was to survey the number, spatial distribution, some important demographic characteristics and temporary migration patterns of the Hungarian community in Transcarpathia (see details in Tátrai, Molnár, Kovály, and Erőss, 2018).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted between June 2018 and August 2019. In 2018, we used a snowball method to find respondents and conducted 13 interviews (8 with a female, 5 with male respondents). In 2019 11 follow-up interviews were recorded focusing on the changes that happened in the village as well as targeted interviews with Ukrainian-speaking Greek Catholics. In sum, 12 interviewees chose to speak in Hungarian and 12 in Ukrainian. The length of the conversation was usually between 50 and 70 minutes. In addition, during the fieldwork we engaged in informal conversations with locals several times. For instance, in front of the only local grocery store, or before and after the Sunday church events (Greek Catholic and Calvinist). The field notes were thus enriched with the summaries of these conversations and field observations (e.g. in the cemetery).

During the research, we tried to talk to both members of mixed couples — preferably at the same time, but in separate places — although this was particularly difficult in Hudya. In many cases, the male, and occasionally both working-age members of the families spend most of the year (including during our fieldwork) abroad for work and only visit home intermittently (Erőss, 2020; Erőss, Váradi, and Wastl-Walter, 2020). This significantly narrowed the pool of male respondents. For this reason, women (16) are overrepresented compared to men (8).

Ethnic categorization theorized: "top-down" and "bottom-up" perspectives

The introductory scene from Satu Mare quoted above could have happened any time after the introduction of regular population censuses at the end of the 19th century. From then on it became important for the current power not only to collect „objective" statistical data (e.g. population numbers, occupation, education, etc.) but also to measure the identity of the inhabitants through questions on native language or ethnicity. For this reason, censuses can be considered as a political act, as an instrument of power (Kertzer and Arel, 2002; Urla, 1993). Ever since the formation of nation-states in the 19th century, censuses in CEE have been effectively supporting efforts at linguistic-ethnic homogenization and centralization. As Kertzer and Arel (2002) put it: modern nation-states categorize their people to better control them. Standard ethnic categories, used by censuses, are the product of nationalism and ethnopolitics (Hobsbawm, 1990). However, these categories are not necessarily aligned with the often fluid, shifting, overlapping identities used in everyday life. By constructing and regulating these categories, the state was seeking to radically simplify a complex social reality

(Eriksen, 1993). According to this logic, people's cultural identity/affiliation could be described using single, mutually exclusive categories (Anderson, 1991). The question about one's native language/ethnicity was a mandatory one, and — in line with the above concept — only one answer could be submitted.

The nature of the census and the nationalizing state has not changed over the decades. Several case studies have shown how the actual power had deliberately tried to reduce the number of minorities in censuses (Egry, 2014; Zahra, 2008) or how racially based categorization of mostly immigrant groups is implemented (Aspinall, 2003; Marrow, 2003; Nagel, 1994). Several studies have conceptualized the internal and external dialectic of identifications and analyzed how the individual's self-identification had come into conflict with census categorization, classification, or terminology created by the state or other official bodies (e.g. Brunsma, 2005; Elrick and Schwartzmann, 2015; Harris and Sim, 2002; Jenkins, 1996; Song and Aspinall, 2012;), most of them understand external identification as labeling minorities/immigrants with official categories and terminology.

One of the most salient examples for the excessive importance held by ethnic statistics is the former Soviet Union, where — unlike in the Russian Empire — censuses recorded not only respondents' native language, but also their nationality (narodnost'). However, the Soviet concept of nationality meant a more objectively outlined ethnic origin and background, rather than cultural affiliation or chosen ethnicity (Arel, 2002; Hirsch, 1997). Despite the invented nature of this category, nationality as a fundamental and essentially unalterable attribute was included in each individual's passport and every piece of their personal documents (Dave, 2004). Naturally, after it was annexed to the Soviet Union, this practice was introduced in Transcarpathia too.

Following the regime change, certain CEE countries — particularly those that do not have a dominant minority which would threaten the country's integrity and existing ethnic hierarchy, like Hungary, the Czech Republic, or Poland — introduced the possibility to declare multiple ethnic identities in censuses. As a result, the number of respondents claiming more than one ethnicity or native language grew substantially. It became clear that a portion of these countries' seemingly homogenous population was evidently characterized by multiple ethnic attachments, hybrid and regional or territorial identities (Czepil and Opioła, 2020; Siwek and Kaňok, 2003; Tátrai, 2015; Vaishar and Zapletalová, 2016).

In other countries, where the survey methodology remained unchanged, the divergence between certain ethnic categories (e.g., ethnicity, native language) might refer to the presence of multiple ethnic attachments. A good example of this is Ukraine, where the 2001 census uncovered that a significant proportion

of the population has differing ethnicity and native language. This is mostly valid for Ukraine's Russian-speaking population, who self-identify as Ukrainians (Karácsonyi, Kocsis, Kovály, Molnár, and Póti, 2014), but the distinction is also remarkable in the case of the Polish population — 85-90% of which does not claim Polish as their native language. The Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholic population in Transcarpathia is also characterized by multiple ethnic attachments and discrepancies between their ethnic and linguistic self-identification. At the same time, it is important to call attention to the unequivocal understanding of "nationality" and "native language" in Ukraine incorporating both traits of primordialism and constructivism (Arel, 2002); however, nationality is no longer recorded in identity cards.

The above macro-perspective approach is significantly nuanced by micro-level experiences. In ethnic contact zones — such as borderlands of Transcarpathia — ethnic identification often undergoes dynamic changes and transformation, which are not limited solely to the modification of ethnic self-identification or the minority's decreasing ethnic reproduction. The traditional ethnic/national categorization and the terms associated with it have been changing: in some contexts, ethnic affiliation, identity, and assimilation attitude are described by differentiated terms, hybrid categories instead of simple, one-word categorization (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, and Grancea, 2006). Under such circumstances, auto-identification and hetero-identification potentially mismatch — or in other words, how one sees oneself is not validated by others (see Appiah 2005; Campbell and Troyer, 2007; Jenkins, 2008; Song and Aspinall, 2012).

Ascribed identification, like ethnicity indicated in IDs or external categorization by others, has a direct effect on the self-identification even of seemingly homogenous groups. Therefore, external categorization may serve as the source of identity or might shape self-identification of individuals and groups, making it prone to changes and constant transformation (see Jenkins, 2008; Song and Aspinall, 2012).

This last thought leads us to the question of the power hierarchy in the classification process. Several examples (Ahmed, Feliciano, and Emigh, 2007; Ladányi and Szelényi, 2006; Telles and Lim, 1998) show that the person who is empowered to classify will have a decisive impact on the categorization itself. The classification of racialized individuals usually results in exclusion (e.g. the Roma in CEE context), meaning that persons of mixed ancestry (or other "in-between" cases) are primarily labeled as non-white[5]. However, when it comes to non-racialized

5 The best-known example of this practice is the one drop rule adopted in the US (see Khanna,

ethnic differentiation (e.g. Hungarian/Romanian or Hungarian/Ukrainian), the person empowered to categorize will most often classify "in-between" or hybrid cases into their ethnicity (Ahmed, Feliciano and Emigh, 2007).

Changes in the ethnic and religious structure in Transcarpathia and the research site

Even though most of the regions in Central Europe were subject to stormy political and economic transformations during the 20th century, only in a few of them were these changes as profound as in Transcarpathia. The region was part of many state formations throughout the 20th century, which had a remarkable impact on its ethnic composition as well as on its general development. In the first decades of the century, it belonged to the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The area was ceded to Czechoslovakia after WWI, and it remained so until 1938. After a short period under the sovereignty of Hungary during WWII, the area was incorporated into Ukrainian SSR as an administrative district of Zakarpatska Oblast, and since 1991 under the same name it has been a part of independent Ukraine sharing borders with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. Even though the state authority over this territory has changed several times during the 20th century, the peripheral position of Transcarpathia remained constant under any state formation (Batt, 2002; Jordan and Klemenčić, 2003). The ethnic and religious pattern has been prone to dramatic changes as well aligning to the geopolitical shift described above.

The research site, Hudya is a small, peripheral village (pop. 592 in 2001) characterized by population decline and a lack of institutions and services. It is located close to the Ukrainian-Romanian border in Vynohradiv Raion, 12 kilometers away from the town of Vynohradiv. Hudya's broader region has been traditionally a contact zone of Hungarian and Ukrainian/Rusyn or, from a religious perspective, Calvinist and Greek Catholic populations.

In the past three centuries, the ethnic and religious composition of the village has undergone significant changes. The village, previously almost exclusively inhabited by Calvinist Hungarians, was settled by Greek Catholic Rusyns in the 18th century. In the middle of the 19th century, Calvinists still formed a majority in the village. However, their proportion gradually decreased, while the ratio of Greek Catholics kept growing due to a higher fertility rate and more favorable migration balance. In a hundred years the village's religious composition had been reversed

2010).

(see Figure 1). At the beginning of the 19th century religious and ethnic boundaries still typically coincided in the region (Keményfi, 2004), but from the middle of the 19th century, they had increasingly diverged. This is further confirmed by church directories, according to which the language of Greek Catholic sermons became Hungarian at the end of the 19th century, even if the liturgical language shifts only followed the population's language use with a certain phase delay (Pilipkó, 2007).

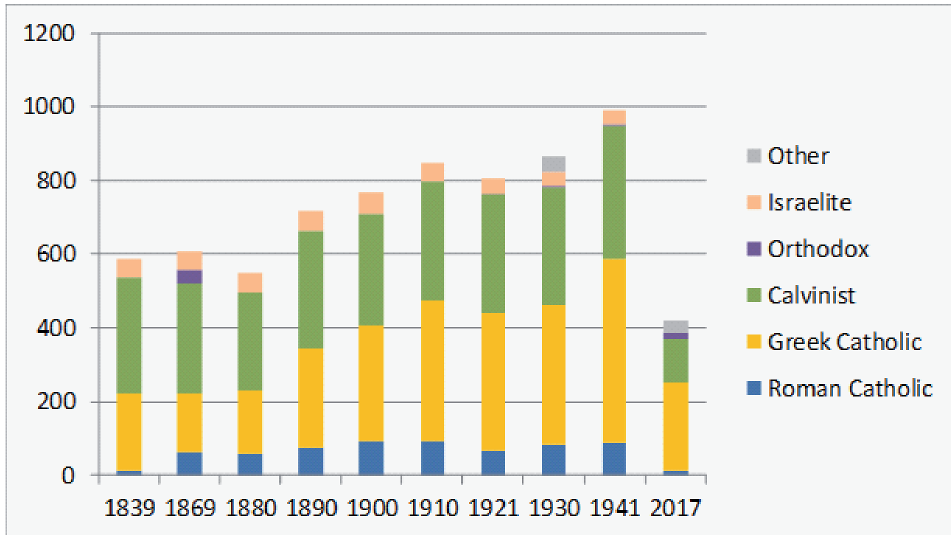

Figure 1: Changes in the religious composition in Hudya between 1839 and 2017

Sources: 1839: Fényes, 1839; 1880-1941: census data; 2017: authors' data collection

Assimilation of Greek Catholic Rusyns in the region accelerated in the second half of the 19th century. It was facilitated by both the switch from the Greek Catholics' Vlach lifestyle to the farming lifestyle and the intensifying nationalizing policies of Hungary. As a result, Hudya became an almost exclusively Hungarian-speaking village by the turn of the century (Pilipkó, 2007). In these years, ethnic-linguistic processes (Magyarization) and religious dynamics (Greek Catholics outnumbered Calvinists) were fundamentally separated from each other. Despite the village became homogenous in terms of language use, the residential segregation between Greek Catholics and Calvinists, the religious endogamy, and the unfavorable socio-economic status of Greek Catholics persisted and kept symbolic boundaries alive.

In the interwar period, the Czechoslovakian state made attempts to distance Rusyns from Hungarians (Pusztai and Pilipkó, 2008) and to reduce the number and share of Hungarians. In statistical terms, it meant that Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholics (as "Hungarianized Slavs") were mostly classified as Rusyns similar to Hungarian-speaking Jews and Gypsies who were listed in separate ethnic groups in the 1921 and 1930 census (Kocsis, 2001). After the short-term reattachment to Hungary between 1938 and 1944 when Greek Catholics were allowed to self-identify as Hungarians, the official ethnic classification practices typical for the inter-war period continued. Throughout the Soviet era, Greek Catholics were labeled as Ukrainians and that ethnicity was displayed on identity documents (Keményfi, 2004). Additionally, two factors must be mentioned that impacted the processes of ethnic categorization and self-identification in this period and have its effect to this day: forcing Greek Catholics into Orthodoxy, and the Ukrainian identity favored instead of or over Rusyn. As we could reconstruct from the interviews, the above all shaped Hudya's ethnic and religious makeup. Nevertheless, in local people's account Hudya remained a Hungarian settlement up to the 1970s, even if, based on statistical data, this was only true concerning the dominant language in the village.

The situation started to change in the 1970s, due to two factors. On the one hand, with the closing of the local Hungarian school the aging and shrinking Hungarian community lost one of its most important institutions for ethnic socialization, which also cut back the opportunities for Hungarian language use. The second factor was the settlement of Ukrainian/Rusyn groups from the mountainous parts of Transcarpathia into the village. The influx of high-fertility, Ukrainian-speaking, Greek Catholic, and Orthodox settlers altered Hudya's ethnic composition. Ukrainian was used more and more as the lingua franca, while Greek Catholic liturgy became dominated by Ukrainian-language parts. The rising number of mixed marriages eventually led to a process of (re-)Ukrainization. As a consequence, by the time of the 1989 census, the Ukrainian population constituted the majority in the village.

Hudya was severely affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's ensuing crisis: the closing of the kolkhoz coupled with diminishing employment opportunities in the neighboring town induced significant emigration in the 1990s, which continues to decrease the settlement's population. At the time of the latest census conducted in Ukraine in 2001, 241 ethnic Hungarians lived in Hudya (41%) and 284 residents (48%) claimed that their native language was Hungarian (see Figure 2).

Ukraine's latest crisis started in 2013-2014 (after the Euromaidan and the Donbas conflict) which gave a new impetus to emigration and working abroad. Working-age males earn their families' livelihood mostly through employment in Hungary or the Czech Republic (Tátrai et al, 2018). Since men are absent for long periods, the population actively present in the village consists of women, children, and elderly residents (Erőss et al, 2020). The severe decrease in the population numbers is reflected by our survey carried out in 2017 (Figure 2).

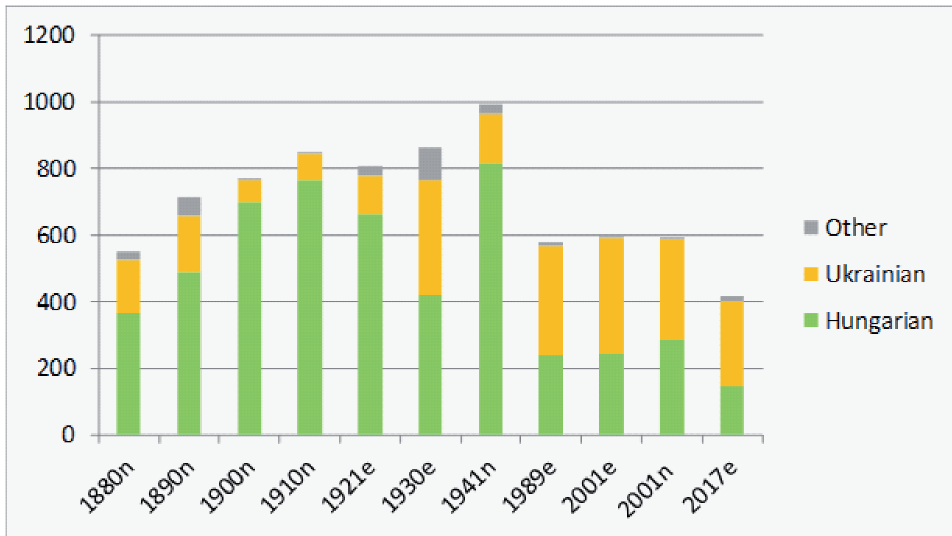

Figure 2: Changes in ethnic/linguistic composition in Hudya between 1880 and 2017

n=native language; e=ethnicity
Sources: 1840-1941, 2001: census data; 1989: Kocsis, 2001; 2017: authors' data collection (external identification)

Characteristics of auto-identification and hetero-identification according to statistical data

Examining the census statistics, it becomes obvious that ethnic, linguistic, and religious boundaries have been overlapping only partially during the past 150 years in Hudya. This phenomenon is primarily related to the Greek Catholic population with multiple attachments who have been the subject of classificatory struggles. Their changing ethnic hetero-identification and auto-identification resulted in quite fluctuating ethnic datasets even in a short timeframe. For example, data collected by the Cultural Alliance of Hungarians in Subcarpathia (KMKSZ) in 1989 and 1991 — presumably based on external identification — points to

a rise in the number of Hungarians from 230 (38%) to 311 (49%) (Botlik and Dupka, 1993). Naturally, the difference was not caused by demographic processes but an identification shift inspired by the changing social framework (i.e., the collapse of the Soviet Union, a more liberal atmosphere, the reintroduced system of Hungarian institutions), which especially affected the ethnic categorization of inhabitants with multiple ethnic attachments. The in-between position of Greek Catholics is underpinned by the last census too. According to the 2001 census, the number of respondents with Hungarian native language was 117.8 per 100 ethnic Hungarians, which significantly exceeded the Transcarpathian average (104.8). However, crosstables are not available by municipalities, this significant difference between "nationality" and "native language" categories can be interpreted only by the multiple attachments of a group of people, presumably the Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholics[6].

Comparing the census' native language and ethnic self-identification data is not the only way to shine a light on multi-ethnic attachments and situational identity. The results of ethnic/religious categorization show remarkable differences depending on whether the classification relies on auto-identification or hetero-identification methods. During our data collection in 2017, based on external categorization, it turned out that our Calvinist data provider primarily — but not exclusively — classified the ethnic belonging of the local residents according to their religious affiliation. Their competency for the Hungarian language, or being a native Hungarian speaker did not seem a decisive condition of being part of the Hungarian community, as would be the case in most of the minority Hungarian communities (Veres, 2015). The survey uncovered that the population present in the village had shrunk significantly due to emigration, while the proportion of ethnic Hungarians had also decreased compared to the 2001 census (see Table 1). Religious dynamics continued to follow existing trends: the ratio of Calvinists had diminished in favor of Greek Catholics. Of the 144 residents identified as Hungarians, 79% were Calvinist, 11% were Greek Catholic and 8% were Roman Catholic. Beyond the 144 Hungarians, there were 14 persons whom our data provider could not unequivocally categorize as Hungarian or Ukrainian. 13 of these 14 inhabitants belonged to the Greek Catholic Church and, rather surprisingly, only 2 of the 14 were adolescents of mixed ancestry, whose classification is typically ambiguous. This practice is rooted in the fact that in the local context one's religious affiliation provides unequivocal information about their ethnicity, and only the categorization of Greek Catholics can be deemed somewhat fluid.

6 In other municipalities, the significant difference is attributed to the Hungarian-speaking Roma population, but in Hudya there are no Roma inhabitants.

Generally speaking, in the 2017 survey, mainly the Calvinists were identified as Hungarians by our Calvinist data provider, and only Greek Catholics with explicit Hungarian attachment (e.g. KMKSZ members) were classified as Hungarian. However, their number reaches only 10% of the entire Greek Catholic population of the village.

Table 1: Ethnic composition in Hudya according to the 2001 census and the 2017 survey

	Population	Hungarian	Ukrainian	Other	Hungarian (%)	Ukrainian (%)
2001n	592	284	301	7	48,0	50,8
2001e	592	241	350	1	40,7	59,1
2017e	417	144	259	14	34,5	62,1

n=native language; e=ethnicity
Source: 2001: Ukrainian census; 2017: authors data collection.

Another possibility for statistical analysis of ethnic categorization is to compare the 2017 external categorization results to ethnic, native language, and religious data of the SUMMA 2017 survey based on self-identification of residents of 18 partly or fully Hungarian households. The two datasets show a high degree of similarity which is because the SUMMA 2017 survey was mainly conducted in that part of the village where Calvinists live in higher concentration. Of the 18 households, the number of those that are homogeneously Calvinist is 14 based on external classification, and 11 according to self-identification. This ratio leaves a relatively narrow opportunity to compare auto-identification and hetero-identification in the case of Greek Catholics. The most remarkable divergence between the two sets of data is not to be found in ethnic categorization, but — somewhat surprisingly — in religious affiliation (see Figure 3). One of the factors behind this is the presence of a few Roman Catholics, who, not having their church in Hudya, do not form an independent, easily identifiable group in the village. When it comes to Greek Catholics categorized as Calvinists, we can observe a practice ensuring familial cohesion, whereby in mixed-religion marriages the family's joint church visits and the baptism of children gravitate toward the dominant spouse's denomination.

Despite slight differences between the two datasets, religion seems to serve as the dominant basis of ethnic categorization in Hudya. The number of Calvinists and ethnic Hungarians is closer to each other according to external categorization data than to self-identification. Studying auto-identification and hetero-identification overall seems to reassert the diverging, incoherent logic of these two classification methods. It also confirms the fact that multiple ethnic affiliations

are primarily found among the Greek Catholic population. However, they are not the sole group affected by the phenomena of mixed ethnicity, language shift, and assimilation, all induced by the transformation of the linguistic-ethnic dominance of the village and the prevalence of interethnic marriages, mixed families, and hybrid life situations.

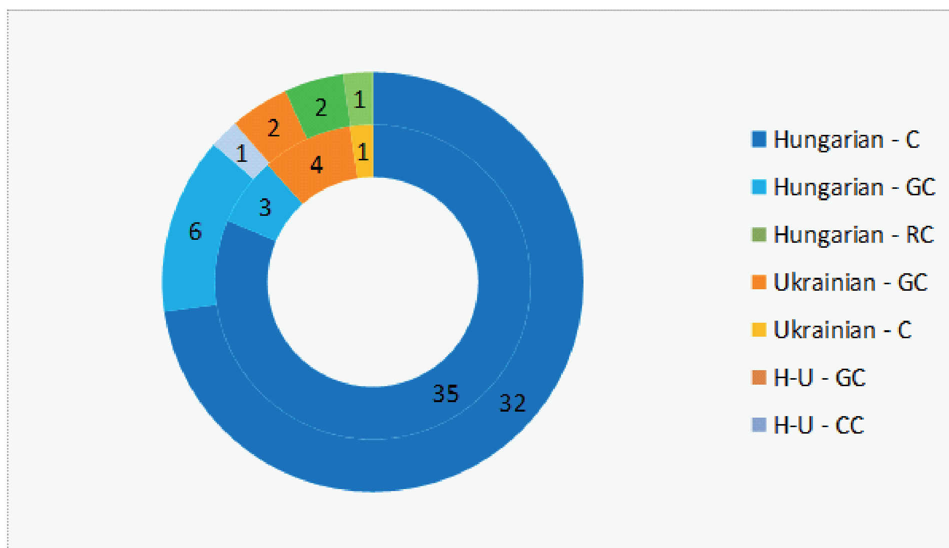

Figure 3: Ethnic and religious classification based on external categorization (inner circle) and according to self-identification (outer circle) in 18 households in Hudya in 2017

H-U: Hungarian and Ukrainian ethnicity; C: Calvinist; GC: Greek Catholic; RC: Roman Catholic
Source: Unpublished data of SUMMA 2017; authors data collection.

As a result of the increasing proportion of mixed marriages and people of mixed ancestry, ethnic boundaries have become increasingly blurred in Hudya, though the traces of the former ethnic-religious residential segregation can be still recognized. Today mixed marriages cannot be labeled simply as individual boundary-crossing acts (cf. Kiss, 2018b; Wimmer, 2013). Instead — similarly to a few other nearby villages cohabited by Calvinists and Greek Catholics (Domokos, 2005; Geszti, 2001; Keményfi, 2004; Pilipkó, 2007) — these have contributed to the formation of a unique practice of ethnic categorization.

Everyday practices of ethnic categorization and identification

In Hudya — just like in other nearby villages in the Hungarian–Ukrainian ethnic contact zone (Domokos, 2005; Geszti, 2001; Keményfi, 2004; Pilipkó, 2007) — religion has an essential role in ethnic identification and categorization. This is hardly surprising because daily life in the village is suffused with religiosity even today. The service/liturgy and other church events and holidays constitute the most important community events and socializing opportunities in residents' lives. Calvinists in Hudya are considered Hungarians, while Greek Catholics are deemed Ukrainians.

> We consider ourselves Hungarian, this is how it is here, if you are Calvinist, you are Hungarian. (Middle-aged, Calvinist woman, interview in Hungarian)

At first glance, it seems that ethnic and religious boundaries simply coincide in the local discourse. However, local practices of categorization and identification are much more complex phenomena that can be interpreted on multiple levels. First, it is important to note that the principle of 'Calvinist equals Hungarian' is far wider accepted than the 'Greek Catholic equals Ukrainian' concept. This points out how it is primarily the Calvinist denomination that maintains the boundaries within the Hungarian-speaking community, basically excluding Greek Catholics from the Hungarian ethnic group in a symbolic way.

> While in Hungary a person can be Hungarian whether they are Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic or Calvinist, here it is said that they are Hungarian only if they are Calvinist. (Middle-aged, Calvinist woman, interview in Hungarian)

This practice of ethnic boundary making dates back to the time when religious differences were corroborated by the existing ethnic-linguistic distinction. Despite the linguistic assimilation of Greek Catholics at the end of the 19th century, several actions took place in the past that reinforced these differences. Such measures included the classification of Greek Catholics as Rusyns during the Czechoslovak rule, and the obligatory Ukrainian ethnicity forced upon the majority of Greek Catholics in the Soviet period, which was also marked in their passports.

> They [the respondent's parents] did not care at all what was written in their Soviet passports. They knew who they were. They didn't speak Ukrainian, and yet the inscription said they were Ukrainians. Such absurdities occurred. (Middle-aged, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Hungarian)

As demonstrated by several international examples (e.g. Jenkins, 2008), Greek Catholics' ascribed ethnicity during Soviet rule has been partially internalized and thus influenced ethnic self-identification over time. It also meant that linguistic and ethnic identification were split from each other. Hungarian as one's native language did not necessarily entail Hungarian ethnicity, which was reflected in the 2001 census data concerning ethnicity and native language.

> That's what they say here: the Greeks are Ukrainians, the Calvinists are Hungarians. In Soviet times those of the Greek faith were written up as Ukrainians. But the Greeks are Hungarian-speaking Ukrainians. I am Greek Catholic, but we have always spoken Hungarian at home. (Elderly, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Hungarian)

By today, blurring boundaries have made it hard to draw a clear line between Greek Catholic and Calvinist groups (and categories). We interviewed a Calvinist woman living in an interethnic marriage who attends the Greek Catholic church and participates in the adjoining community. The reason she gave us was that their community is more active and the starting time of the liturgy suits her better. In contrast, another (Greek Catholic) respondent goes to the Calvinist service so her entire family can attend church together. The "Hungarians are Calvinists" credo is further weakened by the fact that Greek Catholics are over-represented among those people who actively shape the social-cultural life of the Hungarian community in Hudya.

The Ukrainization and the ever more monolingual nature of the Greek Catholic population have played an important part in this transformation. In our days, Hungarian is used only by the older generation of Greek Catholics[7]. Locals unanimously explain this process as caused by the arrival of Ukrainian settlers from the mountainous regions starting in the 1970s. The social cleavage between the approximately 15 newcomer families and the indigenous residents became just as important as the traditional dividing line, the religion.

> Almost all of these Ukrainians here are the ones who moved down to the village. (Middle-aged, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Hungarian)

7 The change in the language of the tomb inscriptions is a good indicator of linguistic Ukrainization. Approximately ¾ of the gravestone inscriptions in the cemetery are in Hungarian, but over time there are more and more inscriptions in Ukrainian reaching 80% in the last years.

> Everyone used to be Hungarian around here, but then the highlanders moved in. (Elderly, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Hungarian)

Local Hungarians refer to the immigrants as "Hutsuls", "highlanders" or "mountain people". They also call them "the Kolochava people" in general, with no regard to whether they came from Kolochava (Mizhhirya Raion) or other municipalities. Hudya did receive a large number of settlers from Kolochava, part of the mountainous area called Verkhovyna, but most of them belong to the ethnographic group of Boykos rather than the Hutsuls who live further east[8]. Referring to the newly arrived Ukrainian/Rusyn people as "Hutsuls" (in many cases as a pejorative term) is common not only in Hudya but in the neighboring Hungarian villages (Domokos, 2005; Geszti, 2001). Some of the settlers consider it offensive, but today the term "Hutsul" is so widely used in Hudya that even the immigrants call themselves as such, even though they know that they are, in fact, not Hutsuls[9]. As one of these settlers in Hudya put it:

> I'm not Hutsul, we came from Verkhovyna. The Hutsuls live higher up, but we are not from there. But all the Hungarians call us Hutsuls. Even me, when I want to explain to someone who we are, I say that we are Hutsuls. That's how they [the Hungarians] know us. (Elderly, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Ukrainian)

The autochthon community viewed the newcomers as a homogenous, Greek Catholic, Ukrainian-speaking group. Meanwhile, most of them were of Orthodox faith, though since then "they have gone over to the Greek Catholics, since there is no Orthodox church here, only in Tekovo, but that's really far." (Elderly, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Ukrainian). Initially the original local residents did not even know the newcomers' names, thus they kept calling them by the name of the family whose house they moved into, at which the settlers occasionally took offence.

Several of the families arriving in the first wave learned to speak Hungarian, but this did not become the norm among the families coming later. Naturally, some members of the Hungarian community resented how the village's former linguistic standards toppled, because "they just moved here, and our people learned to speak Ukrainian, but they did not learn Hungarian." (Elderly,

8 For detailed historical, ethnographical and geographical description of the area of Carpathian Rus' see Magocsi (2015).

9 For a comparison see the contribution by Kosiek (2015) analyzing the case of Ukrainian minority in Romanian Maramureș.

Greek Catholic woman, interview in Hungarian) The changes in the hierarchy of languages are illustrated by the transformation of the language of the Greek Catholic liturgy. Today only a handful of hymns are sung in Hungarian, and the Lord's Prayer is recited in Hungarian 2-3 times each month. The appearance of the Hungarian language in the sacral space is resented by some, to which Hungarians reply by citing the autochthon-allochthon difference, whereby the "more ancient" presence and "noble"[10] ancestry compensates for the current unbalanced prestige of languages.

> I can't say the Ukrainians are not angry about the Lord's Prayer, because they only know it like that [in Ukrainian language]. […] I even showed them that everywhere… up there you see Máté, here Fülöp, it's written like that, everything is in Hungarian, because this church was built by Hungarians a long time ago, and our village was a noble Hungarian village with only Hungarians living in it. (Elderly, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Hungarian)

The ethnic categorization practice adopted by the Ukrainian newcomers is somewhat different from that of the Hungarians. They consider Greek Catholicism a Ukrainian/Rusyn religion, and thus they limit explaining the non-overlapping religious and ethnic boundaries to the separation of religious and linguistic attributes.

> The elderly people in this village all spoke Hungarian. They weren't Hungarians though; it was simply a village where people spoke Hungarian. […] They were Ukrainians, only they talked in Hungarian. There are Calvinists here too, they also speak Hungarian. But our neighbors were all Greek Catholics, but they spoke Hungarian. (Elderly, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Ukrainian)

> There are Hungarians even among the Greek Catholics. How can I put this, they are not Hungarians… that is to say they are Greek Catholics, but they speak Hungarian among each other. (Elderly, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Ukrainian)

10 Interestingly, several of our elderly Hungarian-speaking Greek Catholic interlocutors refer to the village's noble past when it comes to the local community and the autochthon-allochthon cleavage, and the Calvinist population does not exclude them from this symbolic resource, although the nobles in the village were exclusively Calvinists.

Reflected by these quotes, ethnic and religious categorization does not necessarily occur along the terms/concepts/connotations adopted in settings with bright ethnic boundaries. Local usage of the terms "Hungarian" or "Ukrainian" does not primarily refer to one's ethnicity, but instead one's religion, making it impossible to translate them into ethnic categories. The terms used for ethnic and religious categories are interchangeable — at least compared to their standard usage — often (but not exclusively) making "Calvinist" and "Hungarian", or "Greek Catholic" and "Ukrainian" synonymous with one another. This way Hudya has a "Greek" and a "Hungarian" church, and its population can be divided into "Ukrainians" and "Calvinists".

> This is not a large village, but there are quite a few ethnic groups. We have Ukrainians and Calvinists. This has never been a problem. (Elderly, Greek Catholic woman, interview in Ukrainian)

As a consequence, beyond the often ambiguous use of ethnic and religious terms, the language spoken is important information about someone's ethnic orientation and nuances of identity.

Conclusion: factors behind ethnic categorization

The present study examined the characteristics of the various ethnic classification systems in a multiethnic borderland. We pointed to the ethnic-linguistic-confessional complexity of this contact zone derived from the eventful local history. Processes like migration, border changes, segregation, assimilation, and ethnic mixing, together with the agendas of nationalizing states, all have shaped the ethnocultural landscape in the last centuries.

In addition, we highlight that peripherality also has a fundamental impact on the local dynamics of ethnic categorization. Our research site has been a peripheral and underdeveloped setting both in national and regional perspectives independent of which state it belonged to. This contributed to a more traditional way of life remaining dominant, where religion plays an essential role in the local social reality to this day. Community events and everyday life are centered around church activities and religious events, thus denominational boundaries became the most important differentiation factor within the local society. Cultural attributes other than religion (e.g. ethnicity, language) are secondary factors in self-identification and everyday external categorization.

One of its main consequences — and a major finding of the research — is that denomination is the prime factor influencing both auto- and hetero-identification. Characterizing the whole region as well, the most important narrative of local practices of ethnic categorization is that Calvinists are Hungarian. Official categorizations, like ethnic data of censuses or nationality indicated in the ID cards, also equated religion with nationality, which can be traced primarily in the case of the external classification of Greek Catholics. Local Greek Catholics officially categorized as Rusyns/Ukrainians under Czechoslovakian and Soviet rule over time began to self-identify with the Ukrainian nationality inscribed in their passports. Hence, it may seem at the first sight that ethnic and denominational boundaries overlap.

However, the politically motivated top-down ethnic categorization applied such standard and rigid categories that did not correspond to the local populations' self-categories based on denomination. As a result, the local understanding of ethnic terms does not meet the standard meanings, thus ethnic terms simultaneously function as religious terms and vice versa.

Entangled terming suggests what statistical data and field experiences also confirm: namely the inconsistency of ethnic, linguistic, and denominational affiliations, particularly among the Greek Catholic population. Its most striking statistical manifestation is when someone declares different ethnic belonging and native language in the census. In the local scene, the growing number of people of mixed parentage also reduces the interconnection between one's denominational, linguistic, and ethnic identity.

In the local discourse, perceiving that religious affiliation does not fully correspond to ethnolinguistic attributes, categorization is further nuanced by additional information. For instance, marking Hungarian language proficiency or language use can serve as a significant indicator of ethnic orientation. In the case of interviews conducted in the Ukrainian language, interlocutors also felt necessary to 'report' about their (lack of) proficiency in Hungarian. This might derive from the inherent power relation in this specific kind of interview situation, or it might refer to the Hungarian history and population of the village. However, proficiency in the Ukrainian language remained unmarked in most of the cases. This phenomenon fits the integrationist approach according to which the social world is composed of an ethnically unmarked majority and other, ethnically marked groups (minorities) (see Brubaker et al, 2006; Kiss, 2018a).

Ethnic mixing and the consequent blurring of ethnic boundaries gave way to new dimensions of boundary making in the village, among which the most salient is the new autochthon-allochthon dichotomy. It occasionally prevails over

the traditionally most important religious boundaries. However, the numerous mixed marriages between the newcomers and the — partly Greek Catholic, partly Calvinist; partly Hungarian-speaking, partly Ukrainian-speaking — "indigenous" population illustrates the flexibility and situationality of this autochthon-allochthon boundary. Importantly, the narratives of the Ukrainian-speaking population settled in the 1970s on the one hand reinforce the "denomination equals to ethnicity" categorization specific to the region both in the case of Calvinist and Greek Catholics. On the flip side, newcomers have experienced that nor everyday, neither formal external categorization coincides with their self-identification. As Ukrainian/Rusyn people from Verkhovyna speak a local dialect of Ukrainian, they cannot fully identify either with the term "Hutsul" as used by the autochthonous people or with the simple, predefined ethnic categories ("Ukrainian") allowed by the census.

In addition to the emergence of new boundaries, some traditional boundaries have also been preserved. For instance, maintaining — religious or occasionally ethnic — boundaries within the Hungarian-speaking community entails the symbolic exclusion of Greek Catholic Hungarians from the 'imagined' Hungarian ethnic group. Greek Catholics are frequently referred to as Ukrainians (with no regard to their linguistic competencies or ethnic self-claim) by the Calvinist community. The often recalled image of Hudya as a "noble Hungarian village" is another tool of intra-ethnic boundary-making, which prevails even though the power position of Calvinist Hungarians does not support this anymore. Moreover, the engines of local Hungarian community life are Greek Catholics, whereas the aging and shrinking Calvinist church-goers are at best followers, but not initiators.

In sum, social, demographic, and geopolitical processes in recent centuries have created a multiethnic region where unconventional, non-standard ethnic categories developed and multiple belongings and multi-layered self-identifications are integral parts of everyday life. Under such conditions, the specific patterns of the various classification systems, auto- and hetero-identifications presented in this study are characteristic not only of the selected settlement, Hudya but also of its broader region where the Calvinist and Greek Catholic populations are more closely intertwined (see Domokos, 2005; Geszti, 2001; Keményfi, 2004; Pilipkó, 2007)[11]. However, even within this region categorization

11 In fact, the phenomenon extends beyond Transcarpathia to those northeastern parts of the former Hungarian Kingdom where Greek Catholics once constituted the dominant population. For instance, in Satu Mare County, Romania, cited in the introductory quotation, many villages can be characterized by similar categorization practices (Szilágyi 2019). It calls attention to that the Greek Catholic believers has formed a buffer denomination between eastern and western Christianity and thus has been subject of various assimilation processes

systems have their own, local specificities, intricate mechanisms that are in no way unified or constant, rather subjects to constant change and fine-tuning. External, particularly political changes, rivaling nation-building trends, or certain national policy measures (such as the classification of Greek Catholics as Ukrainians, or Hungary's simplified naturalization today) have or can have a substantial impact on the nature of ethnic identification and categorization. Future research might address the impact of Hungary's kin-state policies on ethnic self-identification and different aspects of inter-ethnic relations.

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