The Szekler Identity in Romania after 1989

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the development of the Szekler identity in the post-communist Romania. The Szeklers, Hungarian speaking population of Romania, have had an interesting process of identity that has been reinforcing in the last years. Starting points of the article are the categories of ethnic and national identity. Based on the theoretical framework of the modernist and the ethno-symbolism (the first focused on the idea of Nation-building, the second on the presence of an ethnic background to the national consciousness) we want to look for factors and promoters of the Szekler identity, paying particular attention to the institutions, rituals and symbols that have favoured the transmission of national culture. The article want to identify the main tools used to reinforce the Szekler identity after 1989, also analyzing the space that the Szeklers have had in the socialist Romania. Educational institutions, folklorism, symbols, monuments and national holidays were battlefields and tools to strengthen this peculiar identity, not separated from the Hungarian national consciousness but with its own characteristic. The arise of a strong Szekler identity has, in fact, created "conflicts" not only with the Romanian state, but also within the Hungarian minority, where many looked at it with concern, thinking about the possibility of the spilt of the Hungarian community in Romania. Through a reflection on the formation process of the national identity we want to explore the role of the political and cultural elite in this identity definition; analyzing instruments, forces and promoters of the "revival" of the Szekler identity.

Keywords: *Transylvania, szeklers, national identity, minority rights*

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Introduction

The subject of this article is the "revival" of the identity of the Szekler community. In the recent years there has been a redefinition of "being Szekler" through symbols, rituals and an energetic development of a collective memory that sparked internal debates and conflicts with the Romanian State power. The Szekler issue was placed in the spotlight many times, and not only for the claim of territorial autonomy. In 2012, the prohibition of the prefecture of the Covasna County to use the Szekler flag on public buildings caused a strong popular mobilization crossing the state borders. These examples highlight three main elements to the process of defence and "create" a national identity: the first element is the struggle for recognition of the particular community; the second is the creation and defence of national symbols; and the third is the spreading and sharing of a common sense. This community is experiencing a process of identity redefinition which includes different aspects, and interfaces both with the Hungarian community and to the Romanian State.

The objective of this paper is to analyse how the feeling of Szekler identity has developed in post-communist Romania. Our goal is to pinpoint tools, factors and institutions that have contributed to the formation of the Szekler identity.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is based on categories such as identity, ethnicity and nation. These elements are still at the centre of the public debate. In terms of the relationship between an individual and society, the concept of identity is described in the way the individuals see themselves inside the society and the way they feel as a part of it (Koller, 2006: 11). National identity, strongly connected to the modern state (Connor, 1991), was the protagonist of the twentieth century in Europe, for the better or for the worse. However, today we must face the emergence of new identities, such as regional identities (favoured by the decentralization policy promoted by the EU) which, without the obligation of wanting to build their own independent states, set out to create a new form of nation that contributes to the formation and to the conservation of a common cultural sense, demanding specific forms of autonomy (Grilli di Cortona, 2003: 19). The French philosopher Renan in 1882 defined nation as: "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things which properly speaking are really one and the same. Constitute this soul, this spiritual principle. One is the past, the other is the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present consent, the desire to live together, the desire to continue to invest in the heritage that we jointly have received" (Renan, 1993: 4).

Past and present are two key elements for identifying the different approaches to the nation that developed from the 1980's to today. There are two different tendencies. The first approach, a modernist one, considered the nation as a creation of the contemporary age, a product of the political and cultural *elite*. This theory identifies the nation like a new element, created *ad hoc*. In this case, the present is using the past for its own purpose in order to create the modern national state. The second approach, named ethno-symbolism and defended by the British sociologist Anthony D. Smith, recognizes that nations are modern social forms but imputes their birth with a strong connection with pre-national "ethnic" groups. For Smith, it is the past, made of ethnic groups and the "myth-symbolic complex" that influences the present by creating nations. Nations are so an evolution of ethnic groups, their modern and politicized version.

Particularly interesting in Smith's analysis is the fact that he referred to the Szekler ethnicity which, according to the sociologist, in the eighties had disappeared (Smith, 1992: 225). However, if Smith travelled today in Szeklerland, he would admit that this community, nowadays, is more alive than ever.

Historical brief

The Szekler question is a complicated and highly disputed issue. Szeklers are a population that settled in the 12th century in Eastern Transylvania, but there is still a great debate about their origins. Szeklers live compactly within three regions of Romania: Mureş, Harghita and Covasna. During the Middle Ages Szeklers represented an autonomous social group authorized by special rights and privileges. The peculiarities of the Szekler society have always been in the centre of the tensions with Wien and its modernizing and centralist policies. Conflicts with the Habsburgs were constant and culminated in 1848 when Szeklers decided to support the revolution started in Budapest; they also decided to join the battles, merging with the Hungarian armies. Since 1848, Szeklers officially became part of the Hungarian nation. However, after the fall of the revolution, Szeklerland was in fact marginalized within Austria-Hungary and subjected to Budapest centralism. It wasn't until the First World War and the subsequent peace treaties that determined strongly the future of the Szekler identity. The Szekler region was in fact annexed to Romania, a State where the community conceived them as foreigners. Between the two World Wars, the debate and the definition of their identity entered a new phase, defined by the Italian historic Bottoni as "identity-building". This period was marked by the interest of the motherland, Hungary, in defending the identity of the Hungarian minority. This interest was also reflected in the strengthening of their local common sense (Bottoni, 2013: 477-511).

So it was after the First World War that the Szekler identity, squeezed between the interest and efforts of the Hungarian revisionist and the Romanian cultural nationalism, had found new strength. This was a new approach that developed a sense of belonging to a local identity, without scratching the membership with the Hungarian nation. After World War II, Szeklerland experienced territorial autonomy granted by socialist Romania on the direct advice of Stalin (Bottoni, 2008). This was a project for autonomy in the style of those found in the USSR. The RAU (*Regiunea Autonomă Maghiară* – Magyar Autonomous Region), entered into force in 1952, did not provide any autonomous decision-making, political or economic. Nevertheless it was able to develop and strengthen linguistic and cultural rights that were lost in other parts of Transylvania. After the end of RAU in 1968 and a short period characterized by new possibilities offered by the socialist government, with the 1980's a new phase of repression and assimilation attempts by Bucharest had started. The "1989 revolution" and the fall of the communist regime started a new phase in which the Hungarian community hoped to increase the minority rights.

Szeklers and the census

A privileged instrument for the assessment of national identity is the population census. However, statistical science, particularly survey data on nationality and language, offers numerous questions. Especially in Eastern Europe, owing to the fact that minorities protection laws identify the territory of protection on the results of the census, so surveys often become fields of battles for nationalist politics, and, as a result, surveys lose accuracy.

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In the case of Szeklers, the census has more complex problems because in the collected data there aren't people who claim themselves Szeklers, if not in a minimal number. Indeed, the large majority of Szeklers identify themselves as Hungarians. This may seem obvious after the brief historical introduction made previously, but it was not always so clear. In November 1991, shortly before the first post-communist census, the Szekler newspaper *Hargita Népe* (People of Harghita) wrote on its first page: "We are proud of our Szeklerness, but in the context of the census we need to claim ourselves quietly of Hungarian mother tongue, although there are many people who doubt this". In the Hungarian community, and particularly among the members of the political class, there was a strong fear that people would declare themselves to be Szekler in nationality and therefore would not be counted among the Hungarians, causing great damage to the Hungarian minority. Domokos, President of UDMR (*Unionea Democrată Maghiară din România* - Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania) then, asked the Romanian government to remove the "Szekler" option from the census form. This option was introduced for the first time in 1977, with 6 other nationalities that were never used before. The main purpose of this was to numerically fragment the minorities. In 1977 only 1075 people declared themselves as Szekler in nationality (Varga, 1998-2002: 5). In our article, for both a matter of simplification and a lack of accurate data, we counted as Szeklers all the Hungarians inhabitants of the Mureş, Harghita and Covasna regions, although a part of Mureş isn't a part of the traditional Szeklerland. The analysis of these data shows us an interesting fact. Comparing the Hungarians living in these three regions (Szeklerland) and those living in the others regions of Romania, we see a trend that strengthens the weight of these regions in the Hungarian community. And in 2011, for the first time, Hungarian in others regions were overtaken by the Szeklers in numbers. This is another important fact, especially if we will analyse the dynamics of the Hungarian political parties and their electoral constituencies.

Language as symbols of identity

The linguistic identity is considered the foundation of national or ethnic identity, both by theorists who believe that the choice of identity is a natural choice and those that emphasize the cultural aspect. Linguists assign to the language two main functions: a communicative and a symbolic one. The first is fundamental to the relationship between individuals. The second gives the communication functions a symbolic value, and so with this that becomes not only a political symbol, but one of the strongest national symbols. Kymlicka and Grin underline the functions of language stressing the relationship with the concept of identity.

So the defence of our own language becomes a "holy" task, as to assume higher values: "when a language group fights to preserve its language, it is never just preserving a tool for communication: It is also preserving certain political claims, autonomous institutions, cultural products and practices, and national identities" (Kymlicka and Grin, 2003: 11). The question to ask now is: "Does a Szekler language exist?" The answer is clearly no. Szeklers speak Hungarian, or rather an Eastern dialect of Hungarian (Kiss, 2003: 25-27). Therefore any attempts to consider Szekler an independent language are dictated mainly by political motivations.

From the linguistic point of view there are two interesting elements for our discussion: the system of protection of the language of minorities in Romania and the Szekler-Hungarian runic alphabet. As for the first element, the system of protection minority languages in Romania has proved weak, with inadequate laws and often not

implemented ones. Despite of this, owing to the fact that the Hungarian speakers are a majority, bilingualism existed *de facto* in Szeklerland.

The Szekler-Hungarian runic alphabet is a peculiar issue that intersects directly with the Szekler history and identity. The use of an idiom most often isn't subjected to linguistic aspects but "to the influence of politics, the economy conjunctures, to the fashions of the time, to the destiny of history, and even the power of army" (Mulinacci, 2010: 8). This alphabet was used until 19th century in Szeklerland, but then disappeared. In public space it reappeared in 1989, on 2nd of June 1990, when in Cristuru Secuiesc some youth of the *Székely Ifjak Forum* (Forum of youth Szeklers) placed a unofficial sign with the name of the city in runic at the town entrance. This action triggered vehement protests, particularly from city government led by UDMR which criticized methods and purposes. In an open letter written by the mayor the position taken by the local UDMR is clear: "the runic alphabet cannot be considered a container of culture". There is a long accusation to the intent to reaffirm the Szekler identity.

The mayor expressed that in this time of great difficulty (this discussion takes place after the events of "Black March" in Târgu Mureş) "in this fight against the Romanian nationalism the greatest weapon that we have is unity", and "our enemies are doing everything to divide us [...] they speak about Hungarian and Szeklers [...] they speak of magyarized Szeklers". With this position this first attempt to bring the runic alphabet in the public space was ended. The sign was removed by the authorities a few days later. For several years the runic letters disappeared from public places, but it became a subject of study for linguists and ethnographers.

The interest in this alphabet became stronger in the second half of the nineties when it was also supported by some local governments. At this time the runic went back to the public space: official welcome signs appeared in some villages in Hungary and Romania and in general the alphabet was used in several recreational situations.Finally, it emerge with the series of conferences entitled "*Quo vadis Szeklerland?*", organized in several Szekler cities. At these conferences the role of the runic alphabet was reiterated in defence of Szekler identity. The final document of the conference takes a clear stance in favour of the spread of the runic alphabet, emphasizing the deep cultural relationship existing between this alphabet and being Szeklers.

The history of the runic alphabet and its use, especially in Romania, provides interesting elements. The spread of these signs began extensively from 2000. Until now, hundreds of municipalities have opted for the placement of runic signs; while many schools have started optional courses. However the great majority of the population cannot write in this alphabet, but they still keep emphasizing its symbolic importance.

Folklore and the reinforcement of local and national culture

Traditional song and dance plays an important role in the defence of identity, covering communicative, social and identity functions like the language. The mayor of Ocna de Sus, a szekler village, in 2011 at the opening of the "Camp of the dances of Szeklerland", told: "The battle for the defence of our identity does not take place on the border of the Carpathians anymore, today we fight it in politics and music". Folklore, seen as a collection of dance, song and rural traditions, and folklorism understood as a cultural movement in defence of these traditions, plays an important role in determining identity. The debate between modernists and ethno-symbolists on the role of folklore in the national identity acquires important aspects. Gellner shows that "society doesn't venerate itself anymore through religious symbols; a superior modern culture, efficient, motorized,

celebrates itself with songs and dances, which borrows from a popular culture that naively believed to perpetuate, defend and reaffirm it" (Gellner, 1992: 66). As a contrast Smith recognized folklore as a natural element for ethnic groups. Folklorism, as a category marked by the emergence of institutions and movements, has developed in a particular way in socialist Romania.

The Ceausescu regime has strongly used it for propaganda purposes and for support the national ideology of Communist Party with shows, festivals and the support of a huge number of amateur groups. At the beginning, Szeklers had the opportunity to become part of this movement but in the 1980's the regime reinforced the control over folkloristic exhibitions and limited the numbers of Hungarian-Szekler shows.

As an opposition to the official folklorism, the *Táncház* (Dance house) movement was born (Sándor, 2006: 12-13). The first event in Romania was held in Cluj in 1977. These events, initially granted by the regime, at the 1980's became a target and they were forced to shift in a semi-clandestine space. *Táncház* is very important because it provides new energy and audience for Hungarian folklorist movement, and it helps to reinforce a strong local identity.

In 1989 culture and folk traditions were finally free from ideological control. New perspectives and possibilities were opening to the movements and to the new cultural associations of minority, however new possibilities were soon followed by new problems. Könczei, Hungarian anthropologist and dance teacher, analyses these changes "therefore everything depended on political power, now all depend on the material possibility. Therefore the chance to get a room for the Táncház depended on power concession, today this depends from renting" (Könczei, 2004: 85).

The opening to capitalism connect the country with globalization and commercialization of culture that follow the invasion of Western musical products, many of which are of dubious quality but often treated as a fetish by a population who was keep out for many years.

The communist regime has repeatedly obstructed the movement of *Táncház*, but paradoxically had also helped it: television broadcasts were just two-three hours for day and most were ideological programs discredited by viewers; places of entertainment were scarce, and therefore young people, especially in the villages, if they wanted to play were forced to self-organize, take a musical instrument, dance and sing. All this has favoured the maintenance of traditions and the spread of the movement of *Táncház*.

In the post-1989 the folklore movement among the Hungarian community can resume with force, thanks to *Táncház* and to the formation of local folk groups. In 1990 there are three Hungarian folk groups recognized by the Romanian Ministry of Culture, all three in Szeklerland. These groups, such as the cultural institutions of the Szekler-Hungarian community are part of national culture, are tools used in order to defend the national identity thanks to the strong connection between traditional dances and local identity.

It is worth dwelling on *Hargita Nemzeti Székely Népi Együttes* (Harghita Popular National Szekler Ensemble) group from Miercurea Ciuc, whose name has already an evident and strong connection to Szekler identity. According to the Director András: "The name of the group is a profession of faith at the foot of the Harghita, the sacred mountain of the Szeklers, be Szekler nation and popular group. The word "Szekler" does not mean provincialism, but a tribute to a specificity part of the universal Hungarian culture" (Sarány, 2003: 7).

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Symbols and monuments

Common identity needs symbols, rituals, ceremonies and a collective memory with which not only constantly remembers the difference between 'us' and 'others', but also reaffirms and updates its specificity, its history and their common destiny. According to Smith, myths, values and symbols are the true heart of ethnicity, he calls that "the myth-symbol complex", a factor that guaranteed the unity of individuals in a nation.

The symbols have two main purposes: the conquest of space; and the function of remembering and transmitting the self-representation of the community, contributing the construction of a collective memory. The idea of the collective memory was developed by Halbwachs (Halbwachs, 2001), highlighting the relationship with the dominant forces of the society from which it is redefined.

The flag is one of the most important symbols of identity. Szeklers, as mentioned previously, in 1848 decided to join the Hungarian Nation and since then they started to use Hungarian symbols. These symbols were assimilated and were only used until the end of the nineties. Effectively, a Szekler flag didn't exist, or at least was not widespread in the society. In the 1990's, however, the most common Szekler flag was the red-black flag.

This "unofficial" flag was replaced in 2004 when the Szekler National Council, thanks to the work of the historian Kónya, created the "official" flag with blue-gold colour. In the following years the use of this flag started to spread, but the real success came only when the Covasna prefect in 2012 has banned the use of it on public buildings. As it usually happens, the power prohibitions have contributed to the spread of new symbols.

The monument in Lutiţa, a village near Odorheiu Secuiesc, built in memory of the 1848's Szekler Meeting and represents well the complexity of the formation of their identity. This monument was planned in 1973, granted by the communist regime thanks to the pressure of local politicians, and completed in 1980. But it wasn't opened because the regime had turned into nationalist ideology that closed the Hungarian commemorative space. So, the official opening was postponed after the downfall of the regime. The following year the strong tension within the Hungarian-Szekler community ended with the organization of two separate ceremonies, one on 12th October and the other one on 19th October.

The radical part of UDMR, linked with Szekler issues, announced their intention to dedicate the celebrations to the project of land autonomy. The idea came from Katona, a member of the Odorheiu Secuiesc section of UDMR, whose intention was to ask to the crowd the opinion about the declaration of territorial autonomy. This position caused strong arguments within UDMR, and the party eventually rejected this proposal. So, in 1991, two celebrations took place, one with the participation of UDMR and local institutions, the other one with Katona and the political group that claims for autonomy. The split within the party will resulted in the marginalization of the claim of territorial autonomy and the memory of the monument. In fact, this commemoration was "forgotten" in the following years. The monument is now seen in a detached manner as it represents a fracture, the first, within the Hungarian political community and, perhaps, also because the monument itself, the architectural style and its history, was linked with the socialist period. The monument has played an important role once more in the recent years, although the fracture of 1991 remains an indelible part of it. In 2003, during the celebrations, Markó, President of UDMR, remembered this split: "*The question is not one who is radical and who is moderate, the point is that we must be united and move forward together*" (Harghita Népe 17th October 2003).

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The political institutions

Political institutions have a key role in the process of construction national identity and the spreading of nationalism, understood as a political ideology. According to Smith, national identity is always linked to a political community it is its characterization (Koller, 2006: 88). The difference between ethnicity and nation is that nation is politicized. When an ethnic group becomes a nation equally we have a transition from a cultural phenomenon to a politician, in other words: "Every ethnic group that aspires to become a nation must become politicized [...] have to enter into the political ring" (Smith, 1992: 317). The British sociologist underlines the relationship between ethnicity and State, or the claim to have a slice of the state budget, posts in the bureaucracy and administrative structures. This goal forced the community to leave isolation and passivity marked in the past, in favour of political activism. Before 1989, the Szekler community could in some moments enjoy a political space. The RAU had created a "small Szekler world" where he had been able to develop a Hungarian political *élite*, who until the end of the seventies could play a role in the Communist Party. The total closure of the regime will come with the eighties. In the months immediately following the "revolution" the Hungarian community have high hopes and the UDMR, founded on 25th December 1989, aims to represent them. But the first months of "free Romania" were troubled: the transition highlighted its particularity by continuity with the past regime and by the nationalist tensions (Linz, Stepan, 2000). This situation allowed the former communist Iliescu to easily win the first two elections in 1990 and 1992.

The Hungarian community was shaken by the situation and at the first UDMR Congress in 1990 emerge the need to defend the democratic development in country, so the issues linked on minority rights went in second line. In this moment the Szekler question is extremely marginal, only two delegates talked about it (Varga, 1990: 67). The line of Domokos, President of the party, is clear: first support the stabilization of the country, no space for now to Szeklerland autonomy request.

The first great debate on the Szekler issue in UDMR takes place at the Braşov Congress in 1993 when the word "autonomy" was inserted in the final document, but without a clear definition, a task assigned to a workgroup. The group propose in 1995 an autonomy project draft written by Csapó and Katona. Nevertheless the project was sacrificed and marginalized by the leadership of the party when in 1996 was formed an alliance with the Romanian parties of Romanian Democratic Convention.

In these early years, three different souls emerge within the UDMR. The first supported by the diaspora, where Hungarians are in minority. This area is not interested to territorial autonomy and indeed the Szekler question is seen as a threat to their rights. The second is represented by the political leadership of Târgu Mureş. This is a moderate political group wanting especially to influence the government in Bucharest and to create a system of broad alliances with Romanians parties. For this claim autonomy represents a danger to the political goals proposed. The third area is supported by the more radical forces see in the autonomy of Szeklerland the objective of the party. This area is strong in the Szekler community, which with the first local elections of 1992 has a great number of mayors and important role in regional councils.

The gap between Szekler community and diaspora become larger in the following years. In Szeklerland the vast majority of municipal councils are in the hands of the Hungarians, like the management of local power. None of this can be said for the Hungarian diaspora where even the law on bilingualism isn't respected. However, these different souls are held together by the scare and threat from Romanian nationalist forces

and by the hope of improving the situation when the party will get on government. Nonetheless the 4-year government (1996-2000) prove extremely unsatisfaying. Despite the European integration process the government collects little results and even splits inside the party increase.

In the early 2000's the pressure of the "szekler group" increases: the conference series "*Quo vadis Szeklerland?*" and, the increasing fracture among the party brought the first serious scission, it born the EMNT [Hungarian National Council of Transylvania], follow by the *Székely Nemzeti Tanács* - Szekler National Council [SNC]. A political structure not affiliated to any party that proposed itself as representative of the interests of the all Szeklers, and pay attention in particular to the claim of autonomy. The official birth of SNC and the election of Csapó for president, occurs in Sfântu Gheorghe on 26th October 2003. The final declaration states: "Today's the Szeklers citizens, as inhabitants of Szeklerland declare their willingness to self-administration, the autonomy of Szeklerland, through the approval of the Autonomy Statute Law" (Harghita Népe 27th October 2003), the tools to achieve these goals are "those characteristic of the rule of law [...] the democratic process and the laws in force" (Harghita Népe 28th of October 2003). The SNC statement is made explicit on January 2004 with the approval of the Szeklerland Autonomy Statute. The same day SNC defined the Szekler national symbols, the first official codification of those symbols.

The birth of the SNC opened a new phase in both the claim of autonomy and the build of identity. This political institution did not become a political party, so it operated on a different level. The SNC proposed itself like a structure above the parties, open to different contributions, which has its purpose in the territorial autonomy and the defence of Szekler rights. In the following months, the Council worked to strengthen the Szekler identity and for the acquisition of a broad consensus in the claim of autonomy, both through the mobilization of the civil society, and contacts and pressures spilled into European Union and Romanian Parliament. Since 2004 the "Szekler issue" and the autonomist projects rose up in the public space. The Szekler community acquired greater importance in political scene, thanks to two factors: the demographic endurance, and the European integration process that gradually increased the power of local governments. These two elements, as a result of the birth of the SNC, contributed to the revitalization of the Szekler identity that entered into a new phase, which was characterized by activism and by the growing on political and social consensus around the claim for autonomy and cultural identity.

The UDMR, after the Congress of 2003, despite the outflow of the radical wing, was subjected to an internal review. A partial replacement of the leadership and the resumption of issues related to autonomy occurred. Inside the party emerged a group of young politicians. This new leadership forged a closer relationship with municipalities and counties that, as a result of the decentralization process initiated by European integration, gained more weight and institutional power. Mayors and Presidents of regions were co-participants in the process of strengthening local governments and defend Szekler's peculiarities.

Conclusion

In this paper we have analysed different junctures of the development of Szekler identity in post-1989 Romania: areas related to cultural and political aspects. The identity of Szeklers has been proved irregular, and in some case even troubled, pressed and influenced by intense political, social and cultural changes, and not least of powers and

state institutions. Romanian journalist Manolăchescu has written that the consciousness of Szekler identity manifest itself based on the interlocutor, namely: in Bucharest the Szeklers claimed themselves as Hungarians, in Budapest as Szeklers, in Brussels either of these two, depending on the situation (Manolăchescu, 2009). This statement confirms the idea of the American sociologist Brubaker that identity is a multiple and variable choice, depending on the context (Brubaker, 2006); especially for a peculiar identity like the Szekler, not completely established, but still present. The Szekler identity in fact stands on a middle floor, still under construction, located between a strong local context, primarily related to micro-social units (the village), and a national representation, projected to Hungary which remains a far homeland. Between these two levels there is a space, occupied by the Szekler identity, which had its reasons in medieval ages, but gradually lost its importance in the 19th century, to reappear after the First World War.

The Czech sociologist Hroch identified three phases in the emergence of Nations (Hroch, 1985). The first is characterized by the interest of small groups of intellectuals, involved to language, culture and history. The next phase is called "patriotic agitation" that means the activities of the first small organizations that recognize themselves part of the Nation. The third stage is defined by the emergence of a mass movement, when the national category starts to extend its influence to the majority of the population. This period, in my opinion, characterized the situation in Szeklerland after 2004 when the SNC was born. Since then the Szekler identity has undoubtedly strengthened.

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