

ETHNICITY AND SOCIETY
IN THE ZĂBALA VILLAGE (TRANSYLVANIA)*

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This article deals with the study of ethnicity in a Transylvanian village. Three local ethnic groups – Hungarian, Romanian, and Roma – are analyzed as to their demographic, genealogical, and cultural data. By relating his own field information to that gathered by his colleagues, the author tries to outline the current realities of the village cross-cultural cohabitation, as a community framework within which the ethnic identity is maintained and reified through kinship, territorial, economic, and ritual behavior.

The cultural cohabitation of different ethnic groups provides a framework for understanding not only ethnicity *per se*, but also the ways in which the various domains of social life – such as kinship, economy, and religion – may interrelate with one another through the ethnic (self)identification and differentiation. The question arises “what is the role the ethnic diversity plays within community as a whole – is it a means, or a scope, or both?” as outlined by Smith (1995: 728),

“There is no practical limit to the multiplication of cultural differentiae, or to rediscovery of ethno-histories and myths of ethnic descent [...]”

From another point of view, cultural diversity is seen as a “basis for human rights” to be preserved as any “endangered species and varieties of plants”:

“The maintenance and facilitation of population diversity – in plants, animals and humans in particular – increase the probability of species survival in the face of changing conditions. [...] The right of cultural transmission must also be guaranteed since it is the analog of genetic transmission.” (Barnett 1988: 24)

As an “ascribed” status, then, ethnicity seems to be rendered as an arena or background to enact (or to determine?) other statuses – because “achieved” – like

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