

RELIGION, SOCIAL DESCENT, AND CULTURAL MEMORY
IN A VILLAGE FROM MARAMUREȘ*

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The article examines the relation between the religious denomination, the social rank descent, and the cultural memory in the village community of Lăpuș (Maramureș county). The author argues the heuristic importance of correlating some socio-cultural aspects apparently isolated from one another, yet relevant in their interdependence for understanding the cultural pattern specific to the villagers of Lăpuș. Identifying the links between the above ethnographic aspects reflects a methodological approach representative for cultural anthropology, namely holism.

The village of Lăpuș (Maramureș county, Northern Romania) has a majority population of Romanian identity, comprising some 4,000 people, among which there also live a few Hungarian and Roma families. The Romanian ethnic majority also explains the current name of the village (= Lăpușul Românesc), as well as a historical distinction from "Lăpușul Unguresc" (nowadays, Târgul Lăpușului), an urban locality at 10 kilometers away from the Lăpuș village.

From a religious point of view, Lăpuș village is divided between two Orthodox and one Greek-Catholic parishes. There is between the two denominations a disproportion reflected in the fact that Orthodox believers hold the two main churches of their village, while the Catholics are only allowed to officiate in a older wooden church, marginally situated, and of small size. The Orthodox faith of the most of the present villagers of Lăpuș follows a forced spiritual conversion of the majority Greek-Catholic local population, obliged to accept Orthodoxy under the Romanian authorities' pressure, after 1948.

A biographic account. In the summer of 1998, I conducted a field research in the Lăpuș village. Linked to local kinship structures, my ethnographic interest was materialised in a genealogical inquiry of the lineages of Pop and Giurgiu

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