

Religious Socialization in Diosig, Western-Romania

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Abstract: Religious socialization is a process familiarizing children with the basics of religiosity, with prayers and ethical norms practiced within the Christian confessions. Our paper presents the peculiarities of religious socialization in Diosig, a village in Western-Romania, inhabited predominantly by ethnic Hungarian Calvinists. We present the historical alternations of the religious education and socialization, and the structural characteristics of the various time-periods in the last 70 years. The main purpose of the paper is to present alternations occurred in the religious socialization of the Calvinist community in Diosig since the middle of the past century until today. Therefore, we analyze the primary and the secondary spheres of religious socialization, such as the family, the school and the church, focusing on the elements playing a key role in the process of learning religious behavior, such as prayers, which define and consolidate the individuals' religiosity. The research extends over the ethnic Hungarian Calvinist community of the settlement. It turns out from the interviews that the family is the sphere of socialization where the most important norms, values and attitudes are passed on, and thus the family plays a vital role in the religiosity of the individuals. However, as time went by, the religious socialization went gradually out from the sphere of the family, and the school and the church became more and more important in this respect. The religious forms of knowledge, especially the prayers are today passed on primarily in the secondary sphere of socialization, in the frame of the religious education in kindergarten, school, and church-provided Bible lessons. Thus, these occasions mean the real beginning of the children's religious education.

Keywords: *religiosity; religious socialization; border region; Calvinist community.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *religiozitate; socializare religioasă; regiune frontieră; comunitate calvinistă.*

Introduction

Religion, together with other institutions, is part of the culture's wholeness (Radcliffe-Brown, 2004, 43), its norms' system is an important functional element within any community, as it determines and regulates the everyday life of the communities. Individuals share their own views on the world based on their own social and community

patterns, which serve as a model of behavior and help to interpret different life situations (Somlai, 1997, 70). Religion is a "bearer of peculiar values, a world of attitudes, a lifestyle, and requires religious knowledge" (Horváth-Szabó, 2007, 140). Religious socialization means education for the faith, a lifelong active and passive learning process (Radcliffe-Brown, 2004, 43), and it significantly determines not only the individuals'

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religiosity, but also their set of values and lifestyle.

The religiosity of the societies has been a major research topic among the social researchers in Central-Eastern Europe since the early 1990s (Podolinska, 2010). Our paper intends to contribute to the original research in the field about religious socialization by analyzing Diosig, a locality in Bihor County. We had the chance to carry out various field researches in the locality during the last years, which gave us the possibility to get familiar with the Calvinist community of Diosig. As we did not find any recently published studies about the religiosity of ethnic Hungarian Calvinist communities from Bihor county, we decided to research this issue. There are relevant research papers about the Calvinist communities in Eastern-Hungary, in Hajdu-Bihar county (Pusztai, 2005). The research results of Szilágyi and Tolnai (2009) with detailed data over the religiosity in the urban areas of Bihor are also available. Our research on the issue of religiosity in the rural Diosig is a complementary element to the collective research-based knowledge in regional context. As for the data collection, we used a qualitative method, the interview-based inquiry, as this method gives us the chance to get an in-depth view over the issue and it offers as well the chance of obtaining valid and authentic information with high relevance.

As it is a locality in the border region, with predominantly Hungarian ethnic population, we believe that the analysis of a community in Romania with such social and cultural characteristics can contribute to a better understanding of the religious socialization process in the multicultural and multiethnic areas of the country.

This paper focuses on the issue of the religious socialization. Firstly, we present the religious images and knowledge the Calvinist believers in Diosig used to have, and which were the motivations of the religious education. Secondly, we present the forms of this process: the socialization within the family, and the methods of the socialization and

religious knowledge-transfer in the frame of the religious classes organized by the school and the church since the middle of the 20th century until today.

Religious forms of imagination and knowledge

Every religion has a description and a system of views, and these do not always necessarily correspond to the core thoughts in theological terms. These forms of knowledge can be gained directly (by religious education) or indirectly (in worship, practice of religion) (Bartha, 2006, 22).

The rights and obligations that the Reformed Church requires from its followers are decisive in terms of the religious socialization, as these laws provide instructions for the members of the Church about how to behave and live as a Calvinist believer. These rights and duties define the norms of the community as they contain rules governing the social contacts and failure to comply with these requirements (especially in the past) has resulted in different sanctions. These regulations set by the Church in Diosig are binding obligations for all members of the community and therefore the various human actions are evaluated based on these rules. Nowadays, however, these rules tend to lose some of their importance.

The primary sphere of socialization regarding religious education is the family, and the secondary ones are the community, the church and the school. In each sphere, knowledge is transferred in both formal and informal ways, but the family is the environment in which the most important norms, values and attitudes are passed on.

Religious socialization within the family

In peasant societies, education was associated with everyday life (Vitányi, Sági and Lipp, 1982, 27–28). The children, already at

early ages participated to worshipping with their family, imitating parents and grandparents to learn about behavioral forms related to religion (Korherr, 2000, 105–111), customs, gestures (e.g. hunching of hands). These activities were observed and then reproduced by the child. This was followed by the teaching of religious knowledge and prayers (Prayer of the Evening, Lord's Prayer "Apostles' Creed"), which is one of the most important elements of the religious socialization. Prayer is a means of communication with God, which is the religious obligation of the believer, and a precondition for Christian life.

There are several prayer definitions. According to Heiler, prayer is free, spontaneous, and has a living connection to God (Heiler, 1932, 16). Marcel Mauss writes that prayer is "an oral religious ceremony which is directly focused at sacred things" (Mauss, 1971, 160). Vilmos Tánzos defines prayers as ritualized texts (Tánzos, 2001, 240).

Usually, peasant societies associated closely prayers with daily religious practice. They were traditionally held in the morning, at noon and in the evening (Bartha, 2006, 51), and they could take place before and after meals, as well. There were also other prayers related to daily routines and different life situations and crises (Bartha, 2006, 23). As for their categorization, we can observe help-asking prayers (which are related to daily tasks), thanksgiving (after the successful completion of the day) and self-examination-confessional prayers (Dömötör, 1990, 476) which are always closely related to everyday problems (Bartha, 2006, 67).

Religious education

The secondary socialization sphere is the school. In the case of religious socialization, this means religious classes and preparation for confirmation.

Miklós Tomka writes that religion is "a part of culture, a part of human history, a

code system, knowledge, and, on the other hand, a characteristic world-interpretation, value system, faith, and institutional order of a particular community. The first half is public treasure and the other half is an internal issue of the believers. The first half needs to be taught. Thus, it should be part of any school education." (Tomka, 1992, 21)

In the 19th and 20th centuries, teaching in schools became increasingly widespread, offering thus the peasantry a minimum of religious knowledge (Bartha, 2006, 22). These ecclesiastical schools existed until the school reform occurred in the autumn of 1948, when the denominational schools were nationalized. At that time, the cantor became a state teacher.

All kinds of religion-related activities were suspended in schools and only after the regime-change religion turned into an optional subject for the first time, and thereafter the curriculum became mandatory as of the school year 1998–1999. Since 2016, it is not obligatory, but parents can request religious education. When the religious education was requested at school, the reasons were mainly: the religiosity of parents, the sympathy for a religious teacher and the assumption that the child learns positive things during religion classes (Kustán Magyari, 2015; Bodó, 2015).

Another important element of the religious educational offer is the one provided by the local church. This includes Bible classes and various occasions when the religious socialization occurred in the frame of the church and its directly connected institutions.

The characteristics of the location

The researched settlement is Diosig, a locality within the Bihor county in Romania, in the southern part of the so called "Valea Ierului" (Hungarian: Érmellék) micro-region, along the DN19 road and along the E 671 Oradea-Satu Mare railway line. The locality

had a number of 6.816 inhabitants on the 2011 census being characterized by religious diversity. The religious structure shows the following patterns: 1.385 Orthodox, 750 Roman Catholics, 341 Pentecostals, 303 Adventists, 110 Baptists, and 62 Greek Catholics.

The denominational affiliation of Diosig is related to nationalities, according to which the ethnic Hungarians belong to the Reformed Calvinist Church, the Roman Catholic and the Baptist Church, while the Orthodox and Pentecostal are predominantly ethnic Romanians. Concerning the religious affiliation of Roma population, some are members of the Adventist Church, some are members of the Reformed Church but a large share does not belong to any church. Our current research focused only on the Hungarian-speaking inhabitants of Diosig, belonging to the Reformed (Calvinist) Church.

The purpose of the research

The aim of the research is to present the changes in religious socialization and to describe its forms occurring in the family. We also intend to present the institutionalized processes within the Calvinist community in Diosig. These are all the formal processes providing for religious education either at school, or by the church. Our research intends to complement the findings of Szilágyi and Tolnai (2009) about the religious socialization of the Calvinist communities in urban areas in Bihor county, and they can also serve as a basis of comparison with the results of Pusztai (2005) who carried out researches in Calvinist communities in Hungary. Our research will point out the peculiarities of the religious socialization in a rural locality with Hungarian Calvinist majority that is framed into the Romanian educational administration. The research also focuses on the learning process of the religious behavior, through internalization of norms, habits and gestures,

and on the importance of the religious education, which consolidates the individuals' religiosity.

Methodology

During the research, we intended to discover not only the typical processes of the present, but also the important features of the past, mainly because it became clear to us that this is how we can best understand today's religiosity. Therefore, we thought it was necessary to realize interviews, as thus we were able to get deeper knowledge about the subject.

We applied the expert sampling according to which the researchers select the responders according to their own judgment and the purpose of the examination (Babbie, 2001, 206) and later on, the snowball method. Snowball sampling is a way to gain an ever-increasing number of observation patterns by asking the interviewees to contact other people who are competent on the subject (Babbie, 2001, 206–207). According to our judgement, our research was best supported by these data collection techniques.

As for the description of the sample, the interviews were carried out with all inhabitants of Diosig who were ethnic Hungarians, and belonging to the Calvinist denomination. We had 44 interviewees, and their selection was based on expert sampling and as a secondary method, we applied snowball sampling as well to broaden the circle of interviewed persons. The interviews took place in the interviewees' homes, between January 2016 and May 2017.

When it came to the selection of the interviewees, we were favored by the fact that the first author of this paper, Timea Tolnai was brought up in Diosig, she was a member of the researched Calvinist community. By having spent a significant part of her life there, she was familiar with most of the discussed topics, the antecedents of these, and

with the structures revealed during the interviews, such as the family relations, the events happening in the community. She also knew the persons we interviewed. Most of the interviews were carried out with Calvinist believers and active members of the local Calvinist community in Diosig.

Research results

The teaching of the prayers

By learning basic prayers, the child is attached to the religious life of the community (Tánczos, 2001, 242). Prayers also increase religious knowledge and have a great influence on the child's religious consciousness. During the prayers, the children learn about the various supernatural beings (God, Jesus, etc.), their good and harmful intentions, and thus they learn about the positive and negative sanctions of the various acts. Thus, various social values and norms are passed on in the childhood. The children learn that the greatest sin that a man can commit is murdering his fellow human being, next to theft, adultery, physical abuse, alcoholism.

While learning prayers, they also take over the faith set in the prayer, and trust that their prayer will be listened to, and the problems can be solved or alleviated.

I'm not overbearing, but believe me I realized that many times when there was a problem, I prayed, I thought, my God help me, so that I can get easier through the problems, whatever they are (Sz. I.-73).

Prayers are not always heard, and if the request is not fulfilled, it is believed that God had different plans.

Faith in the reception of the prayers by God is equally present among children and adults. The purpose of the prayers is generally to reduce fear and to seek relief from it, requesting help, as they think that the prayer influences everyday life and its events (Heiler, 1932, 16–17; Tánczos, 2001, 235).

(...) if I ask a child "have you experienced the healing power of God?" "Yes, I have." "When and where?" And, then he says we did not actually go to the dentist, but I just prayed and my toothache went away, I went to bed praying, I fell asleep, and I know that God healed. Here comes the feedback where the child is sure that his prayer will be heard. There are contrary examples because God tests our loyalty with different things, but it is important for the children to feel that they know what they are doing or what they feel (N.I. – 46).

The prayers are invoked either in silence or said loudly. Prayers in silence are typical to the adults, while the children tend to say them aloud, proving the parents and grandparents that they are praying indeed.

Religious socialization within the family

Religious knowledge gained in childhood in Diosig is partly passed on by the parents and grandparents to the children. The religion of today's grandparents was cultivated by the family, and further developed by cantors, and pastors. It was important for the child to participate regularly to worships, but at home they also paid great attention to faith teaching as the father or mother took the Bible and read the Bible together with the congregated family. In 1885, János Molnár was pleased to note that there were families of that time preserving this habit (Molnár, 1885, 61). There were significant differences between the families in terms of religious socialization in their homes. In intellectual families, religious education was passed on at home, as parents and grandparents talked at home with children about God, taught them to pray. However, peasant families typically taught only prayers to the children, with no particular attention being given to the transfer of religious knowledge. At that time, even the transfer of knowledge happened verbally, which was mainly because a

larger share of peasant families were characterized by illiteracy. Prayers were learned from parents and grandparents, especially those that could not be heard during worships (e.g. evening prayers).

We learned from our grandmother how to pray, as we were very young. (...) She taught us to pray. The Lord's Prayer, which we knew by heart at a young age, I liked it so much that I knew it when we went to the church (K.L. – 63).

Today's grandparents became socialized in the folk religiosity, the next generation was socialized in communism, they were now literate, and hence, their religious socialization was different compared to the socialization of their parents. These changes have transformed the local religiosity. Many were afraid to give their children religious education out of fearing the communist system, and many did not even pray, so religious education was now done by the pastor and the cantor.

We did not learn much from the parents, they did not give us any kind of religious education, because it was not allowed. It was feared that the child might say somewhere that he knows something about prayers or some such similar things. What I know, prayers, were taught by reverend Os-váth (Sz.G. – 64).

Since religion was partly put in the background and somewhat restricted during the communist era (Gog, 2007, 52–53), it was largely skipped in the life of the intellectuals, so even though their parents received religious education, this was not present in their own lives. Nearly, only the peasantry was said to have practiced religion but leaving aside prayers, it was only an insignificant part of their socialization, so they could only transmit this limited knowledge to the following generations. Many have reported this and, in particular, that the transfer of religious knowledge was not part of their lives, as they did not have access to it even though they were regular church attendants. This led

to the fact that the acquisition of religious knowledge was no longer closely related to religious life. Many religious persons reported that they lacked basic religious knowledge (e.g. stories related to religious feasts, the reasons why we celebrate, etc.). Moreover, grandparents from peasant families say that today's younger generation has far more religious knowledge than they did during their young years.

We can affirm that religious socialization gets slowly out of the range of the family, and the school increasingly takes on this role. Even among the religious families, it is still natural for them to give their children religious knowledge, especially prayers, but there are always fewer such parents and grandparents. Religious knowledge and prayers are taught by the majority of children in kindergarten or religious school classes.

Not all Hungarian children get religious education at home. When they first came, they were so glad they learned to pray. It is not natural for every child to know from at home the Lord's Prayer, or to know a morning prayer or evening prayer. In my estimation, maybe every class has about 10% of those who can pray. Unfortunately, their parents belong to the generation that never learned formally religion, did not attend church, and had no confirmation obligation (N. I. – 46).

In the case of religious socialization, the existence of a religious value system, living a religious life can be overtaken by the following generation, but so can be the lack of it overtaken too (Horváth-Szabó, 2007, 141). If religious education is omitted, if it is not "embedded" in the child, the belief is shaken and challenged:

I also took the kids to a place where they could build in themselves some spiritual structures. We visited all monasteries in Moldova and participated to rituals when they prayed for rain, and the children had changed so much that when we came back (there was a great drought then) and we came to the Bicz Strait, the rain fell down.

They said you saw that it was efficient to pray for rain because the rain came in. However, the skeptical attitude was already easy to notice in this early age too. One of the children noted that someone must have heard at the radio about the weather forecast and that it was going to rain and that's why the mass was planned for that time (N.K. – 74).

Religious education in the school

From the middle of the 18th century, we find records of the school life in Diosig. At that time, there was a boys' and a girls' school in the locality where cantors practiced religious education (Molnár, 1885, 229–231). These ecclesiastical schools were organic elements of the religious education until the school reform occurred in the autumn of 1948, when the denominational schools were nationalized. At that time, as consequence, the cantor became a state teacher.

After the change of regime, however, there was a lack of trained religion teachers, therefore, in Diosig, the religious education at school was the duty of the local priest, and then trained religious teachers took over the place of the priest in the school.

Today, religious classes are available separately for all denominations. Romanian children can choose Orthodox classes, and Hungarian children have the possibility to choose either Calvinist or Catholic religious education. Since it is a locality with a Calvinist majority, each class has a separate religion lesson. Catholic children also attend reformed education – as they have very few children, so in elementary classes, respectively forms 1–4 and in lower secondary school, that is the 5–8 classes, children learn in 1–1 groups, since Catholic religion is at a different time after the regular classes, Calvinist religion teaching is incorporated into the timetable between usual classes. Adventist, Baptist and unbaptized children are also involved in the Calvinist religious teaching.

According to the religion teacher, very few children receive religious education at home. There is a small proportion in the case of Hungarian families as well, and in Roma families' it is not characteristic at all, these children do not know either religious stories or prayers.

During the religion classes, they learn the prayers considered important in the Calvinist religion. In the primary education, the morning and evening prayers and prayers before and after meals are also taught. In primary school, they learn the Lord's Prayers and the Apostle's Creed (though they often know it much sooner, since they can hear these prayers at a younger age). Whether these prayers are used depends only on the parent or grandparent praying with the child, because they proved to be few, unless the religion teacher encouraged their home prayer.

We also found cases where the parent prevented the child from being educated this way and the child was not allowed to attend religious classes.

There was a kid who told me, that, I'd like you to pray, so that my mother would let me attend the religion class on Saturday. I promised him to pray and maybe once or twice he was allowed to attend, and afterwards he just did not come. His mother told him, you go to school every day, rest, watch the tales. This is not general, but there are also cases like this (N.I. – 46).

Religious education organized in the frame of the Church

János Molnár describes in the late 1800s that religious knowledge transfer began in childhood. There has been Bible-explanation outside the school, which attracted an increasing number of listeners. (Molnár, 1885, 61–62). These exist even today, and even during the communist era, they held religion lessons and pots, which were very popular among children.

We really liked to attend Bible classes, Kalman Fias generated for us electricity, we really enjoyed when we held each other's hand, and the first and last one in the row got hit by the electricity, which only ran through on the rest of us (...). It was the highlight of the class for us, we used to say, that "Father, let the electricity hit us". We liked it very much (N.K.).

The confirmation education was carried out by the pastor. In case that two pastors were serving in the settlement, it was always the task of the second priest to teach there. After the change of regime, the religion lessons were held by the pastor, later by the religion teacher, because the pastor's special duties were extended to his work. Nowadays, the pastor also holds religion lessons and pre-ordination classes. Today, the religion lessons of the church are, among others, designed to prepare children and young people in time for church life.

Summary

The main purpose of our paper was to present the alternations that occurred in the process of religious socialization within the Calvinist community of Diosig. We succeeded in achieving this goal, as we could get an in-depth view over the alternations of the religious socialization in the researched community. In order to put the issue into a proper context, we had an overlook across the primary and secondary socialization spheres,

such as family, school and church. We also focused on the prayers that have a key role in the learning process of religious behavior and on other forms of social interaction, which determine and substantiate the religiosity of the individuals.

The family is the socialization sphere in which the most important norms, values and attitudes are passed on, thus determining whether the child would be religious or not as a future adult. After all, it can be affirmed that the religious socialization has gradually become more sporadic in the families, while school and church increasingly tend to assume this role in a formal and regular way. Even among the religious families, it is still obvious to them to pass on to their children religious knowledge, especially prayers, but fewer grandparents or parents who do so. Religious knowledge and prayers are taught for the majority of children in kindergarten or in religion classes in the school. However, the religious education provided by the school and the church alone does not seem to be enough for the individual to develop a religious life unless it is associated with the values and norms taken from socialization at home.

As for the limits of the research, we should mention that the research has been carried out only on a single ethnical and confessional community, on the Hungarian Calvinist community of Diosig. We intend to realize a similar research with the same methodology on the other confessional groups present in Diosig.

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