Review of the Volume "Identitate și alteritate. studiu asupra ceangăilor din moldova" [Identity and Otherness. Study on the Csangos from Moldova], Author: Cătălin George Fedor, Lumen Publishing House, 2019

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Abstract: The book „Identitate și alteritate. Studiu asupra ceangăilor din Moldova” [Identity and Otherness. Study on the Csangos from Moldova] was published in Iași in 2019, by Lumen Publishing House, and was written by Cătălin George Fedor, who has a PhD in philosophy from “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași and was a postdoctoral researcher in the field of sociology / social and cultural anthropology at same university. In 2016, this research represented the author's doctoral thesis, which he later published as a volume. This book has a pronounced sociological character, and in the 350 pages of the volume the author insists on solving a current problem, which we still encounter in some areas of Moldova even in 2021, namely: the lack of concrete self-identification of Catholics in Moldova, Romania.

Keywords: *Identity; otherness; Csangos; Cătălin George Fedor.*

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The Csangos have their roots in Romania since the time of the ruler Alexander the Good, not being a newly appeared people, in order to make it possible claim that they dilute the identity of the Romanian population. The villages where the subjects who contributed to this research live are: Săbăoani and Gherăești from Neamț County, respectively Prăjești and Faraoani from Bacău County.

The main objective of the research was to identify the ethnic identity of the Catholic population in the villages of central Moldova, but also to find out how they preserve their traditions and customs, as well as how they manage to build their cultural identity. The main goal of the study made by Cătălin George Fedor (2019) was to establish the origin and diversification of Catholics who settled in the villages from the central area of Moldova and to discover the roots of the Csangos in this area.

One aspect of this sociological study is that we still face discrimination and often choose to label those who are different from us. For example, according to the study, the Csangos were characterized as a corrupt and proud people, but at the same time the world considers them workers, religious, conservatives of traditions and honest. Romanians are categorized as dishonest and mischievous, but also hardworking, hospitable and faithful. The Roma have been identified as criminals, socially unproductive and with disturbing behavior in the community, but at the same time they are united people and they stick to their traditions. Hungarians have been labeled as extremely nationalist, but they are also united, supportive and hardworking. However, if you read the book, you will notice that a large amount of data (information) has been collected, therefore many more attributes have been identified than those previously synthesized. Also, through these labels, Fedor (2019) managed to show us that certain behaviors are closely related and determined by the social environment in which we live.

Although due to the sociological terms used, the book is quite difficult to access for people who do not have a minimum of knowledge in the field of sociology, the study is based on both a qualitative and a quantitative research, which makes the results concrete and trustworthy. The quantitative research was conducted by calculating social distance indices (IDS), social contact indices (ICS) and qualitative social contact indices (ICCS). The qualitative research was carried out by applying 12 comprehensive interviews (3 were applied in each village) and a focus group. The trust given by the author to the participants is noticeable, as they are the only source of information, without permitting external sources to influence

in any way the research results. Thus, through the approached topic, the author managed to suggest solutions to current problems.

The target group of the study consisted of 12 elderly people, women and men, aged between 75 and 92 years, living in the villages of Săbăoani, Gherăești, Prăjești and Faraoani. The qualitative analysis presents information on ethnic conflicts, the history of villages, the importance of social institutions, the preservation of traditions through two major dimensions, namely "ethnic issues" and "local specificity". In order to have access to as much information as possible, these dimensions, in turn, are divided into: "memory of the inhabitants regarding the history of the village and the community", "ethnic self-identification", "controversies related to the ethnic origin of communities", "interethnic relations between Romanians-Hungarians-Csangos-Romas-others"; respectively "local traditions and specifics", "the role of the church and other institutions for the community", "preserving local identity" and a "glimpse into the future" (Fedor, 2019).

After analyzing the answers to the questions in the interview, it was found that some of the interviewed Csangos still do not know their roots, and because of not knowing exactly where they come from, they consider themselves Romanians. Also, in another village, the inhabitants are aware that they have some foreign influences regarding their language, calling it "a contaminated Romanian". In another case, some consider that since the formation of the village they were predominantly Catholic, therefore the Orthodox are the minority in that territory, while others accept their condition and are aware that they have something specific, that makes them different, through some characteristics, from Romanians, as well as from Hungarians or Roma.

Although the vast majority identify as Romanians, without being different from ethnic Romanians by behavior or other major characteristics, some unexplained elements that remain after we are presented with the results of the research makes us curious and keeps us captive in this story of the Csangos until the future finding of clearer results, perhaps in the next volume, that Cătălin George Fedor wants to write. He wishes not to abandon the research until he has found all the information he wants in order to fully fulfil the purpose and objectives clearly set out at the beginning of the research.

In my opinion, this book arouses the interest of people passionate about sociology. I also recommend it with confidence to all readers who want to better know the origins of the Csangos. As Nicolae Iorga used to say, "a people that does not know its history and its heroes is like a child that

does not know their parents". I think we should all know our origins, traditions and uniqueness, along with every ethnic group in the country.

References

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