
CULTURAL AND CONFSSIONAL SPECIFICS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES OF SLOVAKIA AS A PART OF IDENTITY EXAMPLES OF URBAN AND RURAL ENVIRONMENT

**Jolana Darulová^{1*}, Katarína Košťalová¹ and
Katarína Slobodová Nováková²**

¹ *Matej Bel University, Tajovského 40, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovakia*

² *University of SS. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Nam. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovakia*

(Received 12 June 2018, revised 3 July 2018)

Abstract

The study points to the cultural and confessional specificities of national minorities in Slovakia. It focuses on theoretical backgrounds - the concepts and documents that determine the existence of national minorities. Emphasis is placed on selected concepts of identity. The authors based the study on the assumption that confessional affiliation has a great importance for the identity of national minorities. It is related to cultural identity, forms the core of minority life and constitutes the basis of preservation of cultural heritage. Confirmation of the theoretical backgrounds is documented by selected current forms of presentations of cultural specifics of national minorities in urban and rural environment.

Keywords: identity, cultural heritage, confession, types, presentations

1. Introduction

The aim of the study is to point out the cultural and confessional specificities of national minorities in Slovakia in the context of the theoretical backgrounds of national minorities and identity. The authors focus on documents, materials and declarations which define the concepts and status of national minorities and selected concepts of identity within the European Union. At the same time, they apply selected principles to Slovakia with its multicultural and multi-ethnic traditions. The research is also focused on forms of presentation of cultural specifics of national minorities in the context of maintaining identity and values of cultural heritage.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 10 November 1994 and it entered into force on 1 February 1998. It is one of the

*E-mail: jolana.darulova@umb.sk

most comprehensive conventions designed to protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. The parties of this convention undertake to support the full and effective equality of persons belonging to national minorities in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, together with conditions allowing them to express, protect and develop their culture and identity. The provisions of the Framework Convention cover a wide range of issues, including:

- prohibition of discrimination;
- supporting effective equality;
- support for conditions that include preservation and development of culture, religion, language and traditions;
- freedom of assembly, association, expression, thinking, conscience and religion;
- access to and use of the media;
- freedom of language (use of minority language in private and public sectors);
- education and teaching in a minority language;
- participation in economic, cultural, social and public life;
- prohibition of violent assimilation [*The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/home>].

The Framework Convention does not contain a definition of the term ‘national minority’ because there is no general definition to be agreed upon by all member states of Council of Europe. From the legal point of view, the definition of belonging to national minority is one of the most complex issues of legal protection of minorities. It is up to a particular state policy to deal with this issue.

In Slovakia, as nationalities are considered such ethnic groups to which a majority nation, with whom they live in a common state, provides a political and legal position in order to preserve their ethnic character as well as their cultural and ethnic self-realization. Under Article 34 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, everyone has the right to freely decide their nationality and the Constitution also guarantees the rights of national minorities. After 1989 (especially after 1993, when a separate Slovak Republic emerged), the change in socio-political conditions created appropriate climate and more sophisticated conditions for the realization of needs and requirements of national minorities.

At the international level, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on cultural diversity was adopted in 2001. On the one hand, it promotes the preservation of cultural diversity as a living and, therefore, renewing treasure that we should not perceive as a changeless heritage but as a process for human survival; on the other hand, it prevents segregation and fundamentalism. The Declaration also states that every individual must recognize not only the differences in all their forms but also the plurality of their own identity in plural society. The first part of the Declaration, called ‘Identity, Diversity and Pluralism’, states that culture has different forms in time and space, and this diversity is expressed by the

originality and plurality of identities of characterizing groups and societies that make up humanity.

The protection of cultural diversity is also an ethical necessity because it includes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular rights belonging to minorities and the rights of indigenous peoples [1].

2. Selected concepts of identity in the context of presentation of the cultural heritage of national minorities

Scientific literature offers multiple approaches to study an identity. Cultural identity is a complex of features characterizing the identity and diversity of cultures, their mutual influences and their influence on the formation of socio-cultural structures. It represents a circuit of securities, a base for communication and an offer for collaboration. Conversely, loss of identity always means the extinction of the community. The concept of identity evolved in the context of culture in the 1990s. It concerns cultural descriptions of people with whom they are emotionally identified, phenomena of similarity and difference. It is basically the cultural construct. Identity is usually characterized as a discourse practice, which names what it produces with the help of references to norms, conventions and their repetition. As a rule, it refers to the realities of reality - in other words, it is a discursive outlook. On the other hand, the concept of identity is associated with the emotional inner person - an essential concept of an entity, developed particularly in psychology, social psychology. Both approaches, however, often refer to the cultural environment in which a person builds identity, which implies that identity is not a universal phenomenon but a phenomenon linked to culture. It is the cultural experience that determines 'I' identity, or 'essence of me', expressed through representations that we and others can understand. Identity - as an essence, refers to taste, conviction, attitude and lifestyle. The anti-essentialist concept argues that identity is the process of 'becoming', and it is made up of elements of similarities and differences [2].

Formation of identity begins in the process of enculturation, specifically in socialization. V. Bacova, who further developed the identity in social psychology, distinguishes the primordial and instrumental basis of identity. The primordial creates what comes from the social existence of a human being: family relations, mother tongue, neighbours, people of the same nation and race, and customs and traditions. The instrumental is given by person's belonging to the communities that bring benefits, and economic and political advantages [3].

Each cultural identity should have a certain core that might be conscious of its own historicity and authenticity. In the ethnological dimension it is also the issue of our own cultural heritage. It is an important source of identity and what distinguishes one social group from another. It is often subjective because it is closely associated with collective memory that preserves the social and cultural identity of a given group through various ritualized opportunities [4].

The diversity of cultures and cultural heritage is an irreplaceable intellectual and spiritual richness of humanity that should be actively promoted as a major aspect of human development. However, if the cultural heritage in general, as well as the cultural heritage of national minorities, does not have a real value for people to meet their needs, it will naturally disappear. Cultural identity as the core of minority life is the basis for preservation of cultural heritage. The authenticity of cultural resources lies in identifying, evaluating and interpreting their values. In the context of historicity, however, it may represent a diverse, often contradictory selection and reflection of myths, historical events, and ancestors. Modern theories state that ethnicity, race and nationality exist only in our understanding, interpretation, representation, categorization and identification, that is, they are not real things in the world, but only a perspective of the world view [5].

L. Lenovsky drew attention to the fact that identity can become a commodity and provides several examples of identity management (Nazi states during the Second World War, the European Union at present). The applied identity management is also realized in practice by educational institutions (examples of multicultural education), supporting grants for the preservation and development of the culture of national minorities with a focus on selected socio-cultural phenomena, and finally, the media promotion of memorial events, religious holidays, cultural events, culinary traditions and so on [6].

3. National minorities of Slovakia - cultural and confessional determinants

In terms of the historical and cultural context, Slovakia has encoded multicultural and multi-ethnic coordinates that can be perceived as our tradition and they are part of our cultural heritage. Slovakia has been the scene of the migration of several ethnic groups that have run through it during history and the place of colonization of various ethnicities which settled permanently in its territory [7, 8]. They have left a significant trace not only on the demographic characteristics but also on the settlement of the landscape and the nature of the diverse cultural heritage phenomena.

The southern part of the country, neighbouring the Hungarian ethnic group, had the character of an ethnically mixed territory with the Slovak and Hungarian inhabitants since the 10th century. Ethnically diverse is also the eastern and north-eastern part, where a mixture with Slovak, Rusyn and Ukrainian populations was created. Eastern Slovakia has the most numerous Romani population in the country, which was mentioned for the first time in 1322. German, partly Italian, French and Czech settlers who were the holders of progressive economic and social relations also took part in the cultural development of eastern Slovakia. The mountainous part was colonized by Gorals, Rusyns and Ukrainians [9]. Northern and central Slovakia retained predominantly Slovak identity, with the exception of the Hauerland settlement area (the German population of Kremnica surroundings, village Nitrianske Pravno). Western Slovakia is almost homogeneously Slovak, despite many

migratory waves - Croatians, Habans - sect of Anabaptists, Huncokars [10]. With its geographic position as well as administratively-managing importance, Bratislava was always a multicultural and multiethnic city, in which trilingualism (Hungarian, German and Slovak language) was common. Several Slovak towns were also multilingual (Kosice, Levoca, Kremnica).

The picture of the ethnic structure of the inhabitants living on the territory of Slovakia provides regular censuses from the Austro-Hungarian period. Based on the last population census in 2011, 5 397 036 inhabitants lived in Slovakia. Inhabitants of Slovak nationality: 80.7%, Hungarian 8.5%, Romani 2.0%, Rusynian 0.6%, Czech 0.6%, Ukrainian 0.1%, German 0, 1%, only 631 of the Jewish population [Statistical Office of the SR, <https://census2011.statistics.sk/tabulky.html>].

The confessional identity has a significant importance for the identity of national minorities. Religious identity is the result of accepting the content of a particular religion and it means integration into a particular religious community [11, 12]. Slovakia is one of the European countries that stretch the dividing line between Western and Eastern religious rites. Despite the small size of Slovakia, there are few such regions where the population would be confessional homogeneous. Until the Second World War, members of at least three different confessions lived in each region. The impact of religion on everyday culture interferes with the whole spectrum of social activities, the individual and the whole. The religiosity of the population as a social phenomenon influenced the elements of material, spiritual and social culture, folklore, but it is also possible to illustrate the difference in value systems [13].

Under the confessionalism, we understand membership in the Church, the relationship of persons to Churches and religious organizations. Religiosity is the attitude of a person to a certain reality that is considered to be truly existent, it is located outside individual and it is assumed that one does not have direct influence on it. At the same time, this reality essentially determines person's life and existence; it is the source of authority and norms [14]. Religiosity includes all ideological constructs that form the basis of personal identity and a certain mode of action.

The dominant Church in Slovakia is the Roman Catholic 62%, according to the last census. Other prominent figures include the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession 5.9%, the Greek-Catholic Church 3.8% [Statistical Office of the SR, <https://census2011.statistics.sk/tabulky.html>].

In the historical context, the Evangelicals were ethnically partially bound to the Germans, Hungarians, and especially Czechs. The Reformed Church - Calvinists were the most numerous in regions inhabited by Hungarian ethnicity. As opposed to Catholics, Evangelicals were characterized by simplicity and rationality in everyday culture reflected in less spectacular feasts, unrecognizable saints' worship, lesser decoration of interiors and clothing, fewer children, and higher education. Fewer visits to churches and greater concluding of religious life into family life led to the atheism of part of the Evangelical population in the last decades of the 20th century. In traditional culture, the

pragmatic approach of Calvin appeared in a lesser celebration of holidays, a less varied dress decorated with valuable jewellery, endogamy, one-child policy and a higher social status [15-18]. The Orthodox Church in Slovakia initially bound itself primarily to the Rusyn-Ukrainian ethnic group. The period of recatholization also marked this confession, which resulted in the establishment of the Greek-Catholic Church. From the cultural point of view, the influence of the churches of the Eastern Rite was reflected mainly in spiritual culture (Gregorian choral influenced by a vigorous culture), culinary ceremonial culture, sacral structures and fine arts [19].

4. Forms of presentations of cultural specifics of national minorities in urban and rural areas

Educational facilities, memorial institutions and cultural institutions create institutional basis. In particular, museums of national minorities organized by the Slovak National Museum (SNM) belong to memorial institutions.

At present the following specialized museums forms their structure: SNM - Museum of Culture of Hungarians in Slovakia in Bratislava (since 2002), SNM - Museum of Culture of the Carpathian Germans in Bratislava (since 1997), SNM - Museum of Roma Culture in Slovakia in Martin (since 2004), SNM - Museum of Jewish Culture in Bratislava (since 1994), SNM - Museum of Ukrainian Culture in Svidnik (since 1956), SNM - Museum of Rusyn Culture in Presov (since 2006), SNM - Museum of Croatian Culture in Slovakia in Devinska Nova Ves (since 2006), SNM - Museum of Culture of Bohemia in Slovakia in Martin (since 2004). The activities of museums are connected with scientific, presentation, editorial and project practices.

The culture of national minorities is supported by a variety of presentation, science-popular and educational activities that can be grouped into several thematic areas. The popular forms of presentation include the phenomenon of traditional culture, which forms the core of the cultural heritage [20, 21]. Traditional culture, as part of organized socio-cultural events, as well as informal meetings, is increasingly becoming a means of communicating and presenting local, regional and ethnic traits [22]. These include, in particular, folklore festivals (for example, Cultural Festivities of Hungarians living in Slovakia, Croatian Culture Festival, Rusyn-Ukrainian Culture Festivities), cultural culinary presentations and craft traditions. Some national minorities are dedicated to specific cultural events, such as the Days of German Culture - the Spis German cultures, the Day of Czech culture and the Week of Romani culture. Many events are associated with significant historical milestones in the lives of national minorities. An example is the Jewish and Romani holocaust, whose purpose is to create and present a picture of events that have been tabooed for decades. Some national minorities have their theater scenes (Jókai's Theater in Komarno and Thalia Theater in Kosice, Alexandr Duchnovic Theater in Presov, Romathan in Kosice), professional artistic ensembles (Young Hearts - Ifju Szivek in Bratislava, Poddukel Artistic Folklore Ensemble in Presov). The

original appearance in the folk art of the Rusyn-Ukrainians are icons forming part of the interiors of wooden churches (cerkvi), four of which were included in the UNESCO list in 2008. Radio and Television of Slovakia provides national broadcasting in the Roma, Hungarian, Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, Polish and German languages.

5. Conclusion

The grammar of culture for ethnology is the recognition of specificities of the way of life of individual national minorities. This grammar is modified under the influence of other determinants into a number of variants of one, diverse culture of Slovakia. Finally, we would like to emphasize that the selected forms of presentation of the cultural specifics of national minorities in the urban and rural environment are aimed at maintaining and developing identity and traditions. The language of national minorities freely applied in the personal, official and liturgical spheres remains the basic condition. Stated examples document the current Slovak multicultural environment and intercultural dialogue, creating a space for recognition, understanding and acceptance of different cultures. Let's hope that these 'experiences' with the historical national minorities Slovakia will also apply in the context of new migration waves.

Acknowledgement

This research paper was supported by the grant VEGA1/0074/16 'Slovak city in the 21st century in the context of latest development trends: Ethnological perspective'.

References

- [1] J. Hamar, *Tradičná a ľudová kultúra v dokumentoch UNESCO*, Slovenské centrum pre tradičnú kultúru, Bratislava, 2007, 138.
- [2] C. Barker, *Slovník kulturních studií*, Portál, Praha, 2006, 206.
- [3] V. Bačová, *Etnická identita a historické zmeny: Výskum obyvateľov vybraných obcí Slovenska*, Veda, Bratislava, 1996, 196.
- [4] J. Bessière, *Sociologia Ruralis*, **38(1)** (1998) 21-34.
- [5] R. Brubaker, *Arch. Eur. Sociol.*, **43(2)** (2002) 163-189.
- [6] L. Lenovský, *Ethnologia Actualis Slovaca: the Journal of Ethnographical Research*, **6(6)** (2006) 12-24.
- [7] J. Botík, *Etnická história Slovenska: k problematike etnicity, etnickej identity, multietnického Slovenska a zahraničných Slovákov*, Lúč, Bratislava, 2007, 228.
- [8] M. Bocánová, *Kapitoly z etnickej histórie Trnavy*, Tribun EU, Brno, 2012, 160.
- [9] J. Darulová, K. Košťalová, *Multikultúrnosť a multietnicita. Kontexty kultúry národnostných menšín na Slovensku*, Ústav vedy a výskumu Univerzity Mateja Bela, Banská Bystrica, 2010, 272.
- [10] K. Slobodová-Nováková, *Ethnologia Actualis Slovaca: the Journal of Ethnographical Research*, **14(2)** (2014) 97-108.
- [11] L. Lenovský, *Eur. J. Sci. Theol.*, **11(5)** (2015) 171-184.

- [12] M. Ambrozy, R. Králik and J. S. Martin, *XLinguae*, **10(4)** (2017) 48-57.
- [13] Z. Beňušková, *Kultúrne krásy Slovenska. Ľudová kultúra*, Dajama, Bratislava, 2010, 127.
- [14] L. Žaloudková, *Sociológia*, **33(1)** (2001) 71–84.
- [15] Z. Beňušková, *Religiozita a medzikonfesionálne vzťahy v lokálnom spoločenstve*, Ústav etnológie SAV – Merkur, Bratislava, 2004, 198.
- [16] M. Bocánová, *Ethnologia Actualis Slovaca* **12(2)** (2012) 101-128.
- [17] M. Priečko, *The Formation of the Zaježová Community: Ideals and Reality in a Slovak Eco-Village*, in *Subcultures and New Religious Movements in Russia and East-Central Europe*, Peter Lang AG, Bern, International Academic Publishers, 2009, 187-207.
- [18] L. Ulašínová – Bystrianska, *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, **5(2)** (2017) 93-106.
- [19] Z. Beňušková, *Tradičná kultúra regiónov Slovenska*, Veda, Bratislava, 1998, 262.
- [20] M. Roubalová, B. Žalec and R. Králik, *XLinguae*, **11(2)** (2018) 51-59.
- [21] R. Kralik, M. Roubalova, L. Lenovsky, T. Tuska and S. Kralj-Vuksic, *XLinguae*, **11(2)** (2018) 17-23.
- [22] K. Košťalová, *Kultúrne dedičstvo ako podpora vidieckeho turizmu = Cultural heritage as a support for rural tourism*, Proc. of the 19th International Colloquium on Regional Sciences, V. Klímová, V. Žitek (eds.), Masarykova univerzita, Brno, 2016, 1032-1039.