

Imagined map of national and cultural identity– Deterritorialization, reterritorialization and village signs in Hungarian villages in south Slovakia¹

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Abstract

The article shows a recent example of symbolic geography and attempts to analyse the practice of reterritorialization of space by stressing cultural and national character. The author shows that globalisation might cause the disappearance of borders in advance of business, work and study but on the other hand it can cause emergence of symbolic borders based on cultural and national identity. The article is based on a limited research in south Slovakian villages with Hungarian population focusing on village signs written in runic Székely writing which is identified by the author as transported national symbols from Transylvania that recently became ideal representations of authentic Hungarian culture. The signs create a link to Greater Hungary, manifest the cultural and historical supremacy of Hungarians and signifies the territory, resp. reterritorializes the space. The reterritorialization process creates a mental map that unites the Hungarian nation and shows that meaning and territory are strongly bounded.

Key words: Symbolic geography, de-territorialization, re-territorialization, national identity, performativity, visual representation

Introduction

Inspired by Brubaker's approach taking nation as a category of practice, I examine the manifestation of nationalism in the circles of the Hungarian national minority in south Slovakian villages from a cultural sociological perspective by focusing on the visual side of

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nationalistic performance. I explore the appearance of visual objects as a category of national identity that is a practical usage with a clear connection to the cultural perception of national symbols. Everyday experience organizes discourse and challenges political action, but it has a deep cultural and historical dimension that appears visually. I argue that national identity is seen as an imagined mental map that tries to push itself onto the map of political borders. One of the most recent and visible manifestations of this struggle is the case of village signs written in székely writing in south Slovakian villages. I examine how Hungarian unification and the symbolic geography of the Hungarian kingdom are performed, and analyse the meanings of visual representations and objects in this process. I point to the relations between nation and space (territory), national symbols (imagined Transylvania) and performance of national identity through székely writing. The representations of the nation, in this case the székely signs, need to be transformed to individuals.



(Pic. 1. photo by the author)

Based on the historical names of the villages, it is clear that the south Slovakian region was multinational and multilingual, inhabited by Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans, Jews and Roma. Relations between the different nationalities were not always peaceful and were often politically motivated. During the 1990s the question of allowing Hungarian village signs was seen as an identity struggle for the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia². From time to time it has happened that during the night the Hungarian sign disappeared or was vandalised, and so the Hungarians defended their signs. By the end of the 1990s, the signs became practically invisible, becoming part of the everyday view of the landscape. In addition, during this time

² Similarly, the issue of bilingual school certificates was connected to the language law of the government led at this time by Vladimír Mečiar. (bővebb kifejtést igényel)

the villages placed the community coat of arms next to or behind the signs in both languages. In 2012 the first runic signs appeared in the region.



Pic. 2 - (photo by author)

As a consequence of the peace treaty ending World War I which was signed in 1918 in the castle of Trianon at Versailles, the region became part of Czechoslovakia – but the nationalities remained. The Hungarian minority in Slovakia, according to the last census in 2011, is 8.5 percent of the total population (Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky: 2011). Still, while there was a decline in the Hungarian percentage from 9.7 in 2001 and 10.8 in 1991, the number of Hungarians is significant. After the Versailles treaty, a revisionist movement³ (Zeidler 2007: 65-78) was born in Hungary which sought to reclaim lost soil. Some of this land is today part of Slovakia. More recently, today's radical right party criticises the treaty as a tremendous injustice committed against Hungary. The idea of revision is very popular in Hungarian radical right circles, which includes the political party Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom, the Új Magyar Gárda Mozgalom movement,⁴ and others.

During the course of this limited qualitative research project I met some of the representatives of the Felföldi Baranta Szövetség (the Upperlands Baranta Association) who are organizing the placement of signs in the székely writing in the villages of the area under study. The Baranta Association is an organisation focusing on Hungarian heritage and martial arts. I made semi-structured interviews with them and with other inhabitants from the villages with

³ In the Hungarian case the common understanding of revisionism was territorial. Hungarian revisionism questioned the legitimacy of the treaty of Trianon and questioned the result of the territorial division of Hungary after WWI.

⁴ The Magyar Gárda Mozgalom (Hungarian Guard Movement) was founded in 2007 and was dissolved by the bench?? in 2009. The same year it was re-founded and exists today under the name Új Magyar Gárda Mozgalom (New Hungarian Guard Movement). (Hivatkozás?)

the signs. Other sources of information include media reports about the events of erecting the village signs and video recordings about them which are available online.

Runic, old-Hungarian or székely writing



(pic. 3)

Runic writing is a topic debated not only by lay Hungarian nationalists but also in academic and linguistic discourse. As Sándor (2014: 18) explains, probably the most popular title is “Hungarian writing,” and this term is used ideologically to support Hungarian nationalism and is believed in these circles to be the oldest writing of mankind, even a manifestation of cosmic power. The argumentation over the use and meaning of the script has a long and rich history. Sándor (2014: 18-23) calls it *székely⁵ írás* (székely writing) and argues that the reason for calling it thus is that most of the ancient chronicles define it as székely writing, and most of the artefacts displaying the script were found in the Székely land. The runic writing found in Székely land has its origin in Asia and was first brought to Europe by Iranian tribes in the 7th century, eventually spreading to the Pannonian Basin (Sándor 2014: 22). In this paper I will use Sándor’s term “székely writing.”

In today’s nationalistic, radical right context, székely writing is considered to be proof of the European origin of the Hungarians, the depth of their culture and its ancient pedigree. However, this argument is not supported by the scientific community. Székely writing is becoming popular not only in Hungary but also outside its borders, within the circles of the Hungarian minority groups living in neighbouring states. Székely writing appears at different levels and in different forms of everyday life (e.g. alphabet pasta, on t-shirts and clothes with text, calendars, books, even the Bible) and celebratory objects (e.g. high school matriculation tablets, memorials) and also in education (as courses for children). Of course one cannot deny the business model that has developed around székely writing, with special shops offering the goods mentioned above.

⁵ The Székely create one part of the Hungarian inhabitants in Transylvania. Székelyföld (Székely land) is the Szekler land, from eastern Transylvania.

De-territorialization and re-territorialization

Feischmidt (2005: 5-6) argues, referring to Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 3-5), that there is a shift in contemporary societies' understanding of places and the space around us. The meaning of places and space is being de-territorialized. According to this argument, under today's globalised conditions real places and localities seem to lose their original meaning (Feischmidt 2005: 5-6). On the other hand, there are places like battlefields, places of commemorative events, cemeteries, buildings, fortresses and city squares that have become symbolically important and meaningful for imagined communities (Anderson 2006). Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 39-40) argue that localised culture is being abandoned and for this reason we need to focus on the way that people's everyday lives and identities in places are imagined. In much of the world, there is a certain mobility of businessmen, workmen and students in border areas and one could get the impression that state borders are losing their meaning and the idea of homogenous nation states is eroding. Ferguson and Gupta (1997: 3-4) argue that cultures are no longer fixed in place; all "associations of place, people and culture are social and historical creations" that are taken as natural. Cultural territorializations are the results of ongoing historical and political processes.

De-territorialisation of identity – if it is happening – can not be seen as a short term process. The meaning of a place in relation to memory does not disappear, as György (2013: 433) argues. Cultural meanings are fixed in physical places, which are connected to national identity and cultural memory. I would argue that national and cultural identity is spatialized in a new way, not only as a result of mass migration but also as a result of cultural trauma and nostalgia. It seems that in the national context the relationship between place and identity is taken for granted, and the feeling of locality is taken as naturally given to the group. From an analytical perspective we can look at the ways in which the issues of place and identity visually appear and ask how their relations are historically and discursively constructed.

By studying visual objects, the research moves from text towards images, and asks what, how and where it is seen. Issues such as spatiality, performativity and semiotics become central to the understanding of visual objects and through them social reality. Emmison and Smith (2009: 107) argue that "objects can operate as indicators of wider socio-cultural processes and therefore serve as tools for a theoretically informed exploration of social life." I am arguing with an imaginary, and at the same time material map as a metaphor for national and cultural identity. A map is an object taken as an objective carrier of information (Anderson 2006: 173)

which can show the borders of a state and the size of a city, but can also culturally connect a nation. In other words, the attempt to stress the identity and origin of places can create a cognitive representation of a homogenous map of culture and identity.

Territories are also understood as imagined maps that have controversial relationships with maps of political borders. Visual representations seem to be the peak of the identity process that is able to hold collective memory and national identity together and draw a direct line to territory. Durkheim (1995) reintroduced ritual as the means by which collective beliefs and ideals are simultaneously generated, experienced, and affirmed as real by the community. Individual identity is socially conditioned and organised and experientially (including visually) manifested through rituals. Alexander (2006: 29-32) argues that rituals in contemporary societies have transformed into ritual-like actions and performances. National representations and their meanings are transmitted to the society and to individuals by these ritual-like events and performances. The erecting of village signs I see as an attempt to create a ritual-like event provided as a performative act.

Borderlands, nations and territory

Important factors in the relations of borderland nations are memory and spatiality. Similarly to Zombory (2011: 8) – who points out that national identity is seen as a territorial issue and the key to understanding it is collective memory – the issue of borderlands may also be partially connected to collective memory. Benedict Anderson, in the tenth chapter of *Imagined Communities*, writes about the role of maps as a “basis of a totalizing classification” (2006: 173) which can work as a representation of a homogenous nation state but also as an imagined map based on cultural identity. Telling stories about a nation’s past does not mean anything unless the past is related to a territory.

Brubaker’s argument that minority status, the nationalizing state and the external national homeland should together be conceived as a field of competing positions, as an area of struggle among competing stances (1996: 67), gives us space to examine the mental map of the former Hungarian kingdom as a struggle for acquiring lost lands and reconnecting all Hungarians in one nation. There might be a competing position, but when stressing the cultural level of nationalism we must also differentiate between the political and the cultural levels of this struggle. Brubaker refers to the political level of competing fields for territorialization. There is a tendency at the cultural level to re-territorialize the space that

politically belongs to Slovakia but culturally is Hungarian. Transborder nationalism is challenging the nationalizing nationalism of the state not by appealing to territory but by practices of localizing culture, re-territorialization by stressing cultural memory, and recontextualizing the meaning of the space. It is an attempt to transform the imaginary map of identity into concrete places in a material-visual-performative way.

Visualization of Imagined Transylvania

... A proud nation with a great history; you need to dispossess their people from their past because with this you destroy their nation. And this is visible today too. Everywhere, even in the stumpstate⁶, and also behind the border, but only in Székely land and Csángóland,⁷ you can see that the people have national self-awareness, that they have national identity, that there they could not take it away from them. And why? Because they still, that the history is not learned from books, and so on. I know because my grandfather said to my father. Son do not forget that we are from the Szittya⁸ land. That there the scythian traditions are still alive and the motives and the ornaments, the patchwork, the carvings, the folksongs, and it is enough to look at the székely anthem...⁹

The cultural meaning of Transylvania has become one of the strongest national symbols and visual representations for the Hungarians. The imaginary ideal representation of the Hungarian man and woman of the Great Plain was transformed to the representation of the székely people after 1989, the Hungarian traditional minority in Romania (Feischmidt 2005:18-19). The image of the true Hungarian moved to the mountains of Transylvania and to the Transylvanian culture and heritage. It became an idealised place where the ancient, authentic Hungarian culture is still cultivated, and became a counterpoint to the post-communist reformist Hungary as the rural and authentic Hungarian community that still cultivates the ancient traditional Hungarian culture. The localisation of this authentic culture

⁶ Contemporary Hungary; after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920 Hungary lost cca. 2/3 of its territory.

⁷ Territory of the Hungarian minority in Moldavia.

⁸ Szittya is the term for the nomadic tribes that came into the Pannonian basin (helyesen: Carpathian basin) during the migration period between the 4th and 7th century. (A szittya fogalom többféle jelentéstartalommal bír. Etimológia?)

⁹ Egy büszke egy nagy múltra visszatekintő nép, akkor a múltjuktú köll hogy megfoszd őket, mer evvel tönkre is töszöd a nemzetüköt. És az a mai napig is jól látható. Mindehol akár a csonkaországbo, de akár a határon túl de egyedü a székelyföldön és csángóföldön lehet látni, hogy az emböröknek a nemzeti öntudata, hogy a nemzeti identitásuk hogy ott nem tudták megfosztani és hogy mér? Azér mer ottan még mindig a, tehát a történelem azt nem könyvekbü tanulják, meg minden... én tudom, hogy neköm a nagyapám, neköm meg azt mondta apámnak hogy fiam ne felejtss el, hogy mi szittya országiak vagyunk, tehát ott a szkíta hagyományok a mai napig élnek és a motívumok és diszítések, a kivarásból, a fafaragásból, de népdalokba, de elég hogy ha megnézzük a székelyhimnuszt is. (A szöveget érdemes lenne elemezni, miként keverednek benne a régi és az új szimbólumok. A székely himnusznak semmi köze a szkíta hagyományhoz, 1921-ben keletkezett.) Hivatkozás?

appeared in literature (for instance, in the revival of the writings of Albert Wass¹⁰), movies (that take place in Transylvania, e.g. “Kalendorok,” directed by Béla Paloczay, 2008), symbolic objects related to Transylvania (e.g. kopjafa, székelykapu) and cultural heritage (e.g. signs written in the runic alphabet, folk dances, folk songs, and traditional clothing). There was also a shift in travel destinations toward Transylvania. To go to Transylvania means to search for authenticity (Feischmidt 2005: 2).



Pic. 4 (photo by the author)



Pic. 5. (Photo by the author)

¹⁰ Albert Wass was a Hungarian aristocrat and nationalist writer, born in Romania. During WW II he fled to Hungary and enlisted in the Nazi army. Recently his writings have become popular and even compulsory reading for children in schools. See also Verseck (2012).



Pic. 6. (photo by the author)

The Practices of Re-territorialization

Now let's get back to the villages. For many years in the 1990s, the village signs in Hungarian represented an identity issue as well. It was a constant struggle in villages with a Hungarian minority, where the signs in Hungarian were removed, shot, defaced or damaged in other ways. A few years later, in the early 2000s, the bilingual signs began to form a natural part of the horizon for my eyes, until recently. I personally could not participate in the erection of the village signs with *székely* writing, but there are plenty recordings on YouTube¹¹ depicting the events. There are organisations that deal with these issues and organise the village sign erections¹². The organisation with which I was in contact started to localise the village signs I am referring to. The one erection I will write about in more detail happened to be recorded,¹³ at least partially, so the reader can get a sense of what such a performance of a *székely*-script village sign erection looks like.

As I was informed, the event starts with lectures and a discussion about the runic signs and *székely* writing, which is followed by the unveiling of the signs, and concludes with a

¹¹ Rovástábla avatások. [online] (accessed 17.11.2014). Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8A39B4D0E25EC75C>.

¹² Source: <http://www.felvidek.ma/felvidek/regio/34474-rovas-helysegnevtablak-kerulnek-csenkere>, (accessed 17.11.2014).

¹³ Homoly, Erzsébet. Felvidéki rovástábla avatás Csengén, Vajasztán és Csörgén. [online] (accessed 17.11.2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jL_0DUcp6ik.

reception. Those present include non-profit organisations that deal with the issues of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, members of the local scout association, and a member of the far-right Hungarian political party Jobbik gives a speech as well. The signs are covered with the flag of the Árpád dynasty, which has become one of the symbols of the radical right. The men in uniform are representatives of the Baranta group, who are the main organisers of the event.

Village signs in székely writing can be found not only in south Slovakia. They are also seen in Transylvania, Hungary and other states in which a Hungarian minority lives. There are more and more organizations and civic movements with an interest in erecting village signs. There is even a discussion between “traditionalists” who strictly use the old alphabet without any changes and “modernists” who create new symbols for letters like “w.” The Hungarian radical right political party Jobbik is also engaged and supportive in the case of village signs. There are two interpretations for this that I have encountered by talking to people. One supportive view says that the signs in székely writing represent national and cultural unity and refer to the Hungarian history of the land. The signs for them demonstrate the Hungarian identity of the villages; they refer to the historical past and to the present. The other interpretation says that the signs are provocative and only create unnecessary friction in the relationship between the minority Hungarians and the majority Slovaks.

The erection of székely village signs in south Slovakia is a powerful identity performance seen by the actors as celebrating the unity of the nation. There is a difference between commemoration practices in Hungary and in the circles of the Hungarian minorities in neighbouring states. Commemoration ceremonies in Hungary are typically less sacralised and are framed in more universalistic terms. Commemoration in Slovakia has higher status. Brubaker describes this distinction by differentiating the terms *holy day* and *holyday* (2004: 170-171). A qualitative comparison is also drawn by a respondent:

... there was an erection of runic village sign, this begins, as usually anywhere in Hungary. There it works, that people go there, eventually they sing something, erect the sign, reveal it and that's it. In my opinion today Hungarian self-identity is in such a bad shape here, consequently the knowledge of history is very deficient, then the people's morality is totally debauched, they do not even care too much about... We try to forge as much as possible, to address them, persuade them to come to the local community house... and then we also prepare a presentation about the runic writing...¹⁴

¹⁴ “Volt egy rovástábla avatás, az úgy szok kezdődni általában, mint máshol Magyarországon. Ottan úgy van, hogy odamennek, esetleg valamit elénekelnek, leteszik a táblát, leszedik a leplet és vége. Én úgy gondolom,

“It has the form of celebration. Now we have a lecture, often we invite a singer, and there we have a kind of celebration ritual. The erection of the village signs is not happening like. That we simply put there the sign and reveal it.”¹⁵

The actors themselves are aware that they live in Slovakia so it is not possible to speak about uniting the nation in a political sense. It is symbolic geography and the mental map that unites Hungarians culturally. The map is not only mental or virtual. Similarly to the székely writing, the map of the former Hungarian kingdom appears in many places, such as cars, t-shirts, cups or on the fence of a family house.



(pic. 7 – photo by the author)

The whole act of erecting the signs also has a deeper spiritual dimension, as one actor who places the runic village signs says:

According to ancient Hungarian mythology we try to initiate the signs ritually. So to say the knowledge of our ancestors, to let them know that yes, a new sign, a new village, a new village sign was restored with the help of the old alphabet, that the runic writing is at the beginning of the village.”¹⁶

The organisers developed a script for the performance of the sign erections. They refer to Hungarian mythology and ancestors. Through the ritual-like act a reunification of territories is happening. An imagined ritual-like event with references to Hungarian mythology is an

hogy annyira rossz állapotban van a magyarság itten, tehát a történelem tudás, nagyon hiányos, akkor morálisan le vannak totálisan züllesztve az embörök, nem is nagyon érdekli ökö. Próbáljuk úgy összekovácsolni a lehető legtöbb embört megszólítani, hogy rávonni hogy jöjjenek el a kultúrházba és akkor ott a rovásírás előadást is osszeraktuk...”Hivatkozás?

¹⁵ “Ünnepélyes formában valójában, hogy így hogy most már van előadás, sokszor meg hozunk énekest is, meg aztán van egy fajta sze.. szertartás, hat a táblafelavatás az minekunk most már, nem úgy zajlik, hogy kirakjuk a táblát és leveszzük róla a lepedőt.”Hivatkozás?

¹⁶ “... a régi magyar hitvilág szerint, próbáljuk a táblákat felavatni, hogy úgymond, az ősöknek a tudását, tudomására hozni, hogy igenis egy újabb táblát, egy újabb falut egy újabb falunevet állítottunk vissza a régi írássú, tehát, hogy rovásírást is feltüntettük a falu elején.”Hivatkozás?

elemental part of the performance. The performative part of the event is visually powerful. The actors wear medieval uniform-like clothes and make a performance by singing songs (the one in the video is the Székely anthem), mostly the Hungarian national anthem and use the swish (pic. 8). The backstage of the event is built up by use of Hungarian symbols, including the Árpád dynasty flag and the Hungarian flag. One actor says:

“... yes for us, for the Hungarians there are lucky numbers, 1, 3 and 7. And these numbers are included into the celebration ritual, into the erection of the runic writing sign. Usually three actors used to swish with the whip – that means the number three. There are seven swishes – that is the seven and the unity of the runic writing means the whole, the number one.”¹⁷



(pic.8)

The demonstrative part of the event refers to the act of demonstrating Hungarian identity for the actors themselves, for the audience, for the ancestors, for the village (its representatives and inhabitants), for Hungary (through the politics of the Jobbik party from the Hungarian parliament) and for Slovakia. The act demonstrates that this is a land of Hungarians, the land of ancestors. The székely sign demonstrates Hungarian cultural supremacy over Slovakia (Slovakian territorial claims are not accepted in Hungarian radical right circles, where the Treaty of Trianon is questioned). The event described above is representative for what has taken place in the other villages of the region. Wagner-Pacifici (2011: 1362) argues that this kind of representative event needs to be copied.

“I tell you how it was. People from village A came to me and told me that they would like to have a runic village sign. So I asked them, A is in such a good condition? Thank God, not because of that, but because villages like B and C, but mainly B have it – they were talking like this condescendingly. Now as you are

¹⁷ “...es ugye számunkra, magyarság számára vannak kedvező számok, 1,3,7 és aztán ezt belevette az egész avatásba, a rovastábla vátásba. Tehát úgy van általában, hogy 3 barantás szokott ostorozni az jelenti a harmas számot, hét ostorcsapásúhoz a 7 és a rovásírásnak az aegyese meg az 1.”Hivatkozás?

telling this so interestingly, just be well informed, listen. I would not exchange one man from village B for ten men from village A. Did you get it, what I just said? Do you know why? They did not want it because it is elsewhere as well, but because they feel like they would like to have it, they need it, that there should be a runic village sign. So, this is the difference.”¹⁸

The events of erecting signs have found their own audience. The signs became representative because they helped to influence the status position of a village. There is a need to perform identity and confirm cultural belonging.

Often in the interviews the issue of the thousand-year history of Hungarians in the territory appears. At the time Hungary entered the European Union, its political leadership spoke about returning Hungary to where it belongs, to Europe. In their argumentation, when the king St. Stephen converted to Christianity, the Hungarian kingdom became part of Europe. Actors in the székely sign erection events see the nation’s golden age in the pre-Christian past to which the székely script belongs. One respondent takes for granted that the Hungarians were already in the Pannonian basin when the Hungarian tribes arrived in the 9th century:

“...so king Attila, and it starts from the Szittyia times, so what they say, that the foundation of the state was in 1000, that is not mentioned by any chronicle. So there was no foundation of state in 1000, and we did not arrive here that time but we converted to a, for us unknown religion and then started the hunt for runic writing. There is written about it, there is proof for that. So St. Stephen as the one who wanted to destroy the so-called pagan writing, he wanted to tuck it away.”¹⁹

This argument refers to and corresponds with the recent nationalistic, radical and restorative process in Hungarian society and memory politics. As György (2013) argues, the mental map of the Hungarian kingdom and cultural space is being legitimised and internalized by the masses in Hungary. Finding the imagined golden age of a nation, using symbols, visual objects and referring to myths, ancestors and ancient knowledge is a recently observable process in Hungarian political and cultural life. The symbols of Transylvania are idealised and

¹⁸ I have changed the names of the villages to A, B, C to ensure anonymity of the informant. “Emondok hogy vót. Megkerestek a A-ak, aztán mondják nekem, hogy szeretnének rovástáblát. Aztán én rákérdeztem, hogy A ilyen jól áll? Hálistennek, há nem, azért akarunk, mer ha ilyen faluban is van, mint B, meg C, meg főleg a B, ilyen lekezelően mondták. Most ilyen érdekesen mondd, hogy képbe legyél, figyelj. Egy B-t se cserélnék le tiz A-ra, értted, hogy mit mondtam? Há mér? Azért mer azok nem azér akarták, mer máshol is van, hanem azér akarták, mer ők úgy érzik, hogy szeretnének, meg szükségük van rá, hogy ott rovástábla legyen. No ez a különbség.”Hivatkozás?

¹⁹ “...tehát Attila király, és szittyakortú kezdődik úgyhogy, tehát az ami, azt mondják, hogy államalapítás, ma hogy ezerbe vót, az egyik krónika se említi, tehát semmilyen államalapítás nem volt itt ezerbe, meg nem is akkor jöttünk ide, hanem akkor fölöttünk, egy számunkra idegen vallást és akkor kezdődött el a rovásírasnak az üldözése. Ezt írják is, erre bizonyíték van. Tehát Szent István volt, aki az úgymond pogányírást ki akarta irtani, teljesen el akarta tüntetni.” Hivatkozás?

are becoming strong visual and mental elements in performing national identity in the bilingual villages of south Slovakia.

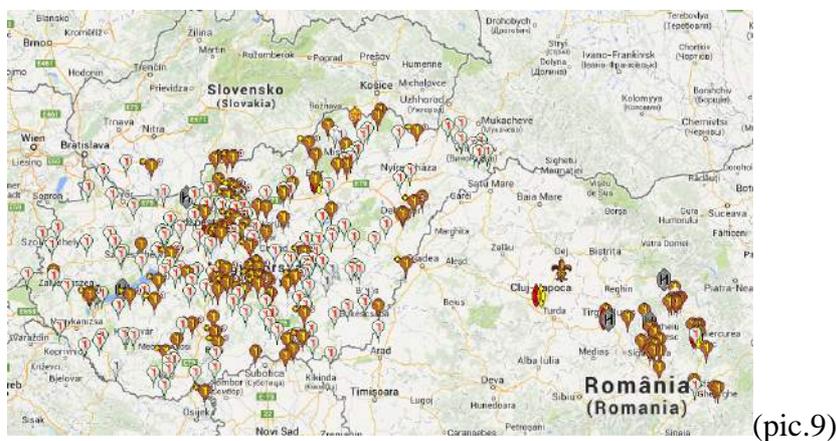
Conclusion: The Map as Identity

As Péter György (2013: 433) has mentioned, the deterritorialisation of the memory of place is a long process. The places of memory do not disappear; this process is rather the recontextualization of the meanings of the place and the transformation of their meanings. Re-territorialisation of the land is happening through visual and material objects and performances. The meaning of the territory never left the place. De-territorialization of the land might work on a political level based on the ideals of a liberal economy model, but culturally it seems that there are attempts that prove that meaning is embedded in the territory and is connected to collective memory. I have argued that the reason for the re-territorialisation of this space in south Slovakia is connected to trauma and nostalgia. For Hungary, the Trianon Treaty is a trauma that partially defines and constructs Hungary's relations with neighbouring countries like Slovakia. The same thing is the case with the nostalgia for the Hungarian kingdom. These two characteristics manifest themselves in the *székely* signs because they refer to the Hungarian kingdom, the former golden age of the Hungarians. This golden period is always presented with a historical map.

More village sign erections are planned and have been announced. It seems that it is a growing trend but not a massive one. The image of Transylvania and Transylvanian symbols as true national symbols has spread to south Slovakian villages. *Székely* writing seems to be one of the strongest symbols that is used in the symbolic geography of Hungary. *Székely* writing defines the space where it appears so unequivocally with its differentness that the message for the environment is clearly broadcast. But the runic alphabet is just an element of the imagined Transylvania that is becoming a unifying symbol for true Hungarian identity. The radicals, for example, use this symbol very consciously; they privatize the national symbols as use them as visual representations of their party (e.g. the *Árpád* flag, the *turul* bird, *kopjafa*, and runic signs). The nationalized meaning of Transylvania has become a product, an image that can be "sold" everywhere a Hungarian minority lives. It is a sort of memory business where runic signs are placed alongside the above-mentioned national symbols.

For Hungarians the map of the Hungarian kingdom is very well known either from school history classes or from the rightwing practices that display them everywhere possible.

Students learn about the Treaty of Trianon in school and also at home from their parents. The Hungarian minority in Slovakia is in a constant struggle of position between Hungary and Slovakia. The lack of homeland partly describes the situation of respondents who are aware of the fact that they live in Slovakia and are Slovak citizens, but culturally refer to Hungary. The mental map of a culturally and spiritually united Hungarian nation evokes the feeling of the imagined golden age for radical right-oriented Hungarians. On the other hand, and problematically, the mental map does not correlate with the political map, with borders pictured as red lines on paper. Creating a new map (pic.9) on the basis of runic village signs opens up space for acknowledging the reality of the political map while focusing on the cultural and historical map of Hungarians. In this way the mental map of Greater Hungary begins to feel real for transborder Hungarians.



(pic.9)

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