

Newsletter (Pilgrim of Benced)

2009. No. 3.



*Beautiful is the Nyiko Valley
and its neighborhood,
Its people believe in God,
More beautiful is pussy willow,
Like on other places the lily of the valley,
La la la..." (szekler folk-song)*

Redacted and translated from Hungarian by Pall Krisztina

Reconsecration of the Church from Upper Benced



12th of July is the celebration of the reconsecration of the church from Upper Benced. It was an unforgettable event for the community. In spite of rainy day, it was uplifting seeing the community celebrating together.

From this place I would like to thank for all those persons, who were there in spite of rainy day, assuming ups and downs of the weather, and celebrate with us.

With words of our writer Tamasi Aron I saluted the attendees.

„We are on the world to be at home somewhere”

And I felt that my heart will be full of great and general warm, my spirit become full of calmness of cheerful time, and my eyes with dew of dawn.

I stood up slowly and I said: He is right, I will go home, to be at home somewhere in the world.

I am sure when someone get the invitations from their relatives they felt the same.

The heart became full of great and general warmness, the spirit with calmness of memories, and the eyes with dew of daybreak.

And you're right I will go home without being in late, if just for one day if just for one week, to be again child, to be again happy, to be again at home.

It was so good to see that the small village



with 11 inhabitants is populated now.

It was good to see, that the inhabitants from Down Benced and the descendent felt very important this celebration, like their brothers from Upper Benced.

It was good to see that it is important the house of God, it can renew, and some people hadn't give up their sacred place.

It was good to see that in our celebration was

present the bishop Balint Bencedi Ferenc, who took an emotionally speech.

Thanks for the 2 main presidents and boss of our area, that they were presents, too. Our village was presented by vice mayor. And of course thank for all attendees being there in that great event.

It was good to see that the 2 old presidents were so emotional, their eyes full of tears when they got the diplomas.

And it was good to see that the church gathers us together.

From where is that knitting? From far away, from mother, from poorness, from affection.

In this way was built the church, from knitting of inhabitants from Upper and Down



Benced, in this way consecrated our ancestors. In December of 1911. I believe that died people were with us, too, our grandparents, grandfathers, their eyes being full of happiness, cheering, that we didn't left the church.

The hope has reborn, that the heart of people is there where he is born.

Reborn the faith in Jesus, the belief in remains, because we consecrated the church, house of God, and I believe that the church will remain us, will gather us, will call home us.

I would like to thank you for those persons, who helped us with their donations. Thank you for Szalon Private company, for its boss, Pap Bencedi Gyula es Pap Balazs, who made the work with less money. Thank you for the public work. Bless with you!

Our church's renovation was sponsored by our partner church from Hanska, Nora Unitarian Universalist Church with 1000 dollars, by Hungarian people from Sweden with 500 Sweden coronas, and by members of Church from Benced 6600 RON and other churches sponsorizations. Together 23500 RON was the all work.

I would like to thank you for Bokor Imre, a writer from Rugonfalva, who made a speech, for the Kovacs descendent for the beautiful presentations, for our YOUTH Association's presentation. I would like to thank you for the restaurant from Simenfalva who made less money the festive meal. And for all people from Upper and Dow Benced who believed in rebirth.

Bless with you, who believed to become real, our dream!

(Makkai-Ilkei Ildikó)



Orban Balazs farm-wagon tour



(Balázs Orbán (1829 in Lengyelfalva, Transylvania - 1890 in Budapest) was a Hungarian writer, historian and politician.

His most important work is "Székelyföld leírása", an encyclopedic description of the Szekely Land. He was the greatest Szekler man.- Pall Krisztina)

It was organized by deanery from Csehetfalva, Lorinczi Lajos and Tunde on way Bencéd-Kisfalud-Kecset-Farkaslaka-Szentlélek-Bogárfalva-Oroszhegy-Szencsed-Fenyőkút-Székelyvarság through hills, forests, from communities to communities, from spirit to spirit.

The members of the tours gathered together from Hungary, Sweden, USA and local youth, being religiously a colorful team, but in Hungarian nation's feeling, who were ready to go on way of Orban Balazs, visiting Szekler villages.

They made it to measure their force with Orban Balazs's love for the Szekler communities, for homeland.

Because they are ready to go behind the wide roads on narrow way of Jesus, through villages, spirits, friendships, proving the force of gathering together, of calling home.

The farm-wagons, pilgrim pedestrians to of went through hills, fields feel the Szekler villages' old, traditional life. In Unitarian, Reformat, Catholic churches, but on fields, on hills, near rivers, near birds songs, in friendships we looked for God and possibility of perseverance. And we looked for the way, that how can we make more from beautiful Szekler hospitality, our spirit near God, near nature, near history, making the possibility to make with our light a lighter world., with our faith a rich world, and a coherent Hungarian community.

The tour began with a worship in Csehtfalva, when was given the pilgrim stick, being ready to get the flags from all villages. Then in the afternoon was the festive meal,



and competition. In three days the tour visited these villages:

Bencéd-Kisfalud-Kecset-

Farkaslaka-Szentlélek-

Bogárfalva-Oroszhegy-Szen-

csed-Fenyőkút-Székelyvarság.

This was third tour under Hungarian nation flag. The tour was all time shown by the pilgrim stick, and was full of Szekler hospitality.

All way was blessed by God, and remains in our spirit.
(Lőrinczi Lajos)

Szekely / Szekler

The **Székely** (pronounced ['se:kɛj]) or **Szekler** people (Hungarian: *Székely*, Romanian: *Secui*, German: *Szekler*, Latin: *Siculi*), are a Hungarian-speaking ethnic group. They are an ethnic subgroup of the Hungarian nation. It is now generally accepted that they are true Hungarians, or Magyars, transplanted there to guard the frontier, their name meaning simply "frontier guards." Their organization was of the Turkic type, and they are probably of Turkic (possibly Avar) stock. By the 11th century they had adopted the Hungarian language.

Along with the Saxons, the Székely played a key role in the defense of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary against the Turks in their role as guards of the eastern border. Today they live mostly in the counties of Harghita, Covasna and Mureș in Romania, with a significant population also living in Tolna, Hungary. Based on official 2002 Romanian census numbers, approximately 1,434,000^[5] ethnic Hungarians live in Romania, mostly

in Transylvania. Of these, about 665,000 live in the counties of Harghita, Covasna and parts of Mures, with a Székely majority (65%). The Székely therefore account for a significant part (45%) of the Hungarian minority in Romania. When given the choice on the Romanian census between ethnically identifying as "Székely" or "Hungarian," the overwhelming majority of Székely choose the latter. Note that they were not allowed to choose both of them. On the last Romanian census (2002), only 150 persons declared their ethnicity as "Székely".

Since the Treaty of Trianon, the Székely population has been a target of Romanianization efforts. In post-Cold War Romania, where the Székely form roughly a third of the ethnic Hungarian population, members of the group have been among the most vocal of Hungarians seeking an autonomous Hungarian region in Transylvania.

Aranyosszék exclave

About 5,000–15,000 Székely live in the former territory of Aranyosszék. Székely villages there include Felsőszentmihály (today part of Mihai Viteazu Commune), or Felvinc (part of Unirea Commune).

History

Székely people in the Kingdom of Hungary

The Székely were considered the finest warriors of medieval Transylvania. They were part of the Unio Trium Nationum ("Union of Three Nations"), a coalition of the three Transylvanian Estates, the other two nations being the (also predominantly Hungarian) nobility and the "Saxon" (that is, ethnic German) burghers. These three nations ruled Transylvania, usually in harmony though sometimes in conflict with one another. During the Long War, the Székely formed an alliance with Prince Michael the Brave of Wallachia against the army of Andrew Cardinal Báthory, recently appointed Prince of Transylvania.

Controversy about origins

There are various ideas about Szeklers' ancestry:

- The Székely have historically claimed descent from Attila's Huns^[2] (repeated in Procopius' *De bello Gothico*), and believed they played a special role in shaping Hungary. After the Magyar tribes settled in Pannonia, they believed that they had special rights to that land as an inheritance from Attila.



A "Székely gate"

- The theory of Szekely descent from the Huns lost scholarly currency in the twentieth century. Some scholars have suggested the Székely are simply Magyars.

like other Hungarians. Their strong cultural differences stem from centuries of relative isolation in the mountains. This is supported by Y-chromosome DNA studies (see below).

- Some scholars believe there was a two-fold Hungarian migration to Transylvania and the Pannonian Plain, one prior to the main Magyar conquest of the Pannonian Plain in 896. According to this theory, the Székely are a Hungarian group that settled in Transylvania during this first migration.
- A Y-chromosome DNA study of former Bucovina Székely families shows their male genetic ancestry to be typical of south east Europe. This suggests the mix of DNA ancestries pre-dates formation of language differentiation in these regions and conforms to historians' theories that the Székely were a Hungarian people.
- Other theories have suggested Avar, Gepid, or Turkic ancestry. Some historians have dated the Székely presence in the Eastern Carpathians as early as the fifth century.
- A small number of scholars believe that they are related to Scythians who may have joined the Magyars on their trek westward and assimilated into the proto-Hungarian culture.
- The Székely formed as an ethnic group in the early Middle Ages as the result of an intermingling of Slavic and Romanian populations with Finno-Ugric peoples who had migrated from the east. ^[1] Later they underwent cultural and linguistic Magyarization. As they lived some distance from the ethnic Hungarian heartland, they developed their own folklore and dialect.

Symbols

The Székely Sun and Moon

The Sun and Moon are the symbols of the Székely, and are used in the coat of arms of Transylvania and on the Romanian national coat of arms. The Sun and Moon symbols represented proto-Hungarian gods. After the Hungarians became Christians in the 11th century, the importance of these icons became purely visual and symbolic. Their original religious significance was lost. The Székely have succeeded in preserving traditions to an extent unusual even in Central and Eastern Europe. The most comprehensive description of the Székely land and traditions was written between 1859-1868 by Balázs Orbán in his Description of Székely land.



Székely pottery (stove tile)

Population by county

The Székely live mainly in Harghita, Covasna and Mureș counties. They form a majority of the population in the counties of Covasna and Harghita.

County	Székely	% of county population	% of worldwide Székely population
<u>Harghita</u>	275,841	84.6%	32.7%
<u>Covasna</u>	164,055	73.8%	19.4%
<u>Mureș</u>	227,673	39.2%	26.9%

The relatively small and isolated Székely population on the border of Cluj County and Alba County (former Aranyosszék) assimilated more significantly during the 20th century than inhabitants of the more concentrated Székely areas. They are estimated to be less than 20,000 today. The Székelys of Bukovina form a culturally separate group with its own history.

Autonomy

Ethnic map of Harghita, Covasna, and Mureș based on the 2002 data, showing areas with Hungarian (Székely) majority

Ever since the abolition of the Hungarian Autonomous Province by the Ceaușescu regime in 1968, some of the Székely have pressed for their autonomy to be restored. Several proposals have been discussed within the Székely Hungarian community and by the Romanian majority. One of the Székely autonomy initiatives is based on the model of the Spanish autonomous community of Catalonia.^[8] A major peaceful demonstration was held in 2006 in favor of autonomy.

Fiction

In Bram Stoker's novel Dracula, the eponymous vampire count regards himself as a Székely, and very explicitly presents them as a separate nation from the Hungarians. He describes a history for his people, claiming a descent both from the Huns and also from an "Ugric tribe from Iceland". He even goes so far as to claim that "after the battle of Mohacs, we threw off the Hungarian yoke". However, this version of Székely history owes far more to the imagination of Bram Stoker than to any historical fact. The historical Vlad III Dracula was actually a Vlach leader of Wallachia, and Iceland was never settled by any Finno-Ugric peoples; only Vikings and Celts.

Far more accurate in their depictions of the Székely are the novels of Tamási Áron, a twentieth-century writer from Farkaslaka who set universal stories of love and self-individuation against the backdrop of Székely village culture. (Pall Krisztina, Source: Wikipedia)

Fourth Summer camp in Benced

Between 25-29 of July will be organized the Summer camp by Ittre Benced Foundation, helped by Unitarian Church of Benced, Local Council and Harghita County Council.

This year will be more children from Benced, Szekelyudvarhely, Szekelyszentmihaly and other villages from the area. The program will be between 10 and 20 o'clock with lunch break. During the englis classes will be 3 small groups, after it will be more colourful relaxing activities, singing, fluting, playing. During the camp will be redacted, multiplicated our newspaper, will be ecological experiments, hiking tours, knowing the flora of fauna of the area, cleaning the river. Important that there will be Richard Shoenbohn and Maggie Moran, again, Peace Corp Volunteers from USA, there will be camp fire, cooking competitions.

At the end of the camp the children wil show for the parents what they learnt during the camp.



They will get T-shirts, diplomas and of course surprises.

I feel that we bring life in the community by this camp, and we help our area's development. Maybe we can decrease the migration, and maybe we can reopen the school.

At the same time we have another two program helped by Local Council, Unitarian Church of Benced, and Harghita County Council: telecottage development buying a video projector, organizing touristy presentations, making brochure in English, Romanian and of course Hungarian language. The other program is for the seniors, old people, giving them package with food. **(Páll Krisztina, President of Ittre Benced Foundation)**

Our community' s website:
[www. benced. ro](http://www.benced.ro)

Our partnerchurch's website:
www.nora-uu-church.org