

## **REGIONAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY EXAMINATIONS ON THE SLOVENIAN SETTLEMENTS OF HISTORICAL GUARDSMEN'S LAND**

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### **Abstract**

#### **Regional and national identity examinations on the Slovenian settlements of historical guardsmen's land**

Our study focuses on the research of regional and national identity – it is mainly based on empirical survey realised with questionnaires - in the border regions of Slovenia, in the former part of the Guardsmen's Land, still inhabited by Hungarians. These settlements are: Hodoš (Őrihodos), Krplivnik (Kapornak) and Domanjševci (Domonkosfa). To compile the required sample, we started out from the census data and from the information of the local self-governments. In addition to the identity examination as the primary research target, the questionnaire allowed as an additional result the drawing up of the exact ethnic spatial structure of the researched settlements, which is also described.

### **Key words**

Guardsmen's Land, national identity, regional identity

## **1. Introduction**

Identity and personal association, the phenomenon and concept of belonging to somewhere can be classified into the subject of several different sciences that are attached to each-other in certain points of examination. These include psychology, sociology, and not least geography. The scientific interest in identity can be traced back to the different interpretations of identity, or more precisely, to various forms of manifestation. Different branches of geography are usually interested in the social, cultural or ethnic identity and territorial-regional identities of a particular ethnic group. Our present study focuses on the research of regional and national identity – it is mainly based on empirical surveys realised with questionnaires - in the border regions of Slovenia, in the former part of the Guardsmen's Land, nowadays part of Slovenia, still inhabited by Hungarians. These settlements are: Hodoš, Krplivnik and Domanjševci.

According to our hypothesis, the national identity of the Hungarian minority beyond the borders is still significant, especially in the case of elder generations. The regional identity was metered in relation to the Guardsmen's Land, as well as a widely known ethnographic and cultural history region, without mentioning specific boundaries for the respondent, just simply using the term Guardsmen's Land. Naturally, depending on the people filling in the questionnaire, there may be a number of different interpretations of Guardsmen's Land, which we have further clarified with additional questions. It is assumed that this territorial affiliation is much weaker than national one, not only because of the uncertainty term usage of Guardsmen's Land which connotates differently to many people, but also because the separation role of the border in this issue is more powerful according to our view.

## **2. Methodology of research**

In the three Hungarian populations of the former border settlement, nowadays part of Prekmurje, we conducted a questionnaire survey to evaluate the national and regional-belonging to the Guardsmen's Land-identity. To compile the required sample, we started out from the census data and from the information of the local self-governments.

In Slovenia, the census of 2011 register-based censuses were made. However, there is no separate register for the number of people belonging to national communities. In addition, there was a reorganization in the administrative system, where the settlements were classified as občine. On average, in Prekmurje there are 6 to 8 settlements that form a commune (Balizs, Bajmócy 2013). Population census data could only be obtained at the municipal level and refined by additional information about the settlement given by the local governments. This also meant that during the questionnaire it was not possible to compile a representative sample because we did not have more detailed information about the structure, just the number of the population provided by local governments. We tried to remedy this problem by taking a much larger sampling than we normally did. During the questionnaire we were aware of not questioning below the age of 18 and that gender equality would be fairly equal. We also took care of the territorial coverage: respondents came from all of the Hungarian habited streets (Tab.1).

Tab. 1: Distribution of completed questionnaires by age groups in the surveyed settlements of Prekmurje.

Settlement	Number of Hungarian population	Number of questionnaires	Age groups						
			18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80 <
Hodoš	106	46	4	5	5	8	9	10	5
Krplivnik	53	26	3	3	4	3	5	5	3
Domanjševci	155	64	8	6	8	12	13	10	7
In all	314	136	15	14	17	23	27	25	15

Source: Based on Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office and own questionnaire, ed. Kardos.

All in all, the questionnaires were surveyed in the three surveyed municipalities of Prekmurje, which account for more than 43% of the Hungarian population. In addition to the identity examination as the primary research target, the questionnaire allowed as an additional result the drawing up of the exact ethnic spatial structure of the researched settlements, which is also described.

### 3. The emergence and spatial extension of Western border region of Hungary

At the time of Conquest of the Fatherland, two major guards were built at the western end of historical Hungary: one in the Pinka valley, in the vicinity of Felsőőr (Oberwart), which was also named Upper-Guardsmen's Land, and is part of Austria now. The other guard site was established in the source region of the Zala River and was defined as a Lower-Guardsmen's Land (Csapó 2008) to distinguish it from the other. This is the area that is mentioned in the name of Guardsmen's Land today as well as in scientific circles, and basically covers the southwestern corner of Vas county and some settlements in Prekmurje, Slovenia (Fig. 1). After the peace treaty of Trianon, the Hungarian population of former settlements annexed to Austria has been significantly reducing to nowadays due to intensive assimilation, and today only four settlements are limited: Unterwart, Oberwart, Siget in der Wart and Jabing (Tóth 1975, Beluszky 2005). However, research in this area, reinforces the same origin and settlement history as is demonstrated in the Lower-Guardsmen's Land/ Guardsmen's Land (Csapó 2008).

The circumscription of the Lower-Guardsmen's Land or Guardsmen's Land is much more problematic, since most of its territory is still in Hungary, so the number of researches dealing with it is bigger and better known. The differences of opinion on the spatial extent beyond the general phenomenon that finding the boundaries of ethnographic landscapes can only be carried out along multiple dimensions (common historical past, religion, dialect, settlement structure, folk customs, folk costumes, local architecture and object use etc.). from the fact that the boundaries of ethnographic landscapes often blur over the time, and in many cases they are only kept by the consciousness of the people (Bazsika, Gyuricza 2008). The Guardsmen's Land is not ethnically and historically separated from its environment by expressive cultural features or geographical geographic features (Kósa 1998, Mohos 2008). Despite its low population density, it is socially and religiously extremely complex (Kósa 1998). Thus, it is no coincidence that we have different solutions in the spatial

delimitation from different authors (Dömötör 1960, Csiszár 1994, Beluszky 2005, Csapó 2008, Balogh, Baranyai 2014). Drawing ourselves from the discussion of the subject of delimitation, we consider the former villages of the Historical Guardsmen's Land, because these settlements belong to Guardsmen's Land in the study of all authors, and mention them among others IV. László published in 1280 or II. Rudolf 1595 donation letter. Hodoš, Krplivnik and Bükalja were part of the Historical Guardsmen's Land. Bükalja is part of Domanjševci today.

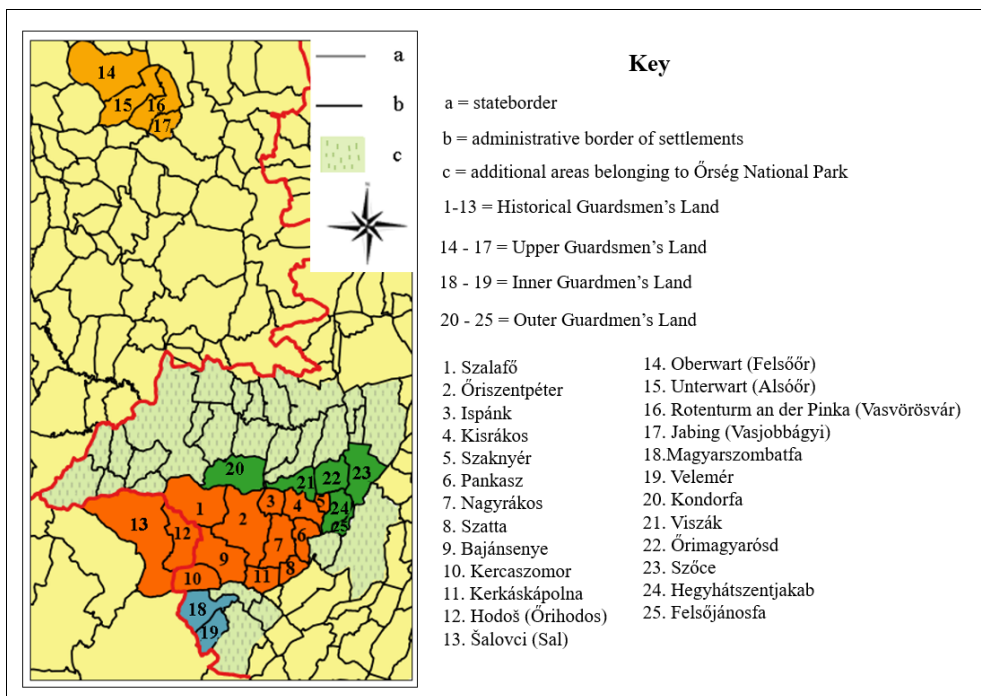


Fig. 1: Settlements of Guardsmen's Land.

Notation: The map based on the recent administrative borders, so it shows the researched municipalities (občina). Hodoš and Krplivnik create a municipality together under the name „Hodoš”. Domanjševci is the part of Šalovci municipality with 5 other settlements.

Source: Based on Beluszky (2005) ed. Kardos.

#### 4. The historical-ethnic characteristics of the Prekmurje, with special regard to the former guard-settlements

Following the Treaty of Trianon, Prekmurje-belonging to the Slovene part of the newly formed South Slavic State - were established of the areas that were disannexed from the Hungarian Vas and Zala counties. The Hungarians of Prekmurje faced several difficulties after disengagement, which had a major influence on the emergence of national consciousness. Most of the Hungarian intellectuals were expelled; from the large estates distributed during the land reform Hungarian nationality people could not receive. Hungarians had a small population (about 22,000), and the fact that the Prekmurje became relatively more advanced than was the motherland, so the population began to take over the Slovenian value system (Göncz 2006).

Today's number of Prekmurje Hungarians is estimated to be between 8 and 12

thousand, most of them living around Lendava, the center of the Hungarians in Slovenia. The Slovenian minority rights system is an exemplary, but bilingual education model can not curb the assimilation, and children born from mixed marriages are largely identified with the majority nation. The national identity of the Hungarians living here faces serious challenges ([www.hunineu.eu](http://www.hunineu.eu)).

The proportion of the Hungarian population of Hodoš, Krplivnik and Domanjševci belonging to the Guardsmen's Land is still significant (Tab.2).

Tab. 2: The ethnic distribution of the researched settlements in 2001.

Settlement	Hungarian (%)	Slovenian (%)	Other or unknown(%)	Population (capita)
Hodoš	42,1	47,6	10,3	252
Krplivnik	50,5	39,0	10,5	105
Domanjševci	51,5	35,9	12,6	301

Source: Based on Republic of Slovenia Statistical Office, ed. Kardos.

Hodoš is a small village with special settlement structure called 'szer'. It means many groups of houses which are situated on hilltops originally. Each 'szer' within a settlement has its own denomination. Hodoš consists of Felsőszer and Alsószer. Nowadays, we can't separate easily the 'szers', because as the population grew, the intermediate areas became populated, many houses were built between 'szers'. Hodoš has a railway connection with Hungary and situated on the banks of the Dolanyi brook. Within the Guardsmen's Land, Hodoš - and Krplivnik - not only smaller forests were typical to them, but also craft and commercial activity took place here. The pottery characteristic of Guardsmen's Land was rooted in the 16th century. The settlement name Órihodos preserves the names of former guards or shooters ([www.hodos.si](http://www.hodos.si)). Nowadays it is mostly inhabited by Slovenians, the Hungarians are scattered here (Fig. 2).

Krplivnik is situated directly by the Hungarian border, which heritage and traditions are guided by the Ethnographic Collection of the Hungarian Nationalities Cultural Institute and the Hungarian National Self-Administration of Hodoš-Šalovci ([www.vasivirtualizmuszeum.hu](http://www.vasivirtualizmuszeum.hu)). In the collection all the objects of the three settlements have given a place. Craft and merchant activities were significant here. On the steep shores of Krplivnik vineyard cultivation existed as well. The Hungarians account for about half of the population of the village living in scattered areas within the settlement (Fig. 3).

By the late 1800s Bükalja was a separate settlement belonging to the historic territory of Guardsmen's Land. In the middle of the 1500's it was owned by Batthyány family. At the end of the 1800s, it was first planned to unite Bükalja and Szomoróc, but because the lack of adequate administrative infrastructure, Bükalja was unified with Domanjševci about half a century later with Szomoróc and Kerca were joined as well ([www.viasanctimartini.eu](http://www.viasanctimartini.eu)). It has been inhabited since prehistoric times, this is indicated by some two thousand years of tombs in its vicinity. The proportion of Hungarians is around 50%, according to an estimate of the municipality of Sal (with which Domanjševci is a joint municipality), more than 90% of the population, as a local woman said, "here everybody is Hungarian." Although, it is typical that people are more likely to undertake their belonging to Slovenes. Like most of the population, the Hungarians live mainly along the "main road" passing through the village (Fig. 4).

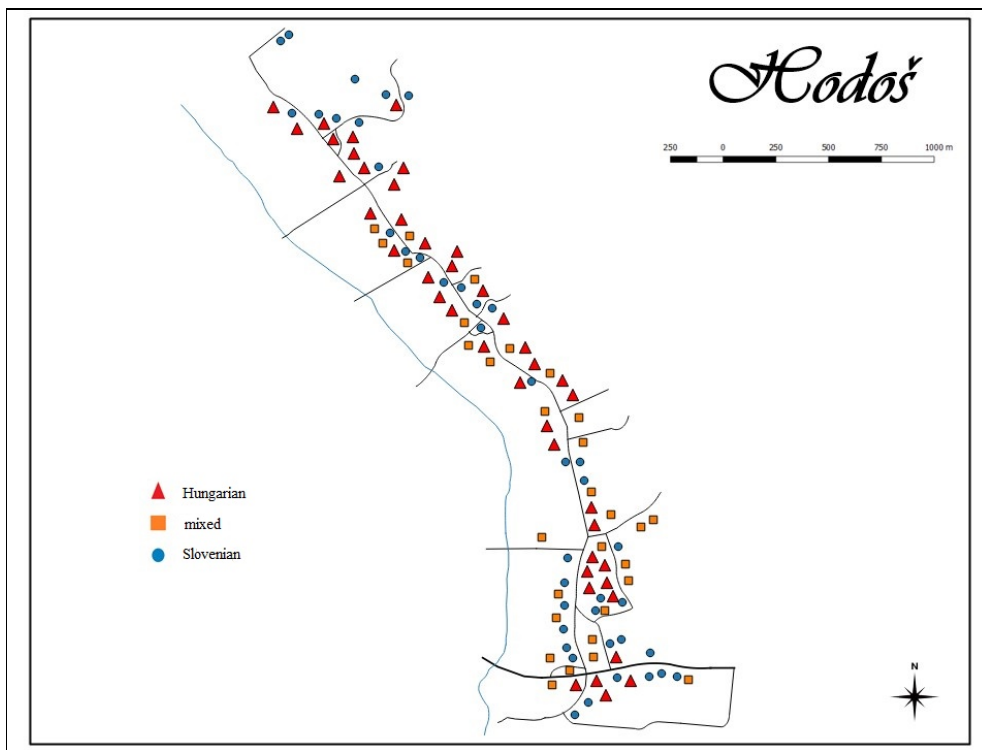


Fig. 2: The ethnic division of Hodoš by households in 2016.  
Source: Based on own questionnaire survey, ed. Kardos.

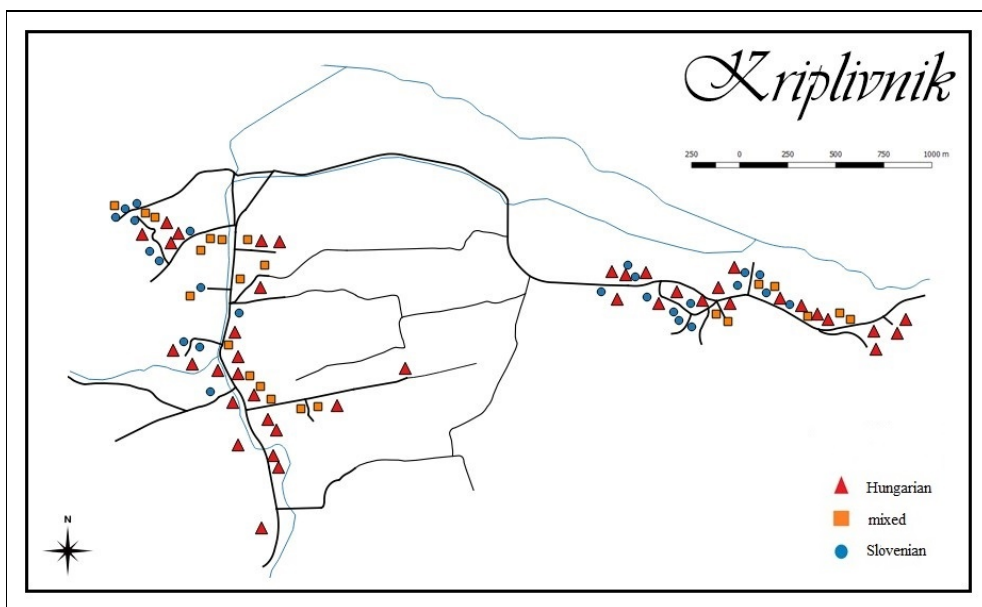


Fig. 3: The ethnic division of the Krplivnik by households in 2016.  
Source: Based on own questionnaire survey, ed. Kardos.

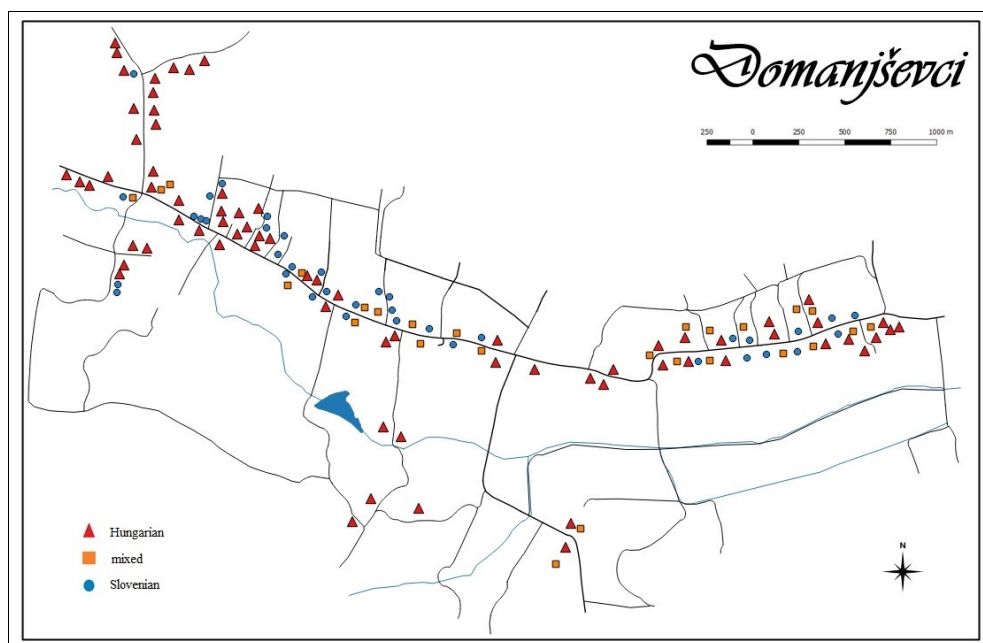


Fig. 4: Ethnic division of Domanjševci by households in 2016.

Source: Based on own questionnaire survey, ed. Kardos.

## 5. National identity

Identity to a nation depends on many factors, such as language, religion, culture, family relationships, and so on. The questionnaire contained the most important aspects of belonging to Hungarians as closed issues. The predetermined responses were prioritized - 1. very important, 2. most important, 3. not important, and 4. not at all important - had to rank the respondents. The listed criteria were as follows:

- For most of his life he lives among Hungarians,
- Be a Hungarian citizen
- Born in Hungary
- Live in Hungary
- Mother tongue is Hungarian
- Speak in Hungarian
- Consider himself as Hungarian
- Know and love Hungarian culture
- At least one parent must be Hungarian
- Do a Hungarian school
- Honor the Hungarian national flag
- Belong to a Hungarian ritual church.

By summarizing the points of the answers to each assumption, we got the final result in such a way that the lowest point amount (which need to cover the 1st is very important or 2. the most important answer to the question) was the most important criterion.

The most important aspect was to consider himself a Hungarian and to know and love Hungarian culture. Almost 100% of respondents on every researched settlement

consider these criteria very important. The Hungarian national flag as the emblem became known and loved became the third, ahead of us, in particular, and by surprise, the importance of the origin (Fig. 5).

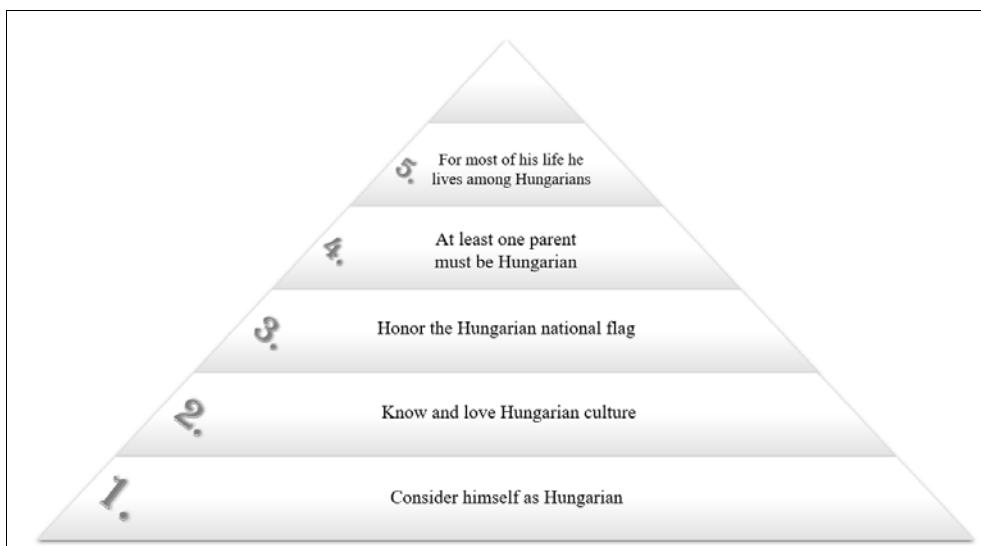


Fig. 5: The most important criteria to be Hungarian according to the respondents.  
Source: Based on own questionnaire survey, ed. Kardos.

All in all, almost 90% of the surveyed population think that the respect of the Hungarian flag is fundamental in the fact that one can keep himself Hungarian. 100% of answerers in Domanjševci considered this criterion really important, but more than 88% of the Kapornakian people likewise considered it. The fourth most important criterion is that at least one parent must be Hungarian. The population of Krplivnik consider this statement to be the most important, 85% of the respondents.

The fifth one is one of the aspects that has played a role in preserving identity is that a citizen lives in the majority of his life among Hungarians. This was especially important for the citizens of Domanjševci: every second respondent said it was very important to live in the Hungarian community for the preservation of identity. Perhaps not by accident, since almost all Hungarians live here and form a strong, cohesive community.

Language is an important building block for national identity, however it has not been included among the five most important aspects in our examined settlements (these are only the 6. and 7. most important statements). There were two statements about the language: one was to have a Hungarian mother tongue, the other to speak Hungarian. It can be said that the latter is considered more important everywhere, the mother tongue is less important. The other statements (attend Hungarian school, belong to a Hungarian ritual church, be a Hungarian citizen, born in Hungary, live in Hungary) are the less important criteria according to the respondents.

## 6. Regional identity

Despite the fact that no question was given to the questionnaire for what area unit



we mean exactly under the Guardsmen's Land, 100% of the respondents meant the ethnographic landscape in the southwestern corner of Vas county in Hungary. It is true-as the survey showed- that there were significant differences in its spatial extent and its main characteristics.

Territorial identity, of course, can cover a lot of issues, and people belong differently from each territorial levels. So I was curious about what territorial level the people in the settlements of the investigated territorial units are most likely to identify, what they think they really belong to, which they most identify themselves. Respondents were asked to sort the number of different territorial levels by number, depending on which ones they most closely associate with. In the case of territorial identity, we understood the degree of identification with the majority of the settlements above the settlement level.

In the case of the Hungarian population of all three of the examined villages, the connection to the settlement level proved to be the strongest, even where they live today. This is followed by the region and the last it the identity of the Guardsmen's Land (Fig. 6).

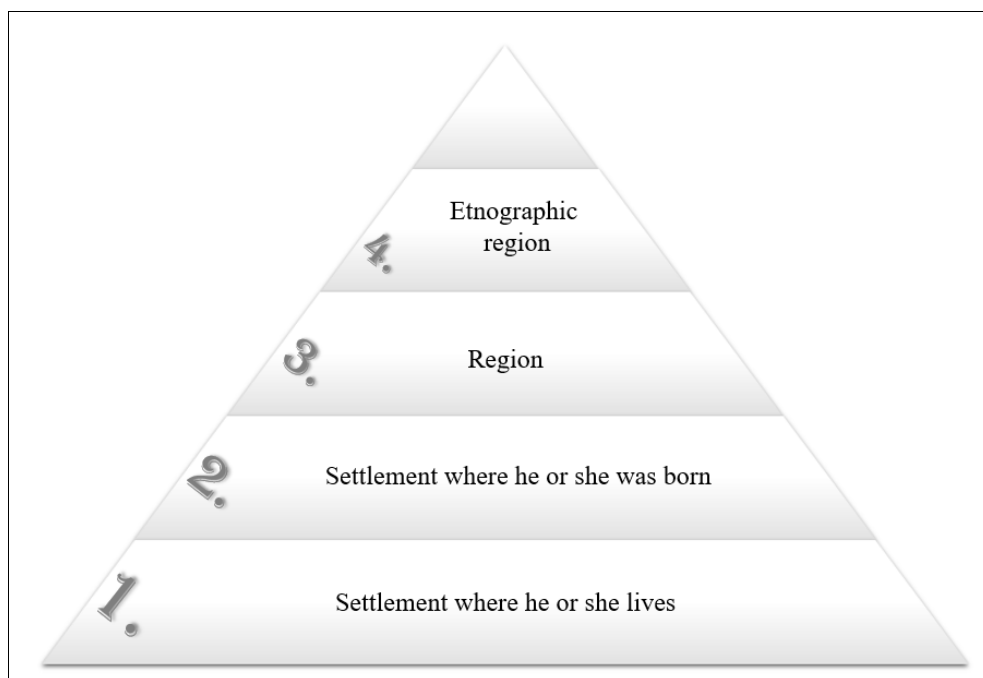


Fig. 6: The identification of the respondents with the different unit areas.

Source: Based on own questionnaire survey, ed. Kardos.

There was no questionnaire where one of the first two places would have been able to placed the attachment to the Guardsmen's Land. To further refine our responses, we looked at the percentage of respondents who ranked the ethnographic region in the third place (Tab. 3).

Tab. 3: Percentage of respondents who ranked the ethnographic region in the third place.

Settlement	ethnographic region in the third place (%)
Domanjševci	63
Krplivnik	50
Hodoš	42
In all	52

Source: Based on own questionnaire survey, ed. Kardos.

More than half of the respondents, in the third place, have already marked the Guardsmen's Land with the highest proportion was in the circle of the respondents of Domanjševci (65.6%). However, it is interesting that the Hungarians living in the three Prekmurje villages mostly consider their own settlement as belonging to the Guardsmen's Land and to themselves as people of Guardsmen's Land (Table 4). In this regard are the respondents of Domanjševci as well, so here is the identity connected to the Guardsmen's Land the strongest.

Tab. 4: Percentage of respondents who consider his own settlement belonging to Guardsmen's Land and himself as the habitat of Guardsmen's Land.

Settlement	Consider his own settlement belonging to Guardsmen's Land (%)	Consider himself as the habitat of Guardsmen's Land
Domanjševci	85	73
Krplivnik	69	58
Hodoš	67	57

Source: Based on own questionnaire survey, ed. Kardos.

According to surveys, however, despite the fact that the attachment to the Guardsmen's Land is not too strong, they are still aware that the place they live in is part of Guardsmen's Land as an ethnographic-historical area. This is also supported by the question of "What are the three things that come from the Guardsmen's Land?" Every second of the 136 questionnaires contained at least one attribute, but in Krplivnik the ratio was more than 70%. The answers are basically divided into four categories:

- Trianon, border, Hungary, Hungarians
- pottery, embroidery, craftsmanship
- gastronomy
- National Park, trip, nature.

The quantity and quality of knowledge about the Guardsmen's Land were dependent on education regardless of geographical location. Undoubtedly, more educated respondents were able to provide more information about the Guardsmen's Land. The proportion of those who did not answer was  $\frac{3}{4}$  or even higher among low-school graduates (skilled workers, primary school, less than 8 grades).

We also tried to find out what the villagers understood as part of the Guardsmen's Land according to the respondents in their own country. In Slovenia, the three villages belonging to the Guardsmen's Land were mentioned by most, but almost half of the respondents thought of Središče and Čikečka vas, and every fifth person considered Lendava to belong to the Guardsmen's Land (Fig. 7).

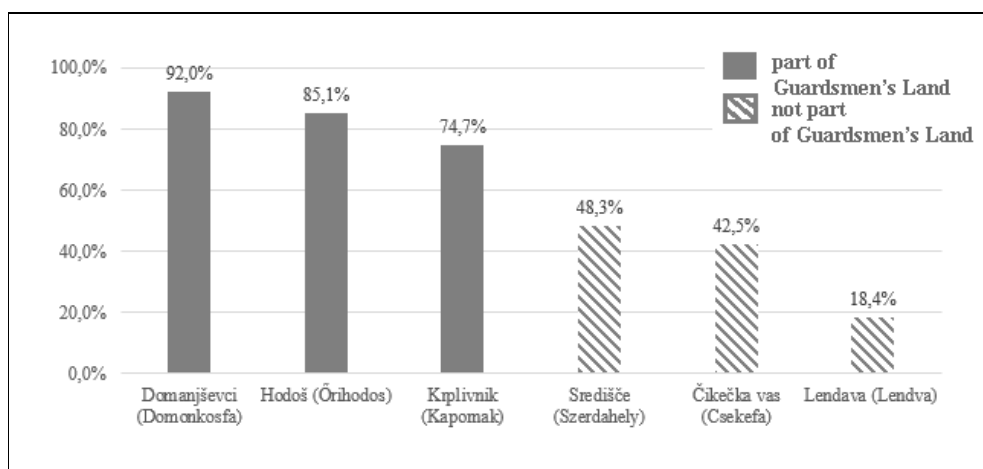


Fig. 7: The settlements which are part of the Guardsmen's Land according to the respondents.

Source: Based on own questionnaire survey, ed. Kardos.

This also means that most of the subjects involved in the empirical research say that the Guardsmen's Land in space is placed in such a way that it does not conform to the current state boundaries. As mentioned by the staff of the National Community of the Municipality of Prekmurje, "the Guardsmen's Land does not end at the Hungarian-Slovenian border".

## 7. Conclusion

In our study, we tried to reveal the national and regional identities of the living Hungarians situated in the Slovenian side of the former Hungarian border settlements, namely the Guardsmen's Land, through empirical research. National identity still remains on the other side of the Hungarian border, though it is increasingly weakening. Especially in the case of people under the age of 50, it can be observed that they increasingly associate with majority culture and language rather than Hungarian. Hungarians living beyond the borders say that the most important criterion of national identity is to consider themselves as Hungarian and to know and love Hungarian culture. In addition, they consider the origin, the symbols and the Hungarian community to be significant. Birth, living and Hungarian citizenship in Hungary are considered to be the least important factors in shaping Hungarian identity. The degree of identification with the Guardsmen's Land is weak despite the fact that they know about the Guardsmen's Land and even their place of residence is a guardian settlement, but their attachment to the area is no longer relevant. Deeper knowledge does not therefore have a stronger influence on territorial bond, it is simply that the geographical proximity, the common historical past, and the survival of certain traditions and customs are manifested beyond the boundaries of the more profound knowledge but not of strong emotional attachment. In the latter, we assume that the separation role of the state border plays a role, namely that, in the decades before the change of regime, this region functioned as a filter and security zone, the relations between the two regions weakened, which had a serious impact on the shapement of the Guardsmen's Land-image among the citizens of Prekmurje.

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<http://www.viasanctimartini.eu/telepulesek/domanjevci---domonkosfa>  
<http://www.hodos.si/?lang=hun>  
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## **REGIONAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY EXAMINATIONS ON THE SLOVENIAN SETTLEMENTS OF HISTORICAL GUARDSMEN'S LAND**

### ***Summary***

Our study focused on the research of regional and national identity – it is mainly based on empirical survey realised with questionnaires - in the border regions of Slovenia, in the former part of the Guardsmen's Land, still inhabited by Hungarians. These settlements are: Hodoš (Őrihodos), Krplivnik (Kapornak) and Domanjševci (Domonkosfa). In addition to presenting the results of our identity research, we briefly described the areas of our analysis and their short historical geographic features. Our hypothesis was that the national identity of the Hungarian minority beyond the borders is important – and this is especially true for the older generations – and it has been justified. We also found it important to examine which statements were found to be a criterion of being Hungarian by the respondents. According to the Hungarians, living beyond the borders, the most important of the national identity criteria is that they themselves claim to be Hungarians, and to know and love Hungarian culture. We have examined the identity of the region with regard to the Guardsmen's Land without mentioning the respondents the clarified territory, simply using the term 'Guardsmen's Land'. Our supposition was that this regional affiliation is much weaker than the national affiliation. Even their settlements are considered to be part of Guardsmen's Land, although their affiliation to the area is weak.

