

LOCAL HISTORIES: FORMATIONS OF LOCAL MEMORY

Local history is a narrative text which summarizes the past of a community, the important events of its past, the sentiments connected to these events, and their contexts, from the perspective and according to the demands of the community. Local history presents the changes which have occurred in the life of the community in the *longue durée*, it creates a close relationship between past and present, on the basis of which the cause of the present situation can be identified in past events, and it reveals the consequences of events from the past. Local history formulates the lessons of the past, it places the events in the life of a community in a chronological order, populates the different epochs with the ancestors of the community and recounts their heroic deeds, accomplishments, and sufferings. Local history represents the narrative identity of the community, it stirs up emotions and establishes relationships between the families and between the members of the community, between the locality and its neighbours, and also between the locality and its region.

Local history is written by a volunteer, such as a teacher, a priest, or an amateur author. This volunteer author collects data, written documents and other sources related to the past, organizes these data and writes up a history of the locality on their basis. He or she also utilizes and cites official works of history and establishes relationships and parallels between official and local history. Local history uses all types of sources related to the past, such as oral tradition (legends, ballads, anecdotes, memoirs), inscriptions (on buildings, objects, textiles, photographs), private records (letters, diaries), administrative records (civil status registers, registers of births, church registers, reports of the proceedings of different associations and guilds), genealogical records (epitaphs, obituaries), the texts of commemorative rites (commemorative tablets and discourses), popular books, and visual sources (photographs, illustrations). Local history can be written as a poem or in prose, by hand or with a typewriter, and it can be published in book form.

The present volume, containing a selection of analytical studies on Transylvanian local histories, represents a first attempt at an empirical and anthropological account of such narratives. Vajda András analyzes the histories of two localities from the Mureş Valley and presents their authors. Nagy Réka studies the composition of an amateur poet who had written a history of a village from Sălaj County. Fodor Attila deals with the historical work of a Unitarian priest from the Arieş Valley. Kiss Lehel and Keszeg Vilmos present the life, works, and the epic poem of a self-taught poet from the Transylvanian Plain. The concluding study, by Keszeg Vilmos, provides an analysis of the different types, functions, and usages of local histories.

The volume is accompanied by a DVD containing the analyzed manuscripts.