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TURKISH INFLUENCES IN FOLK CULTURE IN NORTHERN HUNGARY

Ethnography has researched the stratification of Hungarian folk culture from several aspects. Ethnic groups, living in close proximity for a certain amount of time, influenced each other. Several cultural, farming traditions imply connections with other ethnicities even from the migration era preceding the Hungarian Conquest (dual farming system, viticulture, milk procession etc.).

The effects of the hundred-and-fifty-year-long Turkish presence in Hungary can also be observed in the field of rural culture. There are several reasons that make the research of this quite complicated. On the one hand, since folk culture isn't static, it goes through – although quite slowly – certain transformations, and our cohabitation with the Turks is now in a distance of three centuries. On the other hand, rural culture does not simply borrow certain phenomena, but it transfigures and interprets them, thus making them its own.

North-Eastern Hungary was a borderland, in whose distinct parts – due to the heroic persistence of the defenders at the Castle of Eger – Turkish regime only lasted for a shorter period of time.

Present study investigates the Turkish analogies concerning the ethnographic, folkloristic relics of the area, with special focus on the artefacts protected in museums, and the monuments of rural architecture.

Turkish Influences Concerning the Textiles Produced in Heves County

Turkish influences may not exclusively affect folk culture directly. Even before the appearance of the Ottoman Turkish people in the Carpathian Basin, Turkish textiles were already available in commerce. From archive records we know that Bishop Hippolyt Estei bought “4 towels made of Turkish canvas, for bathing purposes” at Buda in 1507, for the price of 14 Forints, at the costs of his court-hold at Eger.¹ However, only the members of a small social class could afford the commodities of Eastern trade. 14 Forints can be considered as a reasonable amount, as for example a little more than a decade earlier, in 1495, at the time of the episcopate of Tamás Bakócz at Eger, the complete renovation of the roof structure of the bath building cost 9 Forints. These luxurious commodities could rarely reach the circles of peasantry. We can assume, that a more significant back-and-forth cultural transfer could occur during the one and a half centuries of cohabitation. However, our research has also shed light on some interesting

¹ Sugár 1965:121–122.

additions from this aspect too. There is a splendid diversity of motifs in Hungarian folklore, including textile- or also furniture ornaments. The stylized depiction of flowers, plants, existing in the direct environment is quite frequent. Rose, lily and tulip – due to their symbolic meaning – were especially favoured. During the 19th Century, the latter was considered as a flower belonging to the most ancient layer of our folk culture, and was omnipresent in every area of folklore, from ornamental arts to folk songs. Its ancient nature is certified by painted church ceilings that include the year of creation – such as the one in Szentsimon, which dates back to 1650. In a similar manner, during the 19th Century, it became a national flower in several European countries – for example in France and Germany. As a matter of fact, the first examples of these plant species arrived into Western- and Central Europe through the Turkish conquests of the 16th Century. According to a German researcher, the first bulbs were brought in from Turkey by an imperial steward in 1556.² In Hungary, its first appearance in the courts of nobility dates back to the 17th Century, but it only became a widely grown flower of rural gardens in the 19th Century.

However, we cannot find a satisfying answer from these centuries, since ethnography is a relatively young discipline, thus comprehensive research are only available from the 19th Century on. Concerning the previous time periods, only sporadic data and resources are available. In connection with the Turkish system of relations regarding textiles, we can highlight the research of Gertrud Palotay, who, in her writing entitled “Ottoman-Turkish elements in Hungarian embroidery” declared that “Concerning all of the components of Turkish embroidery, shapes had the strongest and most permanent influence on Hungarian embroidery. The layout of the patterns carries less Turkish influence, while in colouring and technique its extent is even smaller.”³

Amongst the oldest surviving textiles, there are several Lord’s Table cloths. In Heves County, one of the oldest identifiable pieces was brought to the Museum of Scientific Collections of the Reformed College of Sárospatak from Tiszanána.⁴ The tablecloth that was made around 1670, was specified as a Turkish work piece. Old Hungarian embroidery was called as Lord’s embroidery from the beginning of the 20th Century. Several layers of cultural heritage was present in embroidery culture that reflected centuries of tradition. Trousseau for example, was made the same way for noble maidens as for rural girls. The only difference was that according to the higher social class, the former was consisted of more ornamented, richer pieces, and made of more expensive materials. The same was true concerning the tablecloths that were created for parochial use, which became representative symbols of the community, as they were seen by the

²„Die außerordentliche Beliebtheit der Tulpe resultiert nicht allein aus dem Siegeszug dieser Blume durch Europa, nachdem sie der kaiserliche Gerandte Busbecq 1556 aus der Türkei mitgebracht hatte und auch nicht aus ihrer Stellung als Spekulationsobjekt im 17. Jahrhundert im Holland wo man 1635 1330 Gulden für eine Zwiebel zahlte Ritz 1974: 196.“

³ Palotay 1940: 62.

⁴ Scientific Collections of the Reformed College of Sárospatak SR F 1965.23.

whole congregation. Lord's embroidery was influenced by the stitches that the young men – longing to be admitted into the sewing guilds – saw during their learning trips, and also by pattern guides that were already marketed in Western Europe during the Renaissance era. These were supplemented by the ancient Hungarian set of motifs and the eastern, for example Turkish influences. In turn, Lord's embroidery had a significant influence on folk embroidery; several researchers share the opinion that the latter facilitated the survival of the former. A very common motif of these was the depiction of pomegranate; there is a Lord's Table cloth artefact from Poroszló, Heves County, supposedly of Turkish origin, but at the same place, Sára Simon, wife of the Vicar Sámuel Igaz also created a tablecloth embroidered with silver yarns in 1743, whose central lines are also ornamented with pomegranates.⁵

We have available data from Heves County, which confirm that for example in Eger, significant numbers of Turkish population remained in the city following the recapture of the castle in 1687. There was a treaty in connection with the surrender that followed the blockade of the castle. It guaranteed that the Turkish inhabitants that remained in Eger could keep their houses and goods – and this agreement was in fact kept. The related research give report about 51 families, which meant approximately 300 people.⁶ Several families kept their name: Ali, Bajzát, Basa, Bégé, Csausz, Hamza, Kara etc., others changed it to Borbély, Csernei, Czifra, Deák, Egri, Farkas, Fekete, Hartyáni, Horváth, Lakatos, Murányi, Pap, Porkoláb, Pusztai, Szécsen, Szinai, Török, Varjas, Váradi etc.

Upon the investigation of Turkish influences, the cross-cultural mediator role of this population cannot be ignored from this point on. The diocese was able to return its headquarters to Eger after the departure of the Turks. Bishop György Fenesei arrived from Kassa at the 21st of March, 1688, however, the church banner, which should have been carried in front of the procession that marched to welcome the bishop was missing. The Jesuit arch-abbot procured a Muslim military flag from a new Turkish convert, István Kis, and had it altered in order to suit their purpose.⁷

Among the commodities of the provincial limitations from the 18th and the early 19th Century – in the section dealing with the pricing of weaver products – we read about cubits of "bulya" linen. Its appearance in the limitation of Heves County emphasizes the importance and sought-after nature of this product during this time period. The name "bulya" – as reference to the well-known textile of Eger – *originates* from the Serbo-Croatian word "*bula*", which means Muslim woman, aunt, or a female teacher in a Muslim school. It could be adopted from the Turkish word "*bula*" ~ "*bola*", which meant "aunt".⁸ According to the Hungarian Explanatory Dictionary, in Hungarian language it referred to a Turkish woman.

⁵Scientific Collections of the Reformed College of Sárospatak SR F 1977.9.

⁶Sugár 1980: 183–214.

⁷Szántó 1988: 108.

⁸MÉK 2004:157.

According to István Sugár's opinion "'bulya' was formed in Hungarian in order to refer to a certain kind of textile: since Turkish women were famous for their textile fabrics, and especially for their home-woven, very fine, transparent linen."⁹

At the same time, according to the Czuczor-Fogarasi dictionary, "bulya" refers to a Turkish word that signifies a woman abiding in a harem:¹⁰ "In Turkish interpretation, 'bulya' meant woman, who lives in a harem. However, it also referred to a fine white linen fabric, Turkish cambric, which is usually made in Eger."¹¹ We can also find literature that unambiguously refers to its Turkish origin: "According to the traditions of Eger, the Turks had a residual branch of industry here"¹². The price lists suggest that it represented a cheaper article amongst weaver products. It was made in wider (52 cm) and narrower (26 cm) variations; the former was woven with the inclusion of cotton, while the latter was produced without it. In the 18th Century, Eger spectacularly thrived, and by the end of the Century it became the sixth most populous settlement of the country. The ever growing population was attracted to the rising baroque city by the work opportunities. Upon arrival, the rural population settled in the suburbs that were established in the proximity of the city gates. The weaving of "bulya" linen became related to the peasant women living in the suburbs, at the so-called "hóstyas". However, this sought-after product soon became a victim of the jealousy of the weavers' guild, so its members also started its production – moreover, they endeavoured to expel peasant women from it. This controversy was brought in front of the Magistrate of the City of Eger in 1750, whose decision was preserved in the records of the Archives of Heves County.¹³ „*It is also allowed to weave for money, but to keep apprentices, and to teach the children of other people is forbidden by any means.*” “*The instruments... which the Masters has taken away from the women must be returned; and the detriments of those who were cut up have to be recompensed.*”

One and a half decade later, during the office of Bishop Károly Eszterházy, the conflicts heated up once again. The bishop took a stand against the complaints of the weavers' guild: “*It seems that they actually misinterpret the law articles of His Majesty so badly that they think they can forbid women from doing essential labour which could help them and their children too.*”¹⁴ In 1764, he ordered the weavers' guild to return the previously confiscated loom of a cobbler's wife with six children. The weaving of "bulya" linen disappeared from our sources by the middle of the 19th Century. Its production decreased, and later it also disappeared from the market.

⁹ Sugár 1985: 215

¹⁰ Czuczor - Fogarasi 1862: 837.

¹¹ Czuczor-Fogarasi 1862: 838.

¹² Barchetti 1804: 21.

¹³ MOL HML. V-I/a. 1750.126–127.

¹⁴ MOL HML V-I/b. 56. rsz. Nr. B. 56. rsz. Nr. B. XXXVIII. b. 109. Sugár 1985: 215–224.

Turkish Influences in the Rural Architecture of the County

In Heves County, in the region of Mátra and Bükk mountains and in its northern foreground, in an area occupied by "Palóc" ethnicity, a heating equipment was constructed indoors, whose fire was also fed from the room; while the smoke was also extracted indoors. The smoke extraction hole, or *chimney* – which provided some kind of primitive smoke extraction system, although it released the smoke into the attic instead of the outdoor environment – rose to widespread use in the 18th Century. At this time, the only place that had some kind of heating system, was the room, thus it functioned both as an accommodation and as a workplace. One side of the chimney rested at the mouth of the internally-fed furnace. It could be either cylindrical or square. A reconstruction of the former can be seen at the Palóc-House at Pákozd, the latter is conserved by Herman Ottó's report about Ostoros as well as his drawings. However, the surveys conducted at the middle of the 20th Century only give report about the shape of the walled hole leading to the attic – at Abasár it was round, while at Gyöngyöspata it was square – which reflects the original shape of the structure. Besides the generally known *chimney*, at Gyöngyöspata it was called as *kinolin*, at Bekölce and Parád *cseresnyek*, while at Sirok it was referred as *anyó*.¹⁵ There are some literature references to a horizontal chimney, which extracted the smoke to the court, however no remaining graphic representation or architectural example could be found about this.

At several places in Moldva and at the Balkan, the chimney is called *hózsály*, which originates from the Turkish *odzsag*. This smoke-extracting arrangement was quite widespread in Hungary too, in contrast with this name variant.

However, concerning the origin of the chimney, the directive of the Chamber Administration of Buda regarding the demolition of the Turkish-style and wooden smoke extractors („die alte türkische von holz auf geführte Rauchfang“) and the building of new, brick chimneys provides some interesting data.¹⁶

The *porch* was considered as a relatively new element of rural architecture in Heves County, which mainly reflected the influences of mansions, as well as the gentry class and the citizenry. There were visible endeavours for securing the protection of the walls against precipitation at smaller roof depths by the construction of the roof structure. In case of the Palóc-House, which was built in the second half of the 18th Century, the roof also serves as more than a half meter long eaves at the part looking at the yard. Also, the main façade was equipped with water-extraction hole. The building is a good example for a certain developmental phase of the porch. That is, because, after a certain depth – for static reasons – the eaves required some kind of support. The side-porches were created by the extension of the roof structure at the yard-side of the building. Subsequently-built, "joint" porches are quite rare. Besides side-porches, front

¹⁵ Bakó 1974: 226

¹⁶ MOL. Kamarai lt. Budai kamarai adm. Expeditionen, 1690. okt. 3.

porches also became quite widespread during the 19th Century. In the mountain area, the porch was called as “*ámbitus*”, “*ámbit*”; while in addition, the name “*gang*” was also in use at the southern areas. At first, the supporting structure was made of wooden beams; where bolster (Tarnabod), and bracket, pairle (Recsk) structural arrangements as well the combination of these (Átány) were both used. The pillar-like shaping of wooden beams was a favoured method, where these were carved to have a cylindrical shape. This required the use of a lathe, which facilitated the Dorian shaping of the column capital, and the cylindrical paring of the two pairles or supporting beams. These Dorian-shaped pillars were often whitewashed, to resemble the pillars seen at the manors.

Starting from the second half of the 19th Century, wooden pillars were replaced by stone columns. However, this transformation took place in a unique manner in this county. Although up north, the pillar of the Göböly-House at Mikófalva was made in 1846, still, at the southern parts of the county, the widespread use of stone outpaced the one at the excavation site among the mountains. The porch-pillars of Tiszanána, Sarud and Poroszló were made of the stone that came from the mines of Demjén and Tarnaszentmária, which was primarily due to the influences of the agricultural conjecture of Southern-Heves. At the northern areas, the unfavourable natural environment only facilitated a slower development of financial prosperity. From the beginning of the 20th Century, stone was in general use everywhere. Wooden pillars were more and more considered as indications of a modest financial position. At several places, wooden pillars were surrounded by reed, and then plastered and whitewashed, in order to attribute a stone-like look to them (Kömlő), but pillars were also made of loam, and then supplemented by stone column-heads and footings that were carved in stonemasonries. The pillars were usually whitewashed, and the footing was often painted to other – brown, red, etc. – colour. However, there are some villages, where the pillars also received ornamental painting (Boldog). County-wide, the column heads show remarkable diversity, which is well presented by the illustrations.

Only a fraction of the porches were characterized by standalone pillars. The majority of these were to be converted into closed premises somehow. The simplest way to do this was the connection of the wooden pillars with a thin, horizontal beam at the height of about 1 meter. The thus created armrest was used for example for the ventilation of bed-linen, or for the drying of rugs, etc. Building a fence or a breastwork between the pillars also became a regular habit. These structural arrangements completely separated the porch from the yard. The picket fence either stood directly on the ground, or it could receive a stone (Novaj) or plank (Poroszló) footing. Also, the picket fence could be completely omitted, and the whole breastwork could be constructed from the same materials – stone or loam – which were used for the building of the walls. In this case, the pillars either stood on the ground (Nagyvisnyó), or at the top of the breastwork (Mónosbél). Between the pillars, the bridging could be consisted of simple-, segment- or elliptical arches, or simple wooden beams. At several spots

in the county, for example at Mikófalva of Northern-Heves, *donkey-back arches* could also be seen. Donkey-back arch is a favoured Turkish motif, architectural arrangement. It can also be found at the Minaret of Eger.

The above thoughts clearly present the difficulties concerning the investigation of Turkish influences in folk culture. More than three centuries have passed since the large-scale encounter of Hungarian and Turkish population. The heritability of Hungarian folk culture has also left the traditional framework since the 20th Century. Such long-term, one-and-a-half century long coexistence of large-scale population left its marks not only on the Hungarian, but probably on the Turkish culture too. However, temporal distance makes it hard to find definite answers for the occurrent questions. Due to the constant cultural transformations, several phenomena can be only researched as historical categories. We can only trust that some excavated data from domestic, or maybe Turkish archival sources will provide new additions in the cultural heritage of both nations, concerning the (folk) impressions of this past encounter of cultures.

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