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AGENTS, CULTURAL DIPLOMATS, TRADITION-BEARERS.

CONFLICTS AND REPRESENTATIONAL SOLUTIONS IN THE HUNGARIAN GYÖNGYÖSBOKRÉTA FOLK MOVEMENT (1931–1948).

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Abstract and keywords (English)

Abstract

The symbolic power of folk culture has played a defining role in shaping Hungarian national identity for centuries. Even today, folk traditions remain a central element of Hungary's self-representation – whether in state ceremonies, international cultural forums, or the visual language of tourism. Following the First World War and the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary's cultural elite identified in the "timeless" traditions of the peasantry a symbolic foundation for national renewal. It was within this context that the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement emerged in 1931, quickly evolving into a nationwide cultural project. The movement not only preserved and staged folk traditions, but also reinterpreted, institutionalized, and infused them with political meaning – thus becoming more than a folkloric initiative. It played a key role in shaping national identity, cultural diplomacy, and heritage preservation.

This dissertation seeks to explore the true purpose of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement: how it transformed from a touristic attraction into a complex cultural instrument, and in what ways it contributed to Hungary's national self-image and international cultural presence. I analyze the movement at the intersection of three core dimensions – identity formation, cultural diplomacy, and heritage preservation – paying particular attention to how these functions reinforced or challenged one another. Through a historical overview supported by previously unpublished sources, the study offers a reassessment of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement's significance from the perspectives of dance history, social history, and heritage studies.

Keywords

Folk culture, cultural representation, cultural diplomacy, cultural heritage, folk traditions, nation-building, national identity, Hungary

Résumé et mots-clés (français)

« Agents, diplomates culturels, gardiens de tradition. Conflits et solutions de représentation dans le mouvement folklorique hongrois Gyöngyösbokréta (1931-1948) »

Résumé

La puissance symbolique de la culture populaire a joué un rôle déterminant dans la construction de l'identité nationale hongroise depuis des siècles. Encore aujourd'hui, les traditions populaires demeurent un élément central de l'autoreprésentation de la Hongrie – que ce soit lors de cérémonies d'État, sur les scènes culturelles internationales ou à travers le langage visuel du tourisme. À la suite de la Première Guerre mondiale et du traité de Trianon, l'élite culturelle hongroise a identifié dans les traditions « intemporelles » de la paysannerie un fondement symbolique pour la reconstruction nationale. C'est dans ce contexte qu'est né le mouvement Gyöngyösbokréta en 1931, qui s'est rapidement transformé en un projet culturel de portée nationale. Le mouvement n'a pas seulement conservé et mis en scène les traditions populaires, mais les a également réinterprétées, institutionnalisées et investies de significations politiques – devenant ainsi bien plus qu'une simple initiative folklorique. Il a joué un rôle clef dans la formation de l'identité nationale, la diplomatie culturelle et la préservation du patrimoine.

Ce travail de recherche vise à interroger la finalité réelle du mouvement Gyöngyösbokréta : comment est-il passé d'une attraction touristique à un instrument culturel complexe, et de quelle manière a-t-il contribué à la construction de l'image de soi nationale et à la présence culturelle internationale de la Hongrie ? L'analyse porte sur l'articulation de trois dimensions fondamentales – la construction identitaire, la diplomatie culturelle et la sauvegarde patrimoniale – en mettant en lumière les tensions ou les synergies entre ces fonctions. À travers une relecture historique fondée sur des sources inédites, cette étude propose une réévaluation de l'importance du mouvement Gyöngyösbokréta, en croisant les perspectives de l'histoire de la danse, de l'histoire sociale et des études patrimoniales.

Mots-clés

Culture folklorique, représentation culturelle, diplomatie culturelle, patrimoine culturel, traditions populaires, construction nationale, identité nationale, Hongrie

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1. Introduction

1.1 Focus and scope of the dissertation

Hungary's national identity has long been entwined with the symbolic power of its folk culture. Even today, folk traditions remain central to how the nation represents itself – whether at official state ceremonies, international cultural forums, or through the everyday visual language of tourism. In Budapest's most frequented districts, embroidered garments, folkloric motifs, and traditional souvenirs serve not only as markers of cultural continuity but as curated images of national heritage. This enduring presence is also institutionalized: numerous Hungarian folk practices are inscribed on UNESCO's Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage, including the internationally recognized Táncház-method as a model of best safeguarding practices. The national Hungarikum inventory similarly elevates elements of folk life as emblematic expressions of Hungarian culture.

This strategic association of folk culture with national essence is not a recent phenomenon. While scholarly and artistic interest in rural life emerged as early as the 18th and 19th centuries, it was in the aftermath of the First World War and the Treaty of Trianon that folk culture assumed a central role in redefining Hungarianness. In response to territorial loss and political dislocation, cultural elites turned to the perceived authenticity and timelessness of the peasantry as a foundation for national renewal. This quest for symbolic rootedness gave rise to an expansive movement – Gyöngyösbokréta – that elevated folk customs from lived practice to staged performance, from everyday tradition to national emblem.

However, this was far more than a simple initiative to collect and exhibit folk traditions. It became a complex cultural project shaped by competing interests, institutional frameworks, and ideological agendas. As such, its analysis requires more than an ethnographic lens alone. To understand the full scope and significance of this movement, it is essential to approach it from multiple perspectives.

During my MA studies in cultural heritage, I came to recognize that the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement was not merely a series of folkloric performances, but a complex cultural phenomenon operating across three interrelated domains: heritage preservation, identity construction, and cultural diplomacy. These three dimensions emerged as central analytical lenses through which the movement's deeper significance could be explored. This realization led me to formulate my core research questions: What was the actual aim of Gyöngyösbokréta? How did it evolve from showcasing folk traditions – sometimes perceived as touristic spectacles – into a multifaceted instrument of national identity, diplomatic messaging, and cultural preservation? And how did these roles interact, reinforce, or even

contradict one another? Ultimately, my study seeks to understand how Gyöngyösbokréta helped shape Hungary's cultural self-representation on multiple levels during the interwar period and beyond.

> „They sang and danced – the bokréta groups. Didn't they do anything else? To the superficial observer, no. However, anyone who gave it a little thought could undoubtedly notice that through the Hungarian songs and Hungarian dances, they successfully strengthened the Hungarian spirit."
>
> /Paulini Béla 1943: Az ország bokrétája. *Országépítés* 1 December 1943. p.6./

As the above quote illustrates, the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, which began in 1931, contributed to the construction of national identity. In the aftermath of the Treaty of Trianon, which resulted in territorial and population losses, the national identity of Hungary required a process of reconstruction. This task was partially addressed through the folk dance and customs performances organized by rural peasant groups, initially designed as a tourist attraction in Budapest. These performances soon evolved into a nationwide movement, which quickly gained political support, advocating for cultural superiority with an emphasis on folk culture. The movement's cultural-political involvement was multifaceted – ranging from participation in national political events to the redefinition of national fashion, national holidays, and the reinforcement of revisionist ideologies. As a result, the movement became the subject of subsequent criticism, with a particular focus on its political role.

However, what roles did the movement, and its participants actually play? To what extent were the peasants engaged in political activities? The primary criticism leveled against the movement, its political involvement – which is often evaluated through the lens of the socialist era and continues to be reflected in contemporary literature – has not yet been thoroughly examined.

In terms of national identity construction, the movement did not merely represent Hungarian folk-national culture domestically; it also played a crucial role in shaping the international image of the country. The peasants participating in Gyöngyösbokréta were often described as diplomats of Hungarian culture, with their mission being the global representation of the nation.

> „Diplomats travel and negotiate. They seek friends and find enemies. They proclaim peace and stir up discord. For us, Hungarians, there is little involvement in these crooked paths. We too send our envoys to distant foreign lands. Instead of traveling in well-cushioned, carpeted carriages, they make their journey on hard wooden benches, but even there they sleep better and dream more beautifully than the envoys of wealthy foreign countries, who are caught in their thoughts... […] The Hungarian »Gyöngyösbokréta« returned from London on Tuesday. They brought with them their experiences and memories of successes, but they left behind friends made through our kind's primal strength, our love for songs, and our eternal optimism."

/A mi követeink. *Kis Újság* 24 July 1935. p.5./

They were invited to numerous international engagements, representing Hungary at various dance festivals and politically significant events on seven separate occasions, and were even featured at receptions for foreign dignitaries. In my dissertation, I also aim to explore the image Hungary projected to the world through the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement: what the peasants' portrayal of the nation conveyed, and how folklore and dance were integrated into diplomatic receptions. This novel perspective unveils another facet of the movement's history, which is primarily recognized for its role in the preservation and presentation of (folk) traditions.

> „With respectful love and esteem, they preserve the intangible heritage left to him by their forefathers, the old Hungarian traditions of life, from which the urban mixed population can often easily free itself. It was named »Gyöngyösbokréta«, a solemn presentation of old Hungarian folk traditions, folk art, ancient dances, songs, and clothing."
>
> /Az ősi magyar szépségek nagy szloveszkói bemutatójára készül Léva. *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* 25 August 1935. p.13./

As evidenced by the above statement, the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement's primary objective was the preservation of folk dances, songs, and attire, all of which align with the broader concept of safeguarding "intangible heritage". Consequently, Gyöngyösbokréta can be regarded as an early initiative in the field of intangible heritage protection, underpinned by a well-defined set of principles centered around authenticity. The movement also played a pivotal role in the evolution of the Hungarian folk dance movement, particularly in relation to the folk-dance house movement starting in the 1960s. Its contributions were foundational, not only in preserving folk customs and dances but also in maintaining traditional attire. Despite this, there remains a notable lack of comprehensive studies addressing the dance-historical significance of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement – studies that could encompass the processes starting in the 19th century, interpreting the varied uses, transformations, and stage adaptations of folk dances as part of a broader, evolving historical narrative.

To shed light on these dimensions, I begin by presenting a thorough historical overview of the movement, incorporating previously unexamined sources that complement existing research. In doing so, I will also examine the movement's origins and its enduring influence, emphasizing its impact on Hungarian folk dance and, more broadly, on the broader cultural landscape. The subsequent chapters will analyze the movement through three lenses: its role in national identity formation, its use as a diplomatic instrument, and its contributions to heritage protection efforts.

By exploring these three distinct roles, I aim to answer the central question of what the mission and purpose of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement were. Furthermore, I will investigate how these roles interacted and influenced one another. Ultimately, the goal is to determine what the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement truly represented, what its objectives entailed, and how its brief existence – spanning just over a decade and a half – has contributed to a diverse array of academic disciplines. These include dance history, ethnography, sociology, rural studies, local history at both the village and regional levels, (rural) tourism, diplomatic history, Hungarian studies, literary studies, and the discourse on heritage protection.

1.2 Methodology

The methodological framework of this dissertation is interdisciplinary, drawing on theoretical perspectives and research methodologies from various academic disciplines to yield a comprehensive understanding of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement. The core of the research is rooted in ethnography, Hungarian studies (Hungarology), diplomatic history, and heritage protection, which are closely interconnected with theoretical frameworks from fashion history, the history of mentalities, and literary history.

A key aspect of the research is a comparative analysis of the heritage conservation principles of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement in relation to contemporary UNESCO-recognized heritage protection practices. This approach aims to illuminate the institutionalization of heritage preservation over time, as well as the mindset of the era regarding the preservation of folk traditions. By placing these two seemingly distinct approaches to heritage protection side by side, the analysis offers insights into how the concept of cultural heritage has evolved.

To investigate this evolution, I utilize a history of concepts methodology, which allows for a nuanced exploration of how key notions such as “authenticity,” “heritage,” and “Gyöngyösbokréta” have been understood and interpreted across different historical and political contexts. This approach is particularly useful in examining the debates and discourses surrounding the movement, providing a deeper understanding of its cultural and political implications.

In addition, I employ press and discourse analysis to explore the representations of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement in public discourse. These methods allow for the examination of how the movement was portrayed in the media and how its meanings and roles were constructed in public narratives, offering insight into its broader societal impact.

The theoretical underpinnings of the research are grounded in nationalism theories, the discourse surrounding heritage, and the positioning of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement within

international exchange networks. These frameworks help contextualize the movement within the broader history of nation-building and heritage preservation.

Moreover, participant observation plays a crucial role in research methodology. Through direct engagement with the ongoing Gyöngyösbokréta Festival in Vojvodina, I was able to observe the continuation of the interwar period movement and gain firsthand experience of its contemporary manifestations. During this event, as well as in the course of local historical research, I engaged with the communities' collective memory of the movement through interviews and informal conversations. This methodological approach allowed for a deeper, lived understanding of the movement's lasting impact and its relevance in the present day.

1.3 Sources

In my doctoral research, I investigate the history and social role of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, employing an interdisciplinary approach that incorporated a variety of source materials. To offer a comprehensive analysis, I drew from ethnographic, dance scientific, and musical references, while also addressing the political and diplomatic dimensions of the movement. Consequently, I carefully selected sources that reflected the breadth and complexity of this multifaceted phenomenon.

Throughout the course of my research, I consulted a range of documents, photographs, correspondence, and other materials related to the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement at several key institutions. Notably, I examined ethnographic and dance-scientific documents at the Ethnological Archive of the Hungarian Ethnographic Museum (Magyar Néprajzi Múzeum Ethnológiai Adattára) and the Library of the Hungarian Heritage House (Hagyományok Háza). The resources provided by the Institute of Musicology (Zenetudományi Intézet) were instrumental in exploring the role of folk music within the movement. Regarding the performing arts, the National Theatre History Museum and Institute's Dance Archive (Országos Színháztörténeti Múzeum és Intézet Táncarchívuma) offered valuable materials on the theatrical and dance elements of the movement.

The movement's role in tourism, particularly as a form of political propaganda, was investigated through documents housed at the Hungarian Museum of Trade and Tourism (Magyar Kereskedelmi és Vendéglátóipari Múzeum). Additionally, the National Archives of Hungary (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára) provided key official documents related to the formation, banning, and various decrees of the Bokréta Association, which were critical for uncovering the political aspects of the movement. I also analyzed reports and memoirs from the socialist era at the Open Society Archives, which provided insight into the

social and cultural dimensions of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement during the communist period.

Thanks to the French Government Scholarship (Bourse du Gouvernement Français), I was afforded the opportunity to conduct research in Parisian libraries and archives. The French Diplomatic Archive (Centre des Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères) yielded valuable documents not only on the organization of the 1937 performance in Cannes but also on the political context of Hungary at the time. These sources illustrated how French diplomats perceived various political events, such as the visit of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy to Budapest, and their views on Hungary and the St. Stephen's Week performances. These findings were supplemented by French newspaper articles, tourist publications, and books about Hungary, which provided insights into the French reception of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement and the broader historical context. In September 2023, as part of the Erasmus+ short doctoral research program, I conducted further research at the Archives Municipales de Cannes, which contributed significantly to the case study of the Gyöngyösbokréta's participation in the 1937 Cannes event.

In addition to archival research, I engaged in fieldwork at the Gyöngyösbokréta Festival in Vojvodina, a prominent annual folk dance and music event for the Hungarian minority in the region. This festival, which reflects the interwar legacy of the movement, allowed for participant observation. Through the use of questionnaires and interviews with organizers and participants, I explored the extent to which the heritage of the 1930s–40s movement is present in the festival and how its foundational role is communicated. In August 2024, I undertook research at the Institute for Hungarian Culture in Vojvodina (Vajdasági Magyar Művelődési Intézet) in Senta, the festival's organizer. I gathered materials from the institute's library and archive, as well as articles discussing the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement and the festival. I also conducted research at the Hungarian Folk Center of Vojvodina (Vajdasági Magyar Folklórközpont) in Subotica and carried out fieldwork in the four villages that participated in the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement. This included mapping material relics (such as flags and photographs) and conducting interviews with descendants of former participants, dance teachers, and local researchers. Furthermore, I explored documents related to the Hungarian Bread Festival in Subotica at the Historical Archive of Subotica (Szabadkai Történeti Levéltár) and the Subotica City Library (Szabadkai Városi Könyvtár).

As part of my fieldwork, I also conducted research in several former Gyöngyösbokréta towns, including Kalocsa, Mezőkövesd, Őcsény, Vitnyéd, and Tápé, where local dance group leaders and descendants of Gyöngyösbokréta participants provided invaluable assistance.[1]

A crucial source for my research was the movement's two journals, *Bokrétások Lapja* and *Hagyomány Szava*, which published articles and thoughts from the movement's leader, the bokréta leaders, and, at times, the participants. More broadly, Hungarian and international press articles played a significant role in my written sources, as they provided valuable insights into public perceptions of the movement.

In examining the press coverage of the Gyöngyösbokréta movement, it is essential to consider both the sources and their discursive frameworks. The journals directly affiliated with the movement – written and edited by Béla Paulini, its central organizer – offer unique and detailed insights. However, these texts must be approached critically, as they reflect the ideological standpoint of the movement's main architect. Similarly, much of the contemporary national press supported Gyöngyösbokréta, portraying it as a symbol of cultural vitality, national representation, and touristic appeal. At the same time, regional and independent journals often provided a more nuanced or even critical perspective, contributing to public debates and exposing internal contradictions. Following the dissolution of the movement and its official banning, references to Gyöngyösbokréta in the press and academic discourse became increasingly rare, and when mentioned, the tone was predominantly negative due to the ideological constraints of the period. Nonetheless, some scientific and local publications made efforts to acknowledge its historical and cultural significance, particularly in the context of dance history and local heritage. A turning point occurred in 1970 with Csaba Pálfi's publication, which marked the beginning of a scholarly reevaluation of the movement. This process was further advanced after the regime change of 1990, when a broader interpretative freedom enabled a renewed interest in the movement's role and legacy in both academic and regional contexts.

[1] In Kalocsa, Imre Romsics, a scholar specializing in the folk art of the Kalocsa region, provided critical data for this research, while in Érsekcsanád, librarian Róbert Kozma contributed valuable visual sources. During my research in Mezőkövesd, Ilona Csizmarikné Cservenyák facilitated an insightful tour, provided significant documents, and directed me to a memorial plaque erected in honor of Béla Paulini. The Matyó Museum in Mezőkövesd, with the assistance of Ilona Viszóczky and Beáta Búzás, contributed resources related to costume history and local history. In Őcsény, I had the privilege of examining the restored flag, a cherished relic still carefully preserved by the descendants of the 1937 Cannes delegation from Őcsény. This flag was presented as a gift to the participants by the festival committee of the French Riviera city. In Tápé, Mária Molnár provided essential literature, while József Lele, the nephew of the former bokréta leader, shared valuable insights regarding his family's heritage. In Vitnyéd, István Tóth and Kamillus Horváth, the son of bokréta leader Péter Horváth, offered significant information. Additionally, I had the opportunity to meet with Ilona Happ, the daughter of the Karád bokréta leader, József Happ, who kindly provided access to her father's correspondence and documents.

I also incorporated foreign newspaper articles in English, Italian, French, and Belgian newspapers into my analysis. For conceptual historical analysis, I consulted various general and specialized encyclopedias, while diaries and personal correspondence served as important ego-documents.

Given the representational nature of my research topic, special attention was paid to visual sources, which greatly contribute to understanding the symbolism and meanings associated with the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement. Access to these visual sources was critical for interpreting debates on authenticity. Newspaper illustrations and caricatures provided insight into how the movement was represented in the press, revealing the associations used to portray it. Photographs and newspaper images helped to construct a broader understanding of how peasants and bokréta groups represented themselves both as individuals and as collectives. One example of this is the "Paulini Album", held at the National Theatre History Museum and Institute's Dance Archive, which offers insights into the members, performances, and activities of each group through photographs, drawings, and newspaper clippings created by the peasants themselves. Additionally, media representations such as radio broadcasts and films – including promotional films, feature films, and newsreels – capture individual moments of the movement. Folk costumes, flags, guild sign boards, badges, and other symbols created by the movement (such as Klára Tüdős's Bokréta Dame dress) also hold significant symbolic value and were important for my analysis. The representations produced by both professional and amateur artists have further illuminated the movement's public image.

The diversity of sources used in my research introduced many new perspectives and included numerous previously unexplored materials. However, as I already mentioned, source criticism is essential, especially regarding both the press and written sources, as well as visual materials. For instance, many articles in the movement's journals and press publications were often written anonymously by Paulini himself, who was not only the leader but also a writer, cartoonist, and editor of the journals. These articles, therefore, must be considered as curated sources. Likewise, numerous daily press publications contained errors, some of which were later perpetuated by local historians and writers, contributing to the spread of inaccuracies in public understanding. Articles published after 1945, which were part of campaigns to discredit the movement, also require a critical approach, as their objectivity often misrepresents the movement's achievements. Nevertheless, these sources are valuable for illustrating the contrasting value systems of heritage preservation and national policy.

Many writings about the movement were authored by individuals personally involved with it. While Paulini's contributions are exceptional, the writings of other ethnographers, such

as Sándor Gönyey and István Volly, also reflect their involvement in the movement. These professionals participated in joint research, fieldwork, and had personal relationships with local participants, raising questions about objectivity. Similarly, local historical writings were often authored by former bokréta leaders or their descendants, which also calls into question their objectivity, even though these sources are unique and valuable.

A limitation of the visual sources is that much of the material is in black and white, and the staged photographs and films from the era complicate the reconstruction of the original dances and folk customs.

Overall, it can be said that the contemporary sources available to us offer contributions from various agents, but the movement's "main characters" – the peasants – are mainly represented through these sources. There is very little material that reveals how this social group, the bokréta peasants, on an individual or collective level, related to the movement's political involvement, how they perceived the celebrations, or how the movement influenced their lives. It is also important to note that the movement evolved rapidly during its brief existence, and the political and public life changes of the era significantly impacted its events and outcomes. As such, opinions, statements, and descriptions of the movement quickly lost relevance or underwent significant alterations.

1.4 Literature Review

The first notable work in the literature on the history of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement was published by art historian László Debreczeni (1903–1986) in 1956. Drawing on several important documents, Debreczeni highlighted the movement's role, emphasizing its significance in dance history. Additionally, he stressed the importance of conducting detailed research and analysis of the movement, as well as the work of its leader, Béla Paulini, beyond the negative aspects often attributed to it.[2] (To date, no comprehensive study has been undertaken on the work of Béla Paulini, and thus, in the chapter on the movement's history, I aim to provide a detailed examination of his life.) It took another fifteen years before the first major interpretive analysis appeared in 1970, written by dance historian and choreographer Csaba Pálfi (1928–1983).[3] This study was not only groundbreaking as the first comprehensive research on the movement, but it was also notable for its timely publication in *Tánctudományi Tanulmányok*, a period when discourse on the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement was predominantly negative, even among ethnographers. It is not incidental, therefore, that there was a considerable

[2] Debreczeni László 1956: A »Gyöngyösbokréta« aktáiból. In: *Táncművészeti Értesítő.* Magyar Táncművészeti Szövetség, Budapest. 99–104.
[3] Pálfi Csaba 1970: A Gyöngyösbokréta története. *Tánctudományi Tanulmányok* (7.) 115–161.

delay in research following the events of 1956 in Hungary. However, Pálfi conducted field research, including questionnaire surveys,[4] organizing his data into tables and conceptual units. A decade later, he revisited the movement, once again highlighting its positive contributions.[5] In a later study, he used the Transylvanian village of Kecsetkisfalud's bokréta group as a case study to explore its role and history.[6]

After a multi-decade hiatus, the volume *A Gyöngyösbokréta: Írások és dokumentumok a mozgalom történetéből* (The Gyöngyösbokréta: Writings and Documents on the History of the Movement), edited by dance historian Krisztina Dóka and folk-dance educator Péter Molnár, was published. This volume included works by Debreczeni and Pálfi, as well as Paulini Béla's 1937 piece *A Gyöngyösbokréta története* (The History of Gyöngyösbokréta), notes by ethnographers involved with the movement – such as Sándor Gönyey, Károly Viski, István Volly, and István Györffy – and a comprehensive bibliography of the movement. This collection contains the most important writings on the Gyöngyösbokréta and serves as a foundational resource for further research into the movement's history.[7] Of the editors, Dóka Krisztina has written extensively on the movement, presenting it in the context of Hungarian dance history and folk-dance studies in her various studies and doctoral dissertation.[8]

From the 2010s onwards, growing attention has been paid to the movement. In addition to Dóka's academic publications, dance-historical analyses have emerged. Dorina Szente's study examines Gyöngyösbokréta as a life-reform movement, focusing on the difficulties of transmitting and presenting traditions.[9] In a comparative analysis, anthropologist László Kürti explored the political aspects of both the Gyöngyösbokréta and the dance house movement of the 1970s.[10] Several studies have been written by Henrik Kovács and István Megyeri, with

[4] BTK ZTI Akt.910 Pálfi Csaba: Kérdésgyűjtemény a Gyöngyösbokréta kutatáshoz.
[5] Pálfi Csaba 1980: A Gyöngyösbokréta és a hagyományőrzés napjainkban. *Táncművészet* 1980. (5.) 4. 15–16.
[6] Pálfi Csaba 1981: Kecsetkisfalud a Gyöngyösbokrétában. *Tánctudományi Tanulmányok* (11.) 317–331.
[7] Dóka Krisztina – Molnár Péter (szerk) 2011: *A Gyöngyösbokréta. Írások és dokumentumok a mozgalom történetéből.* Folkszemle (http:// folkradio.hu/folkszemle/gyongyosbokreta02/index.php#_fitnl – accessed: 2025. március 5.)
[8] Dóka Krisztina 2011: *A magyar táncfolklór átalakulása (1896–1945).* Doktori disszertáció, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Bölcsészettudományi Kar. Budapest.; Dóka Krisztina 2013: Néptáncaink a korai mozgóképeken. *Folkmagazin* 2013. (20.) 6. 35.; Dóka Krisztina 2022: A népi kultúra képének megszerkesztése Magyarországon az 1920-as években. In: *Múltidéző. A Magyarságkutató Intézet Kiadványai (54).* Magyarságkutató Intézet, Budapest. 279–320.
[9] Szente Dorina 2017: A Gyöngyösbokréta mozgalom rituális világa: a hagyomány őrzésének árnyoldalai. In*:* Németh András – Vincze Beatrix: *Továbbélő utópiák – magyar életreform-törekvések és nemzetközi recepciós hatások.* Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest. 141–159.
[10] Kürti László 2022: A táncház és a Gyöngyösbokréta, visszatekintés két nemzeti művészeti mozgalomra. *Szellem és Tudomány* 2022. (13.) 3–4. 133–160.

Kovács exploring the movement's impact on the dance arts of the era,[11] while their joint study examines the movement's social connections, media reception, and relationship to high art in the period.[12] Megyeri, in an unpublished manuscript, demonstrates the movement's impact at the micro-level through the Bokréta communities in the Kalocsa-Sárköz region.[13]

Local historical research focusing on individual villages or regions began in the 1980s. Kamillus Horváth documented the history of the Vitnyéd Bokréta group, led by his father, with several family members also involved in the group.[14] József Lele, similarly, researched and wrote about the Tápé group, drawing from family connections.[15] Imre Töreki (1940–2024), the former leader of the Szany Bokréta Folk Dance Ensemble, published the history of the Szany group in 2001.[16] Sándor Balázs Kovács, a folklorist, examined the local emergence and impact of the movement in the Sárköz region,[17] ethnographer and museum director Imre Romsics has conducted decades-long research on the history of the Kalocsa and surrounding area's Bokréta participants.[18] In 2009, local cantor and historical researcher Péter Benkó published an eight-part series in a local newspaper, presenting the history of the Rimóc Bokréta group through local sources.[19]

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[11] Kovács Henrik 2013: A Gyöngyösbokréta hatása a kor táncművészeire és társadalmára. In: Németh András – Pirka Veronika (szerk.) 2013: *Az életreform és reformpedagógia – recepciós és intézményesülési folyamatok a 20. század első felében.* Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest. 246–266. 246–247.

[12] Kovács Henrik – Megyeri István 2012: Népnevelés a néptánc eszközeivel. A népművészet és a Gyöngyösbokréta ideológiája. In: Bolvári-Takács Gábor – Fügedi János – Mizerák Katalin és tsai (szerk.) 2012: *A hagyományos tánckultúra metamorfózisa a 20. században.* A Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola kiadványsorozata IV. Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola, Budapest. 70–80.

[13] Megyeri István 2009: A Gyöngyösbokréta és hatása a hagyományra a Kalocsai-Sárköz két településén, Uszódon és Géderlakon.

[14] Horváth Kamillus 1980: *A vitnyédi Gyöngyösbokréta története.* Apáczay Csere János Tanítóképző Főiskola, Győr, 1980.

[15] Lele József, Ifj. 1981: A tápai bokréta. In: *A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve.* 1980–81. 191–218.; Lele József, Ifj. 1983: Gyöngyösbokréta Tápén. In: *Múzeumi Kutatások Csongrád Megyében* 35–41.

[16] Töreki Imre 2001: *A Szanyi Bokréta Néptánc Együttes 70 éve. Történeti áttekintés Szany múltjáról.*)

[17] Balázs Kovács Sándor 2006: A Tolna megyei Sárköz és rokon településeinek kapcsolatrendszere a 17–20. században. In: Gaál Attila (szerk.) 2006: A Wosinszky Mór Múzeum Évkönyve 28. Szekszárd. 171–204.; Balázs Kovács Sándor 2013: A sárközi parasztság szabadidős tevékenységei a 19–20. században. In: Gaál Zsuzsanna – Ódor János Gábor (szerk.) 2013: A Wosinszky Mór Múzeum évkönyve 35. Wosinszky Mór Megyei Múzeum, Szekszárd. 305–376.

[18] Romsics Imre 1999: *Kalocsa Anno*. Kalocsai Múzeumbarátok Köre, Kalocsa. 222.; Romsics Imre 2021: Egy város, három bokréta. Identitáskeresés a közös eredet és az egységes népélet csapdájában. In: Vasvári Zoltán (szerk.) 2021: *„Madaradnak fogadj engem…" Tanulmányok Lengyel Ágnes tiszteletére.* Palóc Múzeumbarátok Egyesülete, Balassagyarmat. 231–250.

[19] Benkó Péter 2009: A rimóci Gyöngyösbokréta-csoport története 1934. és 1938. között. 1. rész – Bevezetés. *Rimóci Újság* 2009. (15.) 2. 6–7.; Benkó Péter 2009: A rimóci Gyöngyösbokréta-csoport története 1934. és 1938. között. 2. rész – A Gyöngyösbokréta-mozgalom általános története. *Rimóci Újság* 2009. (15.) 3. 8–9.; Benkó Péter 2009: A rimóci Gyöngyösbokréta-csoport története 1934. és 1938. között 3. rész – A rimóci un. „Piroscsizma ünnepély''. *Rimóci Újság* 2009. (15.) 5. 6–7.; Benkó Péter 2009: A rimóci Gyöngyösbokréta-csoport története 1934. és 1938. között 4. rész – A rimóci un. „Piroscsizma ünnepély". *Rimóci Újság* 2009. (15.) 6. 12.; Benkó Péter 2009: A rimóci Gyöngyösbokréta-csoport története 1934. és 1938. között. 5. rész – Az „újfajta fékető". *Rimóci Újság* 2009. (15.) 7. 14.; Benkó Péter 2009: A rimóci Gyöngyösbokréta-csoport története 1934. és 1938. között. 6. rész – A csoport vezetője: Radványi Lajos kántortanító. *Rimóci Újság* 2009. (15.) 8. 10.; Benkó Péter 2009: A

These scholarly works, though concentrated on specific geographical areas, collectively form a crucial body of research that contributes to the broader understanding of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement's impact and legacy.

The earliest scholarly works on the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement hold particular significance, as they emerged in the communist era, a context where both academic (especially ethnographic) discourse and the contemporary press were constrained in their ability to address the movement openly or positively. Due to political sensitivities and the shifting cultural climate, Gyöngyösbokréta was often absent from public narratives or referenced only obliquely. As such, these pioneering studies not only preserve valuable historical insights but also reflect the complexities of engaging with a phenomenon that, for a time, hovered on the margins of what was academically or publicly permissible to acknowledge.

Although the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement represents only one of many cultural initiatives of the interwar period and has largely remained outside the scope of mainstream historical analyses of the Horthy era, I argue that its inclusion is crucial for achieving a more nuanced understanding of the epoch. In this effort, I engage critically with foundational historical works by Balázs Ablonczy,[20] Catherine Horel,[21] Ignác Romsics,[22] and Levente Püski,[23] not as mere context but as discursive fields that have shaped how the interwar period is narrativized. Theories of nationalism by Benedict Anderson,[24] Eric Hobsbawm,[25] Anne-

rimóci Gyöngyösbokréta-csoport története 1934. és 1938. között. 7. rész – A csoport vezetője: Radványi Lajos kántortanító. (2.rész) *Rimóci Újság* 2009. (15.) 9. 12.; Benkó Péter 2009: A rimóci Gyöngyösbokréta-csoport története 1934. és 1938. között. 8. rész – Vendégszereplés Bujákon. *Rimóci Újság* 2009. (15.) 12. 10.

[20] Ablonczy Balázs 2008: Védkunyhó. Idegenforgalmi fejlesztés és nemzetépítés Észak-Erdélyben 1940 és 1944 között. *Történelmi szemle* 2008. (50.) 4. 507–533. 524–525. ISSN 0040-9634 [A shelter. Travel development and nation-building in Northern Transylvania between 1940 and 1944.]; Ablonczy Balázs 2015: *Trianon-legendák.* 2. kiadás. Jaffa Kiadó. 5.; Ablonczy Balázs 2020: "It Is an Unpatriotic Act to Flee": The Refugee Experience after the Treaty of Trianon. Between State Practices and Neglect. *Hungarian Historical Review* 2020. (9.) 1. 69–89. 69.; Ablonczy Balázs 2020: *Ismeretlen Trianon. Az összeomlás és a békeszerződés történetei, 1918–1921.* Jaffa Kiadó, Budapest.; Ablonczy Balázs 2022: *Go, East! A History of Hungarian Turanism*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. 5.

[21] Horel Catherine 2010: Multi- és plurikulturalizmus városi közegben. Nemzeti és társadalmi sokszínűség a Habsburg Monarchia városaiban, 1867–1914. *Aetas* 2010. (25.) 2. 190–201.; Horel, Catherine 2021: *Histoire de la Nation Hongroise. Des premiers Magyars à Viktor Orbán. Éditions.* Tallandier, Paris.; Horel, Catherine 2011: *A középnek mondott Európa. Habsburgoktól az európai integrációig, 1815–2004.* Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest.; Horel, Catherine 2014: *L'amiral Horthy. Le régent de Hongrie 1920–1944.* Perrin, Paris.

[22] Romsics Ignác 2017: *A Horthy-korszak.* Helikon Kiadó, Budapest.

[23] Püski Levente 2010: *A Horthy-korszak 1920–1941*. Kossuth Kiadó, Budapest.

[24] Anderson, Benedict 1983: *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso, London. 106.

[25] Hobsbawn, Eric – Ranger, Terence 1983: *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Marie Thiesse,[26] Stefano Bottoni,[27], Gábor Gyáni,[28] provide interpretive tools for reading Gyöngyösbokréta as a performative space of national belonging, while János Gyurgyák[29] and the proceedings of the International Congress of Hungarian Studies offer critical insight into the intellectual frameworks underpinning Hungarian national ideologies. However, these paradigms, while illuminating, tend to subsume local cultural practices into macro-historical abstractions. The challenge is thus to examine how movements like Gyöngyösbokréta negotiated, embodied, and at times subverted these national narratives on the micro level.

A central problematic is the deployment of folklore as both cultural capital and political instrument. The long-standing scholarly debate between népiesség and folklorizmus – intensified throughout the 20th century and further complicated by the entrance of Anglo-American folklore theory – offers a conceptual backdrop against which the cultural labor of Gyöngyösbokréta may be reassessed. Here, the contributions of Gábor Barna,[30] Linda Dégh,[31] Zoltán Fejős,[32] David Hopkin,[33] Kincső Verebélyi,[34] and Regina Bendix[35] serve not only as sources but as interlocutors in a broader epistemological question: whose knowledge counts as authentic, and under what conditions is "folk" culture authorized?

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[26] Thiesse, Anne-Marie –Norris, Sigrid 2003: How countries are made: The cultural construction of European nations. *Contexts* 2003. (2.) 2. 31.; Thiesse, Anne-Marie 2019: *La fabrique de l'écrivain national. Entre littérature et politique.* Éditions Gallimard, Paris.; Thiesse, Anne-Marie 2023: Writers and nations: a cultural and political relationship. (Opening lecture.) Symposium Words and Violence: Literary intellectuals between democracy and dictatorhip (1933–1945). Paris, October 25, 2023.

[27] Bottoni, Stefano 2002: The debate over Hungarian national unity from Trianon to the „Status Law" (1920-2001). The Contours of Legitimacy in Central Europe: New Approaches in Graduate Studies. Oxford: European Studies Centre, St Anthony's College, 2002. 1–11.; Bottoni, Stefano 2015: *A várva várt Nyugat.* MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi Intézet, Budapest.

[28] Gyáni Gábor 2008: Budapest – Túl jón és rosszon. *A nagyvárosi múlt mint tapasztalat.* Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest. 101.; Gyáni, Gábor 2021: *A Nation Divided by History and Memory. Hungary in the Twentieth Century and Beyond.* Routledge, London.

[29] Gyurgyák János 2007: *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok. A magyar nemzeteszme és nacionalizmus története.* Osiris, Budapest.

[30] Barna Gábor 2011: Népi kultúra – nemzeti kultúra – nemzeti identitás. A népi kultúra szerepe a nemzeti kultúra és a magyar identitás megszerkesztésében. Kultúra, nemzet, identitás. In: Jankovics József – Nyerges Judit (szerk.) 2011: A VI. Nemzetközi Hungarológiai Kongresszuson (Debrecen, 2006. augusztus 23–26.) elhangzott előadások. Nemzetközi Magyarságtudományi Társaság, Budapest.

[31] Dégh Linda 1988: Folklór és etnikai azonosságtudat. *Világosság* 1988. (29.) 8–9. 590–596.

[32] Fejős Zoltán 1991: Népművészeti divat a múlt század végén és a századelőn. In: Hofer Tamás 1991: *Népi kultúra és nemzettudat. Tanulmánygyűjtemény.* Magyarságkutató Intézet, Budapest. 143–156.

[33] Hopkin, David 2012: Folklore beyond Nationalism: Identity Politics and Scientific Cultures in a New Discipline. In: Timothy Baycroft – David Hopkins (ed.) 2012: *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century.* Leiden, Boston.

[34] Verebélyi, Kincső 2001: L'art populaire et la patrimonialisation en Hongrie aux XIXe et XXe siècles. *Parcours anthropologiques* [En ligne], 1. 2001. 1–10.

[35] Regina Bendix 1997: *In Search of Authenticity. The Formation of Folklore Studies.* University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.; Regina Bendix 1989: Tourism and Cultural Displays: Inventing Traditions for Whom? *The Journal of American Folklore 1989*. (102.) 404. 131–146.

The movement's transborder ambitions and minority outreach necessitate engagement with minority studies, especially the work of Nándor Bárdi, who problematizes the entangled relationship between cultural policy and ethnic identity. [36]

Similarly, the movement's aesthetic politics – particularly its mediation of folk dress – require a reading not merely through ethnographic lenses but through cultural semiotics. The studies of Mária Flórián,[37] Ágnes Fülemüle,[38] Katalin F. Dózsa,[39] and Marianna Bagyinszky[40] help unpack how traditional attire was recontextualized as both rural fashion and national iconography.

While dance historiography is not central to this dissertation, it intersects crucially with broader questions of heritagization, performance, and the construction of authenticity – concepts which demand engagement with both UNESCO's heritage frameworks and the critical heritage studies of Laurajane Smith,[41] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett,[42] the volume edited by Péter György, Barbara Kiss, and István Monok,[43] and studies by Gábor Sonkoly.[44] The symbolic economy of authenticity – as articulated by Somogy Varga[45] and Dimitrios Theodossopoulos[46], and the classic critiques of Alan Dundes[47] and William S. Fox[48] and Dean MacCannell[49] – is especially salient, given the movement's oscillation between grassroots tradition and state-orchestrated spectacle. Fruzsina Cseh's study, which explores the concept of

[36] Bárdi Nándor 2004: *Tény és való*. Kalligram, Pozsony.; Bárdi Nándor 2012: Sajtóterjesztés és társadalomszervezés. Kende Ferenc a vajdasági magyar közművelődés szervezésében (1935–1940) *Egyén és közösség*.; Bárdi Nándor – Filep Tamás Gusztáv – Lőrincz D. József (szerk.) 2014: *Népszolgálat. A közösségi elkötelezettség alakváltozatai a magyar kisebbségek történetében.* MTA Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont Kisebbségkutató Intézet – Kalligram Könyvkiadó, Budapest.

[37] Flórián Mária 2001: *Magyar parasztviseletek.* Széchenyi Nyomda Kft., Győr.; Flórián Mária 2005: A kiskőrösi gúnya. In: Vargyas Gábor (szerk.) 2005: *EthnoLore 22.* 223–256.; Flórián Mária 2011: Életmód, szemléletmód és a módi változása. *Néprajzi Értesítő* 2011. (93.) 9–16.

[38] Fülemile Ágnes 2020: Social Change, Dress and Identity. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 2020. 1. 107–186.

[39] F. Dózsa Katalin 1989: A Muskátli című kézimunka újság és a magyaros öltözködési mozgalom az 1930-as években. *Ethnographia* 1989. (100.) 329–341. 340.; F. Dózsa Katalin 1997: Budapest – divatváros. A magyar divattervezés rövid története. *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából* 1997. 89–110. (26.)

[40] Bagyinszky Marianna 2011: Pesti „magyaros" divat a két világháború között. *Honismeret* (39.) 3. 61–63.

[41] Smith, Laurajane 2006: *Uses of Heritage.* Routledge, London. 2006.; Smith, Laurajane 2011: Heritage and its Intangibility. In: Ahmed Skounti – Ouidad Tebbaa (ed.): *De l'immatérialité du patrimoine culturel.* UNESCO, Marrakech. 10–20.

[42] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara 1995: Theorizing Heritage. *Ethnomusicology* 1995. (39.) 3. 367–38.

[43] György Péter – Kiss Barbara – Monok István (szerk.) 2005: *Kulturális örökség – társadalmi képzelet.* Országos Széchényi Könyvtár – Akadémiai Kiadó Rt., Budapest.

[44] Sonkoly, Gábor 2006: "Cultural Heritage Building in Hungary: Models and Approaches". *Martor* 11: 9–12.; Sonkoly, Gábor 2009: Léptékváltás a kulturális örökség kezelésében. *Tabula* 12 (2):199–210.

[45] Somogy Varga Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal.

[46] Dimitrios Theodossopoulos: Laying Claim to Authenticity: Five Anthropological Dilemmas 3

[47] Alan Dundes 1985: Nationalistic Inferiority Complexes and the Fabrication of Fakelore: A Reconsideration of Ossian, the Kinder- und Hausmärchen, the Kalevala, and Paul Bunyan. *Journal of Folklore Research* 1985. (22.) 1. 5–18.

[48] William S. Fox 1980: Folklore and Fakelore: Some Sociological Considerations. *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1980. (17.) 2–3. 244–261. 252.

[49] Dean MacCannell 1983.

authenticity in the context of Hungarian folk art, provides a relevant lens for understanding the movement's role in this process.[50] The notion of "fakelore", in this sense, is not simply a polemical term but a methodological challenge: how do we trace the borders between invented tradition and cultural continuity?

Finally, the movement's external projection must be understood within the evolving discourse of cultural diplomacy and soft power. Rather than forcing Gyöngyösbokréta into rigid diplomatic typologies, I draw on recent conceptual advances by Elisabet Carbó-Catalan and Diana Roig-Sanz,[51] and the special issue on cultural diplomacy in *Contemporary European History*,[52] and Matthieu Gillabert, who interrogates the overlap and divergence between diplomatie culturelle and diplomatie publique.[53] The historical work of Zsolt Nagy, particularly his pioneering analyses of Hungary's interwar cultural diplomacy, is indispensable here – not least because he is among the first to situate Gyöngyösbokréta within this international representational framework. His work provides not a conclusion but an invitation to deepen the analysis of how cultural forms travel, translate, and acquire new meanings across borders.[54]

In all these sections, I have sought to engage with the cited works not only as theoretical frameworks but also through a comparative approach, using their case studies and examples to highlight points of similarity and divergence with the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement.

1.5 Key concepts and translations

Although this dissertation focuses on a topic that is deeply rooted in Hungarian culture, I aim to position it within an international academic context. The culturally specific nature of many key concepts poses challenges in translation. For this reason, I begin by providing context for certain foundational terms whose English equivalents are either non-existent or potentially misleading.

Since the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement also addressed international audiences and staged performances abroad – with multilingual brochures and documentation – the movement's name and institutional label already existed in English at the time as Pearly

[50] Cseh, Fruzsina 2022: Reviving Authenticity through Traditional Crafts and Folk Art in Hungary. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 2021. (66.) 2. 581–618. 590.
[51] Elisabet Carbó-Catalan – Diana Roig-Sanz 2022: Swinging Between Culture and Politics: Novel Interdisciplinary Perspectives. In: Idem 2022: *Culture as Soft Power Bridging Cultural Relations, Intellectual Cooperation, and Cultural Diplomacy.* Walter De Gruyter GmbH, Berlin – Boston. 1–20.
[52] *Contemporary European History* Vol. 30, Iss. 2, (May 2021): 149-163.
[53] Gillabert, Matthieu 2017 : Diplomatie culturelle et diplomatie publique: des histoires parallèles ? *Relations internationales* 2017. (169.) 1. 11–26.
[54] Nagy Zsolt 2017: Great expectations and interwar realities. Hungarian cultural diplomacy, 1918–1941. Central University Press, Budapest.

Bouquet or Hungarian (National) Bokréta Association. I consistently use these historical English designations where available.

However, in translating certain terms related to the movement – especially those not previously rendered in English – I offer explanatory translations.

First, some terminology associated with Gyöngyösbokréta:

The rural groups that participated in the Budapest productions and later became members of the Bokréta Association were referred to as bokréta. According to Paulini's directive, Gyöngyösbokréta referred specifically to the central event held in Budapest, while bokréta denoted the participating group itself. In Hungarian, the phrase bokréta csoport (bokréta group) is considered tautological and thus avoided. Nonetheless, for the sake of clarity in English, I refer to them as "bokréta groups". Similarly, I use 'bokréta leaders' (vezetők) and 'bokréta members' (bokréta tagok) to describe the group leaders and participants. The members of these groups were recruited from among the peasantry, and the movement's leader – along with the press of the era – emphasized that these were not professional actors or trained dancers, but rather farmers and villagers performing their own cultural heritage. As such, they are often referred to as "bokréta peasants." (bokrétás parasztok)

The category of "peasant," (paraszt) however, is complex and historically contingent. The term encompasses diverse social realities across different periods and regions. I therefore provide clarification on how I use "peasantry" and "peasants" in this dissertation, to reflect the historically and culturally specific meanings embedded in Hungarian usage.

While I will provide a definition of the social attributes of the peasantry as a social phenomenon of the era, my aim is also to demonstrate—through press coverage and various citations – how this category was used in its contemporary context. In the fields of social science and history, key terms such as "peasantry" (parasztság) often function as both categories of social and political analysis and as categories of social and political practice. "Categories of practice" refer to the experience-near concepts developed and used by social actors in everyday life, in contrast to the more abstract, analytical categories used by scholars. In the context of Gyöngyösbokréta, the term "peasantry" operates as a category of practice: the media and propaganda of the period employed it positively, emphasizing the Hungarian peasantry as a culturally rich and ancient stratum of society. They were portrayed as the authentic bearers of national tradition and as representatives of a timeless Hungarian cultural identity.

When discussing the "bokréta peasantry", it is crucial to recognize that we are speaking of approximately one hundred communities. Therefore, when this dissertation addresses topics such as the heritagization of folk culture, the structure and impact of the Gyöngyösbokréta

program, its conclusions must be understood as referring specifically to these participating localities – not to the Hungarian peasantry as a whole. While the public performances of Gyöngyösbokréta often reshaped perceptions of traditional rural life – leading to a symbolic identification of all peasant communities with the costumed performers – the actual effects of the movement were uneven, even within bokréta communities.

It is difficult to quantify how many individuals were affected or mobilized by the movement in each village, as this varied from place to place. Typically, 8 dancing couples (approx. 16 person) were active members (with some turnover over time), and their families and acquaintances were to - varying degrees- brought into the sphere of influence of Gyöngyösbokréta activities. This effect was particularly pronounced in villages where rural tourism emerged as a result of the movement. However, the intensity of this development ranged considerably: in some locations, only a few isolated events took place; elsewhere, recurring events attracted numerous visitors; and in certain cases, guesthouses were built to accommodate sustained tourist interest. The local impact was also shaped by whether a village had already achieved recognition for its folk culture prior to Gyöngyösbokréta – as it was the case in Mezőkövesd or Kalocsa – or whether the movement itself served as the primary catalyst for such visibility and new cultural activity.

Another important reference in discussions of peasant or folk culture is the concept of the *nép*. The term *nép* is very problematic, as it can refer both to the folk and to the Hungarian people as a whole – a dual meaning that appears in several of the cited sources. For this reason, the Hungarian terms *nép* (people) and *népi* (literally from/by the people, popular, folk) and their derivatives resist direct translation, due to their layered connotations in various contexts. Many key concepts in this dissertation are derived from this root – such as *népi kultúra* (folk culture), *népi írók* (in English used as populist writers), *néptánc* (folk dance), and *népszokás* (folk customs). These, too, require contextual explanation and will be elaborated upon where relevant.

In Hungary, the question of how to define and interpret concepts such as the people (*nép*) and folk culture (*népi kultúra*) has been the subject of an ongoing debate for more than a century. This long-standing and often ideologically charged discourse has produced a complex and shifting conceptual framework.

At the heart of this century-long Hungarian debate lies the fundamental distinction between *népiesség* (folkishness, the imitation of folk) and *folklorizmus* (folklorism). This is not merely a matter of terminology, but a deeper cultural and social tension that revolves around

the role of elite or urban culture in relation to peasant folklore: does it represent it faithfully, creatively reproduce it, or inevitably reshape and reinterpret it?

Népiesség, particularly in the 19th century, was characterized by the incorporation of selected and stylized folk elements – often aesthetically transformed and removed from their original contexts – into bourgeois or literary culture. This mode of engagement typically served nationalist or romantic agendas and rarely sought to preserve the authenticity or lived reality of peasant traditions. In contrast, folklorismus, especially as it emerged in the second half of the 20th century, has consciously aimed to retain the original functions, meanings, and social contexts of folklore. Rather than elevating folk culture to the level of high culture, folklorism often seeks to reposition it within contemporary society while maintaining its internal logic and cultural autonomy.

Thus, the central issue is not simply how folklore is used by more dominant cultural forms, but whether it can remain a dynamic and autonomous tradition – or whether it risks becoming fixed, canonized, and stripped of its variability and context. This distinction between népiesség and folklorism remains a key point of contention in Hungarian intellectual and cultural life, with significant implications for how folk culture is preserved, interpreted, and socially situated today.[55] As scholars such as Tamás Hofer and Péter Niedermüller have shown, the very visibility of rural traditions was the outcome of deliberate cultural and political choices. What came to be regarded as emblematic of national heritage often reflected the values and perspectives of those doing the collecting, interpreting, and institutionalizing.[56]

Having already touched the peasantry and the *nép* (people) as a social group, another key concept to consider is the nation and national identity. Although the major era of the funding nation-building had passed by the time of the emergence of Gyöngyösbokréta, the (re)construction of national identity was prompted by the consequences of the Treaty of Trianon. Central European nations – whose histories have been marked by discontinuity even in modern times – gained political consciousness in the nineteenth century but lacked the historical and institutional foundations necessary to establish stable nation-states. Nations such as the Hungarians, Czechs, and Poles often imagined territorial claims that exceeded the political realities of their time, and this persistent gap between imagined and actual borders resulted in chronic crises of national identity.[57] Following this logic, I do not offer a theoretical definition of the nation here; rather, I aim to demonstrate – through the principles of the

[55] Mikos 2023: 40–44.
[56] Hofer 1989: 7–14.; Niedermüller 1989: 15–23.
[57] Le Rider 2011: 15–31.

movement – how the national community was imagined and who was included in this (re)construction of national identity.

To illustrate these concepts, I rely frequently on quotes, all translated by me.

2. The path leading up to the birth of Gyöngyösbokréta

The movement examined in this dissertation, as the title suggests, emerged and developed during the interwar period. But what specific factors contributed to or enabled its formation? This first major section offers an analysis of the historical context and antecedents that gave rise to the Gyöngyösbokréta movement. (Chapter 2) Following this, I will present an overview of the movement's origins, key events, and public reception (Chapter 3), followed by an examination of its socio-cultural context and the broad network of actors involved in Gyöngyösbokréta performances (Chapter 4). This will provide the foundation for analyzing the movement through the lenses of tourism, nation-building, diplomacy, and heritage preservation in the subsequent chapters.

2.1 Historical background

As part of the Habsburg Empire, Hungary was a multicultural kingdom composed of various national groups and governed at multiple levels under Austrian authority. Following the First World War and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Kingdom of Hungary – long a constituent of the Empire – emerged as a sovereign state.[58]

Following the war, Hungary descended into political chaos marked by foreign occupations, the 'red terror' of the Soviet Republic, and the 'white terror' of counter-revolutionary forces. Amid this turmoil, the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic was declared, and Charles IV attempted unsuccessfully to reclaim the throne—neither regime gaining recognition from the Entente powers.[59] During this period, Miklós Horthy (1868–1957), former admiral and commander-in-chief of the National Army, emerged as a key counter-revolutionary figure. On 16 November 1919, he entered Budapest on horseback in a symbolic show of power.[60] On 1 March 1920, the National Assembly elected Horthy as Regent, despite his lack of political experience, granting him partial sovereign authority and international recognition necessary for initiating peace negotiations.[61]

Hungary suffered severe territorial and demographic losses as a result of the Treaty of Trianon, forfeiting 71% of its territory and 64% of its population. The drastic demographic shift

[58] Ablonczy 2020b.; Horel 2010: 190–191.
[59] Püski: 2010.
[60] Romsics 2001: 130.
[61] Püski 2010.

raised concerns about long-term population decline.[62] Following the establishment of the new borders, the newly formed Hungarian state confronted also an immense lack of essential resources. Particularly, a majority of its forests and salt production were situated beyond the new borders.[63] The railway lines were severed by the borders, resulting in increased transportation complications.[64] A significant number of refugees – around 400,000 – also arrived from the annexed territories.[65] Conscious of the impossibility of reconciling ethnographic, economic and strategic bases for delimitation, the principal Allied Powers required of certain States who had profited by the peace settlement, that they should undertake to guarantee the freedom and rights of national minorities included within their frontiers.[66]

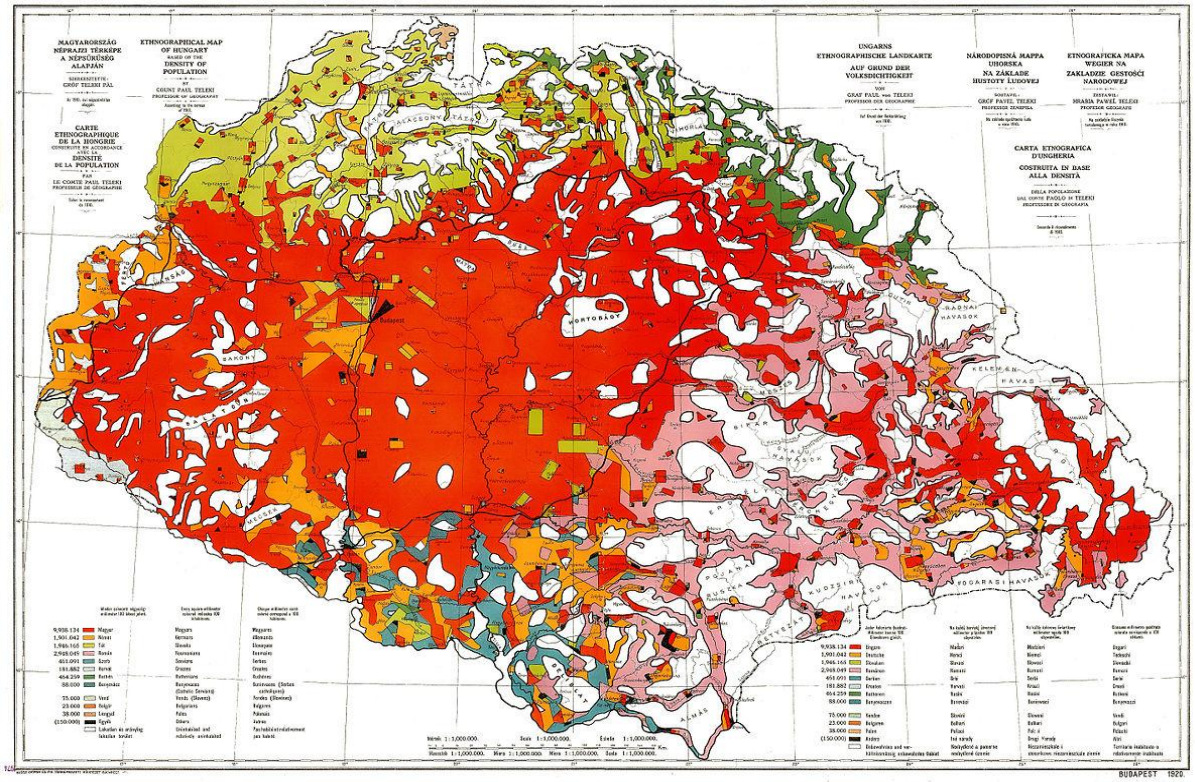

Fig. 1. "Carte rouge". Ethnographic map of Hungary, based on the density of population according to the census of 1910. The Hungarian population is indicated by red on the map, while the border established by the peace treaty is highlighted in black.

During the peace conference, the Hungarian matter was not considered one of the most significant problems, and the majority of decisions regarding sanctions against Hungary were made without the involvement of the Hungarian representatives.[67] Despite the Hungarian scholars' diligent research and presentation of proposals supported by maps, their suggestions

[62] Gyáni 2021: 42.
[63] Romsics 2017.
[64] Czeferner – Nagy 2020.; Nagy 2001: 162.; Tordai 2012.; Zsákai 2020: 6.
[65] Ablonczy 2020a: 69.
[66] Booth 1929: 318–319.
[67] Ablonczy 2020b.; Deák 1942: 29.

for changes were rejected at the peace conference. Instead, the borders were decided mainly based on (economic, transport, strategic) interests of the successor states, rather than considering national sovereignty factors.[68] (Fig. 1.)

In his statistical analysis, Béla Tomka shows that the peace treaty did not have the negative economic consequences in the medium and long term that are often assumed.[69] On the other hand, research performed to mark the centenary of the ratification of the peace treaty has revealed that the Trianon decision continues to have a significant influence even after more than a century: it persists in Hungarian cultural memory as the nation's greatest tragedy, and it is also reflected in political discussions.[70] Balázs Ablonczy, a researcher studying the Trianon Peace Treaty and its associated memory, highlights the significant role of Hungarians living outside the country's borders in the ongoing narrative of suffering. This connection between the present and the past remains a challenging aspect to reconcile with.[71]

During the period between the two World Wars, this was a fresh and sorrowful experience. The political system of the Horthy era can be described as "limited, meaning it incorporated both authoritarian aspects and bourgeois parliamentarism". During the period of 1920 to 1944, a system of multi-party parliamentary democracy was in place, which was comparable to the dualist period but was undemocratic in its institutional structure.[72] According to statistical data, the population of Hungary experienced a growth from 7.9 million in 1920 to 8.6 million in 1930, as reported by the 1930 census. Approximately 2/3 of the entire population resided in rural areas, while around 1/3 lived in urban areas. The proportion of the population that was truly urban could not have been much higher than 25%, given that nearly 2 million individuals, or 21.8% of the population, resided on an agricultural farm, or estate, despite the fact that the majority of them were administratively urban. Budapest, the capital, has achieved a population of 1 million. These statistics indicate the significant source of friction of the period, notably the agrarian issue, which encompassed the peasantry's demand for land, the surplus agricultural labor, and the underdeveloped infrastructure in rural areas, particularly villages and farming regions. The gravity of the situation was intensified by the fact that based on the 1920 census data, approximately 55.7 percent of the population, equivalent to around 4.5 million individuals, were engaged in various agricultural activities for their livelihood.[73]

[68] Segyevy 2016.; Püski 2010.; Kenényfi 2021: 169–194.
[69] Tomka 2020: 1–19.
[70] Egry 2022: 123–142.
[71] Ablonczy 2015: 5.
[72] Romsics 2001: 34.
[73] Romsics: 2017.

Regarding religious affiliation, the Catholic faith was predominant among the Hungarian population, accounting for 65% of the total. Approximately one in five Hungarians identified as Reformed, while 6% adhered to the Lutheran/Evangelical church. Additionally, almost 5% of the population identified as Jewish.[74]

In politics, the concept of revision was predominant. This was also the focus of domestic and educational policy, as well as international relations. The shift towards the far right and the adoption of a pro-German strategy starting in the 1930s were guided by the idea of territorial reunification.[75] This had a significant influence on daily life. The Hungarian society regarded the terms of the peace treaty as a temporary situation, with the objective of promptly reuniting with the Hungarians living in the annexed territories.[76]

A wide spectrum of symbols emerged during the 1920s to materialize the revisionism. One instance of this may be seen in the *No! No! Never! (Nem!Nem!Soha!)* slogan, the Hungarian Creed, and the monuments dedicated to the irredentist national flag (országzászló) found in multiple locations of the country. (Fig. 2.)



Fig. 2. Kiskunhalas Heroes Square, National Flag and Trianon Monument 1938. Gali/Fortepan

In the inter-war period, the questions "who is a Hungarian?" and "what is a Hungarian?" were particularly acute as certain fundamental points of reference were blurred.[77] The self-representation of the period generated discussions on how the Hungarian nation should portray itself, leading to issues with historical continuity, urban versus rural identity, and the influence of both Eastern and Western cultural heritage. The cult of Saint Stephen, who established the

[74] Kollega-Tarsoly (szerk.): 2000.
[75] Püski: 2010.
[76] Romsics 2020: 189.
[77] Horel 2021.

Kingdom of Hungary, plays a pivotal role in self-representation by promoting Hungarian unity,[78] although his character is usually associated with the West, with Western Christianity.[79] As Hungarian revisionism is based on the territorial integrity of the Royal Hungary, the lost territories were considered to belong to the Saint Crown of Stephen and therefore inalienable.[80]

Disillusionment resulting from war defeats, revolutions, refugees, and occupations had a significant role in causing a growing belief that trying to catch up with the West and adopt European-style modernization was futile. Instead, people started to refocus their attention towards the East, seeking connections and kinship. This Turanian ideology endures in the collective consciousness and regularly resurfaces when the pendulum swings between disappointment with the West and nostalgia for a fantasized East. This Eastern ideal also became a major focus in Hungarian public intellectual life during that period.[81]

The implementation of revisionism and the subsequent policy based on it demonstrated effectiveness, but only for a short period. As a result of the Vienna decisions made in 1938 and 1940, the country was able to temporarily reclaim almost one-third of the regions that had been annexed, with the help of Italy and Germany. However, the 1920 borders were ultimately restored by the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty after the Second World War.[82]

The Horthy era concluded with Hungary's involvement in the Second World War, a political swing to the Right, a series of offenses and deportations targeting the Jewish population, and the subsequent German invasion in 1944.[83]

Horthy resigned his position as head of state and designated Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the Arrow Cross party who had consistently allied with the Germans, as his successor. Hungary was also the scene of conflict, and following the arrival of Soviet forces, the communist takeover occurred in 1945.[84]

2.2 Antecedents/Forerunners

Simultaneously with the pursuit of national independence and the investigation and documentation of folk art (both tangible and intangible), the deliberate advancement of autonomous Hungarian art commenced. From the late 18th century forward, there were efforts

[78] Lukács 2021: 5.
[79] Nagy 2017: 78.
[80] Horel 2021.
[81] Ablonczy 2022: 5.; Horel: 2021.
[82] "Hungary subsequently recovered about one-third of the area it had lost in 1920 (not counting Croatia) and more than five million of its previous inhabitants, accomplishing this in four distinct phases. Among these, around 50% were of Hungarian descent, 20% were Romanians, 10% were Russians, 8-9% were South Slavs, and the remaining population consisted of Germans and Slovaks. The percentage of Hungarians decreased from 93% in 1930 to 77%." Romsics 2020: 189.
[83] Romsics: 2017.
[84] Kollega-Tarsoly (szerk.) 2000.

to enhance national identity, with a particular focus on incorporating folk art. These issues were heightened around the Millenium festivities (1000th anniversary of the foundation of Hungary, 1896) and following the Trianon peace (The agreement that ended World War I, mutilating Hungary and imposing heavy sanctions, signed in 1920).[85] In the sections to come, I will attempt to elucidate the factors that led to the creation of Gyöngyösbokréta, including the demonstrations and festivities that showcased folk culture or rural traditions. Within this context, there exists a significant chronicle of peasant theatre, wherein religious or theatrical performances were practiced by groups of peasant origin. Additionally, I will illuminate the evolution of folk shows arranged at national or international exhibitions, international expositions and provide a concise overview of the role of ethnographic professionals in promoting folk shows.

In subsection 2.2.1 I will outline the increasing incorporation of folk art into the Hungarian national cultural canon, a process that gained momentum from the mid-19th century onwards. Ethnographic research played a critical role in this development, not only through the collection and documentation of folk traditions, but also through the institutional frameworks – such as the Museum of Ethnography – that shaped public understanding and influenced cultural policy. Ethnographers and their affiliated institutions functioned as key mediators, transforming localized rural practices into emblematic symbols of national identity.

In subsections 2.2.2–2.2.5, I examine the ways in which folk traditions were transferred from their local rural contexts to the national stage. A particular focus is placed on the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, which involved the active participation of peasants who presented their own community's customs, dances, and costumes. This initiative was unique in that it emphasized the embodied representation of folk culture – peasants were not merely symbolic of tradition but were positioned as its authentic bearers.

The significance of this lies not only in the cultural representation of artifacts – costumes, landscapes, or rituals – but in the presence of the peasant themselves as cultural agents. While it is important to note that these participants did not represent the entire peasant class, which was itself internally diverse and politically contested, Gyöngyösbokréta framed them as authentic transmitters of heritage. This attribution of authenticity had far-reaching consequences: it shaped national identity discourses both within Hungary and in the international arena.

[85] Mezei 2018: 80–81.

To contextualize this phenomenon, I trace earlier Hungarian initiatives that staged peasant/farmer performers and traditions. These include smaller-scale and short-lived productions in which rural participants were invited to perform on (urban) stages. By examining the institutional context, organizational structures, and reception of these early initiatives, I aim to show how they anticipated certain aspects of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, while operating under distinct cultural logics and frameworks. This trajectory culminates in the folk play *János Háry*, discussed in section 2.2.6, which served as a direct forerunner of the Gyöngyösbokréta performances and marked a pivotal moment in the aesthetic and ideological reinterpretation of rural Hungarian performers on stage.

2.2.1 Incorporating folk traditions into national culture

The construction of national cultures in modern Europe has frequently entailed the strategic incorporation of folk traditions into dominant cultural narratives. From the early 19th century onward, emerging nation-states actively sought cultural symbols that could evoke antiquity, continuity, and legitimacy. In Hungary, this search increasingly focused on rural life and the peasantry, where selected elements of folk culture were reframed as embodiments of national character. It was during this period that the foundational components of modern Hungarian identity took shape: the cultivation of a national language, Hungarian-style dress – often signaling political allegiance – and the elevation of oral traditions, such as folk tales, ballads, and melodies, into the realm of national literature.[86]

What began as ethnographic interest gradually evolved into a cultural and political project – the nationalization of folk culture. Through stylization and reinterpretation, vernacular practices including costume, decorative arts, ritual customs, and vernacular architecture were transformed into aesthetic and symbolic capital. Certain geographic regions came to epitomize this curated national heritage. The Great Hungarian Plain (Alföld), with its emblematic figures – csikós (horse herdsman), gulyás (cattle herdsman), and betyár (outlaw or highwayman) – and its archetypal landscapes of puszta and tanya, was imagined as the locus of a specifically Hungarian historical experience, evoking associations with freedom, Eastern origins, and pastoral heroism.[87]

In parallel, regions such as Kalotaszeg (Țara Călatei) and Székelyföld (Szeklerland or Székelyland) were incorporated into the symbolic geography of the nation as idealized "folk landscapes," marked by formal coherence in costume, architecture, and decorative traditions.

[86] Barna: 2011.
[87] Dóka 2022: 300.

Kalotaszeg in particular became a focal point of ethnographic and aesthetic interest in the final third of the 19th century, with its embroidered textiles and dress items achieving national visibility. Following this, the role of Mezőkövesd (Matyóföld) grew substantially in the early 20th century. Its visually elaborate *matyó* costume gained popularity in exhibitions, tourism, and state representation, particularly after the loss of Transylvania.[88]

The institutionalization of Hungarian ethnography advanced in tandem with these developments. The Ethnographic Museum in Budapest, founded in 1872 and hosting permanent exhibitions from 1898, became a key center of cultural authority. In 1890, the Hungarian Ethnographic Society launched *Ethnographia*, the central scholarly journal of the field, which remains active today. Systematic studies of Hungarian folk customs and culture proliferated, culminating in the encyclopedic publication *A magyarság néprajza* (1933–1937). Scholars of this encyclopedia (e.g. Zsigmond Bátky, István Györffy, Károly Viski, and Zsigmond Szendrey, Sándor Gönyey, Zoltán Kodály) were central figures in these efforts.[89] Each contributed to the documentation and interpretation of ritual and performative traditions and later played instrumental roles in shaping the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, which formalized folk performance as a mode of national representation.[90]

Thus, the incorporation of folk culture – whether in stylized or more authentic forms – has long been a constitutive element of national culture, manifesting across diverse domains from language to decorative arts and culminating in the construction of symbolic national landscapes. Ethnography played a central role in curating and legitimizing this cultural image. From the perspective of this dissertation, it now becomes essential to examine how this culture was translated onto the stage, and how it ultimately reached the point at which its original bearers – the peasant communities – began to perform and represent their own traditions in public cultural forums.

2.2.2 Folk plays and peasant actors, folk customs on stage

> "When delving into the history of Hungarian acting, we consistently come across evidence that proves the Hungarian people have always had a fondness for theatre. The relationship between the Hungarian people and theatre, just as the lives of rural people were shown on stage in folk plays, throughout time, theatre – especially recently – has become integrated into the lives of the village people."[91]

[88] Fejős 1991: 143–156.
[89] Bátky – Győrffy – Viski: 1933.
[90] Barna: 2011.; Kutatástörténet. In: Paládi-Kovács (szerk.): 1990.

[91] Tamás 1939: 229.

– states a 1939 article on the relationship between the Hungarian people and theatre. The idea of presenting religious mystery plays with peasants in Hungary was inspired by the Oberammergau Passion Play. The medieval-origin, long-lasting mystery play was widespread in Western Europe, among which the one performed in Oberammergau, Germany, was the most famous, dating back to 1634.[92] In the German-Austrian cultural sphere, similar passion plays were popular, resulting in the preservation of several Bavarian and Tyrolean passion plays. The Austrian provinces and the German-speaking regions of Czechoslovakia also had their own passion plays, and the German-speaking population of Hungary also preserved such plays.[93] In 1900, a passion play was performed at the Városligeti Színkör /City Park Theater Company/ in Budapest, following the example of the Oberammergau tradition. This play was adapted for the Hungarian stage.[94]

The first institutional presentation of folk plays took place in Budapest at the Budai Népszínház /Buda Folk Theater/ from 1861 onwards.[95] However, it can be considered that the itinerant actors who travelled to villages[96] and the performance of similar folk plays at some distinguished balls served as precursors to this.[97] The significance of the Budai Népszínház /Buda Folk Theater/ lies in its contribution to the availability of Hungarian-language theatrical performances in Budapest, allowing audiences to enjoy plays not only in German but also in Hungarian. At that time, however, original Hungarian folk plays were still missing, the folk character was generally compensated for by the actors' performance,[98] with the members of the 'people' only appearing on occasion during mass scenes. After the closure of this Népszínház /Folk Theatre/, folk plays were performed at the Nemzeti Színház /National Theatre/: works by great Hungarian writers were presented, incorporating many folk elements and the processing of folk customs, in accordance with the spirit of the time.[99] From the end of the 19th century, theatres made efforts to include as many folk plays as possible in their repertoire, for which they even announced competitions.[100] At the turn of the century, Hungarian dances also appeared on stage as interludes to Budapest operettas and folk plays.[101]

[92] Fenyves – Pethő 2017: 102.; M. Tóth 2015: 25.; Szerdahelyi (szerk.) 1984: 529.
[93] Dömötör 1936: 42–44.
[94] *Pesti Hírlap* 1900. szeptember 25. 5.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1900. október 5. 5.; Pintér 2013: 426.
[95] Schöpflin (szerk.) 1919: 242–243.
[96] Tamás1939: 229.
[97] Zsoldos 1936: 8.
[98] Pukánszkyné Kádár 1979: 10.; 14.
[99] Tamás 1939: 231.
[100] *Magyar Polgár* 1874. október 3. 3.
[101] Flórián – Paládi-Kovács (szerk.) 2009: 625.

Under such conditions, a writer conceived an inventive notion: the peasant theatre. Starting in 1890, young author Zsigmond Justh (1863–1894) conducted experiments with a peasant theatre in his countryside home in Pusztaszenttornya.[102] Justh personally instructed the peasants in the plays after conducting thorough research on Hungarian peasant morals and their way of life.[103] Aside from his own literary pieces, theatrical plays such as Molière's comedy "The Imaginary Invalid" were staged starting in 1892, with the intention of cultivating the rural population. During his time in Paris, he became aware of the serf theatres and the factory workers' play through his Russian and French acquaintances. However, his contemporaries also noted that he drew inspiration from the renowned Oberammergau Passion Play.[104] Regrettably, the performances were limited to a few seasons, since this distinctive endeavor concluded in 1894. Nevertheless, it was unrivalled throughout its era.[105] The foreign visitors appreciated this unique initiative more than the local residents, leading to a series of French and German officials visiting the country theatre to observe the peasants' performances.[106]

Although it deviates somewhat from traditional folk plays and peasant theatre, the 1911 Izabella Ball is an important milestone in the staging of popular culture and the turn towards folk art. (Fig. 3.)



Fig. 3. Izabella Ball in the Opera House, 1911.

The Izabella Ball was held on February 11, 1911, at the Opera House, including a theme focused on the Mezőkövesd rural wedding tradition.[107] The event took place under the patronage of

[102] Czóbel 1973: 61.
[103] Elek 1973: 81.; Szabó 1973: 95–96.
[104] Dede 2005: 238.
[105] Schöpflin (szerk.) 1929: 168–169.
[106] Rózsa 1973: 69.; Verner 1973: 50.
[107] *Magyarország* 1911. február 12. 13.

Archducess Izabella (1865–1931),[108] and was organized as part of the Széchenyi balls. These events were annually arranged with a distinctive theme such as *One Thousand and One Nights* or Biedermeier. However, the most remarkable one was the Mezőkövesd wedding.[109] This event was orchestrated by the most eminent individuals from the nation and the elite members of society in the capital.[110]

The most exclusive rank of the aristocracy was present at the ball,[111] where the "Mezőkövesd wedding presented by amateur aristocrats in peasant costumes".[112] Prior to the ball, a dress rehearsal took place,[113] "during which couples from Mezőkövesd came to instruct the traditional dances and customs."[114] (Fig. 4.)

In the performance, the distinguished participants portrayed the traditional customs in the folk costumes made by the Matyó[115] people (of Mezőkövesd) just for this occasion,[116] while the other dignitaries appeared in Hungarian-style decorated clothing.[117] The newspapers also highlighted the original set designs, which were borrowed for the occasion from the museum of Miskolc, where folk art from Mezőkövesd was displayed.[118] The main objective of the ball was to emphasize the development of folk art and cottage industry.[119] The ball proved morally and financially favorable,[120] attracting immense interest from domestic circles, as well as guests and journalists from Vienna and other foreign countries.[121] A certain amount of the profits was dedicated to support the cottage industry.[122]

However, a key issue persists: to what extent did the rise of the cottage industry actually help the peasants of Mezőkövesd? Was it a genuine advancement that improved their condition, or merely a grandiose display without substantial impact?[123] From the perspective of the Gyöngyösbokréta, it is noteworthy to observe the presentation of a traditional custom in its

[108] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1911. február 11. 14.
[109] *Nemzeti Újság* 1929. január 13. 20–21.
[110] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1911. január 13. 12.
[111] *Pesti Hírlap* 1911. február 12. 13.
[112] *Világ* 1911. február 12. 10.
[113] *Pesti Hírlap* 1911. január 27. 15.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1911. január 31. 13.; *Magyarország* 1911. február 3. 11.
[114] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1911. február 8. 3.
[115] Matyó: „Roman Catholic community in and around the town of Mezőkövesd in north-eastern Hungary [whose folk art] is characterized by floral motifs that are found in flat-stitch embroidery and ornamented objects". (https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/folk-art-of-the-matyo-embroidery-of-a-traditional-community-00633 accessed: 2024. június 9.)
[116] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1911. február 11. 10.
[117] Nagy 1911: 8.
[118] Fügedi 1989: 317–318.
[119] *Az Újság* 1911. február 26. 36–37.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1911. november 26. 12.
[120] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1913. december 18. 8.
[121] *Magyarország* 1911. február 12. 13.
[122] *Magyarország* 1911. február 16. 8.
[123] Kresz 1952: 25–26.

authentic attire – in this case, as an aristocratic artistic expression where the peasants had a subordinate part, yet it was nevertheless a remarkable accomplishment for its time. “Now, during the Gyöngyösbokréta’s time, it is difficult to comprehend the level of excitement that was experienced when witnessing the presence of the exceptionally stunning aristocratic and gentry girls adorned in their vibrant traditional peasant dresses from Mezőkövesd, accompanied by their esteemed young companions.” – peruses a 1940 article which reflects on the Isabella Ball as a precursor to the Gyöngyösbokréta.[124] Even in the 1930s, the time when the Gyöngyösbokréta was first introduced, the staging of folk customs was not immediately self-evident. The examples provided here, although the list is not comprehensive, demonstrate that there were some attempts to stage these customs. However, there have been only a few and often short-lived initiatives.



Fig. 4. Peasant people of Mezőkövesd at the ball. *Vasárnapi Újság*, 1911, no. 58, 8:150. Photo: Rudolf Balogh

The Matyó wedding gained significant popularity during the period, particularly as one of the main attractions at the Millennium Exhibition. However, for many decades, it was predominantly depicted on film as a quintessential representation of Hungarian peasant culture.[125] Following its remarkable triumph, a comparable gala took place in Transylvania, graced by the presence of the noble families from the area.[126] In 1925, skaters showcased the performance at the ice rink in the City Park,[127] while in 1926, a unique Matyó wedding presentation was planned at the National Human Welfare Expo (Embervédelmi Kiállítás) with

[124] Tóth 1940: 8.
[125] *Nemzeti Újság* 1927. október 30. 14.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1928. május 12. 5.; *Eger* 1930. március 5. 3.; *Az Újság* 1935. szeptember 25. 11.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1935. szeptember 25. 11.; *8 Órai Ujság* 1936. február 1. 10.; *8 Órai Újság* 1936. február 1. 10.
[126] *Székely Napló* 1911. október 21. 2.; *Székely Napló* 1911. október 29. 2.
[127] *Új Barázda* 1925. január 24. 3.;

the residents of Mezőkövesd themselves.[128] Subsequently, we will witness these locals reenacting the performance on the stage of the Gyöngyösbokréta.

The subsequent phase in the staging of the mystery rites with peasant actors was the Passion Play staged in 1922 in Mikófalva, near the town of Eger.[129] The remarkable aspect of the 200-member production, aside from the fact that it consisted entirely of farmers, was its five-hour duration.[130] A magnificent stage was constructed for the performance, adorned with sets crafted by renowned artists, who were also engaged in the instructional process.[131] Nevertheless, its lifespan was brief, spanning only two seasons,[132] while comparable endeavors were undertaken in Hungary. The production followed the routine of the Oberammergau Passion Play, just as other local projects at that time.[133] In 1925, Imre P. Szóka, a Dominican monk, instructed industrial peasants in Vasvár on *The Mysteries of the Mass (Los misterios de la misa)*,[134] a work by the Spanish author Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681).[135] As reported by the press, the group had previously staged the play numerous times in various towns throughout the Transdanubian region and on their own stage, but there was no sustained continuation.[136]

2.2.3 Displaying rural customs at exhibitions: world's fairs, the 1896 Millennial Exhibition in Budapest

Meanwhile, folk art was regularly exhibited internationally, with world's fairs serving as a platform for such presentations. International exhibitions aimed to showcase not just impressive economic accomplishments but also the distinctive qualities of a nation. Historian Gábor Klaniczay explains that in the 19th century, there was a movement among romantic nationalists to seek out traditional folk culture as a counterbalance to modern industrial civilization. This search for values in folk culture was seen as a utopian and somewhat revolutionary endeavor, and it became a central goal in the cultural and political movements of the 19th and 20th centuries.[137] Consequently, the urban citizen reacquainted himself with rural culture, from which he obtained a sense of balance: traditional objects from the countryside began to emerge in the homes of the middle class, and also had an impact on applied art and architectural styles

[128] *Miskolci Napló* 1926. június 18. 7.
[129] Tamás 1939: 233.
[130] Kállay 1934: 320.; Németh (szerk.) 1930: 545.
[131] Balogh 2004: 4–43; Fejős 2002: 725–727.
[132] Kállay 1934: 320.; Galambosné Riskó 2018: 132–133.
[133] *Magyar Jövő* 1922. április 19. 4.
[134] Katona 2021: 377–398.
[135] Tamás 1939: 233.
[136] Novák 1926: 6.; Tamás 1925: 6.
[137] Klaniczay 2003: 18.

of that era.[138] It swiftly evolved into a component of self-expression.[139] During this era, there was a prevailing tendency in Europe to embrace folk art and the peasantry in different ways, but with some delays, due to economic and societal factors.[140]

As part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Hungary's self-representation at world's fairs was greatly influenced by its efforts for independent presentation. The first London Great Exhibition in 1851 witnessed a strong manifestation of this aspiration, despite the fact that at that time Hungarians were not yet able to exhibit independently, just after the suppressed Hungarian revolution against the Austrians in 1848/49.[141] The first occasion that Hungary received its own stand was in 1862, also in London, where photographs showcasing Hungarian folk costumes and peasant scenes were also included.[142] However, this did not yet signify an independent presence, as even at the 1867 Paris World Exhibition, the Hungarian presence was only partially independent, although it was presented by the organizers in the form of a Hungarian inn (magyar csárda).[143] The aim of this exhibition was to showcase the lifestyle and customs of rural people by presenting the traditional inns and peasant houses.[144] The discovery of Hungarian folk art, formerly known as cottage industry, dates back to this period.[145]

The 1873 Vienna World's Fair is significant in several aspects, as the artistic material transmitted to the exhibition will serve as the basis for the Museum of Applied Arts.[146] However, from our perspective, it is noteworthy because it is on this occasion that the Hungarian organizers come up with the idea of including scenes of rural life in the furnished peasant houses.

By this time, it had become customary in the world exhibitions to feature people in folk costume,[147] but there is no information available regarding any Hungarian ethnographic exhibit.[148] In the Hungarian pavilions of the upcoming world's fairs, Hungarian folk culture will be represented, if not in the form of live performances, but certainly through photographs depicting folk customs in traditional attire.[149] My goal is not to further elaborate on world

[138] Sedlmayr 2006: 57.
[139] Kovács – Megyeri 2012: 70–71.
[140] Németh –Sármány 1981: 116.
[141] Farkas 2012: 138.
[142] Farkas 2012: 144.
[143] Sisa 2001: 47.
[144] K. Csilléry 1980: 13.
[145] Kresz 1968: 3.
[146] Kresz 1968: 3.; Farkas 2012: 152.; Szulovszky 1999: 163.; *Néprajzi értesítő* 1977. (59.) 1. 17–89. 17.; Keserü 2015: 94.
[147] Lackner 2000: 130.
[148] K. Csilléry 1980: 14.; Dóka 2017: 38.; Sisa 2001: 47.
[149] Szilágyi 1996: 72.; 235.; *Kecskemét* 1878. június 9. 3.

exhibitions, but these moments are important milestones in presenting peasant lifestyle and folk customs, which have appeared in the international arena and have also influenced events held in Hungary.

Therefore, I believe it is necessary to provide an overview of the 1885 National Exhibition and the 1896 Millennium Exhibition in a brief passage.

In Hungary, trade exhibits have been taking place in Budapest and rural towns from the mid-1800s. Thus, the 1885 show was not the earliest national exposition in Hungary. However, it outshines its predecessors in terms of scale and significance.[150] The fair, which was held from May to November, comprised 90 pavilions and marked the inaugural occasion where a significant number of international visitors were drawn.[151] The primary focus of this event was to enhance the growth of the industrial sector, particularly in the areas of manufacturing, manors, farms, and agriculture.[152] The exhibition showcased not just the fruits of production, but also the advancements in science, education, book-publishing, administration, health, and art.[153] As an integral part of the exhibition, the interiors of peasant cottages were showcased on an immense surface. The purpose was to provide visitors[154] "with a clearer understanding of the folk customs of our nation, surpassing the information found in any book.[155]



Fig. 5. Peasant interiors at the National Exhibition of 1885. Illustration for a report in the *Vasárnapi Újság*. *Vasárnapi Újság*, August 9, 1885, 519.

[150] Kollega Tarsoly 1985: 21.; Vámos 1985: 193.
[151] Szántó 1976: 231.
[152] Kollega Tarsoly 1985: 22.
[153] Devecseri 1975: 41.
[154] *Vasárnapi Ujság* 1885. augusztus 9. 519.; K. Imre 1885: 294–295.; Kovács 2013: 246–247.
[155] *és Vidéke* 1885. április 2. 1–2. 1.

The illustration above demonstrates an attempt to portray aspects of traditional lifestyle using puppets.[156] (Fig. 5.) There is no evidence in the sources to suggest that folk performances took place at the exhibition. However, there were two concert performances performed by a singing ensemble consisting of 1140 Czech farmers.[157]

The very first "ethnographic demonstrations" accessible to the general public were unquestionably showcased at the 1896 Millennial Exhibition.[158] For the event, a total of 24 houses, representing each of the different counties, were constructed in the Ethnographic Village located in the City Park. Among them, 12 houses were designed to showcase Hungarian culture, while the remaining 12 buildings were dedicated to exhibiting the cultures of other nationalities residing in the country.[159] Within the residences, puppets adorned in traditional clothing enacted scenes of rural life, while actual people also appeared to narrate anecdotes concerning regional traditions and regional specialties.[160] The inclusion of groups of peasants in folk costume was already part of the design for the Ethnographic Village and the festive parade.[161] However, the exhibition also transformed into a captivating spectacle with the presentation of authentic folk practices.[162] Krisztina Dóka, a dance historian, provides a thorough analysis of the event, focusing on the presentation of folk dances and customs. She illuminates that "the Millennium event effectively showcases the incorporation of folk culture into the national celebration, as demonstrated through the display of folk costumes, the performance of folk traditions, music and dance for a wide public."[163] Here, I highlight the occurrences of the Millennium Exhibition, which served as an early platform for showcasing folk traditions to the public. (Fig. 6.)

[156] Kollega Tarsoly 1985: 21–24.
[157] Sebestyén 1928: 390.
[158] Kósa 1990 306.
[159] Sisa 2001: 49.
[160] Kőváry 1897: 23.; 262.; 268.; Sisa 2001: 46.; Dóka 2017: 38.
[161] *Magyar Hírlap* 1895. augusztus 28. 5–6.
[162] Flórián – Paládi-Kovács (szerk.) 2009: 625.
[163] *Tánctudományi Közlemények* 2017. (9.) 2. 36–51. 48 –49.



Fig 6. Millennium Exhibition, Bulgarian minority's house of Timis County. In the foreground a man in folk costume. (Fortepan/Budapest Főváros Levéltára.)

World exhibitions at this point commonly emphasize specific characteristics of an industry sector or a nation, sometimes highlighting folk art as a major focus. It is not a coincidence that the Millennium Exhibition promoted folk art and included live folk demonstrations as an innovation.[164]

Throughout the broad festivities, various groups from different regions demonstrated their own traditions.[165] In May 1896, a procession consisting of around one thousand farmers[166] and several other events such as maypole parades, religious festivals, fairs, and funfairs took place.[167] A German group organized a wedding ceremony to showcase with the intention of it being a legitimate marriage between the couple. However, it turned out to be simply an engagement ceremony. Subsequently, a Serbian wedding exhibition took place while a separate wedding event known as a "wedding ball" was organized, where it was possible to participate either through an exclusive invitation or by purchasing a ticket.[168] Regarding a Saxon wedding, it is noteworthy that certain individuals from the audience were incorporated into the wedding party and actively participated in the celebratory dance.[169] The Matyó wedding, attended by approximately 150 individuals from Mezőkövesd, was the most widely enjoyed. In this

[164] Keserű 1977: 120–135.; Sisa 2001: 47–48.; Dóka 2017: 38.
[165] Sisa 2001: 49.
[166] Dóka 2017: 38.
[167] Dóka 2017: 41–42.
[168] Dóka 2017: 39–40.
[169] Dóka 2017: 46.

instance, the civil marriage ceremony took place at home, while the religious vows were exchanged in Budapest at one of the capital city's churches.[170] The festivities continued with a wedding lunch, dancing, and a demonstration of wedding folk traditions in the exhibition area. László Kósa, an expert in ethnographic history, highlights that the exhibition maintained its original purposes, albeit in a manner that was noticeably distinct from its environment. Specifically, the Magyars and Serbs organized a wedding and performed the Torontal Swabian fair as a means to both entertain the public and offer them an educational encounter. Nevertheless, this occurrence did not take place on a conventional theatrical platform, but rather in the public roads or enclosed spaces of the ethnographic village."[171]

The event served as a significant aspect of how the state presented itself during that period. It included several important elements: 1) The ethnographic village showcased an authentic representation of the culture and traditions of the specific regions. 2) The exhibition made sure to include equal representation of different ethnic groups of Hungary,[172] 3) Participants of peasant origin presented still-existing folk costumes and traditions, thereby, as a "symbolic gesture of incorporating peasants in the nation."[173] 4) The event aimed to spread ethnographic knowledge among the Hungarian public. 5) Additionally, it showcased Hungarian folk art to foreign countries, representing the "proud Hungarian nation."[174]

These folklore displays presumably inspired the reinvention of old national fairs within the context of an ethnographic fair. An organizing committee was established in 1902, including artists, writers, entrepreneurs, and merchants. The committee was led by the economist Mór Gelléri, who had previously organized the industrial section of the Millennial Exhibition.[175] Tourism and industry were the primary focal points of the fair,[176] however, numerous articles about the upcoming event emphasized the significance and distinctiveness of ethnographic presentations. The initial schedule outlined in the newspaper called *Magyar Ipar /Hungarian Industry/* provided specific information regarding the parades and customary exhibitions that were planned to be included.[177] This encompassed exhibitions of feasts and fairs in many

[170] Benedek 1939: 97.; Dóka 2017: 42–43.
[171] Kósa 1990: 306.
[172] Sisa 2001: 49.
[173] Sisa 2001: 48.
[174] Dóka 2017: 47.
[175] *Magyar Géniusz* 1902. február 9. 102–103.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1903. június 25. 12–13.; Balogh 1965: 604.
[176] *Magyar Ipar* 1903. (24.) 26. 646.; *Honi Ipar* 1903. november 1. 18.; *Szabadság* 1904. március 8. 7.; A Marosvásárhelyi Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara jegyzőkönyve, 1904. (1.) 1904. február 26. 7.; *Budapesti Napló* 1903. november 4. 3.
[177] *Független Magyarország* 1903. november 4. 12.; *Magyar Nemzet* 1903. november 4. 6.; *Pécsi Napló* 1903. november 4. 5.; *Pesti Napló* 1903. november 4. 2.; *Vásárhelyi Híradó* 1903. november 7. 2.; *Magyar Szemle* 1903. (15.) 46. 2.; *Tolnavármegye* 1903. november 8. 5.

locations, traditional attire and customs of ethnic minorities residing in Hungary, demonstrations of various artisanal trades (such as cattle herding, goulash cooking, weaving, and pottery), and musical performances.[178] In addition, they desired to acquaint visitors with depictions of everyday rural life,[179] while the primary focus remained predominantly on the exotic and attractive aspects.[180] Although the *Budapesti Napló /Budapest Journal/'s* news was reported by *Ethnographia*, the journal of the Ethnographic Society, there is little evidence in press articles to suggest that ethnographers were actively involved in the organization or were invited. The organizing team contacted the county leaders to provide them with guidance on the unique customs of their region and to detect which of them would be willing to represent these specialties at their own expense.[181]

Despite receiving support from the government, the fair was likely hindered by a lack of this "willingness".[182] The fair was rescheduled from 1903 to 1904, with the intention of making it an annual event.[183] However, it never came to completion.[184]

2.2.4 Involvement of ethnographers in the showcasing of peasants' traditions

As can be seen from the above, it is noticeable that in the majority of cases, it was individuals or (local) groups that were enthusiastic promoters of folk art and devotees of artistic endeavors who organized folk plays, folk tradition performances that had been preserved in peasant culture. From the 18th century to the 1920s, folk art attracted people from all social classes, as demonstrated by the examples. Additionally, ethnographers were also engaged in the process, but their primary focus was often on the preservation of local traditions and the documentation of the present condition of customs and dances, as well as their classification. The collection and analysis of folk music in Hungary commenced in the 18th century, with college students documenting the folk tunes of their time. In 1832, the Academy of Sciences requested its members collect traditional songs, leading to the accumulation of a significant quantity of material. Yet, due to financial limitations and the subsequent loss of the collection, none of it was published. In 1846, János Erdélyi (1814–1868) published his work titled *"Népdalok és mondák" /Folk songs and Legends/*, but it did not include any melodies or sheet music (only

[178] *Magyar Ipar* 1903. (24.) 43. 1002–1004. (1903. október 25.)
[179] *Budapesti Napló* 1903. október 31. 11.
[180] Balogh 1965: 604.
[181] Trencsény 1903: 23.; *A Bács-Bodrog Megyei Történelmi Társulat Évkönyve* 1903. (19.) 186.; *Heves Vármegye Hivatalos Lapja.* 1903. december 31. 1.; Balogh 1965: 604.
[182] Balogh 1965: 607.
[183] *Magyar Ipar* 1903. (24.) 28. 690.
[184] Balogh 1965: 603–607.

texts).[185] From the 1860s and 1870s onwards, there was a consistent effort to gather folk music and publish what was found.[186] Ethnographer Béla Vikár's (1859–1945) 1894 phonograph recordings of folk music and ballads were a pioneering and unparalleled innovation in Europe. From 1898 until 1910, he assembled a total of 1492 recorded melodies, which served as the basis for the investigation of music tradition.[187] He was followed in the footsteps by Gyula Sebestyén, János Seprődi, and later Zoltán Kodály, Béla Bartók, Ákos Garay, László Lajtha and Antal Molnár.[188]

The systematization and publication of the tunes was marked by the names of composer-ethnographers Béla Bartók (1881–1945) and Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967). They started publishing their collection in the 1930s, although the work had been ongoing since 1905.[189] Following the First World War, the significance of collecting folk music, folk dance, and folk traditions was further amplified due to the fact that the shift towards folk culture served as a unifying factor for the nation. Another significant aspect was the rising number of collections in the territories annexed by the Trianon peace treaty.[190]



Fig. 7. Ethnographer László Lajtha collects folk music in 1929. (NMF60297. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection. Ethnographer László Lajtha collects folk music in 1929. Photo: Sándor Gönyey.)

In the 1920s, research on folk dance complemented the research on folk music, as seen by the collections of László Lajtha, Sándor Gönyey, and István Molnár.[191] (Fig. 7.) "The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement of the 1930s played a significant role in facilitating the

[185] Jagamas 1973: 203–204.
[186] Gyáni 2008: 101.
[187] Jagamas 1973: 206.; Ortutay (szerk.) 1981: 32–33.
[188] Ortutay (szerk.) 1981: 32–33.; Olsvai 1998: 505.; Berlász 1984: 107.; Tari: 2001.
[189] Jagamas János 1973: Népzenénk kutatásának története. *Korunk Évkönyv 1973.* Korunk, Kolozsvár. 203–218. 212.
[190] Bányász-Németh 2012: 22–23.
[191] Viski: 1937.

exploration and documentation of folk dances and folk-dance music. This movement temporarily captured the interest of notable individuals such as István Györffy (1942), Károly Viski (1937), István Tálasi, Edit Fél, and even foreign researchers like Elizabeth Rearick (1939). It also drew the attention of contemporary dance teachers like Mrs. István Elekes (1947)."[192]

Since the early 19th century, ethnography has also been investigating folk customs. Initially, rituals/folk beliefs were mostly described in relation to folklore, but throughout time, there was also a gradual emergence of research and analysis focused on the practices of everyday life. The development of the collection of these folk customs mostly occurred in French and German study circles, in Hungary the first collection of such traditions was published in 1868.[193] In 1891, a pioneer book on collections in the category of children's plays was released, making it one of the earliest of its kind worldwide.[194] Nevertheless, some "folk" songs and "folk" dances that were associated with the people – and here I mean rural people, peasants – (such as magyar nóta and salon dances) were initially documented during the process of collecting, thereby contributing to the exploration of folk culture and the establishment of its boundaries.[195]

The contemporary usage of the term "folk dance" pertains to the dancing traditions of the rural population in Central and Eastern Europe, which originated during the late 19th century. During that period, this dance was still a widely known and practiced social activity, but it has now nearly vanished due to changes in social interactions and the professionalization of dancing. It is important to emphasize that the belief that the dances are ancient and authentic is incorrect. This is due to the fact that culture, particularly music and dance culture, has always been shaped by the ever-evolving influences of different trends. Therefore, in the 19th century, dance culture was not only a reflection of that period, but also of the global dance scene. According to the speaker, by the late 19th century, our folk-dance culture, which had developed in the Carpathian Basin and was referred to as "traditional" in literature and by the public, had become indistinguishable from a European dance culture influenced by changing trends. Throughout the process of collecting, numerous "folk" songs and "folk" dances were documented, but some of them could not be definitively attributed to the people (and here I mean the peasants, rural people who kept the dances and songs), e.g. magyar nóta or salon

[192] Martin – Pesovár 1998: 541.
[193] Verebélyi 1998: 400.
[194] Hoppál (szerk.) 1990.; Antal 2012: 11.
[195] Ortutay (szerk.) 1981: 32–33.; Hoppál (szerk.) 1990.

dances. Therefore, a significant aspect of exploring folk culture was also to define what belonged to it.[196]

The contemporary usage of the term "folk dance" pertains to the traditional dance practices of the rural communities in Central and Eastern Europe, which emerged around the late 19th century. During that period, this dance was largely a social activity and skill, but it gradually declined as social interactions became more formalized and professionalized. It is important to emphasize that the belief that the dances are ancient and authentic is technically incorrect. "This is due to the fact that culture, particularly music and dance culture, has always been shaped by the ever-evolving influences of various trends. Therefore, in the 19th century, dance culture was not only a reflection of that specific time period, but also of the global dance scene. By the end of the 19th century, our folk-dance culture, which had solidified in the Carpathian Basin and was labeled as »traditional« in literature and later by the general public, was essentially a variant of European dance culture influenced by ongoing trends." – states dance researcher Csongor Könczei."[197]

Folk songs, dances, and folk customs appear to have primarily been collected and categorized at the local level, with very rare opportunities for presentation to the general public in the form of live performances. A few of these performances are briefly detailed below.

In 1899, a girl from Țara Călatei (Kalotaszeg in Hungarian),[198] wearing the traditional folk costumes and performed folk songs from Kalotaszeg as part of a presentation by the folk song collector and ethnographer Béla Vikár at the Uránia Theatre in Budapest.[199] This performance gained immediate attention and curiosity. It was perhaps the earliest occasion of cultural traditions being shown on stage by the peasants themselves.[200] Kata Tamás, the singing peasant girl first served as an assistant to Vikár's ethnographic lecture,[201] but her singing as a "prima donna of Kalotaszeg"[202] was so well-received that her appearances had to be repeated, and the professional community demonstrated significant interest.[203] Zsigmond Bátky, an

[196] Ortutay (szerk.) 1981: 32–33.; Hoppál (szerk.) 1990.
[197] Könczei (szerk.) 2014: 13–14.
[198] Kalotaszeg, or Țara Călatei is a geographic area located in the region of Transylvania, which is – since the 1920 Treaty of Trianon – part of Romania. It is a region in Western Romania that has a notable Hungarian population and is known for preserving traditional Hungarian folk customs from Transylvania, was one of the most important areas in terms of folk art even in the 19th century.
[199] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1899. december 31. 12.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1899. december 30. 15.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1899. december 30. 1.; *Alkotmány* 1899. december 29. 7.; Gál 2010: 216.
[200] Kósa 1990: 306.
[201] Kis Domokos 2003: 72.; Hála 1998: 31.
[202] Sebestyén 2007: 115.
[203] *Budapesti Napló* 1929. december 29. 8.; *Budapesti Napló* 1899. december 28. 8.; *Kakas Márton* 1900. január 7. 12.

ethnographer, highlighted the unique character of Vikár's initiative. Yet, in a lengthier article published in the *Néprajzi Értesítő /Annales Musei Ethnographiae/,* he extensively discussed the urbanization and lack of authenticity in the folk costume worn by Kata Tamás. Bátky drew attention to the risk faced by peasant costume and handicraft due to the influence of urban fashion.[204] The ethnographic profession has actively monitored and supported major events, advocating for the conservation of authentic cultural practices. Furthermore, the audience enthusiastically embraced these performances. Consequently, following her performances in Pest, Kata Tamás proceeded to play in many locations, predominantly in Transylvania, serving as a "live phonograph" for Béla Vikár's performances.[205]

In 1911, the German residents of the village of Főrév near Bratislava revitalized "an ancient traditional performance resembling Oberammergau, which had nearly faded into obscurity."[206] The investigation into the customs of Főrév commenced in 1853, and by 1857, the written scripts of the plays were made available to the public. Efforts were made to organize performances, but it was not until 1911 that a performance was presented, which was considered a novelty for the audience.[207] Interested audience arrived from as far as Vienna and Budapest also, including colleagues of the Hungarian National Museum and the Hungarian Ethnographic Society, who utilized phonographs and photographs to document the Christmas procession of the local inhabitants.[208] Ethnographer László Kósa highlights that the plays of Főrév were not in "untouched" condition even in 1910. This observation prompts us to consider that the discussion over the correlation between authenticity and the staging and presentation of the plays arises. The script, which was lost in the fire that destroyed the church, served as a reference for the ethnographer, who attempted to recreate the traditional performances relying on collecting memory and the previously gathered published material.[209]

The play of Hungarian miners from Felsőbánya is less known, but it shares a commonality with the performances of the Főrév play in its ecclesiastical nature and the long-standing tradition of presentations dating back decades. (Fig. 8.) Gyula Sebestyén, a folklorist, analyzed the regional staging of the three-scene mystery during his visit to Felsőbánya.[210] Impressed by their performance, he sent an invitation to the group to perform in Budapest. The intellectual initiative is unquestionable however it should be noted that not all intellectuals

[204] Bátky 1900: 26–28.
[205] Fejős 1991: 146.; *Erdély* 1902. (11.) 4–5. 46.; Vikár 1933: 11.
[206] Kővágó Zs. – Kővágó S. 2015: 86.
[207] Kósa 1990: 305.
[208] Kővágó Zs. – Kővágó S. 2015: 86–88.
[209] Kósa 1990: 308.
[210] *Felsőbányai Hírlap* 1912. január 11. 1–3.; Sebestyén 1912: 22.

endorsed the Budapest performance. Sándor Solymossy, an ethnographer, expressed concerns that the audience in Budapest could fail to understand the simplicity of the performance.[211] This case serves as an excellent reminder of the challenges that ethnographers have encountered in relation to their presentations.



Fig. 8. The Hungarian miners of Felsőbánya performing a Christmas play. (*Vasárnapi Újság*, January 7, 1912, 6–7. Photo: Gyula Jelfy.)

Gyula Sebestyén proposed showcasing the German traditions of Főrév and the Hungarian traditions of Felsőbánya together in Budapest.[212] With the support of the Ethnographic Society, the Christmas-Epiphany mysteries of two settlements located at opposite ends of the country (Főréve: Upper Hungary, now Slovakia, Felsőbánya: Transylvania, now Romania) were presented in December 1911.[213] "Although they might appear different from each other, they are fundamentally interconnected," stated the *Budapesti Hírlap /Budapest Journal/*.[214] The presentation was ultimately performed at the Uránia Theater by reducing the lengthy demonstrations, thereby modifying the original versions slightly and arranging them side by side.[215] The influence of the performance at the Urania can be attributed to the fact that in 1911, folk customs were also shown in Vas County with peasant actors: Kárpáti Kelemen, a monk and creator of the ethnographic museum in Szombathely, organized a performance including young people of peasant origin, showcasing folk-inspired traditions. The influence of the performance at the Urania can be attributed to the fact that in 1911, folk customs were also shown in Vas County with peasant actors: Kelemen Kárpáti, a monk and founder of the

[211] Kósa 1990: 309.
[212] Takács 1984: 1612.; Kósa 1990: 310.
[213] Sebestyén 1912: *Vasárnapi Újság* 1912. január 7. 6–7.; *Ethnographia* 1912. (23.) 1. 64.
[214] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1911. december 30. 12–13. 12.
[215] Karsai 1939: 200–210.

ethnographic museum in Szombathely,[216] organized a performance including young people of peasant origin, showcasing folk-inspired traditions.[217]

The collections and certain initiatives thus led to the creation of an atmosphere in which the Gyöngyösbokréta folk dance and customs demonstrations could be born. However, the initiative was far from self-evident, as there had previously been no nationwide movement to bring folk culture to the stage, and many proposals failed for various historical reasons. Initiatives to create a Hungarian style based on folk dance had also been made earlier, as Hungarian dances – especially the verbunk and the csárdás – had already conquered the prestigious ballrooms of Europe in the 1800s through the performances of skilled dance companies. A project to develop a particularly Hungarian repertoire of movements for stage performance, as well as the establishment of a national ballet, was intended. However, with the defeat of the 1848/1849 War of Independence, these plans were put on hold and efforts in this regard were prohibited.[218]

Based on the sub-chapters above, it is visible that the efforts described were primarily top-down in nature, led by intellectuals and specifically ethnographers. One can question whether the peasants, who may have been aware of demonstrations happening in other communes, considered the possibility of organizing a joint procession or demonstration to unite their efforts. In the next sub-section, I will outline the organization that strived to unite the rural population through cooperation and coordinate marches and exhibitions for them.

2.2.5 Folk shows organized by the Village Association

After the Treaty of Trianon, popular culture adopted many strategies, including the dissemination of popular culture, the presentation of village culture and the legitimization of cultural supremacy were the key words. The Faluszövetség /Village Association/, often referred to as the Országos Földművelés Szövetség /National Association for Agriculture/, was one of the prominent organizations at this time.[219]

In 1918, the concept of creating the Országos Földművelés Szövetség /National Association for Agriculture/ was proposed.[220] The objective was to bring together farmers and agricultural workers into a unified organization and grant them influence in both the political

[216] Diós - Viczián (szerk.) 2001: 329.
[217] *Ethnographia* 1914. (25.) 58–59.; Kósa 1990: 313.
[218] Kollega Tarsoly (szerk.): Magyarország a XX. században. III. Kultúra, művészet, sport és szórakozás.
[219] Dóka 2022: 285–286.
[220] *Pesti Hírlap* 1918. december 27. 2.; *Világ* 1918. december 27. 6.

and economic domains.[221] The Association was founded in September 1920, with the intention of establishing a branch in every municipality.[222] Nevertheless, the organization was not effective in most locations, as it did not provide any real answer to the issues faced by the communities. It just existed as a puppet organization, aiming to support government agricultural policy by its nominal existence.[223] The government's objective was to gather the support of agricultural laborers and rural residents by providing substantial financial assistance from the state.[224] However, their efforts were restricted to organizing a small number of meetings.[225] Several local events were set up, including a parade featuring traditional costumes and a demonstration of customs,[226] as a gesture of gratitude towards the villagers. Some notable events include the centenary exhibition of the Faluszövetség in Cegléd[227] and the centenary festivities of the Országos Széchenyi Emlékbizottság /National Széchenyi Memorial Committee/ in 1925,[228] the Folk Art and Culture Exhibition in Gödöllő in 1926,[229] the exhibition in Tolnatamási in 1928,[230] and the agricultural work competition at the Village Association's exposition in Kapuvár.[231] The latter event also included traditional folk dances, such as the Kapuvár recruitment dance. However, these dances were also showcased during a separate event organized by a local committee as a private initiative.

The 1925 Sopron Folk Costume Competition was an innovative event that showcased traditional clothes and folk art. Peasants took part in the contest by presenting their own costumes and traditions. On September 6, 1925, the traditional attire of six villages in the region, including municipalities of Hungarian, German, and Croatian minorities of the region, were showcased and received prizes in the countryside's county seat. Approximately one thousand individuals participated in the event, and the teams who showcased the most exceptional

[221] *A falu* 1930. (9.) 9.; *Vasárnap* 1930. október 26. 5–7.; Bodor 1926.; Márkus 1964: 47.; *Friss Újság* 1920. szeptember 11. 3.
[222] *Békésmegyei Közlöny* 1920. szeptember 12. 1.; *Friss Újság* 1920. szeptember 18. 3.; *Világ* 1920. szeptember 18. 3.; *Friss Hírek* 1921. február 27. 2.; *Kecskeméti Közlöny* 1921. március 9. 3.
[223] Márkus 1964: 47.
[224] Fazekas 2020: 163–175.
[225] *Friss Ujság* 1921. május 15. 6.; *Magyar Jövő* 1921. május 18. 2.; *Magyar Jövő* 1921. május 18. 2.
[226] Dóka 2022: 284.
[227] A Faluszövetség századik kiállítása Cegléden. 1925. augusztus Magyar Híradó80. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8326
[228] Az Országos Széchenyi Emlékbizottság centenáriumi ünnepségei. 1925. november. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8371
[229] Népművészeti- és kulturális kiállítás Gödöllőn. 1926. augusztus Magyar Híradó129. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8525
[230] A Faluszövetség Tolnatamásiban rendezett kiállítása. Magyar Híradó239. 1928. szeptember. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8972
[231] Mezőgazdasági munkaverseny a „Faluszövetség" kapuvári kiállításán. 1928. augusztus Magyar Híradó236. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8959

costumes were awarded monetary prizes.[232] In addition to the traditional costume procession, certain groups presented dances and customs from their respective villages.[233] The objective of the event was to revitalize traditional attire that is gradually disappearing.[234] As reported by a local newspaper article,

> "the Sopron Folk Costume Competition had a positive impact to some degree. Currently, there is a widespread effort in many communities to search for any remaining remnants of the traditional and authentic folk attire. The purpose is to replicate this exquisite costume with utmost precision as it serves as a symbol of national pride. Several communities have made the decision to have their residents wear traditional clothing during important local festivals, particularly during fairs."[235]

The objective of promoting folk education through folk art displays was also achieved, as exemplified by the group from Szany, who used the prizes to support the growth of the local youth library.[236] To promote the event, additional trains were scheduled from the neighboring regions the event, and a reduced visa fee was organized to entice international tourists.[237] The Sopron demonstration also involved Hungarian minorities, who actively engaged in preserving their traditions through various activities such as amateur acting and tradition preservation.[238] The ceremony was also graced by the presence of the distinguished ethnographer of that era, Sándor Gönyey (Ébner).[239]

In 1929, the Association arranged a singing contest for rural Hungarians in Gödöllő, where peasant ensembles also showcased their talents. The competition also established a challenge cup for the winners, which indicates that a regular continuation of the event was planned.[240] The Village Association also took part in the parade of some groups in folk costume during the procession of the State Foundation Day in Budapest on 20 August.[241]

By the 1920s and 1930s, as has been demonstrated, folk costume shows had already been organized in the framework of a local enterprise, but despite the efforts of the Village Association, they were not extended to a national level. What was needed was a central

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[232] *A Nép* 1925. szeptember 10. 5.
[233] Népviseleti bemutató Sopronban. Magyar Híradó83. 1925. szeptember. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8338; *Sopronvármegye* 1925. szeptember 3. 2.
[234] *Magyarság* 1925. szeptember 1. 11.
[235] *A Nép* 1925. szeptember 17. 8.
[236] *Sopronvármegye* 1925. október 4. 5.
[237] *Sopronvármegye* 1925. augusztus 30. 4.; *Sopronvármegye* 1925. szeptember 1. 4.
[238] Dömötör 1960: 26.; Glavanics 2021: 4.
[239] Gönyey 1925: 188.
[240] *Magyarság* 1929. június 14. 11.
[241] Szent István-napi körmenet Budapesten. 1926. augusztus. Magyar Híradó131. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8530 (accessed: 2024. május 4.).; Az 1927. évi Szent István napi ünnepségek. 1927. augusztus. Magyar Híradó183. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8743

organizer who would organize demonstrations by peasant/farmer groups in different parts of the country.

In the following, I will introduce the founder and organizer of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement and explain how he transitioned into organizing the very first events following his professional career.

2.2.6 Béla Paulini, the funding father of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement

2.2.6.1 Early life and career of Béla Paulini

Béla Paulini was born in 1881 on the Esterházy estate in Csákvár, where "he had exposure to the profound aspects of Hungarian peasant life" during his childhood.[242] His father held the position of a farm manager at the M. Móric Esterházy estate in Csákvár. He served as the headmaster of the agricultural school, overseeing its operations and supervising the teaching staff.[243] Additionally, he received medals in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the field of agriculture.[244]

From 1891 until 1898, he received his education in Székesfehérvár, a town in close proximity to Csákvár.[245] Subsequently, he gained admission to the Technical University of Budapest. Despite not completing his academic education within the span of eight years, his inventiveness manifested in a multitude of patented innovations.[246] Throughout his time in university, he initiated the practice of drawing caricatures.[247]

Starting in 1907, he commenced creating cartoons for the journal *Fidibusz*, and within a year, he assumed the role of editor.[248] In 1909, he established a prestigious newspaper called *Izé /Gizmo/*.[249] This newspaper featured not only well-known cartoonists, but also esteemed writers who contributed humorous articles.[250] The following year, his cartoons were displayed

[242] Volly 1981: 14.
[243] Kenessey 1896: 6–7.
[244] Varró 2021: 259–262.; *The New York Herald* 1903. március 19. 2.; *Borászati Lapok* 1894. (26.) 34. 403; *Gazdasági Mérnök* 1902. (26.) 40. 335.; *Magyar Közlöny* 1903. március 15. 7.; *Alkotmány* 1903. március 17. 4.; *Köztelek* 1922. március 4. 228–229.
[245] Iskolai értesítők, Állami Ybl gimnázium, Székesfehérvár. 1891.; Iskolai értesítők, Állami Ybl gimnázium, Székesfehérvár. 1894.; Iskolai értesítők, Állami Ybl gimnázium, Székesfehérvár. 1895. 61.; Iskolai értesítők, Állami Ybl gimnázium, Székesfehérvár. 1897. (VII. osztály) 66.; Iskolai értesítők, Állami Ybl gimnázium, Székesfehérvár. 1898. (VIII. osztály) 59.; Iskolai értesítők, Állami Ybl gimnázium, Székesfehérvár. 1898. 62.;
[246] *Polytechnikai Szemle* 1903. (7.) 2. 24.; *Polytechnikai Szemle* 1903. (7.) 22. 275.; *Magyar Üveg-és Agyagipar* 1903. (15.) 62. 11.; *Magyar Vaskereskedő* 1904. október 23. 17.
[247] *Magyarország* 1908. január 26. 14.; *Pesti Napló* 1908. január 26. 21.; Egyesületek. *Budapesti Hírlap* 1908. január 31. 18.
[248] *Bereg* 1907. január 1. 4.; *Szeged és Vidéke* 1912. szeptember 21. 7.; Lakatos 2004: 27.
[249] Paulini Béla (szerk.) 1909–1910: Izé. Jókai Nyomda, Budapest.
[250] *Az Újság* 1909. október 15. 13.

at the International Cartoon Exhibition.[251] Additionally, he became a member of the Humorists' Artists' Association /Humorista Művészek Egyesülete/ in 1911.[252]

In 1909, he joined the Otthon Writers and Newspaper Writers' Circle, which established his professional reputation and gained recognition among readers.[253] Subsequently, he became a member of the editorial staff at the daily *Nap /Day/*[254] and maintained his presence in humor publications like *Borsszem Jankó,*[255] *Pesti Mozi,*[256] *Kakas Márton,*[257] and *Bolond Istók*[258]. However, his name quickly gained recognition in both national and provincial media. Journals as *Világ /World/,*[259] *Ellenzék /Opposition/,*[260] *Kis Újság*,[261] *Szózat,*[262] *Nemzeti Újság,*[263] *Budapesti Hírlap,*[264] *Pesti Hírlap,*[265] *Pesti Napló*[266] regularly published his writings and illustrations.



Fig. 9–10. Illustration by Paulini Béla on the cover of the cimbalom catalog, 1917. Mogyoróssy, Gyula, ed. 1917. "A Cimbalom." 1917, no. 25, 1.; Paulini, Béla. *A hétfülű szamár meg a háromfülű nyúl: Mesék.* Budapest: Kultúra, 1931.

[251] Feleky 1910: 706–708.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1910. április 20. 15.; Gyöngy: 2008.
[252] *Az Újság* 1911. január 10. 19.
[253] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1909. október 6. 9.
[254] *Népszava* 1911. május 28. 7.; *Élet* 1913. július 26. 956.
[255] Paulini 1912: 6.; Paulini 1918c: 4.; Paulini 1921e: 9.; Paulini 1925b: 4.; *Borsszem Jankó* 1912. május 12. 10.
[256] Karinthy 1913: 3.; *Pesti Napló* 1913. március 26. 12.
[257]. *Kakas* Márton 1912. december 18. 27.; Paulini 1913: 32.
[258] Paulini 1918b: 5.; Paulini 1918a: 8.
[259] *Világ* 1921. február 11. 5.
[260] Paulini 1921f: 2.
[261] Paulini 1929b.
[262] Paulini 1922a: 2.
[263] Paulini 1922c: 3–4.
[264] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1923. október 7. 11.
[265] *Pesti Hírlap* 1923. október 11. 6.
[266] Paulini 1924a: 2–3.

His first book, *Emlékirataim /My Memoirs/,* was published in 1914.[267] In 1919, during the Soviet Republic, he started a children's magazine called *Bukfenc /Somersault/.*[268] This was his first step on the path of fairy tales and children's literature, with which he created a new genre. "Paulini has opened up a whole new path for children's literature with his magazine, which is full of fresh ideas and also makes interesting and amusing reading."[269] And although, like the Soviet Republic itself, the magazine was not long-lived, Paulini's tales grew in popularity. Newspapers ran a series of his stories, but he also organized storytelling afternoons and children's circuses,[270] First some of his serialized tales, which appeared in the newspapers,[271] and then his specially written tales were published in book format, with Paulini's own illustrations.[272] (Fig. 10.) He was also a member of the Hungarian Meseszínház Részvénytársaság /Tale Theatre Limited Company/.[273]

Aside from his pursuits as a cartoonist, writer, and journalist, he also produced theatrical plays. In 1920, he made his debut as an author at the Andrássy-úti Theatre,[274] and his pieces quickly gained recognition and were soon staged at the Magyar Színház /Hungarian Theatre/, the Belvárosi Színház /Downtown Theatre/, and other venues.[275] In addition, he contributed articles to the esteemed publication *Színházi Élet /Theatre Life/.*[276] His ingenuity, demonstrated by his introduction of the night performance as a novelty,[277] has resulted in early achievements in this creative domain.[278] As a result, he has been extended numerous requests. In 1927, he established his own theater known as *Játékszín /Playhouse/.*[279] The objective of the *Playhouse* was to establish "a theatrical setting that embodied an authentic Hungarian ambiance",[280] thus pioneering the Hungarian theatre scene of that era.[281] Following the initial performance, the press expressed the sentiment that a new theater had emerged in Budapest, aiming "to embody

[267] *Borsszem Jankó* 1914. június 28. 14.; Paulini: 1914.
[268] Paulini: 1919.
[269] *Pesti Napló* 1919. március 8. 5.
[270] Paulini 1921b: 9.; Paulini 1921a: 11.; Paulini 1921c.; Paulini 1921d: 9.; Paulini 1924e: 224–226.; Paulini 1924b: 320–322.; Paulini 1924c: 304–305.; Paulini 1924f: 431–433.; Paulini 1924g: 572; Paulini 1926b: 2–3. Paulini 1929a: 11.
[271] Paulini 1921b: 9.; Paulini 1921a: 11.; Paulini 1921c.; Paulini 1921d: 9.; Paulini 1924e: 224–226.; Paulini 1924b: 320–322.; Paulini 1924c: 304–305.; Paulini 1924f: 431–433.; Paulini 1924g: 572; Paulini 1926b: 2–3. Paulini 1929a: 11.
[272] Paulini 1922b; Paulini 1924d.; *Pesti Napló* 1924. december 23. 13.; *Jó Pajtás* 1925. (17.) 1. 14.; Paulini 1925a.; *Színházi Élet* 1925. 51. 83.; Paulini 1928.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1925. április 10. 9.; Paulini 1931.
[273] *Központi Értesítő* 1921. (46.) 11. 266.; *Gazdasági, pénzügyi és tőzsdei kompasz, 1925–1926. 1.* 1172.
[274] *Az Újság* 1920. március 19. 6.
[275] *Az Est* 1923. augusztus 23. 5.; *Színházi Élet* 1927. 19. 20–22. 21.; *Dunántúl* 1924. május 4. 1.
[276] *Az Újság* 1918. december 1. 12.; Paulini 1920: 28–29.; Paulini 1926a: 38–39.
[277] *Szózat* 1923. február 17. 6.
[278] *Órai Újság* 1924. május 6. 9.; *Pesti Napló* 1928. április 15. 20.
[279] *Színházi Élet* 1927. 51. 25.
[280] *Nemzeti Újság* 1927. augusztus 28. 13.
[281] *Magyarság* 1927. augusztus 28. 21.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1927. december 15. 9.

Hungarian traditions in a contemporary manner, although with minimal funds."[282] The initiative, serving as a „literary experimental theatre",[283] provided Hungarian writers with a platform to showcase their works.[284] Additionally, there were intentions to tour these plays in various regions of the country.[285]

The press analysis does not provide any information regarding the outcome of this significant endeavor. However, starting from the mid-1920s, Paulini began to take on increasingly significant roles in the Hungarian cultural scene. This period was of great interest to him and to the prehistory of Gyöngyösbokréta in terms of theatrical stagings. It is worth noting that his experimentation on stage was not limited to Játékszín. In 1924, he successfully completed his play Háry János, which he co-wrote with his writer-translator friend Zsolt Harsányi.[286]

2.2.6.2 Paulini's János Háry opera – inspiration for Gyöngyösbokréta

János Háry takes its inspiration from *Az Obsitos /The Veteran/*, a comical comedy written by János Garay in the early 19th century. The main character is a genuine figure of popular admiration, a former soldier who served in the Napoleonic wars. He fabricates stories about his heroic actions, but these exaggerations are portrayed not as falsehoods, instead as a manifestation of the aspirations of the common people.[287] Háry is often regarded as the personification of the Hungarian society that experienced the losses resulting from the Treaty of Trianon. His remarkable presence prompted multiple scientific studies aimed at verifying his existence, and Garay even based the main character of his work on a soldier from Szekszárd, drawing inspiration from the soldier's extraordinary stories.[288]

The libretto has numerous allusions to contemporary politics, particularly the geopolitical border between the East and West (Russia and Austria), which serves as a symbolic representation of Hungary's historical context. The purpose of the work was similarly to "address the psychological distress caused by the Trianon Treaty", similar to the mournful Psalmus Hungaricus, which was also composed by Kodály a few years prior.[289] An important examination in Kodály scholarship regarding Háry revolves around the symbolism embedded

[282] *Nemzeti Újság* 1927. december 23. 9.
[283] *Magyarország* 1928. január 28. 11.
[284] Móricz 1927: 13.; B. Gy. 1928: 11.; *Pesti Napló* 1928. július 6. 19.
[285] *Esti Kurír* 1928. augusztus 17. 11.; Nógrádi 1928: 3.
[286] *Vasárnapi Újság* 1924. július 20. 15.
[287] *Tolnai Világlapja* 1926. november 3. 49–50.
[288] Haugh: 1914.; Kussinszky 1973: 225–228.; Temesközy 1975: 85–89.; Polner 2013: 151–158.
[289] Dalos 2015: 4.

in both the narrative and the music.[290] More precisely, it explores how the exaggerations in the piece serve to depict and mirror historical events, particularly those related to the First World War and the Trianon Peace Treaty. This is because the Hungarian-Austrian-French trinity holds significant connotations. Kodály's statements and studies demonstrate that

> "The mockery of the French, for instance, holds a particular significance considering the Hungarian community's trauma from Trianon on one side, and Kodály's strong admiration for French culture on the other. The song-play manipulates historical events to align with its preferences, not just during the more fantastical parts of the narrative. Kodály stated in multiple subsequent articles that the fictional narratives of János Háry were grounded in genuine historical events. According to his perspective, folklore alters history, similar to how folk songs modify historical styles. [...][291]

In 1924, the year when the play was completed, there were plans to debut the piece with the music composed by the renowned conductor of that time, Rezső Lavotta.[292] However, the premiere did not take place as intended. In 1925, the above-mentioned Zoltán Kodály, a distinguished composer and expert in folk music, was requested to provide the musical component of the piece when it was decided that it would be performed as a song play.[293] Due to the piece's large volume and its musical nature, it was decided that the performance would take place on the stage of the Opera House instead of the National Theatre.[294] Rehearsals commenced in 1926,[295] and the premiere occurred on 16 October of the same year.[296]

The press's favorable reception of the performance indicates that the amusing and well-written script, the effective musical interludes by the renowned composer of the era, and the exceptional acting were all highly acclaimed. Additionally, the Hungarian-themed piece was warmly received at the Opera House.[297] The press praised both the narrative and the music, stating that "the text of János Háry is a splendid and significant piece of work, which also exhibits a distinctly Hungarian essence. It originates from the imaginative creations of the ancient Hungarian imagination."[298] Furthermore, apart from the Hungarian essence of the narrative, "we are also content with the production in terms of musical selection, as the inclusion of Hungarian compositions such as Bánk bán, Farsangi lakodalmak, Háry János, and Fanni will help balance the prevalence of foreign pieces. A magnificent Opera House constituted by

[290] Eősze 1999: 5.
[291] Dalos 2015: 5.
[292] *Nemzeti Újság* 1924. július 9. 8.; *Pesti Napló* 1925. február 5. 12.
[293] *Az Est* 1925. március 15. 13.
[294] *Pesti Napló* 1925. július 14. 16.; *Esti Kurír* 1925. augusztus 11. 11.; *Az Est* 1925. november 6. 8.
[295] *Magyar Hírlap* 1926. szeptember 19. 11.; Haraszti 1926: 18; Fodor 1926: 7.; Cserna 1926: 21.; Kern 1926: 16–17.; Dömötör 1926: 11–12.; Tóth 1926: 30.
[296] Schöpflin 1929: 210.
[297] Márkus 192613.; Papp 1929: 279.
[298] Gajári 1926: 14–15.

Hungarian artists, including exquisite Hungarian vocabulary and enchanting Hungarian vocal performances. This represents our perfect vision."[299]

The absence of Hungarian-themed works, as demonstrated in the previous section, was evident in both the theaters and the Opera House. This was particularly visible when a Hungarian drama was presented, indicating that there were indeed works of this nature that people were eager to witness. The premiere of Háry was met with a positive reception, as nearly all the articles praised the Hungarian theme of the performance.

> "János Háry holds a significantly higher, more universal, and more profound importance specifically within Hungarian music culture. It is important to recognize that János Háry should not be seen as a single instance. János Háry is a sequel to the *Carnival*, which started two years ago in the Opera House. This is a crucial milestone towards fully utilizing the Royal Hungarian Opera House for the advancement of Hungarian music culture. During the years leading up to and throughout the war, the Opera House had a repertory that closely resembled that of the opera in Buenos Aires. The Hungarian Opera, in essence, was an apathetic establishment in terms of its impact on Hungarian musical culture. It primarily catered to a select group of individuals seeking refined musical enjoyment, rather than serving as a platform for the advancement and growth of Hungarian music, and the fostering of its artistic potential. We can only be pleased that it has acknowledged its initial calling, which it is diligently and effectively working towards fulfilling, as seen by its success."[300]

The aforementioned quote was published on the pages of *Nemzeti Újság /National Journal/* following the dress rehearsal, and the participants themselves also made statements in this manner. Paulini explicitly declared that "the modern Hungarian song play was born", Nándor Rékai, the conductor of the Opera House added that

> "The most significant and remarkable aspect of Zoltán Kodály's music for János Háry is its absolutely delightful and recognizable Hungarian essence. I believe it is accurate to state that I have never encountered such a substantial amount of Hungarian music being played in a theater before. The inherent Hungarian identity and musical brilliance of this music immediately captivated my attention."[301]

In addition to the Hungarian aspect, or rather as a result of it, the result of the performance at the opera house was the birth of the Hungarian song play: it was the first time that Hungarian folk songs were performed on the stage of the Opera House. The piece achieved significant success not only in its first period but also in the subsequent decades. It was widely published

[299] P. V. 1926: 10.
[300] *Nemzeti Újság* 1926. október 16. 1.
[301]„ Kis Domokos (szerk.) 2007: 20.

in many versions,[302] including books[303] and films,[304] and gained rapid popularity internationally, despite the inherent complexity of its story.[305]

As well as its unforeseen successes, it is worth noting that the farmers from Paulini's hometown mastered the play in honor of the author, who belongs to their village, and performed it in the local wine bar. The premiere of the performance in Csákvár took place on April 16, 1929, on a stage that was barely a few meters long, adorned with paper-made sets and borrowed costumes.[306] The emphasis, of course, was not on these, but on those farmers who, accompanied by a violin, performed the play under the mentioned circumstances. Since Csákvár had a vibrant cultural scene and had previously organized rehearsals for folk plays, the performance could have taken place within the usual local framework, providing entertainment for the peasant actors and their local audience. However, news of the unexpected troupe's performance of Háry quickly spread, reaching even foreign countries.[307] As a result, a few months later, on June 16th, opera artists and members of the National Theater also traveled to Csákvár to watch the performance locally.[308]

Paulini's merit lies in organizing the event where both he and his colleague, Zsolt Harsányi, delivered presentations, and two members of the Opera House sang before the performance by the Csákvár residents,[309] which received highly positive feedback from everyone.[310] Zoltán Kodály expressed a positive opinion about the presentation,[311] mentioning it as an important example in terms of preserving Hungarian folk culture and folk song heritage. "The example of Csákvár proves that it is not too late to strengthen and encourage fading folk songs. Csákvár was utterly unfamiliar with any of the songs of János Háry, which are all genuine, traditional folk ballads. Today, the entire village joyfully sings them."[312]

The press also emphasized that[313] "the people reclaimed these notes and sung them in their own manner, with genuine sincerity, free from any pretense of artificiality."[314] Paulini's

[302] *Az Újság* 1928. január 11. 9.; Szomory 1934: 30–32.; *Színházi Élet* 1934. 38. 24.; *Színházi Élet* 1938. 13. 32.; *Film, Színház, Muzsika* 1979. (23.) 42. 3.; Gábor 1984: 8–9., *Film, Színház, Muzsika* 1985. (29.) 44. 23.; *Film, Színház, Irodalom* 1988. (32.) 3. 23.; Albert 1988: 3–4.
[303] *Nemzeti Újság* 1926. december 8. 11.; *Színházi Élet* 1926. 51. 41.; *Corvina* 1927. február 6. 22.
[304] *Film Színház Muzsika* 1964. december 18.; *Népszava* 1980. április 15. 4.
[305] Dalos 2012: 291–298.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1930. október 23. 11.
[306] Paulini 1929c: 4.; Béla 2004: 51–56.
[307] *Comoedia* 1929. augusztus 7. 1.; *Le Républicain du Gard* 1929. szeptember 12. 1.; *Magyarország* 1929. július 31. 8.
[308] Hegedűs 1929: 66–67.; Paulini 1929c: 4.
[309] Lukács L. 2004: 45–47.
[310] Hegedűs 1929: 66–67.; Lukács L. 2004: 45–47.
[311] H. K. 1929: 9.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1929. december 12. 9.
[312] Kodály (1929) idézi: Bónis Ferenc 2011: 246.
[313] Simon 1931a: 5.
[314] *Pesti Napló* 1929. augusztus 2. 11.

comment extended the idea by expressing his belief that "a significant Hungarian movement will arise from this phenomenon."[315]



Fig. 11. Béla Paulini and Tibor Hegedűs with the lead actors of the *Háry János* performance in Csákvár. *Színházi Élet* 1929, no. 32: 66–67.

Both the János Háry performances presented by the actors at the Opera House and the performance presented by the peasant actors from Csákvár were broadcasted by the radio.[316] In the latter case, it is important to mention that this was the first provincial broadcast in the history of Hungarian radio,[317] prior to which Paulini himself gave a lecture.[318] The broadcast not only reached the Hungarian audience, but also achieved great success by reaching the international audience through the BBC broadcast.[319]

At that time, another radio recording took place in Csákvár, notably of the end-of-summer harvest festival, which was also broadcasted on the radio. The Newsreel about the production of the broadcast begins as follows: "The radio introduced the meaningful and original celebration of Hungarian life to the foreign audience."[320] In this case, they sought to present peasant customs as an ancient remnant of Hungarian culture to the global community. The festive procession was followed by a collective performance of dance and singing, during which the older generation brought forth traditional folk songs.[321]

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[315] *Magyar Hírlap* 1929. december 6. 8.
[316] Filmhíradók Online. A „Háry János" daljáték rádióközvetítése Csákvárról. 1929. július. Magyar Híradó 283. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=9194; *Magyarország* 1929. június 9. 19.; *Magyarország* 1929. június 9. 19.; *Magyarország* 1929. június 9. 19.; *Magyarország* 1929. július 21. 19.
[317] *Magyar Hírlap* 1929. július 29. 9.; Kenyéri 1998: 62.
[318] *Magyarország* 1929. július 21. 21.; Kodály Zoltán – Háry János 1929-es bemutató Csákváron. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DSlaNigltI
[319] Kenyéri 1998: 62.; OSZMI TA HGy. 34. Legacy of Béla Paulini. A Magyar Bokréta története 1. kötet.; *Magyarság* 1929. július 17. 15.; *Magyarság* 1929. július 21. 25.; *Magyarság* 1929. július 23. 18.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1929. július 24. 14.
[320] Filmhíradók Online. Aratóünnep rádióközvetítése a Fehérmegyei Csákvár községből. 1929. augusztus. Magyar Híradó 285. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=9200
[321] *Új Nemzedék* 1929. július 18. 17.; Paulini 1929c: 4.; *Magyarság* 1929. augusztus 1. 18.

During the performance of the *Háry* play by the Csákvár farmers, organizers planned to prepare a presentation in Budapest as well, so that the audience in the capital might also become acquainted with the art of these peasant actors.[322] The originally planned premiere of Háry János, which was intended for the National Theater but was performed at the Opera House, was temporarily relocated. The operetta was presented at the National Theater's Chamber Theater on December 13th, 14th, and 15th, 1929.[323] Since these three performances were insufficient and a lot more people wanted to see them, the people from Csákvár also performed at the Hungarian Theater for a few evenings.[324] On this occasion, they are appearing under the name *"Földműves Játékszín" ("Farmers' Play")*.[325] The actors from Csákvár performed in Budapest using their own sets and costumes, with the music provided by a local orchestra consisting of farmers. The success was attributed to the simplicity and prosperity of the added folk motifs.[326] The press also spoke very positively about the Budapest premiere, referring to it as a "conquest of the Hungarian stage"[327] and as a manifestation of the village-city's affectionate approach.[328]

In the esteemed literary publication dedicated to revitalizing Hungarian literature, *Nyugat /West/,* theater critic Aurél Kárpáti dedicates a lengthy article to the performance, and in relation to the performance of the peasant actors, he explains that

> "this fortunate encounter was really an event of convergence. Not only did the folk artists benefit from it, finding suitable and appropriate material to indulge their playful inclination, but the piece itself, which – almost as if we felt – just now received its true, perfect framework and personifications. In the performance of the peasant girls and peasant lads from Csákvár, Háry János underwent a peculiar transformation. My impression was that the folk performers played their roles in a spontaneous manner. As if it had originated in their marvelous, storytelling imagination, in the purest, poetic depths of the collective soul."[329]

[322] Lukács L. 2004: 45–47.
[323] M.L. 1929: 9–10.; *Magyarország* 1929. június 22. 9.; *Az Újság* 1929. december 6. 10.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1929. december 6. 10.
[324] Kenyéri 1998: 63.; Zoltán 1929: 9.; Vándor 1929: 10.; Szilárd 1929: 8.; *Magyarország* 1929. december 17. 11.; *Esti Kurír* 1929. december 17. 12.
[325] *Nemzeti Újság* 1929. december 14. 10.*; Magyarság* 1929. december 7. 15.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1929. december 17. 11.; *Új Barázda* 1929. december 14. 5.
[326] *Magyar Hírlap* 1929. december 6. 8.; *Magyarság* 1929. december 6. 21.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1929. december 6. 10.; Várady 1929: 9.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1929. december 13. 10.; *Magyarország* 1929. december 13. 11.
[327] Féja 1929: 22.
[328] *Friss Újság* 1929. december 15. 6.
[329] Kárpáti 1930: 80–81.



Fig. 12. Illustration depicting the arrival of the rural performers from Csákvár to Budapest and their designated area for changing costumes. (*Friss Újság*, December 13, 1929, 1.)

A French newspaper article titled *"How can we solve the theatre crisis?" („Comment résoudre la crise du théâtre?")* discusses the Budapest premiere of Háry. It highlights that the peasant theatrical performance added a new dimension to the Budapest theatres. Unlike the German peasant theatricals of Omergaum, which focused on mystery plays, or comedies that were not suitable for them, the peasant theatricals in Budapest remained within the realm of fairy tales. Their simplicity contributed to their immense success.[330] Several newspaper stories highlight the peasants' lack of education and their limited exposure to cultural activities such as theater. Nevertheless, these articles acknowledge the peasants' ability to perform an authentic and traditional form of art.

Due to the resounding success of the debut in the capital, the Minister of Culture granted the theater director, Béla Paulini, permission to present the song play *János Háry* in the countryside.[331] The initial location chosen was Székesfehérvár. Subsequently, the players from the Csákvár peasant theatre also staged in smaller towns in close proximity to the capital,

[330] *L'Européen* 1930. május 7.
[331] *Belügyi Közlöny* 1929. december 22. 1313.; *Magyarság* 1929. december 14. 14.; Kárpáti 1930: 80–81.

including Cegléd, Nagykőrös, and Budakalász.[332] However, further locations were being planned.[333]

The success achieved domestically and internationally was immense, and there was something novel in development. The debut of the Csákvár play was frequently juxtaposed in the media with the Oberammergau Passion Play, both in terms of its execution and in its emphasis on the rural characters.[334] (The analogy was likely drawn in several occasions, since one of the peasant characters sarcastically states, "I am a Csákvár Passionist." János Bakonyi, an elderly farmer from Csákvár who portrays the judge in János Háry says "he is a passionate player because he adopts a passionate style of play", he provides an explanation for it with this word play.[335])

Dezső Kosztolányi, a prominent writer of the era, requested the theater directors in Budapest to:

> "Organize these peasant theatrical performances, regularly and frequently summoning the peasants from […] various linguistic regions of our nation, in order for us to witness their performances sequentially on stage. Our exceptionally talented writers will be delighted to assist them in performing traditional, archaic comedies, nativity plays, religious mysteries, and wedding salutations. It is not solely a question of temporary amusement and achievement. This firm may possess significant potential. It has the potential to give rise to the authentic Hungarian style of play, the genuine Hungarian drama that we are still in search of."[336]

Additionally, some of the leading ethnographers of that era were already in attendance at the performances in Pest. They encouraged Paulini to showcase the traditional dances, plays, and songs of the Hungarian peasants instead of the Háry theatrical production.[337] Following the performance in Budapest, both the Csákvár team and Paulini refused to rest. Meanwhile the farmers of Csákvár attended a national tour with the performance of Háry, Paulini participated in the 1929 St. Stephen's Week festivities with a fairy-tale children's revue. At the time, Paulini did not realize that his show would become the main attraction of the state foundation celebrations in the future.[338]

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[332] OSZMI TA HGy. 34. Legacy of Béla Paulini. A Magyar Bokréta története 1.; *Magyarság* 1929. december 20. 10.; *Cegléd és Környéke* 1930. február 2. 4.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1929. december 20. 8.
[333] *Kecskeméti Közlöny* 1929. december 22. 5.; *Somogyi Újság* 1930. február 27. 3.; *Pécsi Napló* 1929. december 29. 9.
[334] Nyigri 1929: 14. 12.; Porzsolt 1929: 12–13.; Kállay 1934: 317.; *Az Újság* 1929. december 13. 11.
[335] *Magyar Hírlap* 1929. december 15. 23.
[336] Kosztolányi 1930: Színház. *Új Idők* 1930. (36.) 1. 6–7.
[337] Gönyey é.n.: 5.*;* Kenyéri 1998: 63.*;* Györffy: 1939.
[338] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1929. augusztus 14. 8.; *Az Újság* 1929. augusztus 14. 8.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1929. augusztus 18. 24.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1929. augusztus 13. 9.

During the 1930s, Paulini continued to write for both children and adults.[339] However, his focus gradually shifted towards folk art and popular culture. Following the immense triumph of The Peasants of Csákvár, the initial action taken was the establishment of a nationwide amateur theater competition by the Chamber Theater of the National Theatre /Nemzeti Színház Kamaraszínháza/. In this competition, several amateur theatre companies showcased their performances of one of the famous writer's, Zsigmond Móricz's (1879–1942) works, *Nem élhetek muzsikaszó nélkül /I cannot live without music/.* The objective of the performances was to promote amateur actings, and Paulini served as a member of the jury responsible for evaluating the performances.[340] Meanwhile, he persists with his radio endeavors, building upon his triumphant on-location transmission in Csákvár.[341] At first, he releases some of his one-act plays on the radio, and later he also transmits on-location episodes with a theme focus, generating remarkable inventive outcomes. In October 1930, he organized the radio transmission of the drama *Somogyország /Somogy Country/* by the journalist József Babay, which portrays the traditions of the people from Somogy County.[342] In late 1930, he once again showcases the residents of Csákvár on the radio. This time, they perform selected parts from Háry János in the studio, along with presenting traditional folk scenes. The most remarkable of these scenes is their adaptation of the nativity play.[343]

The inhabitants of Csákvár and Paulini did not have another significant production until the summer of 1931, when Paulini was assigned to coordinate cultural events for the St Stephen's Day festivities. The summer season, specifically the commemoration of the first Hungarian king and the foundation of the Hungarian State, was utilized as a significant tourist attraction in Budapest. However, due to the absence of appealing programs, it frequently fell short of achieving the anticipated outcomes.[344] This phenomenon was largely attributable to the lack of attractiveness of the Hungarian tourist offerings to international visitors, since the programs missed distinctiveness or any elements that were uniquely Hungarian.[345]

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[339] Paulini 1930a: 29.; Paulini 1930b: 231.; Paulini 1930c: 9.
[340] *Az Újság* 1930. január 22. 9.; *Esti Kurír* 1930. január 24. 9.
[341] *Kis Újság* 1930. június 22. 14.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1930. augusztus 27. 13.; *Magyarság* 1930. augusztus 26. 14.; *Kis Újság* 1930. november 28. 8.
[342] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1930. október 3. 8.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1930. október 17. 4.; *Magyarság* 1930. október 19. 27.; *Az Újság* 1930. október 22. 9.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1930. október 19. 22.
[343] *Pesti Napló* 1930. december 19. 11.; *Magyarság* 1930. december 28. 7.; HGy. 34. Paulini Béla hagyatéka. A Magyar Bokréta története 1.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1930. december 23. 19.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1930. december 23. 19.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1930. december 20. 15.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1930. december 24. 12.
[344] Simon 1931b: 5.; La festa di Santo Stefano a Budapest. A066603. 1930. https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000030137/2/la-festa-santo-stefano-budapest.html?startPage=0&jsonVal={%22jsonVal%22:{%22query%22:[%22la%20festa%20di%20santo%20stefano%22],%22fieldDate%22:%22dataNormal%22,%22_perPage%22:20}} (accessed: 27 May 2024.)
[345] *Magyarság* 1931. július 19. 18.

Starting in the mid-twenties, there was a shift in attention towards the establishment of the cult of St Stephen. This involved highlighting the foundation of the state and popular culture simultaneously. This tradition was influenced by the St. Stephen's Days of the dualist era, when rural people were welcomed with a folk festival after the procession, which also provided an opportunity for rural farmers to go shopping.[346] In the 1920s, there was a revival of this tradition, which now incorporated ox roasting and other rituals. The primary objective was to exhibit folk art and the way of life of the people. The concept was to showcase groups from various locations around the country, each demonstrating their own culture and gastronomy.[347] In order to establish it, the Budapest Metropolitan Tourist Office communicated with the mayors of several regional communities and asked the governors and archbishops for fishermen from the Tisza River to cook fish soup in front of fishing huts, Matyó women to prepare sausages and meat,[348] Csongrád weasels making pancakes and csusza [typical pasta with ricotta],[349] Hortobágy horse racers and cattlemen to show herding demonstrations and to offer their traditional soup[350] arguing that "today, when we have to work on the loving coexistence of the countryside and the city, it is important that the atmosphere and kindness of Hungarian folk life reach the people of the capital."[351]

Similar to these celebrations, the St Stephen's Day St Right procession consistently required the involvement of groups dressed in costumes. In pursuit of this objective, they have endeavored to offer many advantages to the rural population, who would participate in the procession adorned in their traditional attire. As early as 1925, it was proposed that anyone wearing traditional national attire for the St. Stephen's Day festivities in Budapest would receive train discounts that surpass the already exceptional ones.[352] This concept failed to materialize, and the organizing committee of the Metropolitan Tourist Office of Budapest encountered temporary challenges as they were unsure of whom to approach for groups wearing national costumes. The above mentioned Faluszövetség /Village Association/ (Subchapter 2.2.5) eventually compiled a roster of rural communities whose traditional attire was still actively preserved. Consequently, the local authorities of these villages were urged to promote

[346] Lukács A. 2021: https://bparchiv.hu/statikus/lukacs-aniko-hogyan-unnepeljuk-szent-istvan-napjat (accessed: 2022. június 17.)
[347] BFL IV.1501.f. 107/1928. A tattersali népünnepély rendezőjének 1928. augusztus 9-i levele a Magyar Kir. Államrendőrség főkapitányához.
[348] BFL IV.1501.f. Zilahy Dezső levele Zsóri Lajos mezőkövesdi főszolgabíróhoz.
[349] BFL IV.1501.f. Zilahy Dezső 1928-as levele Szentesi Dr. Farkas Béla Csongrád vármegye főispánjához
[350] BFL IV.1501.f 54/1928 Zilahy Dezső 1928-as levele Dr. Fáy István kecskeméti polgármesterhez, Hadházy Zsigmond debreceni főispánhoz és Magoss György debreceni főispánnak.
[351] BFL IV.1501.f. Zilahy Dezső levele Szentesi Dr. Farkas Béla Csongrád vármegye főispánjához.
[352] *Az Ujság* 1925. augusztus 12. 3.

and motivate their residents to join in wearing their traditional folk clothes.[353] In a 1927 letter, it was proposed that individuals wearing traditional rural attire who visit Budapest would be eligible for a reduced rate on exceptionally affordable lodging.[354]

In the meantime, transportation was made affordable to all, and starting from that year, "railway and shipping firms are providing discounted travel fares to facilitate the integration of the Hungarian population from both the capital and the countryside into a great unity during these specific days."[355] Starting in 1927, the Hungarian State Railways, municipal railways of local interest, and Danube shipping firms offered a 50% discount to individuals arriving in Budapest from any station, including the border, on the morning of August 20th.[356] The duration of the celebrations on 20 August defined the number of days before and after the event. During this time, half-price tickets were made available to all, including both rural Hungarians and foreigners. Foreigners were granted free visas.[357] The purpose of implementing this discount and gradually extending it, along with the integration of the urban and rural areas on a national holiday, was to provide both local and international tourists with greater opportunities to stay longer in the capital city, make hotel reservations, engage in consumption, and go shopping.

Despite offering discounted tickets and accommodation, the attempt to attract groups of people in costume to Budapest was largely unsuccessful. Numerous village leaders responded with letters stating that their residents could not afford to travel to Budapest at their own expense due to extreme poverty.[358] The half-price tickets were considered a significant financial burden for the rural population, particularly the farmers who were already struggling to make ends meet. However, in several instances, the fact that individuals in the countryside had ceased to don the traditional folk attire also posed a predicament.[359] In 1926 and 1927, some groups of peasants dressed in costumes participated in the processions on 20 August, however, no formal parades were organized.[360]

But the ice was broken in 1931 when Béla Paulini organized a group of farmers from a dozen villages to perform their folk traditions, marking the beginning of the Gyöngyösbokréta-

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[353] BFL IV.1501.f. Szent István hét Érdemes községi Elöljáróságoknak címzett levél 1927. június 24-én BSZIH igazgatósága.
[354] BFL IV.1501.f. Szent István heti ünnepségeket rendező nagybizottság levele Népviseleti községeknek 1928.
[355] BFL IV.1501.f. Szent István hét Érdemes községi Elöljáróságoknak címzett levél 1927. június 24-én BSZIH igazgatósága.
[356] BFL IV.1501.f. 1927. Budapest nagy előkészületeket tesz az idei Szent István-hétre.
[357] *Pécsi Napló* 1931. július 29. 4.
[358] BFL IV. 1501.f. Zalamegyei főispán 1928. augusztus 12-i válaszlevele a Szent István hét rendezőbizottságának.
[359] Andor 2022: 93–124.
[360] Szent István-napi körmenet Budapesten. 1926. augusztus. Magyar Híradó131. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8530 (accessed: 2024. május 4.).; Az 1927. évi Szent István napi ünnepségek. 1927. augusztus. Magyar Híradó183. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=8743

movement, following two months of journey through the countryside.[361] Through the aforementioned life path and the experiences of *János Háry*, I have attempted to illustrate the personal qualities and cultural contributions of Béla Paulini, as well as how he got the role in organizing the Gyöngyösbokréta.

As demonstrated above, Paulini was a culturally engaged intellectual whose childhood years in the countryside afforded him a profound understanding of peasant culture, which is also reflected in his writings.[362] His background as a journalist and playwright made him a figure familiar with the world of show business, meaning he had learned how to promote and present ideas effectively. As a radio broadcaster and author, he possessed strong communication skills. These attributes enabled him to launch new initiatives successfully, but – as later ethnographer Zsigmond Bátky described, – he was a person who "displayed enthusiasm but lacked knowledge in the field of ethnography."[363] His wide-ranging personality was crucial in establishing the movement. While he made significant contributions in various fields, encyclopedias primarily recognize him as the founder of the Gyöngyösbokréta. He not only created and organized it, but also directed it, shaping the movement and its principles. His life and name were inseparable from the movement.[364] For this reason, Paulini's further elaboration on his other activities can be found in the introduction to the movement.



Fig. 13. Illustration about Béla Paulini in the commemorative album presented by the Gyöngyösbokréta groups on the 10th anniversary of the movement, 1940. The portrayal of him featured him with a tobacco pipe, adorned in traditional Hungarian attire, deep in contemplation of Gyöngyösbokréta. (OSZMI TA HGy34.)

[361] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 18. 11.
[362] Paulini 1927: 2–3.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1924. december 21. 10.; Tóth Arnold 2020: 101.
[363] *Magyarság* 1933. szeptember 7. 4.
[364] Asztalos (szerk.) 1933: 238.; Dormándi – Juhász (szerk.) 1936: 195.; Balla (szerk.) 1941: 5037–5038.; Révay – Kőhalmi (szerk.) 1947: 416–417.; Juhász (szerk.) 1948: 338.; Kenyeres (szerk.) 1967.; Benedek (szerk.) 1965: 453.

3. Birth, life, demise and afterlife of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement (1931–1989)

3.1 How folk traditions became Budapest's main attractions – The beginnings of the movement (1931–1933)

3.1.1 20 August – Peasant folk performances as part of the St Stephen's Celebrations programme in Budapest

Upon reflecting on past events, it becomes clear that the Gyöngyösbokréta was not the first example of showcasing folk traditions. Similar endeavors were undertaken abroad, and in Hungary, there were also numerous projects and forms that displayed folk traditions and dances. Paulini was given a significant task in August 1931 when he was given the responsibility to organize the cultural program for the St. Stephen's Day (later Week) celebrations. A significant number of individuals expressed dissatisfaction with the programs from prior years, resulting in a notable lack of enthusiasm for the St. Stephen's celebrations in the late 1920s.[365] The program included several sporting events such as swimming, athletics, and national football, as well as circus performances, concerts, horse races, an exposition, a cruise boat race, and fireworks in the evening.[366]

The organizing committee, consisting of Vilmos Kovácsházy, councillor, Ferenc Ripka, mayor, and Dezső Zilahy, director of the tourist office, aimed to enhance this proposition by presenting folk traditions:[367] "this year, the capital city is placing particular emphasis on giving the celebrations of St Stephen's Day a Hungarian caracter".[368] However, to ensure caution, two distinct folk programs were presented at separate locations, which has raised concerns regarding the success of the folk performances.[369] The two folklore programs, intended as attractions, were linked by the connection that they were both staged by Paulini, and the press greeted the announcement of both of their commencement with immense enthusiasm.[370] The objective of the two performances was to show that "Budapest, embracing the Hungarian village with love, wishes to provide an opportunity to present the Hungarian village and folk art to the foreigners who have come here."[371] The capital city implemented these folk-themed presentations in an

[365] Simon 1931a: 5.; Kónyay 1931: 8.
[366] *Magyarság* 1931. augusztus 4. 8.; *8 Órai Újság* 1931. augusztus 9. 4.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 13. 10.; *Új Nemzedék* 1931. augusztus 12. 7.; *Az Újság* 1931. augusztus 15. 10–11.
[367] *Nemzeti Újság* 1931. június 26. 10.; *Pesti Napló* 1931. június 27. 16.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1931. augusztus 9. 9.
[368] *Ceglédi Közlöny* 1931. július 5. 2.
[369] Heuman 1931: 17–19.
[370] *Nemzeti Újság* 1931. augusztus 15. 8.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1931. augusztus 9. 9.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 9. 2.
[371] *Pesti Hírlap* 1931. július 19. 20.

effort to promote tourism, and also implemented measures such as reducing accommodation rates[372] and offering free visas for foreigners.[373]

In the Chamber Theatre of the National Theatre, Paulini presented a stylized play of seven colors under the name *Magyar Szivárvány /Hungarian Rainbow/* with the farmers of Csákvár.[374]

Earlier press reports indicated that it was planned to perform János Háry with the inhabitants of Csákvár.[375] However, the final program of the *Magyar Szivárvány* comprised a nativity play, the first act of a famous folk drama, a folk ballad, and a grotesque folk play.[376] (Fig. 14.)



Fig. 14. Performation of the Csákvár farmers in Budapest. ("Magyar szivárvány." *Pesti Napló Képes Melléklete*, August 23, 1931, 8.)

Even the dress rehearsals received excellent reviews from the participating organizers,[377] with critics commending the originality, the use of peasant dialect, and the naive charm of the performances.[378] The *Magyar Szivárvány* performance by the renowned Csákvár company was completely sold out,[379] and the press colleagues who attended the rehearsals described it as a significant and noteworthy event.[380]

> "Undoubtedly, this is an influential artistic occasion. Attending the performance at the Chamber Theatre of the National Theatre in Budapest tonight will create lasting memories for the villagers. We are currently confronted with a severe economic and moral dilemma. This invigorating folk theatrical performance provides us with an opportune chance to regain our faith and awareness, if only for one evening. It serves to showcase the exceptional talent of our community, as well as the broad range of

[372] *8 Órai Újság* 1931. augusztus 9. 4.
[373] *Pécsi Napló* 1931. július 29. 4.
[374] *Pesti Napló* 1931. július 19. 25.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 9. 13.
[375] *Nemzeti Újság* 1931. június 26. 10.; *Pesti Napló* 1931. június 27. 16.
[376] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. július 19. 20.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1931. július 19. 18.; B.Gy. 1931: 11.
[377] *Új Barázda* 1931. augusztus 18. 4.
[378] Ignotus 1931: 14.; Zsigray 1931: 258–259.; Pünkösti 1931: 11.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 19. 6.
[379] *Kis Újság* 1931. augusztus 18. 8.
[380] Dékány 1931: 5.; Kolba 1931: 11.; L.Z. 1931: 11.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 18. 8.; Sz. S. 1931: 8.

> emotions and dramatic productions that our people possess. Despite the prevailing uncertainty, a gracious person emerged to orchestrate and guide the trajectory of this group of performers. He was keenly aware that the development of the people's play style could only be achieved by a complete separation and distinct departure from the professional stage."[381]

The triumph of the *Magyar Szivárvány* has been verified. Simultaneously, Paulini's alternative play, the Gyöngyösbokréta (Pearly Bouquet), originally titled Ispilángi Rózsa,[382] was presented in the Municipal Theatre and ran for two nights.[383]

In chapter 5.1.1, I will thoroughly analyze the choice of the name. However, I would like to emphasize that the term "gyöngyösbokréta" refers to a tool from folk culture that is worn on men's hats and carries symbolic significance. In certain regions, girls used to attach it to boys' hats as a symbol of their affection. Additionally, "gyöngyösbokréta" as a bouquet signifies the gathering of the most exquisite flowers in folk culture, known as pearls.[384]

The evening had twelve performances by rural groups, displaying local traditions and dances.[385]Ten groups were mentioned in newspapers in certain locations, while twelve or thirteen were stated in others. This was due to Paulini's visits to villages recommended to him by ethnographers István Györffy and Sándor Gönyey at the Ethnographic Museum in June 1931. These visits took place just two months before the national holiday of St. Stephen's Day. Paulini hoped to discover existing folk costumes and customs during his visits. Initially, it was just communicated that there in the religious process, there will be a parade consisting of 400 peasants dressed in costumes.[386] However, as Paulini's study advanced, the program underwent changes right up until the final moments.[387]

According to Gönyey's personal recollection, he recommended the groups of Boldog, Mezőkövesd, Buják, Bocsárlapujtő (Karancslapujtő), Nagykálló, Zsámbok to Paulini, who was visiting him at the Ethnographic Museum, for the first presentation.[388]

Zsámbok did not take part in the first Gyöngyösbokréta presentations, as it had not a strong group leader.[389] Furthermore, with the municipalities proposed by Gönyey, participants from Hortobágy, Kapuvár, Koppányszántó, Mikófalva, Őcsény, Püspökbogád, Sellye, Szany,

[381] *Az Est* 1931. augusztus 19. 10.
[382] *Pesti Hírlap* 1931. július 19. 20.; *Pesti Napló* 1931. július 19. 25.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. július 19. 20.
[383] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 4. 6.
[384] *Hagyomány Szava* 1940. (7.) 2. 5.
[385] *Pesti Napló* 1931. július 19. 25.; *Friss Újság* 1931. augusztus 20. 6.
[386] *Nemzeti Újság* 1931. június 26. 10.; *Pesti Napló* 1931. június 27. 16.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. július 4. 10.
[387] *Pesti Napló* 1931. július 19. 25.
[388] Gönyey é.n.: 5.; NM EA 22766 Gönyey Sándor: „Gyöngyösbokréta" táncainak véleményezése (Töredék) (1936–1940). 2.
[389] Hajdú 1991: 81.

Szentistván, and Tiszapolgár participated in the inaugural Gyöngyösbokréta event in Budapest.[390]

Already this first show embraced the diverse customs and dances of the country's different regions and represented the three typical music dialects of Hungary: Transdanubia, Upper Hungary and the Great Plain (at this time Transylvania, also a distinctive musical area, could not be part of it due to the annexation).[391]

The "Gyöngyösbokréta series of songs and dances"[392] included, among others, a bridal shower, a spinning scene, herdsman's dance, a bottle dance, a jumping dance, a verbunk, a harvest festival. [393]

While the actual groups and municipalities were not confirmed their participation until the last week,[394] there were ultimately twelve performances involving fourteen to fifteen groups. The newspapers and memoirs provide varying names of municipalities, suggesting that the former list is more reliable.

> "The primary objective of showcasing this song-and-dance team, which will be examined here, is to highlight the high regard in which exquisite costumes, age-old Hungarian songs, and captivating Hungarian dances are held both within the nation and globally. It emphasizes the importance of preserving these cultural treasures in places where they still exist and reviving authentic Hungarian songs, dances, and costumes in regions where they have been lost. The St. Stephen's week folk shows, although splendid, do not represent the final outcome in this regard. Subsequently, these song and dance presentations will showcase all the villages that could have been initially invited to participate and be honored but were unable to due to the limited scope of the performances. This presentation will take place on a global stage, symbolizing the heart and appreciation of the country."[395]

Although many doubted the success of the performance – whether it would not be a new "wanna-be-folk" theatre – the show was very positively received, and as the quote suggests, plans were already being made to include groups from other parts of the country with their folk traditions.[396]

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[390] *Magyarság* 1931. augusztus 20. 9.; *Népszava* 1931. augusztus 20. 15.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 20. 12.; *Új Barázda* 1931. augusztus 19. 2.; *Új Nemzedék* 1931. augusztus 19. 6.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 20. 13.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 18. 11.; *Pesti Napló* 1931. augusztus 19. 11.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 20. 13.; Szita 1981: 8.
[391] Volly 1995: 11.
[392] *Magyarság* 1931. augusztus 18. 9.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 4. 6.
[393] Pálfi 1970: 145.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. július 19. 20.
[394] *Nemzeti Újság* 1931. augusztus 9. 9.; *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 15. 9.; *Az Ujság* 1931. augusztus 15. 11.; *Pesti Napló* 1931. július 19. 25.
[395] *Nemzeti Újság* 1931. július 19. 21.
[396] *Pesti Napló* 1931. augusztus 22. 8.

Paulini's name was frequently lauded in relation to his performances as well.[397] Paulini's achievement is not just linked to his contribution, but rather, a collective effort involving the local leaders who provided assistance in rehearsing customs and dances, as well as organizing and managing the journey to Budapest.[398]



Fig. 15. Paulini with Zsigmond Csuka, leader of the Érsekcsanád bokréta group. (Property of Csilla Csukás)

Starting this year, it has become a tradition for rural groups to march through the streets of the capital and show their appreciation to the mayor by thanking him for his warm welcome in Budapest and offering him small presents.[399]

The deed was symbolic, signifying "the capital's affectionate embrace of even the smallest village during the week of the first Hungarian king's celebrations, symbolizing the unity of Hungary."[400] They marked the proximity of the village and town, the shared national heritage of folk culture, and the unity of the nation.

The *Magyar Szivárvány* ceased to be played in subsequent years due to the greater success of Gyöngyösbokréta with international audiences,[401] and the actors from Csákvár peasant theatre discontinued their performances.

[397] *Magyar Hírlap* 1931. augusztus 15. 17.
[398] *Pesti Napló* 1931. július 19. 25.
[399] *Pesti Napló* 1931. augusztus 4. 12.; *Kis Újság* 1931. augusztus 18. 6.; *Új Nemzedék* 1931. augusztus 19. 6.
[400] *Magyarság* 1932. augusztus 18. 10.
[401] Volly 1995: 13.

In 1933, a show also called *Magyar Szivárvány* was performed at the Operetta Theatre.[402] It is worth mentioning that this production, directed by a poet, a composer, a dramatist, a painter, and a theatrical director,[403] shared the same name as Paulini's Csákvár peasant group, but had no further connection to it, despite the fact that the piece was billed as "a folk symbol of Hungarian life elevated to art",[404] and after the Budapest performances[405] they performed in Italy as messengers of Hungarian culture.[406]

The Gyöngyösbokréta has just begun its conquest. The 1932 performances took place at the National Theatre, with the participation of 16 groups from Buják, Koppányszántó, Mikófalva, Mezőkövesd, Őcsény, Szentistván, Őrhalom, Kunszentmiklós, Kalocsa, Bocsárlapujtő, Hortobágy, Boldog, Kapuvár, Kazár, Püspökbogád, and Szany.[407] The bokréta groups performed for four consecutive evenings this year, specifically on the dates of August 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st.[408]

By 1933, twenty-three groups were performing: The groups of Boldog, Bugac, Buják, Érsekcsanád, Galambok, Hortobágy, Kalocsa, Kapuvár, Kazár, Kiskomárom, Koppányszántó, Kunszentmiklós, Mezőkövesd, Mikófalva, Nagykálló, Őcsény, Őrhalom, Püspökbogád, Szakmár, Szany, Szentistván, Tiszaföldvár, Váralja participated in the Budapest performances.[409]

Starting from these years, Paulini organized the groups in a way that each evening, groups from various locations were combined to showcase a variety of costumes and traditional customs to the audience.[410] Therefore, each evening, a total of 10 to 12 groups would showcase their unique traditions and dances, while on following evenings, different groups would display the dances and traditions of their own communities.[411]

I have provided a list of the initial three years to demonstrate that certain municipalities have previously been referenced in the 'antecedents' section (2.2) in relation to different initiatives.[412]

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[402] *Pesti Napló* 1933. július 30. 21.
[403] Faragó 1933: 8.; Ottlik 1933: 10.
[404] *Friss Újság* 1933. augusztus 3. 10.; *8 Órai Újság* 1933. augusztus 24. 8.
[405] Gy. Z. 1933: 4.
[406] *Az Est* 1933. augusztus 31. 6.; *Pesti Napló Képes Műmelléklet* 1933. szeptember 3. 11.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1933. szeptember 19. 8.; *Magyarország* 1933. szeptember 19. 8.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1933. október 18. 8.
[407] *Magyarság* 1932. augusztus 18. 10.
[408] Paulini Béla 1932: A Gyöngyösbokréta utján – egy palóc községben. *Színházi Élet* 1932. (22.) 35. 8–11.
[409] *Kis Újság* 1933. augusztus 17. 10.; *Kis Ujság* 1933. augusztus 20. 14.
[410] *Kis Ujság* 1933. augusztus 20. 14.
[411] *Kis Újság* 1933. augusztus 7. 10.
[412] Hajdu 1991: 81–84.

For instance, Mezőkövesd participated in the Millenary Exhibition and the Matyó wedding at the Opera House, Mikóháza took part in the 1922 Passion Play,[413] Kapuvár exhibited at the Village Association's Kapuvár exhibition, and the group from Szany competed in the 1925 Sopron folk costume competition.[414] In addition to these villages, Paulini himself has travelled to many rural villages to search for folk costumes and customs.



Fig. 16. Béla Paulini performs a traditional csárdás with one of the girls of Gyöngyösbokréta. (*Színházi Élet* 22 (1932): 8–11.)

In the photograph shown here (Fig. 16.), Paulini was exploring the possibility of finding folk customs to stage in a village during one of his visits to the countryside in 1932. Paulini even participated in a dance for the shot, and the key to his success was that individuals from a peasant background embraced and relied on him. According to his own statement, the formation of the organizations relied heavily on the local leader – a cantor, a teacher, a priest, or a local judge – and their relationship with the people. But Paulini himself also had to be creative in his approach to the people, and to find several ways to get a group to explore and stage their customs. "I have to find my way to the heart of the people in different ways. The most primitive way is ten liters of wine in the cooperative..." – he said in 1932.[415] After all, in those days, it was by no means self-evident to the peasants that their folk traditions represented a value worthy of being presented on stage. As we have seen, in the 1920s, there were difficulties in attracting ethnic groups to Budapest, one of the reasons being that the peasants did not understand the sudden interest of the upper classes in the peasantry.

[413] Galambosné Riskó 2018: 132–133.
[414] Németh 1942: 2.; Volly 1991: 112–115.; Fercsik 1981: 1.
[415] Barabás 1932: 21.

3.1.2 Joining the Gyöngyösbokréta

Paulini, as his career shows, was not an ethnographer, so he did not analyze each production with regards to its authenticity or the traditional nature of folk practices. Due to his theatrical career and his career as a director, he had a preference for seeking visually appealing elements in rural settings that would translate well on stage. The primary 'accessory' to it was folk costume, so Paulini sought out the customs and dances of colorful, flamboyantly costumed localities in the villages.[416] Upon Paulini's arrival, a ball was organized in each municipality, during which Paulini would see the dance in its authentic context and choose the performers, the future members of the local bokréta group.[417] His brother-in-law, Antal Szilárd, accompanied him on multiple trips and assisted him in selecting the bokréta groups.[418] Paulini also utilized the media (radio, press) to promote the recruitment of Gyöngyösbokréta, by broadcasting a radio program and publishing a newspaper article inviting municipalities with authentic folk costumes and traditions to apply.[419] In doing so, he also reached out to the Hungarians in the annexed territories, who later – at the time of the re-annexations – officially joined the movement.

Paulini's tour in the countryside resulted in a twofold increase in the number of participating groups over a span of two years, leading to a growing interest from numerous municipalities in joining. Regarding the 1933 presentation, the Kiskunhalas local newspaper is delighted to report on the triumphant display of the Gyöngyösbokréta. However, it mentions that the town of Kiskunhalas intends to showcase its folk art with other groups in the upcoming year.[420]

Similarly, there was a proposal to include individuals from Békés county in the nationwide movement inside the Great Plain region, specifically at the county level.[421] In addition, an article, entitled "*Why were the Csököly people left out from Gyöngyösbokréta?" /Miért maradtak ki a csökölyiek a Gyöngyösbokrétából?/* was written by the local teacher from Csököly village. His essay laments the fact that despite the initiation of learning local customs in the the village, they could not perform in Budapest. [422] The minority groups residing in Hungary expressed their desire to be part of the movement. For instance, the "courageous and

[416] Paulini Béla 1932: A Gyöngyösbokréta utján – egy palóc községben. *Színházi Élet* 1932. (22.) 35. 8–11.
[417] Horváth Péterné Nagy Anna. http://nepmuveszetmesterei.hu/index.php/dijazottak-neve/124-horvath-peterne; Lele 1983: 35–41.; Szapudi 1979: 5.
[418] Volly 1995: 13.
[419] *Budapesti Hírlap Rádiómelléklete* 1931. szeptember 25. 1.; *Vasárnap* 1934. július 29. 11.
[420] *Kiskunhalas Helyi Értesítője* 1933. augusztus 29. 2.
[421] *Orosházi Friss Hírek* 1936. november 29. 3.
[422] Szalóky 1940: 3.

patriotic Swabian community of Bezedek village" contended that the inclusion of the national group could foster a sense of pride among both the German minorities and the Hungarians in Hungary.[423] And while several groups of Hungarians from across the border eventually became members of the movement, no minority groups were included.

These examples demonstrate that being a member of the Gyöngyösbokréta was a highly prestigious position, and numerous municipalities aspired to join the national movement, which occasionally resulted in feelings of envy. Additionally, there were rivalries among the included groups, particularly among communities in close proximity to one another and belonging to the same ethnographic region. This applies to the groups that join the movement from the Matyó villages (Mezőkövesd, Tard, Szentistván) or from Kalocsa and its surroundings. In his study, Imre Romsics, an ethnographer and researcher of folk art in Kalocsa, highlights that the leadership of the Kalocsa bokréta group was unwilling to acknowledge the fact that Paulini invited groups from villages (Szakmár, Homokmégy) that were once part of the city of Kalocsa but had since become separate settlements.[424] The manifestation of jealously and a refusal to recognize the need for sharing success became a prominent concern when Paulini extended an invitation for the Szakmár group (and not for the Kalocsa group) for the international event in Vienna. The group of Kalocsa, particularly the leaders, were worried about their own position. They perceived the autonomy of the folk art in the neighboring villages as a potential danger to the established and organized folk art enterprise led by the leaders of the Kalocsa bokréta.[425]

So, within two or three years the success of the Budapest shows had spread to the countryside, and by then, as we can see, there were debates and prestige issues about joining. Here are several instances where the inclusion of a settlement was occasionally arbitrary. There were multiple methods employed to acquire inclusion in the Gyöngyösbokréta.

For instance, Paulini used his previous acquaintances to build a network. In 1929, he took part in the Hungarian Song Association's competition in Sopron, where he got to know Kálmán Kokas, the leader of the Szany Song Choir, and he asked him to join the Bokréta movement.[426] Or, in 1934, Paulini made a visit to Karád, a village where Zoltán Kodály had already gathered a significant collection of folk songs. In addition to the folk songs, the village

[423] Vécs 1933: 8.
[424] Romsics Imre 2021: 236.
[425] Romsics Imre 2021: 238–239.
[426] NM EA 22506. Varga Szabolcs: A Szanyi Bokréta története. Érk. az 1985. évi Országos Néprajzi és Nyelvjárási Gyűjtőpályázatra. 4.

also kept some customs.[427] On the contrary, the inclusion of the Uszód bokréta among the groupings was largely coincidental. Agricultural products were transported from Uszód to the capital, where farmers spent the evening before the market resting or entertaining themselves. On one such evening, a Uszód market vendor happened to see the Gyöngyösbokréta showed at the City Theater and invited Paulini to the dance ball in Uszód. Paulini attended the local ball in Uszód, and the next year, the group also received invitations to the Budapest premieres.[428]

On rare occasions, a group would perform in one year and subsequently not be included in the list again. The primary reason for this was the absence of a competent local leader, or later on (during the Second World War), the recruitment of men, including the leaders, which prevented the performing of folk rituals and dances.[429]

It is worth questioning why the Csákvár group did not continue to perform certain traditional events, like the nativity pageant with its original folk customs. Additionally, one may ask why settlements that were already famous about their folk culture, such as Fiskalitáshuta, which showcased "original dances" in the 1931 Filmhíradó, were not included in the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement.[430] However, the inclusion in the movement was primarily influenced by factors such as the presence of a prepared local leader.

An obstacle encountered during the research was the discovery of numerous settlement names associated with the Gyöngyösbokréta groups in the sources. However, it was observed that several of these settlements were not formally recognized as part of the National Bokréta Association. An example is Apátfalva. (Fig. 17.) Apátfalva was visited by ethnographers who documented customs[431] and provided guidance to the local community on how to accurately showcase traditional costumes and customs.[432] However, ethnographers Edit Fél and László Kovács noted in their report that the customs they observed were not unique,[433] which likely explains why they were not presented in Budapest. Nevertheless, the photographs here demonstrate that these customs were showcased locally in various performances and events under the name of Gyöngyösbokréta.[434]

[427] Szapudi:1997.
[428] Kovács– Megyeri 2012: 77.
[429] Ifj. Lele 1990: 159.
[430] Mátrai népviselet és néptánc. Magyar Híradó389. 1931. augusztus. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=9674)
[431] Bárkányi 2015: 417–424.
[432] Bárkányi 2015: 341.
[433] Kovács – Fél 1937: 309.
[434] Felföldi– Gombos 2015: 460.



Fig. 17. "The Gyöngyösbokréta group of Apátfalva."
("Az apátfalvi gyöngyösbokréta…" *Somogyi Újság Képes Híradója*, October 10, 1937, 8.)

The trajectory of the Szil group intersected with the Gyöngyösbokréta in a different way. Based on the settlement's website, they took part in various Budapest shows starting from the mid-1930s.[435] However, according to the official papers of the movement, they made their initial appearance as "guest bokréta"[436] at an event in Sopron in 1943. It was planned for them to officially join the movement from that point onwards. Although they did participate in another Gyöngyösbokréta event in early 1944,[437] they ultimately did not become members of the Association. This decision was likely influenced by the events of 1944. There is no evidence to suggest that they performed in Budapest.

Apátfalva and Szil are not rare examples, and the memories published on the Szil website is not exceptional, as participation in the Gyöngyösbokréta was (and in some cases still is) a significant occasion in the local history. Additionally, the names of Adony,[438] Boldogasszonyfalva,[439] Csökönyd,[440] Drávanagyfalu,[441] Gáborjánháza,[442] Petrikeresztúr,[443] Szentgyörgymező,[444] Zengővárkony,[445] and other others have been cited as bokrétas. Some of these were performed at local events, but most likely were never showcased at the St. Stephen's Day exhibitions in Budapest, and they were not affiliated with the Bokréta Association.

For this reason, among others, it is challenging to determine the precise number of municipalities and members affiliated with the movement. Dance historian-choreographer Csaba Pálfi's list includes 98 settlements,[446] although dance historian Krisztina Dóka's table

[435] Szil honlapja. https://szil.hu/2015/07/
[436] *Hagyomány Szava* 1943. (4.) 9. 1–2. 2.
[437] *Hagyomány Szava* 1944. (5.) 1. 1.
[438] *Új Nemzedék* 1938. szeptember 2. 5.
[439] *Színházi Élet* 1938. (28.) 41. 50.; *Kis Újság* 1936. június 21. 11.
[440] Szőllősy 2010: 121.
[441] *Zalamegyei Újság* 1942. augusztus 31. 5.
[442] *Zalai Magyar Élet* 1943. november 11. 3.
[443] Káli 2016: 359.
[444] Bárdos 1994: 125–166.
[445] Gállos 1982: 8.; *Új Dunántúli Napló* 1998. május 23. 10.; *Délmagyarország* 1935. augusztus 30. 2.
[446] Pálfi 1970: 147–151.

displays 102 localities.[447] However, Pálfi's list also accounts for cases where municipalities asked for inclusion but did not ultimately join the movement. During my research, I identified a collective of 97 villages that participated in the movement, namely those that showcased their traditions or dances at the St. Stephen's Week events held in the capital. The examples pointed out that certain groups have solely performed at rural/local bokréta events, without taking part in the Gyöngyösbokréta presentations in the capital. Consequently, I omitted them from consideration.

Between 1931 and 1948, depending on the calculations, about a hundred groups of municipalities took part in the Gyöngyösbokréta presentations.

Initially, during the initial stages of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, bokrétas from the territory of Truncated Hungary were part of the movement. However, starting from 1936, „bokréta groups" were also formed beyond the border. These bokrétas, with the re-annexation of the territories, officially joined the Hungarian movement.

Almost one quarter of the 97 settlements I counted were bokrétas established in the annexed territories of the successor states, as the total number of bokrétas in Transylvania (13), Vojvodina (4), Upper Hungary (7) and Transcarpathia (1) is twenty-five. (Fig. 18.)

[447] Dóka 2011: 218–220.

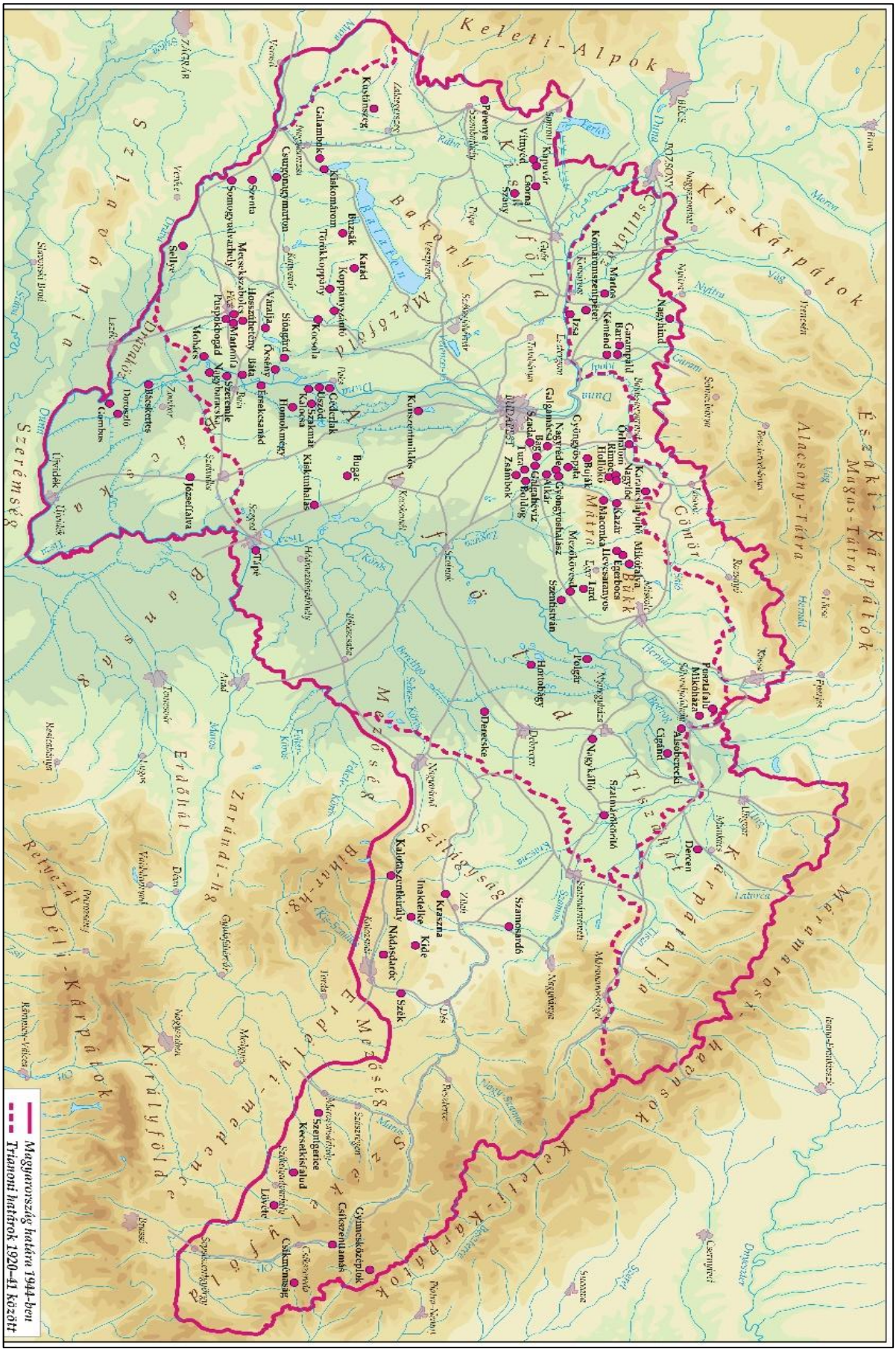

Fig. 18. Geographical location of the settlements joined Gyöngyösbokréta in 1944. Created by: László Sebők.

On the map of Fig. 19., the red dots indicate the municipalities from which Gyöngyösbokréta groups have officially joined the Bokréta Association. The dotted lines indicate the territory of Hungary after the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, which coincides with the territory of Hungary today, while the solid lines indicate the territory of Hungary in 1944 (with the addition of the territories that were reannexed under the Vienna Decisions I and II).



Fig. 19. Map of 1939 with the settlements that joined the National Hungarian Bokréta Association and their rail and road connections. "From where do the "Pearly – Bouquet" peasant groups come?" *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939, no. 6, 28.

In 1939, a map published in the *Bokrétások Lapja* indicated that the Bokréta Association consisted of 59 settlements by that year, covering the folk dances and traditions from almost all the regions in the country. This offered an opportunity for groups from unknown villages and regions to identify themselves and establish connections with each other. In addition, the numbers and the map show that the Gyöngyösbokréta created a real fashion, and the number of settlements joining the movement increased fivefold between the beginning and 1939 and continued to increase as more settlements (mainly from the reannexed territories) joined. The map also indicates that nearly half of the settlements were not situated immediately along the railway or roadway transportation (shown by a red line on the map), therefore indicating the isolation of these settlements. This isolation helps to explain the longstanding presence of folk

practices, however, the proximity of the railway simultaneously enabled outreach, as many settlements thus became aware of the movement.

This meant that travelling to Budapest was also a big thing in the life of the bokréta members, as many of them had never left the borders of their village, and had never been to Budapest, as in many cases it meant a half-day journey and was only possible after the first major settlement had been reached.

The following table (Table 1) presents the settlements joined the Gyöngyösbokréta arranged in alphabetical order. I have created my list by exclusively incorporating the groups that were in attendance at the Budapest performances, as previously specified. In the second column of the table, I indicated which settlements joined the territories that were from the annexed and then briefly reannexed territories according to the Treaty of Trianon, while in the third column, I tried to present the division by counties. (I have opted for this approach instead of using the criterion of ethnographic regions since I frequently encounter challenges in distinguishing landscape units based on varying boundaries and the inclusion of specific settlements.) The fourth column points out that the vast majority of the settlements included in the Gyöngyösbokréta are small or large villages, but two groups have also been formed in towns, Kalocsa and Kiskunhalas. The population graphs, derived from the 1930 and 1941 censuses, depict a heterogeneous representation of the many groups residing in Gyöngyösbokréta. Among the settlements with a population of a few hundred, Mezőkövesd, a large municipality with a population of 20,000, is also on the list. Some of the names of the settlements have changed: most of them occur among the groups that moved across the border, but some settlements have lost their independence and have been incorporated into a larger city (e.g. Kecsetkisfalud into Farkaslaka, Kiskomárom into Zalakomárom, or Mecsekszabolcs into Pécs). This may also suggest that in the 1930s these settlements were small and isolated, allowing for the preservation of folk costumes and customs, but in later decades they were integrated into a larger neighboring settlement.

In terms of religion, most of the groups were Catholic, as the majority of Hungary was Catholic at the time, but a few Reformed settlements joined in.[448] There were differences in both customs and costume, this was mainly highlighted in the case of settlements located in close proximity to each other but of different religions. (For example, Kalocsa, Homokmégy,

[448] Occasionally, there were Jewish individuals who served as group leaders. However, due to the increase in antisemitism, the Association was requested to appoint Christian leaders in all instances. (NM EA 19036. 162/44. Paulini Béla 1944. június 23-i levele Dr. Timár Sándor tanácsjegyzőnek.; NM EA 19037. 167/44. A mikóházi körjegyző 1944. június 5-i levele Paulini Bélának. Pataky 1964: 16.)

and Uszód were neighboring settlements in the Kalocsa region. While the majority of the residents were Catholics, Uszód stood apart due to its Reformed customs and clothing.) On rare occasions, the data indicates that the ratio of individuals from two distinct religious groups in a community is nearly identical throughout the period in question. In these cases, I have specified the religion to which the bokréta group belongs. This was greatly influenced by which religions still preserved their customs and costumes, and which religious leaders were interested in ethnography and able to assemble a group of their believers.

Municipality	**Country**	**County**	**Legal position 1922**	**Population 1930 (annexed territories: 1913)**	**Population 1941**	**Church**
Alsóberecki	Hungary	Zemplén	small village	742	772	Reformed
Atkár	Hungary	Heves	large village	2225	2147	Catholic
Bácskertes (today: Kupusina, Купусина)	**Vojvodina, Serbia (Yugoslavia)**	Bács-Bodrog	large village	3205	3165	Catholic
Bag	Hungary	Pest	large village	3458	3168	Catholic
Bart (today: Bruty)	**Felvidék, Szlovákia**	Esztergom	1913: large village	1168	1087	Catholic
Báta	Hungary	Tolna	large village	3689	3675	Catholic
Bocsárlapujtő (today: Karancslapujtő)	Hungary	Nógrád	small village	2135	2367	Catholic
Boldog	Hungary	Pest	large village	2787	2893	Catholic
Bugac	Hungary	Pest	"puszta"	3527	4447	Catholic
Buják	Hungary	Nógrád	small village	2368	2467	Catholic
Buzsák	Hungary	Somogy	small village	2553	2549	Catholic
Cigánd	Hungary	Zemplén	small village	4715	5104	Reformed
Csíkmenaság (today: Armășeni)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Csík	1913: large village	2178	2015	Catholic
Csíkszenttamás (today: Tomești)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Csík	1913: large village	2721	3492	Catholic
Csorna	Hungary	Sopron	large village	8498	8951	Catholic
Csurgónagymarton	Hungary	Somogy	small village	548	518	Catholic
Dercen (today: Dercen, Дерцен)	**Kárpátalja, Ucraine**	Ung	1913: small village	2025	2017	Reformed
Derecske	Hungary	Hajdú-Bihar	large village	9985	10399	Reformed
Doroszló (today: Doroslovo, Дорослово)	**Vojvodina, Serbia (Yugoslavia)**	Bács-Bodrog	large village	2722	2865	Catholic
Egerbocs	Hungary	Heves	small village	1000	999	Catholic
Érsekcsanád	Hungary	Pest	large village	2116	2226	Reformed
Galambok	Hungary	Zala	small village	1868	1785	Catholic
Galgahévíz	Hungary	Pest	large village	2414	2570	Catholic
Galgamácsa	Hungary	Pest	large village	1880	1748	Catholic

Garampáld (today: Pavlová)	**Felvidék, Szlovákia**	Hont	1913: small village	521	528	Catholic
Géderlak	Hungary	Pest	large village	1580	1501	Catholic
Gombos	**Vojvodina, Serbia (Yugoslavia)**	Bács-Bodrog	large village	3225	2878	Catholic
Gyimesközéplok (today: Lunca de Jos)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Csík	1913: large village	3080	5369	Catholic
Gyöngyöshalász	Hungary	Heves	large village	2053	2241	Catholic
Gyöngyöspata	Hungary	Heves	large village	3077	3359	Catholic
Hevesaranyos	Hungary	Heves	small village	987	983	Catholic
Hollókő	Hungary	Nógrád	small village	621	666	Catholic
Homokmégy	Hungary	Pest	large village	3062	3043	Catholic
Hortobágy	Hungary	Hajdú	"puszta"	1406	1653	Reformed
Hosszúhetény	Hungary	Baranya	small village	2947	3101	Catholic
Inaktelke (today: Inucu)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Kolozs	small village	706	702	Reformed
Izsa	**Felvidék, Szlovákia**	Komárom	large village	2136	2332	Catholic
Józseffalva/Bácsjózseffalva (today: Novi Žednik, Нови Жедник, Újnagyfény)	**Vojvodina, Serbia (Yugoslavia)**	Bukovina	large village	2967	n.d.	Catholic (Orthodox majority because of the Serbian majority)
Kalocsa	Hungary	Pest	town	11930	12389	Catholic
Kalotaszentkirály (today: Sâncraiu)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Kolozs	small village	1046	1054	Reformed
Kapuvár	Hungary	Sopron	large village	9536	10173	Catholic
Karád	Hungary	Somogy	large village	3484	3486	Catholic
Kazár	Hungary	Nógrád	small village	2205	2220	Catholic
Kecsetkisfalud (today: Satu Mic, belongs to Farkaslaka)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Udvarhely	small village	749		Reformed
Kéménd (today: Kamenín)	**Felvidék, Szlovákia**	Esztergom	large village	1812	1890	Catholic
Kide (today: Chidea)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Kolozs	small village	796	739	Catholic, Reformed, Unitarian, Greek Catholic
Kiskomárom (today: belongs to Zalakomárom)	Hungary	Zala	small village	1933		Catholic
Kiskunhalas	Hungary	Pest	town	19789	23784	Catholic
Kocsola	Hungary	Tolna	large village	2310	2312	Catholic
Komáromszentpéter (today: Svätý Peter)	**Felvidék, Szlovákia**	Komárom	large village	2959		Catholic

Koppányszántó	Hungary	Tolna	large village	1407	1281	Catholic
Kraszna (today: Crasna)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Szilágy	large village	3884		Reformed
Kunszentmiklós	Hungary	Pest	large village	8434	8241	Reformed
Kustánszeg	Hungary	Zala	small village	1019	1100	Reformed
Lövéte (today: Lueta)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Udvarhely	large village	3434		Catholic
Maconka	Hungary	Heves	small village	706	718	Catholic?
Martonfa	Hungary	Baranya	small village	351	325	Catholic
Martos	**Felvidék, Szlovákia**	Komárom	large village	1288	1357	Reformed
Mecsekszabolcs (today: belongs to Pécs)	Hungary	Baranya	large village	4671	5612	Catholic
Mezőkövesd	Hungary	Borsod	large village	20984	20988	Catholic
Mikófalva	Hungary	Heves	large village	1090	1107	Catholic
Mikóháza	Hungary	Zemplén	small village	646	646	Catholic
Mohács	Hungary	Baranya	large village	14695	15442	Catholic
Nádasdaróc (today: Dorolțu)	Transylvania, Romania	Kolozs	1913: small village	239	166	Reformed
Nagybaracska	Hungary	Baranya	large village	3515	3507	Catholic
Nagyhind (today: Veľké Chyndice)	**Felvidék, Szlovákia**	Nyitra	1913: small village	483	457	Catholic
Nagykálló	Hungary	Szabolcs	large village	9361	9862	Catholic, Reformed
Nagylóc	Hungary	Nógrád	small village	2292	2305	Catholic
Nagyréde	Hungary	Heves	large village	2748	2890	Catholic
Őcsény	Hungary	Tolna	large village	1780	1773	Catholic, Reformed
Őrhalom	Hungary	Nógrád	small village	1304	1405	Catholic
Perenye	Hungary	Vas	small village	854	945	Catholic
Polgár/Tiszapolgár	Hungary	Hajdú-Bihar, before 1949 Szabolcs	large village	8840	9697	Catholic
Püspökbogád (today: Bogád)	Hungary	Baranya	small village	605	598	Catholic
Pusztafalu	Hungary	Abaúj-Torna	small village	525	542	Reformed
Rimóc	Hungary	Nógrád	small village	1671	1813	Catholic
Sellye	Hungary	Baranya	small village	2164	2085	Catholic
Sióagárd	Hungary	Tolna	large village	1986	1878	Catholic
Somogyudvarhely	Hungary	Somogy	large village	2196	2231	Catholic
Szada	Hungary	Pest	large village	1702	1793	Catholic
Szakmár	Hungary	Pest	large village	2671	2661	Catholic
Szamosardó (today: Arduzel)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Szilágy	1913: small village	628	n.d.	Reformed
Szany	Hungary	Sopron	large village	3409	3385	Catholic

Szatmárököritó (today: Ököritófülpös)	Hungary	Szatmár	small village	2461	2550	Reformed
Szék (today: Sic)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Szolnok - Doboka	1913: large village	3612	4444	Reformed
Szenta	Hungary	Somogy	small village	1052	963	Catholic
Szentgerice (today: Gălăţeni)	**Transylvania, Romania**	Maros Torda	small village	1369	1282	Unitarian, Reformed
Szentistván	Hungary	Borsod	large village	4095	4003	Catholic
Szeremle	Hungary	Pest	large village	1846	1882	Catholic
Tápé	Hungary	Csongrád	large village	4288	4654	Catholic
Tard	Hungary	Borsod	large village	2139	2131	Catholic
Törökkoppány	Hungary	Somogy	small village	1324	1263	Catholic
Tura	Hungary	Pest	large village	6781	7053	Catholic
Uszód	Hungary	Pest	large village	1976	1945	Reformed
Váralja	Hungary	Tolna	large village	1563	1649	Catholic, Reformed
Vitnyéd	Hungary	Sopron	small village	1869	1952	Catholic
Zsámbok	Hungary	Pest	large village	2705	2716	Catholic

Table 1. Table of the settlements (officially) participating in the movement, their size, and the religion of the local bokréta group (which generally reflects the main religious affiliation of the settlement).[449]

The unwavering popularity of Gyöngyösbokréta is demonstrated by the fact that even in 1944, numerous settlements desired to join the movement alongside the ones displayed in the tableau.[450]



Fig. 20. Paulini with some bokréta members. "Paulini a Gyöngyösbokrétásokkal." *Színházi Élet*, 1938, no. 28, 35.

[449] Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 1932: *Az 1930. évi népszámlálás 1. Demográfiai adatok községek és külterületi lakotthelyek szerint. Stephanum Nyomda Részvénytársaság, Budapest.;* Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 1913: *A magyar Szent Korona országainak Helységnévtára, 1913*. Budapest.; Várady Károly (szerk.) 1942: *A Magyar Szent Koronához visszacsatolt déli országrészek betűrendes helységnévtára. 2. kiadás* Hornyánszky Viktor R.-T., Nyomdai Műintézet, Budapest.; Az 1941. évi népszámlálás: Dem. 2. kötet/Az 1941. évi népszámlálás. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. Népszámlálási Osztályográfiai adatok községek szerint.; Kempelen Béla (szerk.) 1922: *Csonka-Magyarország compass-szerű helységnévtára.* Werner Miksa és Fia, Budapest.; Beluszky Pál 1999: *Magyarország településföldrajza. Általános rész.* Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest-Pécs.; Beluszky Pál 2020: *Városi szerepkör, városi rang.* Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest.

[450] NM EA 19037. 86/44. Simunek Béláné 1944. február 22-i levele Paulini Bélának.; NM EA 19036. 79/44. Bíró Izsák unitárius lelkész – bokrétavezető 1944. február 15-i levele a Bokréta Szövetség vezetőségéhez.; NM EA 19037. 195/44. Bálint Károly és Bálintné G. Julianna 1941. augusztus 2-i levele Paulini Bélának.

3.2 The (National) Hungarian Bokréta Association – an association endorsed and sponsored by the state and public intellectuals (1934–1948)[451]

3.2.1 To unify the peasant culture – The (National) Hungarian Bokréta Association

The sudden expansion of the groups, the complexity of the organisational work and the increased expenditure made it clear after the first few years that a properly coordinated organisation was needed. With the help of the Ministries of Religion and Public Education, the Interior and Trade, the Hungarian Bokréta Association was set up on the initiative by Béla Paulini. However, the support from the ministries was not entirely altruistic, as they quickly realized that "through the movement, it is possible to send a message within the country and abroad that social, popular and Hungarian politics are being pursued here."[452] As a prelude to this, the Ministry of Religion and Public Education had already issued a decree on April 17, 1934 addressed to the Extracurricular Education Committees (Iskolánkívüli Népművelési Bizottságok), to support the activities and further organizational work of the Association as far as possible and to call upon the local education committees.[453] On November 15, 1934, another decree was sent to the teachers, calling upon them to ensure that anyone wishing to take part in the work of cultivating and reviving folk arts should do so only in accordance with the "principles and work plan" of the Hungarian Bokréta Association.[454] From these decrees it is clear that the ministries gave both intellectual and financial support to the work of the Bokréta Association. As a result, more municipalities began to re-evaluate their traditions in order to join the movement, and intellectuals began to support the movement as it gained in popularity.

Financial support for the Budapest events of the Gyöngyösbokréta was thus provided by the capital city, the Ministry of Trade and Commerce, and Paulini himself set up a system of patronage: in return for the full amount of their membership fees, the patron members received folk art objects[455], and patrons did not have to pay an entrance fee and were given reserved seating at local bokréta shows. Data on patron members available for the year 1943. As per the annual report, the Bokréta Association had a total of 518 patron members in 1943.[456]

[451] Andor 2020: 5–28.
[452] Pálfi 1970: 122.
[453] Debreczeni 1956: 100.
[454] Molnár 1935: 3.
[455] *Függetlenség,* March 28, 1940. 5.
[456] NM EA 19036. 162/44. Paulini Béla 1944. június 23-i levele Dr. Timár Sándor tanácsjegyzőnek.

Not only individuals, but also towns and counties could become supporters of the movement. In 1934, already 14 major cities had become full members,[457] and up until the end of 1944, numerous major cities annually endorsed the movement in this manner.[458]

In addition to financial support, the aforementioned moral support was also important in the history of the association, and after the 1934 decrees, a decree was issued in 1935 clarifying the tasks of the association.

The decree dated June 27, 1935 in Budapest, first described the aims and activities of the association: "The aim of the national movement started under the well-known name of Gy. B. is to preserve the originality of the special characteristics, distinctive features and traditions of Hungarian folk performing arts and to make them known both at home and abroad." This decree also stressed that the Hungarian Bokréta Association, under the supervision of the Minister of Religion and Public Education, "carries out its activities in the public interest, excluding all commercial aspects, purely in the spirit of serving Hungarian national culture." The cottage industry activities, which belonged to the performances, also required the approval of the Minister of Commerce.[459] The collection, display and sale of "folk articles" also called for organisational cooperation, and the decree stipulated that only the Hungarian Bokréta Association, in addition to the IBUSZ (Idegenforgalmi, Beszerzési, Utazási és Szállítási Részvénytársaság – Tourism, Procurement, Travel and Transport Company), could sell such articles in an organised manner.[460] This was important because the Hungarian Bokréta Association organised exhibitions of folk art and sold folk art products during the performances.

The decree was amended several times. In 1935 the organisation was renamed the National Hungarian Bokréta Association, defining the scope of the association's activities.[461] The statutes of the National Hungarian Bokréta Association were also amended in 1942, in which the aims were extended to include the unification of the Hungarian people (countryside – Budapest), tourism, foreign presentation and the revival of folk industry.[462]

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[457] Molnár 1935: 3.

[458] NM EA 19036. 52/44. Országos Magyar Bokréta Szövetség tagsági díjának kiutalása az 1944. évre. (Kassa város polgármestere.) 1944.; NM EA 19036. 54/44. Az Országos Magyar Bokréta Szövetség tagdíjának utalványozása. (Győr város polgármestere.) 1944.; NM EA 19036. 46/44. Országos Magyar Bokréta Szövetségi az 1944. év tagsági díjának kiutalása (Szombathely polgármestere.) 1944.; NM EA 19036. 53/44. Határozat. Országos Magyar Bokréta Szövetség vezetősége 24.- pengő tagsági díj megküldését kéri. (Nagyvárad polgármestere.) 1944.; NM EA 19036. 56/44. Utalvány. Országos Magyar Bokréta Szövetség. (Marosvásárhely polgármestere.) 1944.; NM EA 19036. 104/44. Az Országos Magyar Bokréta Szövetség tagsági díja. (Baja polgármestere.) 1944.; NM EA 19036. 106/44. Határozat az Országos Magyar Bokréta Szövetség kérése a városnak a tagok sorába való belépése iránt. (Szilágysomlyó polgármestere.) 1944.

[459] *Budapesti Közlöny,* June 29, 1935, 10.

[460] Pálfi, A Gyöngyösbokréta története, 124.

[461] Molnár*, Főtitkári jelentés*, 3.

[462] MNL OL K 150–1943–VII–5–184455–6194.Ob_Szü 541.

As at the time of the first Gyöngyösbokréta, the success of the production was far from clear, so as another kind of support, the performances were advertised in as many forums as possible, and the Hungarian press and radio published reports on the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement from its first performance. In 1934, with the support of the government and in the frame of the Hungarian Bokréta Association, there were two significant developments in the promotion of the movement.

Firstly, for Hungarian readers, the Association launched a monthly journal called *Bokrétások Lapja (The Journal of Bokréta members)*, which was renamed *Hagyomány Szava (The Word of Tradition)* in 1940. In these periodicals, the names of the newly established local bokréta groups were published highlighting their costumes and folk art, and the performances of the bokréta groups were detailed. Béla Paulini edited the journal and wrote most of the articles and news alone, but he also published articles by ethnographers and local bokréta leaders. Secondly, from 1934 the events were increasingly promoted as five-language booklets were published.[463]

3.2.2 Organization and structuring of the association

Each bokréta groups comprised approximately 8 couples, i.e. 16 persons from one village, who were trained by the local teacher, cantor, priest or notary, and the local organizations included officials in addition to the members. One of their duties was to hold a general assembly in the first month of the year to elect a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and auditor, who would make up the leadership of the local bokréta group.[464]

Each instance involved groups of peasants from one particular settlement. Paulini's principle asserted that the representation of popular culture should be exclusively entrusted to the people themselves, hence excluding participation from individuals belonging to other social classes. The bokréta members primarily consisted of the younger generation, who acquired knowledge of the traditional dances and cultural customs from their elders. In some locations, members refrained from participating in Gyöngyösbokréta activities after marriage due to societal norms deeming it inappropriate. However, if a married couple did choose to engage in such activities, they would only do so alongside their spouses.[465] Nevertheless, there were children's bokréta groups present in multiple locations, and occasionally individuals from the older age group also participated. (The eldest individual was 75 years of age in the year 1936.[466])

[463] Ujváry, Bokréták a Galga völgyében, 19.
[464] MNL OL K 150–1943–VII–5–184455–6194.Ob_Szü 532.
[465] Petur 1933: 11–12.
[466] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 1–2. 3.



Fig. 21. The Atkár bokréta group. OSZMI TA HGy34. Legacy of Béla Paulini.

The management structure of the association was like that of the branch organizations: it had a president, a general assembly, an annual report and a set budget.[467]

The association and its branches thus had a well-organized system, but it was Béla Paulini who ran things at the central level and the group leader intellectuals (teachers, notaries, priests) at local level. The bokréta leaders were financially supported by the Ministry of Religion and Public Education in the organization of bokréta affairs, but they received little professional help. Not all the leaders had an adequate knowledge of ethnography and folklore. Although the leaders of the bokréta groups were intellectuals, they often caused problems by imposing their own will and ignorance on the safeguarding of the traditions. It depended on the attitude and ability of the leaders whether their groups presented the authentic traditions they had found or 'hungarianized' traditions that had never existed. In this way, their activities also had a major influence on the customs and dances that would be considered original in later times, since the upcoming folk dance movement was based on the dances and customs that had been discovered and presented by the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement.[468] Ethnographer Imre Romsics's research has shown that

> "In Kalocsa, the leaders of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, especially canon Ferenc Kujányi and painter-teacher Lajos Gábor, intervened in the development of folk art in a significant way. Elsewhere, intellectuals, especially village teachers, played an important role in organizing the independent artistic life of the peasantry, creating and organizing folk theatre, patriotic celebrations, harvest balls, and Gyöngyösbokréta groups, and introducing new songs, customs and costumes."[469]

[467] MNL OL K 150–1943–VII–5–184455–6194.Ob_Szü 532.
[468] Vadasi 1979: 49.
[469] Fehér 2003: 5.

In many cases, however, local leaders took a stand and their awareness helped to preserve the original folk costumes and traditions. In the case of Tiszapolgár, it was the priest who preserved the decaying traditional costumes in the parish church for posterity.[470] The above-mentioned ethnographer-museologist, Sándor Gönyey, for example, was one of the first to propose the village of Zsámbok for the Gyöngyösbokréta, but there was no suitable local leader at first. It took four years – of studying other bokréta groups – until the local teacher became a suitable leader, and eventually organised two groups, a small (for youngsters) and a large (for adults).[471] These examples, both positive and negative, demonstrate the great role and responsibility of the leaders of the local bokréta groups, since it was essentially they who determined whether traditions and costumes were preserved, and if so, in authentic form or modified.



Fig. 22. Photos of the Galgahévíz bokréta group's performances and its leader. OSZMI TA HGy34. Legacy of Béla Paulini.

It can be seen, therefore, that Béla Paulini quickly reached the highest level of support, both financial and intellectual, making the Gyöngyösbokréta one of the most supported social movements of the interwar period. However, as the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement was the first attempt to preserve and stage popular traditions, it had many difficulties, and the leaders had a great impact on what we call popular traditions today.

[470] Gönyey 1938: 427–429.
[471] Ujváry, Bokréták a Galga völgyében, 25.

3.3 Becoming a movement: political, touristic, and diplomatic roles

3.3.1 From local performances to national political events and performances abroad

The events at which the bokréta groups performed reflect the place and importance of the movement in society and in cultural politics. The main attraction was the Gyöngyösbokréta performances in the capital around Saint Stephen's Day which was later extended to Saint Stephen's Week, where tens of thousands of people from Hungary and abroad attended.

After the foundation of the Bokréta Association, in addition to the shows in Budapest, the villages also organized bokréta performances at local fairs, often inviting the bokréta groups of nearby villages to participate, and the larger towns also invited the bokréta groups to their events. Paulini's credo was that all festivities should be hungarianised, from Christmas to the pig slaughter[472], which he imagined with the participation of the bokréta groups. For this reason, the Bokréta Association (re)organized some traditional Hungarian festivals with the contribution of the bokréta groups.

Firstly, on February 3, 1935, the Association organized the event entitled Hungarian Carnival in Gyöngyös, in which the villages around Gyöngyös took part. The dances and customs of the repertoire of the bokréta groups were presented here, and while spinning and harvest festivities were presented, there were no carnival elements on the programme.[473] In an article published after the event, Paulini described the success of the performances, and said that "with this Hungarian carnival we are now beginning to build up a national folk art festive series, which we will have to complete with the Hungarian Christmas."[474] In 1938, the town of Győr organised the Hungarian Carnival with seven bokréta groups, and that year, the Hungarian Christmas was also organised with six bokréta groups.[475] But following the popular calendar, there were also programmes in between to celebrate the different festivals of the year.

The next of these renovated traditions was the Hungarian Pentecost with eight bokréta groups, held in Vác on May 16, 1937, as a national bokréta event. The Hungarian Pentecost programme included the "Pentecost king election" and "Pentecost run" based on folk tradition, and the bokréta groups also performed May or Pentecost traditions.[476] It was the first time that the group from Szada had performed,[477]and for this occasion, they learned the folk song "Ma vagyon, ma vagyon piros Pünkösd napja" (Today is the day of red Pentecost), which was not

[472] Béla Paulini, A jubileumi esztendőre ez szóm és mondásom, Bokrétások Lapja 6. no. 10. (1939) 1–2.
[473] Gönyey, A Gyöngyösbokréta története, 9.
[474] *Az Est* February 6, 1935. 4.
[475] Gönyey, A Gyöngyösbokréta története, 9.
[476] Bokrétások Lapja 4. no. 3–4–5. (1937) 5.
[477] Kecskés (ed.) 2002: 7.

otherwise known in Szada.[478] Thus, in the case of Hungarian Pentecost, the groups' performances were already adapting to the occasion with each group presenting Pentecost customs, but this also meant that in some cases, they did not perform their own traditions. In this case, too, the aspect of invented traditions is confirmed in this form, where local leaders use the data available to them to create an ideal type of folk tradition which then becomes a representative tradition at national level. A similar phenomenon can be observed in the case of bread festivals, which are a combination of several previous customs.

The New Bread Festival was held in Szeged on June 29, 1937. This event is not without precedent and origin. In Szeged, however, no harvest festivals had been held before, but Szeged was a desirable choice because it is located in the Great Plain, where there are many agricultural workers, and because it was also the new border of the country. "The significance of this celebration is especially great here, on the Trianon border, where thousands of families lost their bread as a result of the terrible disaster."[479] The quote illustrates a case where invented tradition plays a role in building national consciousness and supports the idea of territorial expansion. Paulini adopted many details from the previous bread festivals, but he also added his own ideas to make it more Hungarian. The next bread festival had to wait four years: On July 27, 1941, the National Political Service and the National Hungarian Bokréta Association organised the Hungarian Bread Festival in the reannexed city of Subotica,[480] which gave the movement not only a cultural but a national political significance with the success of the territorial reclamation policy.

But it was not the only example when bokréta groups participated in events of political significance. During the Second World War the Bokréta Association was asked several times to accompany or perform for soldiers or foreign politicians. The events of the war had an impact on the bokréta groups as some of them were disbanded because several bokréta participants were conscripted. This made it increasingly difficult for the Bokréta Association to put together a full programme for the St Stephen's Week celebrations,[481] but they had new performances. In 1942 in Cluj Napoca and other towns of Transylvania, bokréta presentations were organised for the Hungarian Defence Forces, where one hundred and twenty bokréta members performed their traditions for Hungarian soldiers.[482] On June 4, 1942, at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, some bokréta groups travelled to Vienna for an international event in honour

[478] Kecskés (ed.) 2002: 7.
[479] *Délmagyarország* July 1, 1937. 5.
[480] Zala Megyei Ujság July 28, 1941. 1.
[481] Ujváry, Bokréták a Galga völgyében, 48.
[482] Turán 1942: 3.

of wounded soldiers.[483] There were several bokréta tours in Vojvodina[484] and in Transylvania[485] organized by the Ministry of Defence where the participating bokréta members accompanied the soldiers on their way and held some folk-art performances for them. The most important military event where the Bokréta Association participated was the entry of Regent Miklós Horthy in Kosice, where they had a representational role.[486]

When the government recognized the representational role of the bokréta groups, the Bokréta Association was often asked to participate at the receptions of foreign statesmen. On May 4, 1937, Austrian Federal President Wilhelm Miklas was given a reception befitting a head of state on his visit to Budapest. In St George's Square he was cheered by a splendid group of a few hundred members of the Pearly Bouquet.[487] Some weeks later, 32 bokréta groups attended the reception of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy and his wife. In honour of the delegation, a reception in the castle gardens of Gödöllő was attended by residents of the surrounding villages dressed in costume. As a favour to the Italian royal couple, "reversing the order of the shawls worn on Pentecost, the girls from Szada now displayed the Italian tricolor."[488] On the occasion of the reception, the King of Italy awarded Béla Paulini the Knight's Cross of the Order of the Italian Crown (Olasz Koronarend lovagkeresztje).[489] During his visit to Hungary in March 1941, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister Cincar Markovic announced that he would like to see living Hungarian folk art, so the Bokréta Association was commissioned to convene a few bokréta groups.[490] After the ceremony, the Foreign Minister had a discussion with Paulini, during which they discussed plans for a joint Yugoslav-Hungarian folk art festival.[491] In the same year, Franz Schlegelberger, the German Reich State Secretary, came to Hungary with his wife, and the couple visited the National Hungarian Bokréta Association, and also watched a local bokréta presentation.[492]

To represent Hungary, the Bokréta Association also performed abroad. In 1934, seventy members of four bokréta groups were sent to Vienna by the Ministry of Culture to perform Hungarian folk dances at a dance competition.[493] A year later, the Bokréta Association was

[483] Ujváry, Bokréták a Galga völgyében, 48.
[484] Hagyomány Szava 4. no. 1. 1943. 1.
[485] Hagyomány Szava 4. no. 4. (1943) 1.
[486] Bokrétások Lapja 1938. (5.) 11. 4.
[487] *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* May 4, 1937. 1.
[488] Magyar Távirati Iroda March 1, 1941.
[489] Nemzeti Ujság June 5, 1937. 9.
[490] Magyar Távirati Iroda March 1, 1941.
[491] *Magyar Távirati Iroda* March 1, 1941.
[492] Zehery 1941: 355.
[493] *Magyar Hírlap* June 10, 1934. 15.

invited to another famous dance competition, the Folk's Dance Festival of London.[494] In 1936 and 1938 the bokrétas were invited to Hamburg[495], while in 1937, a group of bokréta members travelled to Cannes[496], in 1939 the bokréta groups performed their traditions in Brussels.[497] The last appearance of the Association abroad was the aforementioned second trip to Vienna in 1942.[498] There were other plans – e.g. to perform in America – also, but the war prevented them from doing so.[499]

Besides, thanks to the propaganda on the radio, groups were formed in the annexed territories, so in Upper Hungary, Vojvodina and Transylvania and the Hungarian minorities similar performances of traditional dances and customs were organized under the name of Gyöngyösbokréta. However, they could only join the movement officially after the re-annexation[500], they were active and for those Hungarian communities this movement symbolized that they still belonged to the Hungarian nation[501], and when they were official members, they had a special role in the bokréta events to symbolize the togetherness of all Hungarians.[502]

The list so far shows the variety and significance of the events in which the bokréta groups participated. On the tenth anniversary of the first Gyöngyösbokréta presentation, the Hungarian Bokréta Association itself held a celebration which was a major event.

The celebration took place on August 19, 1940, in the Pesti Vigadó. On this occasion, members of 22 bokréta villages marched. The ceremony was attended by Archduke Ferenc József, Archduchess Anna, Minister of Industry József Varga, State Secretary for Culture István Váy, Mayors Jenő Karafiáth and Károly Szendy, State Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office Ferenc Zsindely, painter Oszkár Glatz, etc. The jubilee assembly was also attended by representatives of the people of the returning Highlands and Transcarpathia. After the hymn, Mayor Károly Szendy welcomed the bokréta members, which was followed by a speech from the Prime Minister Count Pál Teleki:

> "I have come here as allies, because the most important thing for all of us is to preserve the Hungarian soul in this nation. […] I came here because one's heart is glad when one sees something truly Hungarian, something Hungarian from the soul. And I also came here to thank the people of the village for coming up here to Budapest to teach people

[494] Bokrétások Lapja 1935. 2. no. 7. 5.
[495] Ujváry, Bokréták a Galga völgyében, 31.
[496] *Bokrétások Lapja* 4. no. 3–4–5. (1937) 1.
[497] Bokrétások Lapja 5. no. 4–5–6. (1938) 3.
[498] Hagyomány Szava 3. no. 6. (1942) 1–2.
[499] Lele Jr.: 1983: 40.
[500] Béla Paulini, A Gyöngyösbokréta karácsonya – erdélyiekkel. *Hagyomány Szava* 1940. (1.) 4. 3–4.
[501] Kende 1936: 380–387.
[502] Hagyomány Szava 2. no. 7. 1941. 2.

> Hungarian things. I hope that no one sees this as just a spectacle, but on the contrary, as what is important. They see in it what it really is: Hungarian things. And maybe the people of Budapest will take something home with them, that we are Hungarians and that we should think Hungarian at home too. I came here to thank you not only for your visit this year, but also for the ones you have made so far, and the ones to come, with a true Hungarian heart and true Hungarian joy."[503]

The quote above demonstrates that they were looking for an empirical counterpart to the whole Hungarian idea, which they found in this movement. One might ask why these important occasions were not performed by professional actors and dancers. The reason was that the emphasis was on a culture based on folk roots, which also represented the rapprochement between Budapest and the village and the appreciation of the peasants.

Another of the Association's mission was the promotion of tangible folk art. This action, albeit less grand compared to the intangible heritage, should not be overlooked due to its significance. The Association, led by Paulini, saw it crucial to showcase and safeguard each aspect of folk art. Consequently, they actively promoted the revival of traditional crafts among the bokréta peasants. During one of the exhibitions, he observes that "there is a scarcity of »old« items on display. The Association does not plan to remove the remaining antique things from the chambers. Its objective is to encourage the youth to produce again, following »classic« patterns."[504] (Fig. 24–25.) The creations produced by the bokréta members were distributed to patrons and showcased at the National Salon, followed by an exhibition at the Tamás Gallery during the August Gyöngyösbokréta events. (Fig. 23.) The collection includes detailed needlework, handicrafts, embroidery, weavings, woodcarvings, wooden sculptures, painted Easter eggs, clay and earthenware vessels.[505]



Fig. 23. An invitation in English to the exhibition of the Hungarian Bokréta Association. (*Bokrétások Lapja.* 1937. 4 (6): 6.)

[503] *Újság* August 20, 1940. 7.
[504] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 7–8. 4.
[505] *Színházi Élet* 1938. 36. 12–15.





Fig. 24–25. Wood sculpture of János Hercz, shepherd of Tiszakürt. Bokrétás Híradó and Bokréta member girls making embroidery. "Bokrétás Híradó." *Színházi Élet* 1938. no. 36, 12–15.

The growing number of groups, events, responsibilities and success led Paulini to devote his entire career to the Gyöngyösbokréta. Given the above-mentioned set of events, it is unsurprising that he decided to withdraw from other artistic activities. During his period as the leader of Gyöngyösbokréta, he composed only one theatrical play consisting of nine scenes, drawing inspiration from folk art and the Gyöngyösbokréta. This work, titled *Hungarian Fullplay or Play of Plays* /Csupajáték/, was showcased during the 1938 Eucharistic Congress in Budapest and in London, including renowned dance performers of that era.[506] (Fig. 26.)

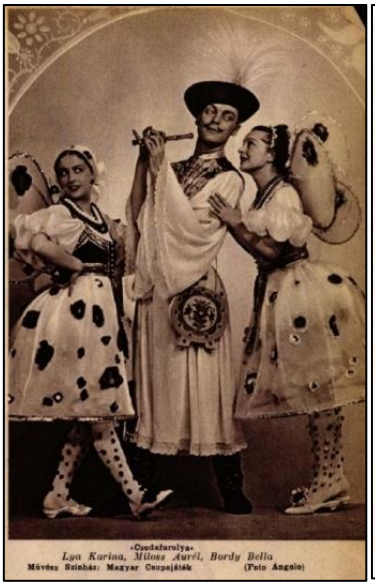
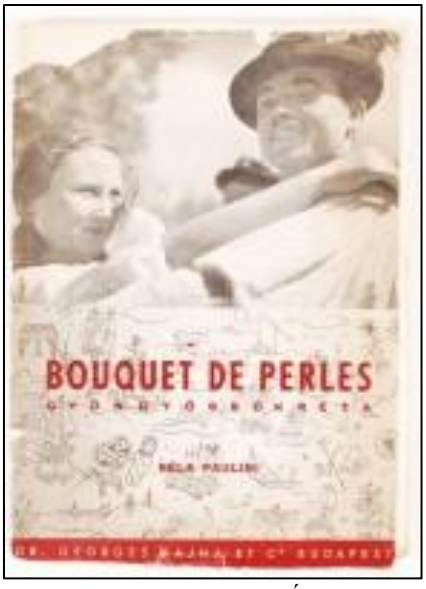

Fig. 26–27. Excerpt from the theatrical performance of *Csupajáték*. (*Színházi Élet*, no. 28 (1938): 6–10, 7.); Paulini, Béla. 1937. *Bouquet de Perles*. Budapest: Dr. Vajna György és Társa.

[506] *Népszava* 1938. május 22. 8.; *Magyar Nemzet* 1939. április 12. 13.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 4. 4.; *Pesti Napló* 1939. április 23. 19.; *Nyugat* 1938. (31.) 6. 478–479.; Kővágó Zs. 1986: 25–42.

His writing activity – as he says in a humorous interview – consisted of letters written to village priests, notaries, i.e. the bokréta leaders during the Gyöngyösbokréta's golden age.[507] Additionally, he authored the Gyöngyösbokréta book in 1937, which was published in Hungarian, English, German, Italian, and French.[508] (Fig. 27.)

3.3.2 Becoming recognized: the power of the media

The above data suggest that Gyöngyösbokréta has had significant success within a short span of time. Numerous municipalities have joined the initiative, resulting in a rise in both the quantity of performances and the number of spectators. Moreover, there has been a growing interest in the performances from both Hungarian and foreign audience. Undoubtedly, the significance of Paulini himself and the mass media that characterized the era cannot be underestimated. The Gyöngyösbokréta's popularity was further enhanced by the press, radio, and sound cinema, which were notable accomplishments of the time. The powerful usage of the press and media has undeniably had a role in the evolution of the yearly (St Stephen's Week) presentations into a nationwide movement.

During the first Gyöngyösbokréta event, the outcome of the production was uncertain. To ensure maximum visibility, the performances were promoted extensively across various platforms. The Hungarian press and radio have consistently published reports on the Gyöngyösbokréta demonstrations since the very first performance, providing valuable support to the movement. In his study, Henrik Kovács examines the weekly newspaper *Tolnai Világlapja* in the context of the articles published between 1931 and 1935 about the Gyöngyösbokréta, in addition to the daily newspapers *Budapesti Hírlap*, *Népszava* and *Az Est*, and shows that newsworthy, independent articles appeared in these newspapers, the number of which generally increased year by year during the period under study.[509]

In addition to these, several articles were published in the *Nemzeti Újság* and *Magyarság*, which, together with *Az Est*, were among the main supporters of the movement, along with ministries, radio and the Ethnographic Society.[510] Both rural and local newspapers reported on both the Gyöngyösbokréta and local bokréta events. During its initial years, Gyöngyösbokréta emerged as a remarkable and long-awaited event in newspaper articles. The success of the initiative was widely acknowledged regardless of political affiliation.

[507] *Színházi Élet* 1933. 37. 33.
[508] Paulini 1937b.; *Magyarság* 1937. augusztus 18. 10.; *8 Órai Újság* 1937. augusztus 19. 9.
[509] Kovács 2009: 48–50.
[510] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1935. (2.) 4. 3.

3.3.2.1 Journals of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement

As soon as the Gyöngyösbokréta received support from the ministries and the Hungarian Bokréta Association was established, the association began its monthly publication, *Bokrétások Lapja /Journal of the Bokréta members/*, in August 1934. The journal was later renamed *Hagyomány Szava /Word of Tradition/* in 1940. Béla Paulini, as he was a journalist, was responsible for editing the journal and authored the majority of the articles and news content. These journals contain a substantial amount of visual material in addition to the written content.

What were the reports of the *Bokrétások Lapja* (1934–1940) and the *Hagyomány Szava* (1940–1944) and who was their target audience? Their primary role was to transmit information to bokréta groups, or alternatively, they had the power to transmit reports and news regarding the Gyöngyösbokréta.

Additionally, he aimed to communicate with a broader audience, striving to maximize his outreach. Paulini encouraged his readers to get as many subscribers as possible.[511] The *Bokrétások Lapja* consistently published the names of recently formed local bokréta groups, along with descriptions of the villages that were part of the Gyöngyösbokréta, emphasizing the traditional attire and folk art of these communities. In the *Hagyomány Szava*, this practice continued, and as bokréta groups from the reannexed territories were finally able to officially participate, there is plenty of articles and descriptions available regarding the landscape and folk art of Upper Hungary, Vojvodina, and Transylvania.

We may familiarize ourselves with Paulini's ideology and the way he directed the Gyöngyösbokréta primarily from his published articles. The articles clearly depict Paulini's credo regarding Hungarian folk art and the goals that the movement set for itself. He also documented the successful outcomes of the Bokréta Association's efforts in safeguarding these traditions. He consistently emphasized the significance of the movement and the transparency of its accomplishments, as well as the distinct value preservation attempts undertaken by the Bokréta Association since its creation.

The author consistently advocated for the exclusive responsibility of the Hungarian Bokréta Association in preserving living folk traditions. This viewpoint was expressed through multiple articles, including *For the Integrity of the Bokréta Movement /A bokréta mozgalom épségéért/*[512], F*or the Unity of the Bokréta /A bokréta egységéért/*[513], and *For the Continuity of*

[511] Újváry Ferenc: Bokrétások a Galga völgyében. 18.
[512] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1934. augusztusi szám I.1. 15.
[513] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1934. szeptemberi szám 12.

the Hungarian Bokréta Movement /A magyar bokrétamozgalom zavartalanságáért/[514]. Paulini himself authored writings on the topic of folk art, and he also communicated papers on the subject written by ethnographers, primarily in the journal *Hagyomány Szava*. For instance, Sándor Gönyey initiated a series on traditional attire, Zsigmond Szendrey authored an essay on *The bokréta movement and ethnography /A bokréta-mozgalom és a néprajztudomány/*[515] and Ákos Szendrey presented a series on the annual folk customs among other contributions. Paulini's cultural columns served as propaganda, but in addition they included explanations of folk songs, presentations about different attractions, museums, and educational articles. The series *The most beautiful songs of the Gyöngyösbokréta /A Gyöngyösbokréta legszebb dalai/* continued for several years and included sheet music. This way, the paper operated as a cultural journal and in a way provided cultural education to the peasants in Gyöngyösbokréta.

The monthly volumes offer an in-depth overview of the events in which the bokréta groups have taken part. Members of local bokréta organizations or bokréta group leaders frequently submit recollections and descriptions of their national and international engagements, providing detailed reports about their journeys to London, Cannes, Brussels, and other locations.

Paulini additionally shared newspaper articles regarding Gyöngyösbokréta and the diverse initiatives orchestrated by its association. Aside from adapting articles from Hungarian newspapers, he also made an effort to translate articles in foreign languages that were published in relation to the Gyöngyösbokréta visits abroad or the movement's foreign connections. These publications generally complimented and emphasized Hungary's movement as an exemplary model. If anybody were to publish negative remarks about the Gyöngyösbokréta, Paulini would promptly address such comments in either the *Bokrétások Lapja* or the *Hagyományok Szava* publications, emphasizing the merits of the movement and the validity of its ideology. These journals also served as a platform for communication among the bokréta groups, allowing them to share information about various events such as marriages, births, deaths, leadership changes, and other significant occurrences within the bokréta community. (Fig. 28.)

[514] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1934. októberi szám 5.
[515] Szendrey Zs. 1941a: 1.



Fig. 28. Cover of the 7–8th issue of the 1938 *Bokrétások Lapja.* This issue published by an international company, it exceptionally got a colorful front page.

3.3.2.2 Radio broadcasts

In July 1929, three and a half years after the start of radio broadcasts in Hungary, Hungarian Radio aired a performance of *János Háry* including Béla Paulini and the peasants of Csákvár, as previously described in the beginning of the dissertation. From that point forward, Paulini began making regular appearances on the radio. The first Gyöngyösbokréta of 1931 was also broadcast on the radio, but it failed to create a lasting impression. Consequently, Paulini adopted a new approach by using dialogues and monologues to take his listeners to rural towns and villages where bokréta groups are presented. During these broadcasts, he delved into local customs and holidays.[516] By utilizing the radio, he effectively promoted the hamlet, its cultural traditions, and the Gyöngyösbokréta to a wide audience, resulting in favorable attention. For instance, the spread of a radio program on 20 March 1932, specifically highlighting the folk practices of the village of Boldog, played a significant role in promoting the establishment of tourism in Boldog.[517] As a result of the radio broadcasts, bokréta groups have also emerged in Hungarian settlements situated outside the 1920 borders, particularly in Vojvodina and Upper Hungary.[518] In 1936, Hungarian Radio distributed the program for the June weeks (where the Gyöngyösbokréta presentations were the main attraction) to international radio stations. As a

[516] Tertinszky 1970: 1984.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. november 26. 11.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1931. október 23. 9.
[517] Ujváry 1980: 43.
[518] Volly 1982: 164.

result, the English radio requested the broadcast of Gyöngyösbokréta.[519] The BBC's Village of the Week show planned to air a segment of the Gyöngyösbokréta, and the French also produced a one-hour documentary on the folk presentations.[520]

3.3.2.3 Motion pictures

Gyöngyösbokréta groups were no strangers to the film industry. They attended the inauguration of the Hunnia film factory in Zugló,[521] and they were given opportunities to appear as extras in several short and large-scale films.

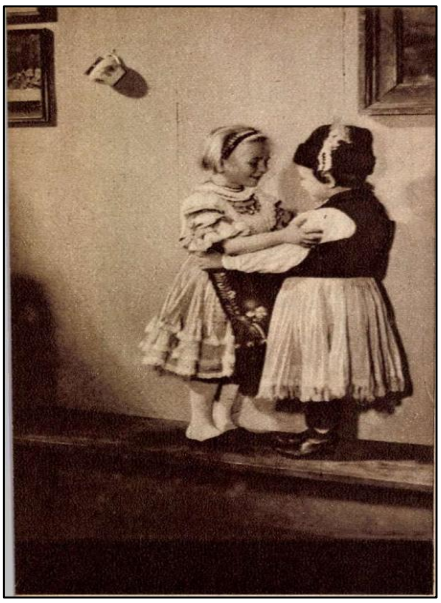

Fig. 29. Dancing children in the *Hungarian Nativity Play /Magyar Betlehem/. (Magyarság Évkönyve 1934*, 226.)

In 1932, the then world-famous director, Pál Fejős's film *Tavaszi zápor /Spring shower/,*[522] and one year later his *Ítél a Balaton /The Verdict of Lake Balaton/* included Gyöngyösbokréta members' dances.[523] Also in 1933, the movie *Rákóczi induló /Rákóczi March/* which is based on Ferenc Herczeg's play,[524] in 1937 in the *Hotel Kikelet /Hotel Sunrise/*[525], in 1938 and 1941 movies based on Kálmán Mikszáth's novels, *A Noszty fiú esete Tóth Marival /Young Noszty*

[519] Debreczeni 1956: 100.
[520] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 4-5. 8.
[521] *Magyarság* 1936. november 25. 3.; *Esti Kurír* 1936. november 25. 8.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1936. november 25. 8.
[522] Frey 2018: 51.; https://filmarchiv.hu/hu/alapfilmek/film/tavaszi-zapor-1.; Ujváry 1980: 43.; Fejős 2002: 724–726.; Fejős 2011: 179.; Szántó 1990: 14.; Tari 2001: 438–440.
[523] Ratkó 2020: 223.
[524] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1933. szeptember 6. 10.; Farkas 1933: 10–13.; Film. *Eger-Gyöngyösi Újság* 1933. december 31. 5.; Rákóczi induló. https://videa.hu/videok/film-animacio/rakoczi-indulo.mkv-WiEXRxUV5d85memM; Rákóczi induló. https://www.mafab.hu/movies/rakoczi-indulo-268951.html; Svenskfilm Databas. https://www.svenskfilmdatabas.se/en/item/?type=film&itemid=39206; Rákóczi induló. https://filmarchiv.hu/hu/filmmaraton/korabbiak/2017/filmek/rakoczi-indulo; *Dunántúl* 1933. december 5. 3.
[525] *Pécsi Napló* 1937. június 17. 4.; *Pécsi Napló* 1937. június 18. 3.; *Pécsi Napló* 1937. június 19. 5.

and Mary Toth/ [526] and *Eladó birtok /Property for Sale/,* [527] in 1943 Móricz Zsigmond's novel's film version *Sári bíró /Judge Sari/* featured different bokréta groups. (Fig. 30–31.) These films had a historical theme and featured folk costumes and the peasants themselves as a setting. This was done to highlight the charm of rural life and the idealized portrayal of village life, which faced criticism during that time.[528]

However, numerous films have also been produced focusing on the Gyöngyösbokréta groups, primarily with the intention of promoting propaganda. In 1932, Paulini directed the film *Szanyi búcsú /Indulgence at Szany/,*[529]and in 1933, also directed by Paulini, the film *Magyar Betlehem /Hungarian Nativity Play /* depicted the Christmas customs of the children's bokréta group in Szentistván.[530] Additionally, in the same year, the film *Gyöngyösbokréta /Pearly Bouquet/* showcased numerous bokréta groups' traditions. [531] In 1935, two films, *Ünneplő Falu /Village in Celebration/*[532] and *Magyar falu /Hungarian Village/*, were produced with the aim of promoting tourism. The *Magyar Falu /Hungarian Village/* was screened at the Brussels International Exposition, where it received an award, and was also displayed at the Venice International Film Festival.[533] The following year, under the title *Népek tánca /Dance of the Peoples*/, the UFA film studio in Hamburg filmed with the bokréta members, who were performing in Hamburg that year.[534]

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[526] Romsics Imre 1999: 222.; Török 1937.; *Szentesi Napló* 1939. július 16. 3.; *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* 1938. május 23. 3.; *Magyar Jövő (Hungarian Daily Journal)* 1946. április 16. 5.

[527] *Délmagyarország* 1941. január 31. 8.; *Hétfő* 1941. január 7. 4.; *Szentesi Napló* 1943. június 16. 3.; *Kecskemét és Vidéke* 1941. január 7. 3.; *Kecskeméti Közlöny* 1941. január 9. 7.

[528] *Népszava* 1943. december 24. 6.

[529] Barabás 1932: 21.; Paulini Béla - Szanyi búcsú (1930-as évek). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BZ7qh_sa-c; Kokas 1943: 54–55.

[530] *Függetlenség* 1933. december 2. 6.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1933. december 2. 8.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1933. december 12. 11.; *8 Órai Újság* 1933. december 13. 9.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1933. december 7. 8.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1933. december 12. 10.; Híradó. *Esti Kurír* 1933. december 2. 10.; *Függetlenség* 1933. december 2. 6.; *Kis Újság* 1933. december 10. 12.; *Kis Újság* 1933. november 30. 8.; *Pesti Napló* 1939. július 25. 12.; *Az Est* 1939. július 25. 8.; Keleti Márton. https://www.hangosfilm.hu/filmenciklopedia/keleti-marton; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1933. december 1. 5.; Dallos 1934: 226.; *Hétfő Reggel* 1939. július 24. 10.

[531] *Új Magyarság* 1939. június 7. 11.; *Színházi Élet* 1933. (23.) 39. 42.; Paulini Béla. https://www.hangosfilm.hu/filmenciklopedia/paulini-bela

[532] NM EA 22506. Varga Szabolcs: A Szanyi Bokréta története.; *Napkelet* 1936. (14.) 7. 502–504. 503.; *Magyar Film* 1939. (1.) 4. 16.; Jámbor – Lafranco: 1941.; Töreki: 2001; *Magyar Film* 1940. (2.) 4. 13.

[533] Cs. Schwalm 1990: 42.; Balázs Kovács 2011: 312.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 1–2. 5.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1935. agusztus 2. 3–4.; *Esti Kurír* 1935. augusztus 25. 9.; *Magyar Film* 1939. (1.) 4. 16.; Töreki: 2001.

[534] *8 Órai Újság* 1936. augusztus 25. 11.; Hamburg 1937 - KdF Umzug - inkl. „Hakenkreuz Karneval" - 'Kraft durch Freude' Reichstagung. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmBZGT32moo; *Nemzeti Újság* 1936. augusztus 23. 27.

In 1937, the American Metro Goldwyn Mayer film company made a film about Hungary called *Rural Hungary*,[535] starring villagers in folk costume, in most cases the local Gyöngyösbokréta groups.

In 1938, the films *Magyar falu mosolya /The Smile of a Hungarian Village/*[536] and *Népművészet derűje/Magyar nép derűje /The Serenity of the Hungarian People/*[537], in 1939, the films *Magyar táncok és népszokások /Hungarian Dances and Traditions/* were filmed for tourism purposes about the bokréta groups.[538]





Fig. 30–31. Scene from the shooting of the film „Judge Sári", with bokréta members in the background. *Színházi Magazin*. September 22, 1943, 17.; Members of the Tápé bokréta group during the shooting of the film „Judge Sári", 1943. Fortepan/Konok Tamás id.

Some of these films remain accessible now, with their information easily obtainable. However, for a few of them, I had to rely solely on newspaper articles and encyclopedic sources. Aside from the aforementioned films, there have been cases where the potential use of bokréta groups in films has been suggested.[539] However, in many situations, I encountered a lack of reliable or questionable information. For example, there were reports suggesting that Sándor Korda, a notable Hungarian director of the time, had intentions to create a film about the Gyöngyösbokréta in London.[540] However, there is no documentation suggesting that the film

[535] *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* 1937. július 15. 8.; Rural Hungary – 1939. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a46KeUGyFWU

[536] NM EA 22506. Varga Szabolcs: A Szanyi Bokréta története. Érk. az 1985. évi Országos Néprajzi és Nyelvjárási Gyűjtőpályázatra. 9.; *Pesti Napló* 1939. június 1. 14.; *Délmagyarország* 1939. november 23. 6.; *Filmkamarai és Moziegyesületi szaklap* 1939. november 18. 2.; *Budapesti Közlöny* 1939. június 17. 5.; *Budapesti Közlöny* 1939. június 17. 5.; Á. G. 1939: *Magyar Film* 1939. (1.) 27. 2–4. 3.; Töreki: 2001.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1939. március 8.; *Magyar Film* 1939. (1.) 40. 2.

[537] NM EA 22506. Varga Szabolcs: A Szanyi Bokréta története. Érk. az 1985. évi Országos Néprajzi és Nyelvjárási Gyűjtőpályázatra.10.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 7–8. 3.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1939. június 2. 13.; *Pápai Kis Ujság* 1948. május 9. 2.; Szopkóné Ágh 1939: 2.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1939. március 8.; *Soproni Hírlap* 1938. szeptember 7. 4.; Töreki: 2001.; Frey 2018: 96.

[538] *Az Újság* 1940. november 23. 8.; *Budapesti Közlöny* 1941. május 31. 7.; *Az Újság* 1940. november 23. 8.; Kenyeres (szerk.) 1994: 250.; Lanszki (szerk.) 2020: 178.; Mészöly 1974: 59.; Paulini Béla. https://www.hangosfilm.hu/filmenciklopedia/paulini-bela Incorrect references stating that the film was made in 1931.: Hoppál 1972: 142.; Dóka 2013: 35.; Dóka 2011: 58.

[539] *Kecskeméti Közlöny* 1938. október 15. 8.; *Új Magyarság* 1938. július 8. 12.; *Soproni Hírlap* 1938. október 23. 10.; *Budapesti Közlöny* 1940. szeptember 14. 6.; *Esti Újság* 1941. február 10. 8.

[540] *Magyarság* 1935. szeptember 1. 21.; *Keleti Újság* 1935. szeptember 8. 6.

was actually produced. Therefore, it is possible that the bokréta members were also depicted in other films. For instance, several amateur films of the bokréta groups were recorded during the Gyöngyösbokréta presentations in Budapest and other events.[541]

Films with/about Gyöngyösbokréta				
Year	**Title**	**Director**	**Participating bokréta groups**	**Role of the bokréta groups**
1932	*Indulgence at Szany /Szanyi búcsú/*	Béla Paulini	Szany	Main role, the film is about them
1932	*Spring shower /Tavaszi zápor/*	Pál Fejős	Boldog	Minor character, guest appearance
1933	*The Verdict of Lake Balaton /Ítél a Balaton/*	Pál Fejős	Nagykálló	Minor character, guest appearance
1933	*Hungarian Nativity Play /Magyar Betlehem/*	Béla Paulini	Szentistván children's bokréta	Main role, the film is about them
1933	*Rákóczi March /Rákóczi induló/*	István Székely	Püspökbogád	Minor character, guest appearance
1933	*Pearly Bouquet /Gyöngyösbokréta/*	Márton Keleti	Several municipalities	Main role, the film is about them

[541] Endrődi 1933: 6.; *Kecskeméti Közlöny* 1934. augusztus 22. 2.; *Dunántúl* 1937. augusztus 24. 3.; *Kis Újság* 1933. augusztus 23. 7.; NM EA 19036. 148/44. Tihanyi Jenő 1944-es levele Paulini Bélának.

1935	*Village in Celebration /Ünneplő falu/*		Szany	Main role, the film is about them
1935	*Hungarian Village /Magyar Falu/*	László Kandó	Báta, Boldog, Mezőkövesd, Váralja, Buják, Szany	Main role, the film is about them
1936	*Dances of the Peoples /Népek tánca/*	Hamburg UFA	Zsámbok, Nagyréde, Mohács, Szenta, Püspökbogád, Nagybaracska, Szany	Main role, the film is about them
1937	*Hotel Sunrise /Hotel Kikelet/*	Béla Gaál	Püspökbogád	Minor character, guest appearance
1937	*Rural Hungary*	Metro Goldwyn Mayer - James A. FitzPatrick	Mezőkövesd, Hortobágy, Érsekcsanád	Minor character, guest appearance
1938	*The Serenity of the Hungarian People /Népművészet derűje/*	Béla Paulini	Several municipalities	Main role, the film is about them
1938	*Young Noszty and Mary Toth /A Noszty fiú esete Tóth Marival/*	István Székely	Kalocsa	Minor character, guest appearance
1938	*The Smile of a Hungarian Village /A magyar falu mosolya/*	Béla Paulini	Several municipalities	Main role, the film is about them

1939	*Hungarian Dances and Traditions /Magyar táncok és népszokások/*	Ferenc Fekete	Several municipalities	Main role, the film is about them
1941	*Property for Sale /Eladó birtok/*	Viktor Bánky	One municipality (not clarifyed which one)	Minor character, guest appearance
1943	*Judge Sári /Sári bíró/*	Tibor Hegedűs	Tápé	Minor character, guest appearance

Table 2. Films with/about Gyöngyösbokréta.

Obviously, the bokréta members have also been the focus of ethnographic filmmaking. Elisabeth Rearick, an American researcher, produced a documentary film titled *Dances of the Hungarians* in New York in 1939, which focused on Hungarian traditional dances.[542] Her camera was purchased by ethnograph Sándor Gönyey (Ébner) who primarily captured images of the village dances of the Gyöngyösbokréta. In addition to his work as a choreographer, István Molnár took recordings of the Gyöngyösbokréta performance, too.[543] István Volly, a folklorist, recorded the customs and traditions of the bokrétás as they made their first appearance in Budapest, in the courtyard of the National Museum.[544] Ethnograph László K. Kovács and dance researcher Olga Szentpál also filmed in bokréta villages, where they marked the dances that the Gyöngyösbokréta had staged.[545] Paulini himself (not as a folklorist) urged the recording on film of the folk customs and dances discovered by the Gyöngyösbokréta, and the films he directed were also aimed at capturing and presenting the Hungarian folk spirit.[546]

The press, radio, and movie screens successfully communicated to the bokréta members themselves the significance of their traditions and costumes, emphasizing the need for preservation. The primary impact of the radio was the transmission of news about the Gyöngyösbokréta to those beyond the borders, leading to the formation of further groups inside and outside Hungary as well. Additionally, numerous films played a role in promoting the

[542] *Magyarország* 1932. december 11. 10.
[543] K. Kovács 1956: 324–326.; Dóka 2011: 58.; Bodai (szerk.) 1981: 13.
[544] Volly 1995: 12.
[545] BTK ZTI. Ft.599. Keszi Kovács László és Szentpál Olga tardi filmje 1948-ban.
[546] Kenessey 1942: 5.

movement and popular culture on a broader scale, while also contributing to the boost of tourism in Hungary.

3.4 End of an era – The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement under the communist regime (1945–1989)

3.4.1 Annulation and survival of the movement in Hungary (1945–1948)

Despite the critiques, the movement continued to grow (in total it gathered 4 to 5,000 peasant members) until it dissolved in the wake of the second world war, Paulini's passing, and the establishments of the new regime. As a result, the Budapest performances were cancelled in 1944.[547]

Even before the communists seized power, the movement was facing dire circumstances by 1945, which were made worse by the implementation of a new cultural policy.

The Soviet 'constructive' folk art staging paradigm was emulated, as it was the case in all people's democracies.[548] "We have before us the results of folk dance culture, which has been raised to a very high level among the Soviet peoples, and we must aim to approach them (...) Folk dance is one of the most striking and widely effective ways of realizing a national culture in form and a socialist culture in content."[549] In hindsight, it is apparent that the "socialist theater movement continued many of the traditions of Gyöngyösbokréta and created an organizational framework for the involvement and training of young people."[550] But this narrative was also passed on to young people, and the Hungarian dancers and singers of the Prague Youth Meeting used it as early as 1947: "We want to follow in the footsteps of the Russian Moiseyev group. We see them as a role model, and they have been admired by Hungarian audiences when they were visiting Budapest."[551]

The slogans of progress and education were used to emphasize the importance of the peasantry and its place in the new cultural policy. This narrative was applied to all fields, and was also expected in the performing arts, in addition to popular education through radio and the "cultivation" of peasant intellectuals.[552] Although socialist newspapers also appeared in the Horthy era, it was not common for them to attack the Gyöngyösbokréta on ideological grounds. As mentioned earlier, the movement was harshly blamed for its exclusiveness given that

[547] *Hagyomány Szava* 5, no. 8 (1944): 1.; *Pápai Ujság* January 13, 1945. 4.; Ujváry F. 1984: 50.
[548] *Új Dunántúl* 1946. augusztus 6. 3.; *Építünk* 1950. (1.) 1. 42–43.; *Délmagyarország* 1951. augusztus 2. 4.; Felföldi 2018: 27.; Abkarovits 2012: 153–154.
[549] Szentimrei 1949: 8–9.
[550] Paládi-Kovács 2004: 5.
[551] *Igaz Szó* 1947. augusztus 13. 8.
[552] *Szabad Nép* 1946. november 9. 2.; Bóka 1946: 7.

peasants only were allowed to participate and not members of other social classes. On the other hand, the communist newspaper *Kanadai Magyar Munkás (Hungarian Worker of Canada)* harshly criticized the movement very early on: „The art of the Hungarian people is prostituted by the lords for their own profit and they brag about it as if it were their own art. But it is absolutely none of their business."[553] The very same narrative emerged after 1945: the movement was condemned for promoting „the lords' friendship for the people", for turning folk culture into exploitation, entertainment, etc.[554] Even János Manga, an ethnographer and the director of the Institute of Popular Culture, underlined the gentry's exploitation of the peasantry.[555]

In the period of the communist takeover, events continued at the local level from 1945 onwards, where the bokréta groups kept on performing endorsing no political message. Yet until the 1948 ban,[556] they participated in political events. Just like the Kisgazda Párt (Smallholders' Party)[557], the bokréta groups also performed at events organized by the Szociáldemokrata Párt (Social Democratic Party) and its Youth Group.[558]

Although the 'people' "as a basis of reference and legitimacy" was staged in astonishing political spectacles under the new regime, for a long time the Gyöngyösbokréta could not but be rejected as the embodiment of the continuity of the pre-1945 regime.[559]

The St. Stephen's Day procession commemorating the foundation of the Hungarian state, which included the annual presentation of Gyöngyösbokréta, was also abolished as a national holiday.[560] Because of its ecclesiastical nature and its ideological message, it was incompatible with the communist cultural policy, and was replaced by the New Bread Day and, from 1949, Constitution Day.[561] Undoubtedly, not everything could be entirely eradicated: for example, several moments and phrasings of the harvest celebrations of the former Gyöngyösbokréta celebrations did survive. It is important to emphasize this as the foundations

[553] *Kanadai Magyar Munkás* 2 October 1934. pp.3.
[554] *Szabad Szó* 24 December 1948. pp.8.; Gyertyán 1951: 4.; Barsi 1957: 22–23.; *Gazdasági Figyelő* 5 April 1957. pp.1.; Kardos 1954: 418.
[555] Manga 1958: 8.
[556] *Szegedi Kis Újság* 16 June 1946. pp.3.; *Délmagyarország* 27 June 1946. pp.4.; *Szabad Magyarság* 14 August 1945. pp.2.; *Dunántúli Népszava* 4 October 1945. pp.2.; *Délmagyarország* 4 December 1945. pp.2.; *Kis Újság* 29 September 1946. pp.5.; *Világosság* 6 October 1946. pp.3.; *Kecskeméti Hírek* 10 August 1947. pp.3.; *Kecskeméti Hírek* 19 August 1947. pp.3.; *Új Dunántúl* 4 May 1948. pp.3.
[557] *Új Dunántúl* 8 July 1945. pp.7.; *Új Dunántúl* 14 July 1945. pp.3.; *Szegedi Kis Újság* 3 October 1946. p.3.
[558] *Új Dunántúl* 3 June 1945. pp.2.; *Új Dunántúl* 13 July 1945. pp.3.; *Dunántúli Népszava* 1947. július 9.
[559] Csukovits 2011: 12–13.; Volly 1991: 114.; *Magyarság* 20 March 1970. pp.5.
[560] *Új Magyarország* 23 August 1947. pp.4.; Feszty 1946: 540.
[561] Szabó 2009: 90–91.

of the shaping of new socialist culture, which started in the second half of the 1940s and were laid by the established practices of the previous decades.[562]

In 1946, despite all the difficulties, many members advocated proceeding with their activities, and they also began to reorganize the Bokréta Association,[563] which had been left without a leader in the absence of Paulini. Attempts were made to find a new leader and to revive the movement. The Bokréta Association was officially re-established in 1946. The fact that there was demand for joining the movement suggests that it was appealing to large swathes of the public opinion. In that year, a folk-art exhibition was held in Aszód, and bokréta groups participated in the Szeged Bread Festival[564] and the event of the Salgótarján Women's League. The largest event after the re-establishment was the Országos Parasztnapok (National Peasants' Day) in 1946, where the various bokréta groups were allowed to perform in Budapest like in the old days. The Peasants' Days were organized by the Parasztszövetség (Peasants' Association)[565], the idea for the event having been inspired by mass rallies of communists. The Smallholders' Party, which was to enter a coalition with the Communist Party as a result of the 1945 elections, wished to "show at a mass meeting in Budapest that they had at least as much social background as the Communists and could convince their electorate to take part in large-scale national events"[566]. The original plan was to hold the Peasants' Days on August, 20, when many peasants traveled to the capital to celebrate King St Stephen, but the Communist leadership, who did not look on the gathering favorably, refused to authorize it for various reasons, and the event was held on September, 7 to 9.[567] One of the reasons was that the most modern industrial and agricultural machinery could not arrive from the Soviet Union by August, 20. In the end, an industrial and agricultural exhibition did take place as part of the event, and it was hailed as a "historic achievement" that peasants were no longer sent to Budapest "to see Gyöngyösbokréta and fireworks, but to see new vine presses, fertilization and quality production."[568] The Communist Party mobilized every resources to ensure that as few people as possible from the countryside came to the event, because the Smallholders' Party's high-volume event was frowned upon. Therefore, Communist leaders saw it fit that the party leader

[562] Vámos 2018: 32.
[563] Mohácsi R. 1946: 4.; Kemény (n.d.): https://mnl.gov.hu/mnl/bkml/multbanezo_4_2 (Accessed: 20 May 2023.)
[564] *Szegedi Kis Újság* 28 June 1946. pp.3.; *Délmagyarország* 2 July 1946. pp.2–3.; *Vásárhelyi Független Újság* 3 July 1946. pp.1.
[565] *Kis Újság* 30 August 1946. pp.3.; *Kis Újság* 8 September 1946. pp.3.; *Magyar Nemzet* 10 September 1946. pp.1.
[566] Vida 1976: 215.
[567] Czettler 2002: 63–80.
[568] *Haladás* 12 September 1946. pp.11.

Mátyás Rákosi himself and Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy should speak at the event.[569] Its organizers, capable of mobilizing hundreds of thousands of people, frightened the communist leadership, who at the time did not exert indiscriminate power, and the performance of Gyöngyösbokréta at this political event led to the Communists' eventual resentment of the movement.

But not only was it a surprise politically speaking – and an unpleasant one for that matter – that Gyöngyösbokréta attended the event, in fact Paulini's opponent, choreographer Elemér Muharay (1901–1960), also expressed his discontent in an article. In his trenchant critique, he pinpointed the exploitation of the peasants by the lords, the legitimization and revival of a bygone system, but also the lack of progress in the spirit of Gyöngyösbokréta. Unsurprisingly, his article elaborated on the folk ensemble he had founded recently, which he deemed the basis for a new type of tradition-keeping in lieu of Gyöngyösbokréta. Muharay had been experimenting with staging folk tradition and dances in various projects since 1938.[570] The principles that directed these projects – antecedents of the folk ensembles – were the artistic concept of making art accessible to a wide audience.[571]

> "The concept of the folk ensemble is diametrically opposed in content to the concept of Gyöngyösbokréta. The meaning of folk ensemble is the cultivation and modern development of folk cultural values and strengths and the preparation for the reception of higher culture. The most important thing in folk ensemble work is that it seeks that this folk tradition interacts with the higher culture. The aim is to cultivate our traditional assets that we can maintain in our everyday life, to preserve the specific elements of permanent validity and to initiate a constantly rising, cultural process."[572]

The article did not go unheeded: first, ethnographer János Bartók shared his reflection and fully endorsed the accusations already placed, and went even further as stressing that the leaders of the movement did not possess sufficient ethnographic knowledge to be able to preserve traditions authentically.[573] János Bartók, like the journal *Köznevelés (Public Education),* highlighted that in the near future, the collection and presentation of folk traditions should be carried out by a national organization of trained professionals.[574]

The emphasis on the difference contrasting Gyöngyösbokréta from the folk ensembles was consistent in the first decades of their existence, especially in the press.[575] The

[569] Czettler 2002: 63–80.
[570] *Esti Kurír* 9 January 1938.; Sima 1939: 1.; *Magyarország* 24 November 1939. pp.6.; *Nemzeti Újság* 26 November 1939. pp.13.
[571] Pesovár 1999: 55.
[572] Muharay 1946: 4.
[573] Bartók 1946: 6.
[574] *Köznevelés* 1946. (2.) 19. 13.
[575] *Ifjúság* 27 September 1946. pp.1. Boldizsár 1951: 1.

professionals (dance teachers, choreographers) also expressed negative opinion against Gyöngyösbokréta until the first half of the 1950s.

Two of the last events Gyöngyösbokréta participated in were firstly the *"Fölszállott a páva" (Fly, Peacock, Fly)* organized by István Volly on March 20, 1948, and secondly the centenary cultural competition in Gyula. As a matter of fact, after the war, the latter was the only dance event that could rightly be claimed as a national event.[576] It brought together the old peasant groups, which had enjoyed great success in Gyöngyösbokréta, and the newly formed urban, factory, and student groups.[577] Therefore, bokréta groups and folk ensembles co-existed at the time, and in many places the bokréta itself had been transformed into a youth ensemble.[578] The ensuing press controversy revolved around the presentation of the staged folk traditions by the ever-multiplying ensembles. In the columns of the catholic journal *Új Ember (New Man),* it was harshly critiqued that the folk ensembles had not progressed, that their quality was the same or worse than that of former Gyöngyösbokréta. Since this criticism arose from the right-wing, the response from the left-wing *Igaz Szó (True Word)* was to slander the article for its denigrating the value of the cultural work of socialist associations.[579] This also evidences that the whole debate was actually political in nature.

By that time, however, the folk ensembles had nothing to fear, as in 1948 the new regime banned the Bokréta Association (and all its local branch organizations). Although Gyöngyösbokréta collated more than 200 variations of 75–80 different dances, 35–40 plays[580], and traditions from the almost lost folk heritage during its performances, neither the press nor political publications, nor the ethnographic profession were allowed to shed positive light on the movement.

Thus, the survival of Gyöngyösbokréta officially lasted until this point, but even following the crackdown on the movement by the regime, opportunities emerged for a revival.

3.4.2 Revival possibilities (1948–1989)

3.4.2.1 Revival in Hungary

The seemingly hopeless situation after the ban was made worse by the launching of a smear campaign against Gyöngyösbokréta on both the political and educational fronts. "On the

[576] Maácz 1977: 17–18.
[577] Gyapjas 1958: 1.
[578] Kaposi 1999: 69.
[579] Gereblyés 1948: 2.
[580] Pálfi 1970: 146.

political and artistic fronts, the false aims of Gyöngyösbokréta campaign had to be exposed."[581] By the 1950s, the local bokréta groups, already operating as a folk ensemble (which, incidentally, could be seen as a means of survival), were often receiving scathing criticism for their performances.[582] Because of their political involvement, they were labeled as chauvinist-nationalist, capitalist, fascist, nationalist cultural supremacists[583] – labels that were not necessarily illegitimate for their participation in various political events. As far as the cultural side was concerned, they highlighted the underdevelopment, the lords' exploitation by entertainment, the lack of authenticity, the lack of culture.[584] The coup de grâce came when communist leader Mátyás Rákosi, in a 1949 statement, also cited Gyöngyösbokréta as a counter example: "[in] the past, the village and the city were at odds with each other. In the past, the village had only the garbage and the dross from the urban culture, the culture of the village could reach the city only along the degenerate way of »Gyöngyösbokréta«.[585]

Thus, the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement did not correspond to the principles of the new political system, nor could the folk-dance movement, which had been established on new foundations, identify with the position of the bokréta tradition preservation. The bokréta groups therefore were either to cease their activities or they could choose to join the Muharay folk ensembles.[586] In many cases, the bokréta group formed the basis of later traditional groups (e.g. Báta[587], Zsámbok[588]), some of which also commemorated the movement in the choice of their names (e.g. Dercen[589], Szany[590]).

The Folk Singing, Dancing and Playing Ensemble made its debut at the National Theatre on March 4, 1946, eighteen months before the Peasant's Day performance.[591] The aim of the folk ensembles was to promote the idea of folk culture accessible to all,[592] to "represent and develop folk culture to the highest degree accessible to the amateurs", from which they

[581] Poór 1951: 23.
[582] Körmendi 1950: 12–13.; Heltai 1964: 5.
[583] F. Á. 1949: 3.; Tüskés 1965: 5.; Zsolnay 1951: 4.; Sas 1960: 139.; Zoltán 1959: 35.
[584] Szebeni 1954: 4.; Benedek 1960: 5.; *Dunántúli Napló* 8 October 1957. pp.3.
[585] Vámos 2018: 32.; Rákosi: 1949; Kresz 1952: 40.
[586] Borbély 1996: 10.
[587] Http://Www.Sarkoz.Extra.Hu/Bemutatkozas.Html – Accessed: 9 January 2020.
[588] Https://Zsambok.Asp.Lgov.Hu/Nepi-Egyuttes – Accessed: 9 January 2020.
[589] Https://Karpataljalap.Net/2015/11/11/40-Eve-Alakult-Derceni-Gyongyosbokreta-Neptancegyuttes – Accessed: 9 January 2020.
[590] Https://Www.Szany.Hu/Index.Php/2014-05-04-11-52-41/Bokreta-Neptanc-Egyuttes – Accessed: 9 January 2020.
[591] *Demokrácia* 3 March 1946. pp.8.
[592] Péterfi 1946: 4.

could even continue as professional dancers in the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble /Magyar Állami Népi Együttes/, which was being organized.[593]

In the meantime, the Dance Association /Táncszövetség/, which had been devised since 1945, was founded in 1947/48 as a central body, aiming at the coordination of scientific dance collection, of stage dance performances, and the professional and ideological management of the dance movement.[594] News reports on the ensemble, which was assisted by the Russian choreographer Igor Moiseyev, did not fail to highlight the contrast between Gyöngyösbokréta and the State Folk Ensemble.[595] "To falsify the voice of the people: that was the goal of the Gyöngyösbokréta. To reveal the voice of the people: that is the aim of the State Folk Ensemble."[596] A newspaper article about the State Folk Ensemble, as it was celebrating its 1,000th performance, puts it bluntly: "[t]he famous »Gyöngyösbokréta« of Béla Paulini was actually revived because the Hungarian people did not want to give up their national dances for any international kolo, tarantella and bear dance."[597]

A 1951 memo testifies to how the members of the Kapuvár bokréta and the community experienced the banning of the movement. It describes not only how the folk-art presentations were ruined by the new cultural policy, but also that the ban on Gyöngyösbokréta brought negative changes to the peasants' lives.

> "The folk attire, folk dances, and music of the Kapuvár Gyöngyösbokréta were not only featured in the renowned Gyöngyösbokréta event organized by Béla Paulini, but also continued to be a vibrant part of the village's everyday life. The traditional attire was prominently displayed throughout numerous church and religious festivities in the village (...)
> The impact was severe, leading to a growing number of individuals disengaging from Gyöngyösbokréta. To compensate for the scarcity, the proponents of the Communist dictatorship, who also lacked traditional attire, endeavored to compensate for this deficiency. During specific festivals, they made an effort to request clothing from the kuláks,[598] who were naturally hesitant to lend them. Having learnt from past experiences, the kuláks stored the clothes aside, as they are irreplaceable today.
> The materials required for creating these exquisite garments are no longer accessible, and the skilled old artisans who possessed the expertise to craft them, as well as the musicians capable of performing the traditional dance music for Gyöngyösbokréta, have also become extinct. The vibrant cultural celebrations, characterized by the presence of traditional attire, which used to accompany most traditional marriages, have vanished."[599]

[593] Muharay 1985: 146.
[594] F. Á. 1949: 3.; *Világosság* 15 May 1949. pp.4.; Zsolnay 1951: 4.
[595] *Új Szó* 7 June 1951. pp.4.; Fodor 1963: 8.
[596] H. Gy. 1951: 10.
[597] *Képes Világhíradó* 10 April 1959. Pp.2.
[598] Rich peasants.
[599] OSA 12846/52.

If the above passage does not sufficiently illustrate how the communist cultural policy sought to preserve folk traditions and help the peasants, it is worth proceeding with the reading of the report:

> In 1951, the Kapuvár Gyöngyösbokréta ensemble received an invitation to showcase their talents to Rákosi in Budapest, as part of the Constitution Day celebrations. Undoubtedly, the group's reputation had declined, as had the dancers' skills, but Rákosi still expressed his approval for the ensemble.
> The participants were guaranteed dance boots for the male participants and yellow leather shoes for the female participants. In May 1952, the males were provided with boots. However, these boots were not the traditional curved-legged bexsör fabric and double-soled footwear of the folk costume. Instead, they were Russian-style, crumpled canvas-legged, single-soled dance boot. The males were greatly disappointed, but the women were much more disappointed as they received nothing. They approached the party secretary to voice their complaints and insisted on obtaining the yellow shoes. The response indicated that the men had received the boots and were now expected to regard it as their responsibility to acquire the yellow shoes for their dance partners. The males, obviously, declined the proposition due to the inferior quality and style of the boots they had received, which were valued at less than 50 forints. In contrast, the women desired shoes that were priced at a minimum of 400 forints. "[600]



Fig. 32. Young couple from Kapuvár in festive attire. Gyöngyösbokréta dancers in Budapest at Népliget, 1941. (Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection. Photo: István Szendrő.)

Folk dance performances were thus made compulsory, people were, as it were, exploited, echoing what occurred under the previous regime, and the communist discourse claiming to promote the peasantry was mere propaganda. It is no coincidence, therefore, that in many

[600] OSA 12846/52.

former bokréta settlements, traditions and customs ceased to exist and died out during these years. And although it was hardly possible to criticize the work of the folk ensembles, a few articles testify to the fact that the much-heralded progress and development was void.[601]

There was a dual attitude on the part of the communist leadership towards the position of the local bokréta leaders. In non-democratic regimes, the party in power reserves all the state offices to its members. The aim of the communist regime was to create a new stratum of intellectuals after 1945/48, and many teachers, notaries, scout leaders, religious leaders, bokréta leaders were removed from their positions.[602] In bokréta circles, this was the case, for example, with Gyula Várallyay, the leader of the bokréta of Mezőkövesd, who, like the other bokréta leaders, was not allowed to continue his activities and decided to head the local volunteer firemen, because he felt that it was the better way for him to serve the youth and the community under the new regime.[603] Many were not even given this opportunity, as the authorities did not allow them to remain in their localities as teachers or cantors, and they were transferred to more distant municipalities. In several cases, however, the bokréta leaders were honored during the socialist period, which is quite striking.

On the other hand, it is not surprising, since it was precisely those who knew folklore, folk dance, and local traditions whom the party needed, since it was part of their policy to have folk groups in every municipality. But it was difficult to find people who knew the traditions and dances well and could teach them to local groups. While folk music research had begun in Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century (following in the footsteps of Kodály and Bartók, many people started collecting folk music), and thus the collection and teaching of folk songs and folk music was already under way. Even at the time of Gyöngyösbokréta's ban, however, folk dance collection was still in its infancy, and it was only in 1949 that folk-dance choreographer training was launched.[604] This is quite paradoxical. Indeed, on the one hand, the movement's participants and leaders were awarded the highest honors of the folk-art world by the regime but on the other hand the same regime strove to denigrate and eradicate them at all costs. Besides, some folk culture leaders helped to preserve folk traditions in Gyöngyösbokréta (mainly based on the bokréta past and traditions) while later taking part in socialist folk culture. Several bokréta leaders were recognized with the award for folk artists, the Népművészet

[601] Kónya 1954: 3.
[602] Volly 1991: 114.; (vezetők vegzálása 1948 után) NM EA 22506. Varga Szabolcs: A Szanyi Bokréta története. Érk. az 1985. évi Országos Néprajzi és Nyelvjárási Gyűjtőpályázatra. 13–14.
[603] Pap 2003: 42.
[604] Bolvári-Takács 2013: 88.

Mestere Díj (Master of Folk Art Award), founded in 1953 (in the categories of folk crafts, folk dance, folk music, folk song, folk tales, and tradition-keeping).[605]

Let's cite some of them: Lukács Szappanos (1886–1973), the founder-leader of the Kunszentmiklós Bokréta, who was visited by generations of ethnographers from 1947 to collect the region's 'dance treasure,'[606] or Ferenc Vén (1920–2010), a dancer from Kalocsa, who was a member of the local bokréta since the age of 15 and later member of the Kalocsa Traditional Association founded in 1966.[607] János Horváth (1914–1984), a dancer from Karád, was awarded in 1979, but not everything was easy for him under the socialist regime: while he took part in many foreign performances and saw the world with the Gyöngyösbokréta, he was politically discriminated against after World War II because of his origin. He later continued performing and teaching young people, and from 1948 her dances were filmed by researchers.[608] Juli Vankó Imréné Dudás (1919–1984) who organized the Galgamácsa bokréta group and later became an embroiderer, weaver and draughtswoman got the award in 1956[609], while Anna Horváth Péterné Nagy (1913–1994), a singer from Vitnyéd, wife and dancing partner of the leader of the Vitnyéd bokréta, received the award in 1972.[610] But also several musicians and costume makers who once took part in the performances of the bokréta groups have received this honor. These include József Szaszkó (1908–1979), a cither player from Tura[611], and Gizella Vén Lajosné Török (1919–2006), ornamental painter.[612] In addition to these, László Kovács (1908–1962), cantor teacher, founder of the Gyöngyösbokréta in Tura, and a folk artist, was awarded the Kossuth Prize, the highest state prize of the Hungarian state, in 1954.[613]

Obviously, the award was not for Gyöngyösbokréta participation, but the numerous awarded leaders show that people associated with the movement were not persecuted so much

[605] The Masters of Folk Arts are creative artists highly acknowledged within their own communities. They have the vast knowledge of long-established folk activities, and they have the power to influence those they interact with. The masters are examples to all because they preserve the values and processes of traditional artistry.
Each year, the state recognizes 10 people (7 people prior to 2004) as Masters of Folk Arts. These masters have either made prominent works of art or have had life-long dedication to artistic activity. (https://nesz.hu/english/the-masters-of-folkarts/ accessed: 2023. április 2.; Nagy 2021: 21–23.)

[606] Szellemi Kulturális Örökség – Népművészet Mesterei egyesített jegyzék. https://www.studiolum.com/nm/hu/szappanoslukacs.htm (accessed: 2023. május 30.); Felföldi – Gombos 2001: 131.

[607] Szellemi Kulturális Örökség – Népművészet Mesterei egyesített jegyzék. https://www.studiolum.com/nm/hu/venferenc.htm

[608] https://www.studiolum.com/nm/hu/horvathjanos.htm

[609] https://nesz.hu/a-nepmuveszet-mesterei/

[610] https://www.studiolum.com/nm/hu/horvathpeterne.htm; Vankóné Dudás 1976: 54–55.

[611] https://www.studiolum.com/nm/hu/szaszkojozsef.htm

[612] https://www.studiolum.com/nm/hu/venlajosne.htm

[613] P. P. 1972: 4.; S. T. 2012.

after 1953 because of their Gyöngyösbokréta past. Besides, some folk culture leaders helped to preserve folk traditions in Gyöngyösbokréta while later taking part in socialist folk culture. The reason they got awarded was that it was difficult to find people who knew the traditions and dances well and could teach them to local groups. Bokréta leaders were precisely those who knew folklore and local traditions whom the party needed, since it was part of their policy to have folk groups in every municipality. While folk music research had begun in Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century (following in the footsteps of Kodály and Bartók), thus the collection and teaching of folk songs and folk music was already under way. Even at the time of Gyöngyösbokréta's ban, however, folk dance collection was still in its infancy, and it was only in 1949 that folk-dance choreographer training was launched.[614]

In the new regime, following the 1956 revolution (the Kádár era), which brought a loosening of state control in all areas, the movement was less under attack. From the 1970s, when the cultural policy was further relaxed, and even more so with the Transition in 1989,[615] the movement at local and national level was reassessed.[616] In 1956, László Debreczeni (1903–1986), an architect and expert on the preservation of historical monuments, raised the idea that it was worth clarifying what one knew of the movement, and published extracts from some of the documents on the movement in *Táncművészeti Értesítő [Hungarian Dance News]*.[617] In the newspapers, the movement is mentioned in a few sentences from the 1960s onwards. Articles and reports on dance groups and village life at that time still tend to write disparagingly about it[618], but when the old bokréta members are called into the conversation, the movement inevitably takes on a more positive narrative, as the former participants recall Gyöngyösbokréta with fondness and nostalgia.[619]

In 1970, the first comprehensive, scientific paper – by the dancer-choreographer Csaba Pálfi (1928–1983) – was published, dealing entirely with the movement.[620] From then onwards, professional opinion reassessed the movement, and it is argued that the folk dance movement and folk dance research have benefited greatly from the traditions of Gyöngyösbokréta: it is deemed to have preserved valuable traditions.[621] "Despite some negative political traits, it has passed on a very valuable heritage. Wherever there was a bokréta group, folk dancing has

[614] Bolvári-Takács 2013: 88.
[615] Takács 2016: 24–25.; Pataky 19644.
[616] Böjte 1978: 15.; Kováts 1989: 4.; Minárik 1989.
[617] Debreczeni 1956: 99–104.
[618] Tüskés 1965: 5.
[619] Vincze 1956: 4.; Rab 1963: 4–5.
[620] Pálfi 1970: 115–161.
[621] Pesovár 1977: 22–24.; Vekerdi 1985: 709.; Dégh 1988: 593.; Felföldi 1977: 82.; Martin 1980–1981: 241–243.; Maácz 1977: 17.; Bakonyi 1959: 4.; Dömötör 1960: 26.

usually been preserved."[622] Traditional ensembles have also been able to develop mainly where there has been a continuity of theatrical tradition-keeping over several decades, usually as successors to the bokréta groups.[623] Professional opinion also had an impact locally, and in the 1980s a few local historical works were issued on the movement: the local notary wrote memoirs about Boldog's bokréta,[624] a publication printed in thousands of copies about Kunszentmiklós' bokréta history were published in 1989.[625] In 1987, the Boldog village hall was renovated and reopened in honor of the Gyöngyösbokréta and its former participants.[626] In 1982 a film was produced on the Gyöngyösbokréta in southern Hungary, entitled *The Bokréta /A Bokréta/,* featuring some of the surviving former bokréta members or their descendants.[627] They have been praised, thus highlighting the shortcomings and undeniable merits of the movement (although negative voices have also been heard concerning the movie...[628]).



Fig. 33–34. A film by the Dance Association showcasing various dances and customs from Tard, featuring former Gyöngyösbokréta performers. The film highlights which segments had been adapted specifically for the Gyöngyösbokréta stage. BTK ZTI Ft.599. Dance Association, Tard, 1948.

In relation to professional documentation and fieldwork, it is important to highlight that – despite the frequent criticism and disdain expressed in the press – the Dance Association /Táncszövetség/ itself also collected dances in the same villages that had once participated in the Gyöngyösbokréta movement. In 1948, for example, a film was made in Tard documenting various local dances and customs, explicitly indicating which segments had been adapted for the Gyöngyösbokréta stage (thus marking them as choreographed folk dances and acknowledging that the film itself was the result of staged filming). (Fig. 33–34.) In some of

[622] Novák 2002: 91.
[623] Héra 2002: 55.
[624] Ujváry F.1980: 42–44.; Ujváry F.: 1984.; Fercsik 1981: 4.
[625] Galambos: 1989; Sitkei 1989: 4.
[626] Heves megyei aprónyomtatványok 23.J
[627] *Délmagyarország* 10 April 1982. pp.9.
[628] Akácz 1982: 4.

the former Gyöngyösbokréta villages, local dances were even recollected decades later from dancers who had once participated in the movement. (Fig. 35.)



Fig. 35. BTK ZTI. TF39238.
Elderly people from Szeremle, former Gyöngyösbokréta participants. Date of collection: 16 March 1979; Collected by: Mrs. Sándor Manno (Manno Sándorné).

The press analysis also points out that the revival of Gyöngyösbokréta was repeatedly raised not only at the academic and institutional levels, but also in newspaper readership's correspondence. In 1956, the *Tolnai Napló /Tolna County Journal/* published the first article entitled "Where have the Koppányszántó Gyöngyösbokréta gone?", in which old bokréta members were interviewed to state the usefulness of the practice of Gyöngyösbokréta. The question was raised at the article's outset: "If this association was a national asset in the past, proclaiming popular culture at home and abroad, why shouldn't it be a national asset today, proclaiming popular socialist culture?!"[629] This was followed by many similar suggestions in the following decades, while ethnographer István Volly, who was involved in organizing Gyöngyösbokréta showcases in the interwar period and was one of the people advocating the revival of the movement, was still convinced in 1990 that it was time to renovate Gyöngyösbokréta: He and the leaders of 10 or 12 groups of old bokréta communities planned a show at the Madách Theatre in August, to no avail due to lack of funding, but there was support at parliamentary level for a major Gyöngyösbokréta show the following year.[630]

Even if the much-discussed renewed Gyöngyösbokréta event was still to become reality, local communities started implementing an increasing number of commemorative initiatives.

[629] Kovács 1956: 4.; *Tolna Megyei Népújság* 5 December 1957. pp.4.
[630] Baróti 1968: 1.; Volly 1991: pp.114–115.

Here are a couple of examples: A statue honoring the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement was erected by the Csurgónagymarton municipality in 1999.[631] To pay homage to the history of the Gyöngyösbokréta, the István Bogár Traditional Folk Art Association /Bogár István Hagyományőrző Egyesület/ held a dance-hall assembly in Őcsény in 2008 in partnership with the associations of the former bokréta settlements in the region.[632]

A musical folk play illustrating a village life at the dawn of socialism, *Gyöngyösbokréta of Baranya County /A baranyai gyöngyösbokréta/*, was staged in 2019.[633] The State Folk Ensemble and the Hungarian Heritage House cooperated to organize the *New Bokrétas Festival /Új Bokréták Fesztivál/* in Jászberény, which "expressed our living traditions and recalled the atmosphere of the former Gyöngyösbokréta performances." In addition to the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble, several other folk ensembles and professional folk dancers performed during the festival. While children's and minority dancers also performed, the former bokréta settlements were not invited to the event.[634]

After several decades, Gyöngyösbokréta was incorporated into dance education institutions' curricula in the 2010s.[635]

The movement has also been acknowledged in museum exhibitions. In 2008, a permanent exhibition on the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement was opened in Székesfehérvár at the initiative of the Alba Regia Dance Association. The exhibition, presented in the form of an ethnographic photo display, was motivated by the fact that Csákvár – located near Székesfehérvár – was the birthplace of Béla Paulini, the leader of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement.[636] The exhibition later became a travelling display and in 2010 was also presented at the Hungarian Folk Center of Vojvodina /Vajdasági Magyar Folklórközpont/ in Subotica. According to plans, it will be featured as an accompanying event at the annually organized Gyöngyösbokréta and Durindó Festival.[637]

In the current permanent exhibition of the Hungarian Museum of Trade and Tourism – titled *Welcoming Guests, Being a Guest: Permanent Exhibition on the History of Hospitality in Hungary*, inaugurated in 2014 – Gyöngyösbokréta is presented primarily from the perspective

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[631] http://www.csurgoikisterseg.hu/index.php?page=page&id=19; http://www.eutudakozo.hu/miniweb/csurgonagymarton/

[632] *Tolnai Népújság* 12 April 2008. pp.16.

[633] Urbán 2019: 11–13.

[634] https://hagyomanyokhaza.hu/hu/mane/program/uj-bokretak-fesztival ; https://www.jaszbereny.hu/hirek/uj-bokretak-fesztival/4892/; http://jku.hu/tag/uj-bokreta-fesztival/

[635] Dr. Martin György Alapfokú Művészeti Iskola. https://www.szegedtancegyuttes.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Pedag%C3%B3giai-program.pdf (Accessed: 4 April 2023.); Táncos Néptáncos szakmairány. https://www.nive.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=449&Itemid=101

[636] Székesfehérvár 2008. Programok. https://www.szekesfehervar.hu/_user/11/File/2008_program.pdf

[637] L. M. 2010: 15.

of tourism, highlighting its role in promoting rural tourism and its connection to the Saint Stephen's Week celebrations following the First World War.[638] Ethnography is the scholarly discipline most closely linked to the Gyöngyösbokréta movement. Accordingly, it is of considerable academic and cultural significance that the newly inaugurated permanent exhibition at the Museum of Ethnography features initiatives dedicated to the collection, preservation, and stage adaptation of folk traditions. Within this context, the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement is presented through photos, a interactive map, and a concise historical overview that critically reflects on both its achievements and shortcomings. While the movement is recognized for idealizing rural life and deflecting attention from serious social issues, its enduring contribution lies in the rediscovery and public dissemination of numerous folk traditions that had previously remained in obscurity. These revived traditions subsequently informed ethnographic research and influenced the development of later stage-based folk-dance movements.[639]

3.4.2.2 Revival/survival overseas

In keeping with the spirit of the interwar Gyöngyösbokréta, Hungarian overseas minorities had folk tradition performances in the United States, South America, and Canada. During the interwar years, some Hungarian communities (such as those settled in Cleveland or Sao Paolo) began to perform "Gyöngyösbokréta" folk dance, imitating the customs and dances of the bokréta groups in Hungary.[640] In some cases, such as in Venezuela[641] or Argentina[642] it was a revival, as from the 1950–1960s the scouts and local associations learnt and presented the dances under the name „Gyöngyösbokréta".[643]

These overseas Gyöngyösbokréta groups were usually formed and performed at local Hungarian scouting or religious (usually Catholic) congregations, in the context of scout days or parish events. While not only Gyöngyösbokréta, but also scouting and other organizations were banned in Hungary in 1948, for Hungarians of the diaspora, these organizations ensured a sense of belonging, the preservation of Hungarian customs and values.[644] „We Hungarians, old, new, and young, watched the successive scenes, our eyes brimming with tears. The past

[638] MKVM Permanent exhibitions. https://mkvm.hu/en/welcoming-guests-being-a-guest/; Németh – Saly 2016: 48.
[639] A Néprajzi Múzeum 2024 októberében átadott gyűjteményi kiállítása.; Danó – Szarvas (szerk.): 2024.
[640] *Magyarország* 19 October 1934. pp.10.; *8 Órai Újság* 31 December 1941.
[641] *Képes Világhíradó* 1 April 1967. pp.18.; *Képes Világhíradó* 1 March 1970. pp.7.
[642] Szeleczky 1958: 8.
[643] *Magyarság* 27 June 1952. pp.2.
[644] Papp Z. 2008: 173.

was revived before our eyes. The wonderfully beautiful Hungarian past. It was as if we were at home in the good old days, in happy Hungary, seeing the 'proposal', 'harvest festival', 'Pentecost tradition', 'palóc wedding' and 'cornhusking'"[645], – they wrote of the 1960 Pittsburgh show of the Scouts' folk group Gyöngyösbokréta, and yet most of the shows and gatherings were seen as strengthening the Hungarian identity.[646]

In addition, the residents of the host countries (Americans, Venezuelans, Argentines) were also eager to participate in these events, so they could learn about Hungarian folk dances and culture.[647] In the 1950s, the Hungarian Cultural Association in California had a group called Gyöngyösbokréta, whose dancers took part in balls and events set up by the association and performed Hungarian village harvest festival customs.[648]

In Cleveland, a Gyöngyösbokréta group was formed in the 1930s, modeled on the Hungarian group, and was active until the 1970s: they held an annual Scout Ball, where groups of scouts engaged in dances from various Hungarian regions. The importance of the events in Cleveland is evidenced by the fact that they were joined by Hungarian groups of Hungarian "bokréta groups" from all parts of East and Central America.[649] (Fig. 36.)


A clevelandi cserkészek népi Gyöngyösbokréta csoportja Pittsburghban

Lendvay József

Képes Világhíradó

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Fig. 36. The Cleveland Gyöngyösbokréta group in the local newspaper. *(Képes Világhíradó*, June 1, 1960, 12.)

[645] Lendvay 1960: 12.
[646] *Szabadság* 20 August 1971. pp.15.; *Magyarság* 3 September 1971. pp.2.
[647] *Képes Világhíradó* 1 July 1960. pp.4–5.
[648] *Californiai Magyarság* 14 February 1956. pp.5.; *Californiai Magyarság* 14 June 1957. pp.5.; *Californiai Magyarság* 19 July 1957. pp.5.
[649] *Magyarság* 8 August 1958. pp.2.; Lendvay 1964: 5–6.

Both in the interwar period and after 1945, there were difficulties in preserving Hungarian traditions on the other side of the world, as neither suitable instructors nor musical material nor folk costumes nor materials were available to the groups. (In the 1960s, for example, the performances of the Gyöngyösbokréta dance group in Caracas, Venezuela, were called off because the tape recorders containing the appropriate music were lost.[650]) The Hungarian community in Argentina performed a large Gyöngyösbokréta (60 performers) in 1958, but in addition to these difficulties, a newspaper article also pointed out that it was difficult for second-generation Hungarian youth to learn and present Hungarian folk dances and customs without ever having seen and experienced them live.[651] However, groups such as the Gyöngyösbokréta and the Cleveland meetings continued to operate, and there have also been examples of Hungarian minorities from different countries organizing meetings.

3.4.2.3 Revival in Vojvodina, Serbia

Gyöngyösbokréta was also an instrument of nation-building intent and revisionist politics in the interwar period. In the territories annexed under the Treaty of Trianon[652], Upper Hungary (Slovakia), Transcarpathia (Ukraine), Transylvania (Romania) and Vojvodina (Serbia), bokréta groups were formed during the period of the annexation, which were allowed to officially join the work of the Bokréta Association only upon the return of the territory (according to the Vienna Decision I and II), but traditions-preserving activities, gatherings organized around folk dancers were already arranged in the mid-1930s among these Hungarian minorities.

It is therefore understandable that in these regions, as well as among the diasporas in North and South America, the movement and its heritage and transmission had different meanings. István Volly, an ethnographer, who has been present in the (post)life of the movement since the birth of Gyöngyösbokréta, notes in 1990 that "it is interesting that from the

[650] *Képes Világhíradó* 1 December 1964. 31.; *Képes Világhíradó* 1 March 1970. pp.7.; *Képes Magyar Világhíradó* 1 June 1975. pp.8.
[651] Szeleczky 1958: 8.
[652] „By the Treaty of Trianon, signed on June 4, 1920, Hungary lost more than half of both her territory and her population. She was left with 8 million inhabitants, while the territories that she lost contained about 12 million, of which (according to the Hungarian census of 1910) Magyars constituted 3.1 million, Rumanians 2.8, Croats and Slovenes 3.0, Ruthenes 0.4, Slovaks 1.7, and Germans 0.9. Rumania, on the east, acquired all Hungarian territory in- habited by a majority of Rumanians; to the south, Serbia was allotted the Croats and Slovenes, and with them became the kingdom of Jugoslavia; and the Slovaks and Ruthenes became citizens of Czechoslovakia, to the north. But the territories acquired by these states included also certain areas inhabited by a Magyar majority; the 3 million Magyars separated from Hungary by the new frontiers (2.4 million according to the 1921 censuses of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and the 1931 census of Rumania) constituted roughly one-fourth of Hungary's prewar Magyar population." Schüller, Richard (1944). Hungary, a Danubian Problem. *Social Research* Nr. 11. (1.) 40–52.

1940s to the present day, the villages in Bácska[653] have kept the name of Gyöngyösbokréta and held meetings in Yugoslavia even if the name was censored in Hungary."[654]

"Interesting" because the movement was banned in Hungary, the motherland, and "interesting" because Yugoslavia was also under a communist regime in those decades, where Hungarians were a minority and were able to preserve this form of tradition-preservation. "Interesting", but not self-evident (since in the case of Transylvania and Upper Hungary we cannot speak of a similar revival or survival), and it was absolutely no easy task to maintain and revive the traditions of the movement. After the Second World War, it also ceased to exist in Vojvodina, but its revival (both at the level of local groups and of open-to-all gatherings) was initiated soon afterwards, in the second half of the 1940s.[655] From 1969, folk art shows were again held regularly in Vojvodina under the name of Gyöngyösbokréta, which are still considered the largest gathering of Hungarian minority in Serbia.[656] At the local level, the bokréta groups continued their tradition in the following decades.[657] In 1969, the leaders of the few former participating municipalities re-launched the Gyöngyösbokréta gatherings. In the first years, it was held in the same municipality (Gombos Богојево/Bogojevo), and since 1972 it has been a touring festival, with a different municipality taking on the role of host each year.[658] The popularity of the movement is shown by the fact that in 1985 there were already 2,000 participants, and the celebration of Hungarian folklore traditions has already crossed the borders of Vojvodina and even the country.[659] Even though there was also a staunch communist regime, the politics of Tito's regime offered room to the preservation of the minorities'. During this era in the policy of 'Brotherhood and unity' („testvériség-egység"), the Yugoslav State allowed its minorities to have some liberties: it was possible to preserve their traditions, even though they tried to downplay the meaning and importance of these events.[660] Clearly, these were no longer local tradition-preserving events, but gatherings of folk-dance ensembles, where they presented not only the dance treasures of their own settlements, but also those of the Hungarian regions. However, as a minority initiative, the survival of this movement has also been met with challenges, authenticity being the main issue, so that a professional jury was requested to assess

[653] Бачка. A geographical name referring to the territory of the former Bács-Bodrog county, the northern part of which belongs to Hungary (15%) and the southern part to Vojvodina (85%), with a significant Hungarian minority.
[654] Volly 1991: 113–114.
[655] Cs. Tóth 2018: 123–139.; Dautbegovics 2013: 9.; Hajdú 1986: 7.; Csorba 1947: 102.; *Magyar Szó* 19 July 1947.; Kalapis 1948: 5.
[656] Liszka 2002: 153.; *Magyar Szó* 2 June 1986. pp.7.
[657] Kiss 1945: 4.; Nagy 1947: 11.; *Magyar Szó* 18 July 1950. pp.1.; Zabosné Geleta 2010: 275.; *7Nap* 14 August 1960. pp.4.; *Magyar Szó* 10 October 1963. pp.16.; Tomka 1967: 4.
[658] Dautbegovics 2013: 9.
[659] Hajdú 1986: 7.
[660] Szőke 2013: 13–14.; Lőrinc 1974: 111–112.; *Magyar Szó* 9 May 1969. pp.5.

and help with the productions.[661] This revival movement is an important element of both the preservation of folk traditions and the sustenance of minority identity.

Thus arises the question of to how the minority movement managed to persist within a communist regime, especially as it was not the case in Hungary. A thorough examination of Hungarian-Yugoslav relations during this era provides valuable insights.

The tensions between Hungary and Yugoslavia escalated following the annexation of Vojvodina into Serbia, a constituent part of Yugoslavia. The enactment of the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty delineated new borders, resulting in thousands Hungarian citizens residing within Serbian (later: Yugoslav) territory. Consequently, the Hungarian government expressed concern regarding the welfare of the Hungarian minority. Commencing in 1938, negotiations ensued between Hungary and Yugoslavia, culminating in the proposition of the Treaty of Eternal Friendship between the two nations in 1940, subsequently ratified on February 27, 1941.[662]

Nevertheless, Hungary's involvement in the German invasion of Yugoslavia on April 11, 1941, aimed at reclaiming Vojvodina, resulted in the abrogation of the aforementioned treaty.[663] Subsequently, following its defeat in World War II, Hungary found itself compelled to pay reparations once more. By signing the Paris Peace Treaty on February 10, 1947, Hungary consented to adhere to its pre-1938 borders, thereby forfeiting territories reannexed in the wake of the two Vienna decisions, including Vojvodina.[664]

From then on, the Hungarian government's strategy was guided by the principle of gradualism, and it progressively tried to establish diplomatic contacts, particularly with the democratic countries of the Carpathian Basin. Among them, Yugoslavia was the first to structure its cultural strategy in such a way as to enable the normalization of relations between the two countries, notwithstanding historical circumstances, and the minority issue of Vojvodina.[665]

Vojvodina as a region is unique since it has always sought autonomy – a goal that predates Hungary's division. Self-determination movements were launched by Serbs living in Hungary in the 1848 revolution. Gradually, this desire for independence strengthened and shifted its emphasis from the Serbian people to the "economic, cultural, civilizational, and

[661] Bodor 1999: 73.
[662] Olasz 2014: 68.; *Külügyi Szemle* 1941. (18.) 2. 162.; Erdős 2018: 31–32.
[663] Romsics 2020: 189.
[664] Farkas 2004: 9.
[665] N. Szabó 1999: 57.

ethnic characteristics of the territory and its inhabitants,"[666] which were seen as essential to Serbia within the context of Yugoslavia. Vojvodina gained autonomy under Tito's regime (Yugoslavia was established as a socialist federal republic in 1945, led by Marshal Josip Broz Tito [1944–1980])[667] beginning in 1946.[668]

Although there were atrocities against the Hungarian minority at first,[669] Tito's communist leadership claimed that "Yugoslavia distinguishes between the Hungarian people and the former Hungarian reactionary leaders"[670] meaning that a leaf had been turned over, and that Hungarians were accepted members of Yugoslavia.

Because Vojvodina was characterized by ethnic variety and diverse national communities, the state's leadership provided space for minorities, including Vojvodina's Hungarians, in the spirit of "Brotherhood and Unity".[671] In accordance with this principle, the minority policy offered minorities constitutional rights (use of language, development of separate institutions), but in fact, this was also intended for assimilation purposes.[672] The Hungarian Cultural Association of Yugoslavia, the largest autonomous Hungarian cultural and social organization, was founded in 1945.[673] When it was created, the local Hungarian newspaper wrote: "[the] struggle for the implementation of the principle of national equality is a struggle for the realization of the idea of Brotherhood and Unity."[674] This principle was also adopted during the organization of Gyöngyösbokréta, which was recognized and permitted to take place. "The openness of Gyöngyösbokréta, the festival of Hungarian folk music, folk dance, and traditions in Yugoslavia, demonstrates that it regards it as an important task to deepen the brotherhood and unity of the nations and nationalities of the SAP [Socialist Autonomous Province] of Vojvodina precisely through mutual knowledge of each other's cultures. The nations and nationalities living here will develop closer as they learn about and appreciate one other's traditions and customs." To emphasize fraternal togetherness, the Gyöngyösbokréta's closing celebration featured performances by groups from other nationalities in Yugoslavia, sometimes even from abroad.[675] (Fig. 37–38.)

[666] Korhecz 2010: 53.
[667] H. Grove 2018: 6.
[668] Bjelica 2019: 151.; Korhecz 2010: 54.; Tóth 2018: 10–11.
[669] Mák 2014: 174–178.
[670] *Nép* 15 July 1947. pp.2.
[671] H. Grove 2018: 6.; Ördögh 2017: 36.
[672] Gruber 2018: 143.
[673] N. Szabó 1999: 57.
[674] *Magyar Szó* 9 May 1969. pp.5.
[675] Hajdú 1986: 7.; V. K. M. 1972: 12.; *Magyar Szó* 4 June 1972. pp. 9.

In 2021 and 2023, I attended the Gyöngyösbokréta festival, where during my second stay I drafted a questionnaire to uncover, among other things, how much the participants knew of the origins and history of the festival and what the event meant to them. I gathered 50 replies (different age groups, different genders, different qualities – performers, musicians, accompanists, vendors, organizers, etc –). The evaluation of the questionnaires showed that none of them knew exactly when the movement was held first, although some pinpointed the start in the 1960s-1970s, close to the time of the revival, even the living memory of the older people suggested this. It was, though, quite a surprise to all but two respondents that the beginnings of the festival dated back to the 1930s. In response to the question "What does participating in the festival mean to you?", they confirmed the opinion, as expressed in the press, that it is the most popular cultural event that strengthens Hungarian identity.[676]



Fig. 37–38. Poster (in Hungarian and Serbian) of the 1983 Gyöngyösbokréta.; 50th Gyöngyösbokréta Festival in Gombos, Vojvodina, 2013. (Institute for Hungarian Culture in Vojvodina)

[676] Questionnaire 2023.

4. The socio-cultural context of Gyöngyösbokréta

According to the 1920 census, Hungary's industrialization was still in its early stages, with 55.7% of the population working in agriculture, 30% in industry and trade, and nearly 10% in intellectual or administrative occupations.[677] In 1930, 1.35 million workers and dependents living in small and medium-sized peasant households constituted nearly one-sixth of the population, with the agrarian population accounting for about a third. The remaining two-thirds were described in the 1930s rural literature as "three million beggars," reflecting the severe social situation. By the late 1920s, the land issue remained one of Hungary's most significant problems, and although more than 100,000 new landowners emerged from the land reform, the poorest peasantry continued to live in the most challenging conditions.[678] The 1941 census showed that Hungary had not yet become an industrialized country by the beginning of World War II, with 49% of the population still working in agriculture.[679]

Before World War I, neither the working class nor landless peasants were represented in the Parliament, although they made up a large part of the country's population.[680] From the 1930s onward, the unfavorable social situation of the peasantry and the need for large-scale land reform became central topics of public discourse.[681] (Many reports, even in the 1940s, mention that despite the successes of Gyöngyösbokréta, the villages where the folk groups were based still greeted visitors with poverty.[682]) As the conditions in the villages were not sufficiently developed to accommodate guests, rural tourism infrastructure began to develop.[683]

Ferenc Erdei (1910–1971), an influential social writer, founder of the Hungarian Peasant Party, and later a politician in the communist system, divided society into three layers, placing the peasantry below the historical-national layers. Coming from a peasant family himself, Erdei emphasized that this social class lived in oppression, was vulnerable, and their only desire was to modernize.[684] Over time, the peasants' lifestyle, behavior and mindset changed.[685]

The Gyöngyösbokréta brought significant changes to the lives of peasants, too. Generally, through travel, peasants saw more of the world, which impacted their customs and mentality. On a micro level, for example, distant bokréta groups formed friendships, and in

[677] Gyáni 2021: 43.
[678] Romsics 2017: 177–179.
[679] Gyáni 2021: 43.
[680] Anderson: 106.
[681] Püski 2010: 43.
[682] Vörös 1937: 5.; Kassay 1943: 1.
[683] *Új Budapest* 1934. szeptember 15. 4.; *Képviselőházi napló, 1935. 8. 1936. május 19. – 1936. június 6.* 397–398.
[684] Erdei: 1947.
[685] Romsics 2017: 177–178.

some cases, marriages took place between members of distant groups.[686] This further reinforced the idea that participation in folk festivals was a path to modernization. Thus, it became clear that Gyöngyösbokréta had turned into a social issue: as a representation of the peasantry and Hungarian identity, it drew attention to a social class, highlighting its problems, shaping an image, and increasingly playing a role in the formation of national identity.

Throughout the period under examination, more than half of Hungary's population belonged to the agrarian sector. Following the emancipation of serfs in 1848, a class of agricultural workers capable of existential independence began to emerge. While the term peasantry or agrarian society generally refers to those engaged in agricultural labor, the reality was far more complex: not all landowners performed such labor or possessed the necessary expertise – for instance, viticulture required specific knowledge. In interwar Hungary, landholding was typically classified as follows: plots up to five holds were considered dwarf holdings; between five and one hundred, smallholdings; between one hundred and one thousand, medium holdings; and above one thousand, large estates – though these thresholds varied across regions. The landless rural proletariat, often living semi-nomadic lives shaped by seasonal labor opportunities, also formed part of the peasantry. For the lowest strata, mere subsistence and family survival were the primary goals. Dwarf holders, estate servants, and cotters often lived in extreme poverty. Their plight was first brought to public attention through the sociographies of the népi írók /populist writers/, village research movements involving scouts and clergy members.[687] This era witnessed the first significant efforts to organize traditional rural society through modern mass movements, paralleled by a flourishing of peasant- and rural-themed expressions in the artistic sphere.

4.1 Exploring peasant culture: Initiatives in researching folk traditions

During the era of Gyöngyösbokréta, various parallel initiatives emerged to explore, collect, and catalogue rural lifestyles and folk traditions. These efforts operated at different levels and were driven by diverse motivations, yet all contributed to a growing interest in documenting and preserving peasant culture. These initiatives were driven by pedagogical, nation-building, and ethnographic aims, and often sought to collect, publicize, and give voice to peasant culture. While providing a comprehensive overview of these movements falls outside the scope of this dissertation, I consider it necessary to briefly mention a few, as they form an important part of the historical context and the broader discourse surrounding the representation of rural life and the peasantry.

[686] *Kis Újság* 1934. április 6. 6.
[687] Bencsik 2020: 184.

The Faluszövetség /Village Association/, established in 1920, has already been discussed, while the movement of the népi írók /populist writers/ will be addressed in the next subsection (4.1.1). This latter case is particularly illuminating, as it helps to contextualize the emergence of Gyöngyösbokréta and to explain why the movement, which aimed to present peasant culture, came under criticism.

The Hungarian Scout Movement /cserkészet/, established in 1910, was both a youth education program (for boys) and a nation-building initiative that emphasized character development, patriotism, and service. Pál Teleki (1879–1941), twice Prime Minister of Hungary, became a symbolic figure of the Hungarian Scout movement, as his involvement in youth education and national upbringing after 1920 became a defining element of his public legacy.[688] In interwar Hungary, the scouting movement – particularly the branch known as regöscserkészet, played a significant role in the exploration and documentation of rural life and folk traditions.[689] Emerging in the mid-1920s, this initiative encouraged scouts, especially older members (18–24 years old) to engage in "village-walking" research, visiting rural communities to observe, collect, and learn directly from local people. Their work focused on music, dance, customs, and daily life, combining fieldwork with self-education and seminars during the rest of the year. Inspired by figures such as pedagogical and philosophical writer Sándor Karácsony (1891–1952) and later supported by political and educational leaders, regös-scouts contributed to the broader ethnographic movement and folk revival efforts in Hungary. As part of this effort, scouts occasionally attended Gyöngyösbokréta performances, where they learned folk dances and customs that they later presented at international scout jamborees.[690] On their way to the 1937 gathering in the Netherlands, the press even referred to them as a „scout bokréta" due to the influence of these performances.[691] During the 1947 World Jamboree in France, Hungarian scouts presented exclusively folk music and dance, reflecting their commitment to authentic cultural heritage. This movement laid groundwork for a generation of cultural researchers and performers, blending patriotic youth education with grassroots ethnography.[692]

Numerous religious associations at the local, regional, and national levels played a significant role in exploring rural life. These groups documented rural lifestyles and challenges, and some also provided educational and spiritual support to village communities. One notable

[688] Ablonczy 2020c: 81.
[689] Bárdos: 1929.; Ablonczy 2020c: 83.
[690] Berényi: 1937.; Iskolai értesítők. Budapest, II. kerületi Kir. Egyetemi Katolikus Főgimnázium és Ferencz József Nevelő Intézet, 1938.; *Pesti Napló* 1937. július 11. 18.
[691] *Pesti Hírlap* 1937. július 13. 8.
[692] Tóth 2020: 102–103.

example is the KALOT (Katolikus Agrárifjúsági Legényegyesületek Országos Testülete) /National Organization of Catholic Agrarian Youth League/.

Through its expansive educational, cultural, and community programs, KALOT played a significant role in uplifting rural society – promoting not only spiritual and national values, but also contributing to the cultural mapping of villages by fostering self-awareness, local identity, and the organized documentation of folk traditions across thousands of Hungarian settlements.[693]

The agrarian settlement movement was formed in a different environment, within college circles. This movement pursued scientific and artistic objectives and became Hungary's first organized college-level rural research group. Its predecessor was the radical Bethlen Gábor Circle of university students, led by figures like György Buday (1907–1990), who began exploring rural villages in southeastern Hungary in the fall of 1928 and were confronted with the severe poverty of the peasantry.[694] Inspired by the English settlement movement, which established social centers in urban slums, the Hungarian agrarian settlement initiative began in September 1929, focusing on educational, social, and ethnographic work in the Szeged region. Out of this effort, the Szegedi Fiatalok Művészeti Kollégiuma /Szeged Youth Art College/ was founded in 1930 to creatively and scientifically process the fieldwork results. Members like Gyula Ortutay (1910–1978) and Ferenc Erdei (1910–1971) made pioneering contributions to Hungarian ethnography and sociography.[695]

In several cases, these village researchers discovered the same settlements as the Gyöngyösbokréta. In Tápé, the students of Szeged University, organized by the agrarian settlement movement and later the Artistic College of Young Intellectuals in Szeged /Szegedi Fiatalok Művészeti Kollégiuma/, considered it their task to create a "social condition survey" of the village in the first half of the 1930s. Gyula Ortutay (1910–1978), along with sociologist–psychologist Viola Tomori (1911–1988), and poet Miklós Radnóti (1909–1944) also participated in the research. The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement has also discovered the rich traditions of Tápé, "but it is satisfied with the shiny superficialities, while closing its eyes to the complete reality of Tápé."[696] In the local history of the bokréta group of Tápé it is mentioned that in 1934, during the rapid formation of this Tápé bokréta group, the young people of Szeged were engaged in assessing the social situation of the country. The intellectual young people of

[693] Bencsik 2020: 188.
[694] Buday 1933: 32–35.
[695] Szegedi Fiatalok Művészeti Kollégiuma címszó. *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon* 1981.
[696] Bálint 1976: 234.

Szeged at that time did not welcome the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, as they saw it as a means of "boasting about our elaborate misery and concealing the social reality."[697] Similar fieldwork was conducted in Boldog, and this settlement in the Galga region was also visited by many, such as the students of the Jászberényi Tanítóképző Intézet /Jászberény Teacher Training Institute/, whose teacher presented to them what a true Hungarian village is like. He not only drew attention to folk art, but also to the destitution in which the villagers lived at that time. The articles were published one after another with the following titles: "Darkness in the Village." "The car stalled. The patient died due to the absence of a doctor." There is not a "Gyöngyösbokréta" atmosphere, but rather occasional cries of distress, which will surely fall on deaf ears if not supported by the growing tourism.[698]

4.1.1 Gyöngyösbokréta as a social issue of the peasantry – critics of the populist writers

The social role of Gyöngyösbokréta necessitates an introduction to the népi (populist) writers.[699]

The term populist writers refer to is an intellectual and quasi-political movement emerging in Hungary in the 1930s and 1940s, which held together writers, poets, publicists and scholars. Many members of it were born in part into the poor peasantry or the middle classes, but all having deep sympathy with the fate of the then pauperized lower agrarian social strata. The populists negated not just the conservatism of the Horthy regime, but also rejected liberalism, democracy and bourgeois radicalism. According to their nationalist ideals, the special and authentic national characteristics were retained in the purest form among the rural population and the peasantry *per se*. They thus were hostile both to the bourgeoisie and the old elite (the aristocracy) and also disliked the urban way of life in its entirety."[700] While Populist writers, calling for drastic changes in many areas of public life, placed at the centre of their demands the social and political empowerment of the peasantry, which was seen as the basis of national renewal, and considered the key to any renewal to be the implementation of a radical land reform.[701]

> "In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the popular movement that emerged clearly and unequivocally broke with official Hungary, with the Hungary that seemed to solidify

[697] Lele 1983: 37.
[698] Ujváry 1980: 42.
[699] *Nép* means people (as Hungarian people), but in a more historical or cultural context, *nép* can also refer to a nation or community with shared traditions and identity. In some contexts, it refers to ordinary people, especially as distinguished from the elite or aristocracy. *Népi* refers to things related to folk culture, traditions, and popular practices, especially in the context of the common people's way of life. The commonly used English translation is 'populist', which I also adopt; however, both in this footnote and at the beginning of the subsection, I make an effort to clarify that this term is not used in the sense it carries in contemporary political discourse.
[700] Gyáni, 2021: 44.
[701] Püski: 2010.

> under the Bethlen consolidation in the 1930s, or, as they referred to it, with the triad of the clerical estates, large capital, and the secular landowners, but it also distinctively separated itself from the resurgent far-right ideologies and the traditional left."[702]

In this context, writers play a central role in shaping national identity, yet in this case, the populist writers express themselves somewhat in opposition to official political representation. Their works give space to the lower classes and aim to provide a realistic portrayal of Hungarians and Hungary. Village research literature represents the crisis of the Hungarian peasantry and society.[703] In this way, literature and the writers themselves become representatives of the nation within nation-building efforts.[704] Although peasants appeared in the national literature of the period (e.g., in works of Géza Gárdonyi [1863–1922] and Zsigmond Móricz [1879–1942]), they were often side characters, frequently embodying a romanticized image of the peasantry. For instance, Móricz confessed that he liked Gyöngyösbokréta: he praised the usefulness of the performances in articles[705] and participated in their rehearsals, from where he reconstructed the atmosphere of the serfdom world,[706] and his aim was for the peasants in several of his works to be portrayed by the actors of Gyöngyösbokréta.[707] In his play *Sári Bíró*, characters from Gyöngyösbokréta were also featured.

The populist movement did not form a unified or closed group, as they differed in their origins, career paths, education, as well as their political and literary connections. Most came from the poorest layers of the peasantry, but among them were also individuals with middle-class and bourgeois backgrounds. However, what connected them was stronger and more important.[708] The populist movement aimed to bring out the Hungarian and the human from the Hungarian people, becoming one of the key factors in 20th-century Hungarian history. The young talents emerging mostly from the peasant class sought to draw attention to "the contradiction between the glorification of folk culture and the exploitation of the people, through somber novels, poems, and sociographies."[709]

Their leading figures advocated reforms, developed societal transformation plans, and supported evolutionary development, using revolutionary language.[710] The populist movement

[702] Gyurgyák 2007: 389.
[703] Bibó 1940; Erdei 504.
[704] Thiesse 2019: 12–13.
[705] Móricz 1934: 2–3.
[706] Palóczi Horváth 1969: 76.; Vitéz 2002: 5.
[707] Hertelendy 1939: 7.
[708] Gyurgyák: 395.; Borbándi 2000: 5.; Széchenyi 1994: 57–66.; Bognár 2009a: 60–77.; Bartha 2014: 116–138.
[709] Dégh 1988: 593.
[710] Borbándi 2000: 8.; Lengyel: 2015.

stood in opposition to the urban group, which supported modernity and urbanization. The populist-urban debate at the beginning of the 20th century addressed issues of Hungarian society's modernization and national identity, particularly regarding the country's lagging behind Western European development and the possible ways to catch up. The urban camp supported Europeanization[711] and "bourgeoisification"[712], while the populist camp emphasized preserving national identity and defending traditions, especially by highlighting Central European characteristics. The debate centered on the nation's relationship with its past, the evaluation of history, and the goal of modernization, with both camps envisioning alignment with European development, albeit in different ways.[713] Contemporaries, as well as today's historians and social scientists, continue to debate what type of social model characterized Hungary between the two world wars, and the depictions presented by village researchers and populist sociographies are often criticized.[714] However, it is clear that their work still has an impact today, and the populist-urban debate has not lost its relevance.[715] The populist movement was also identified with a "third way" /harmadikutas/ perspective.

The idea of the third way, which emerged in the interwar period, was rooted in the intellectual and political milieu of the Hungarian populist movement. It sought to offer an alternative to both right-wing conservatism and left-wing Marxism, rejecting the extreme ideologies of the Arrow Cross's far-right rule and Stalinist socialism alike. Advocates of this approach called for a renewal grounded in national identity and social justice, envisioning a form of development based on the specific realities of Hungarian society. As such, third way thinking constituted both an organic part of the populist movement and its more politically explicit, radical current.[716]

After the first presentations in the capital, the populist writers also took notice of the Gyöngyösbokréta, and several of them wrote about the movement, usually in a critical manner.[717] This group embraced various political ideologies, but a common aim was to achieve

[711] The Hungarian word „Európaizálódás" meant the adoption of European (Western European) values, primarily – but not exclusively – culturally. This suggests a process of integrating or embracing the cultural values associated with Western Europe.
[712] The Hungarian word polgárosodás can be translated as "modernization", "civilization" or "bourgeoisification", depending on the context. In this case the term refers to the process of becoming a "polgár" (a citizen, in the sense of a member of the bourgeois or middle class), but it also refers to the development of a society towards a more structured, urban, and economically advanced form. In addition, it can refer to the shift toward middle-class values, social structures, and economic systems.
[713] Fricz 2012: 267–301.
[714] Erdei 2010: 12–42.
[715] Fricz 2012: 267–301.
[716] Borbándi 2000: 6.; Némedi 1989: 173–178.; Bognár 2009b: 141–159.; Romsics 2017: 324–325.; Domonkos 2003: 134–135.
[717] Domonkos 2002: 134–135.

land reform and improve the situation of peasants and rural areas. They considered turning towards the people as a positive step, but in their opinion, Gyöngyösbokréta presented a false image of the rural life, showing only the festive and decorative side of peasant life, whereas the whole reality needed to be explored and portrayed.[718]

In his 1940 work *A néma forradalom [The Silent Revolution]*, Imre Kovács (1918–1980) highlighted the issue of the "single child" /egyke/ in the Sárköz region. Through the experiences of four villages, including Őcsény, which was a member of the Hungarian Bokréta Association, and Decs, where a non-affiliated group performed at local bokréta events, he drew attention to the problem that in Sárköz villages, to avoid land fragmentation and in the spirit of urbanization, families often had only one or no children at all.[719]

> "When Gyöngyösbokréta, with all the props of stage performance, presents the singing and dancing Hungarian village, who would think that this cheerful Sárköz group came from one of the most tragic realities of Hungarian life? Behind the performance, the only child stands silently, and to those who see deeply, the illusion of the singing and dancing village becomes very somber. Perhaps this Gyöngyösbokréta procession is the best way to illustrate the Sárköz one-child phenomenon. [...] By controlling birth, they ensured a stable standard of living, while their love for folk costumes and the desire for the most colorful external appearances found validation and comfort in the Gyöngyösbokréta fashion."[720]

Interestingly, various bokréta groups performed at several events created to honor mothers with many children, thus also fighting against the "one-child" phenomenon.[721]

A similar experience was shared by Ferenc Erdei (1910–1971), a writer, sociologist, and later left-wing politician and Minister of the Interior, who researched the village of Kalocsa, also a bokréta community.[722] In his work *Futóhomok [Quicksands]*, highlighted that in the case of Kalocsa, the peasantry no longer considered their customs and attire important but desired bourgeoisification, that is, to escape their miserable life and resemble the higher classes as much as possible.[723] Erdei placed the peasantry in his system as a society that remained in its old state during both the historical national and bourgeois social systems, which "remaining defeated, still retained its old ties and peasant social structure." The peasants' outdated and underdeveloped agricultural practices, as well as their often meaningless folk culture and social isolation,[724] characterized this layer of society, making it understandable that the peasants

[718] Dala 1939: 14.
[719] The urban population's similar practices were not discussed as they were not considered representatives of the Hungarian nation. (Gyáni 2021: 43.)
[720] Kovács 1940: 156–158.; Bartha 2014: 116–138.
[721] *Néptanítók Lapja* 1935. (68.) 18. 718–719.; *Dunántúl* 1937. június 17. 5.; *Dunántúl* 1937. szeptember 22. 4.
[722] Erdei 1937: 146.
[723] Halmos 2010: 4–11.; *Szocializmus* 1937. július 1. 369–371. 370.; Bibó 1940: 503.
[724] Erdei: 1987.

wanted to close themselves off and forget everything that reminded them of their peasant origins.

An analysis reveals that this situation not only falsely portrays the peasants' situation, but also has an impact on their material culture and transforms Kalocsa motifs in order to enhance their marketability.[725] Therefore, Erdei strongly criticizes the process of turning popular culture into a commodity. In Gyöngyösbokréta, numerous peasants also saw a lucrative chance to generate income through the sale of dolls and traditional attire. "The most significant aspect of a young man's experience at the Gyöngyösbokréta is not merely having visited Pest, although he does derive some happiness from that in an atypical rustic manner. Rather, it is the satisfaction derived from selling a doll for 50 pence and receiving a substantial sum for his entire outfit."[726] The Gyöngyösbokréta had a positive impact on tourism, providing a convenient source of income for the villagers. They earned higher wages for producing folk art objects compared to physically demanding labor, and selling these objects generated even more profit.

Writers József Darvas[727] (1912–1973) and Géza Féja[728] (1900–1978) also emphasized the negative aspects of Gyöngyösbokréta, noting that those who were of peasant origin and had knowledge of folk culture could form a true picture of it through the Gyöngyösbokréta experience, but who only saw the bokréta dances might believe that it was the reality.

Writer Péter Veres (1897–1970) refers to Gyöngyösbokréta in connection with several phenomena. First, he points out that even though Gyöngyösbokréta attempts to elevate the peasants, it cannot create a true way of life, and instead, it only represents "pseudo-peasantry."[729] According to him, "the dead culture of past social and economic systems cannot be revived in a class living in changed circumstances."[730] In his work *Az Alföld parasztsága [The Peasantry of the Great Plain]*, although he does not mention Gyöngyösbokréta specifically, he argues that the peasantry of the Great Plain is not theatrical, does not like stage performances or extravagance, and their folk costumes are not elaborate.[731] These reasons, explain why the Great Plain is underrepresented in Gyöngyösbokréta. In his work *Rossz asszony [Bad Woman]*, he also argues that village researchers were often unfamiliar with the peasants and did not know how to behave or communicate with them, and frequently, even the young

[725] K. Csilléry 1983: 363.
[726] Erdei 1937: 260.
[727] Darvas 1936: 9.
[728] Féja 1938: 3.; Bognár 2009a: 60–77.
[729] Veres 1935a: 26–27.
[730] Veres 1935a: 26–27.
[731] Veres: 1986.; Bálint 1936: 153.

village researchers only knew the peasants through Gyöngyösbokréta.[732] Veres stresses the importance of understanding the history and art of the people, but he criticizes Gyöngyösbokréta, claiming that it falsified the idea of folk art.[733] In a 1968 reflection, he also admitted that he was fundamentally hostile to Gyöngyösbokréta, and when he attended a performance in Budapest using a complimentary ticket, he found most of the performances to be artificial and forced. However, it was through this performance that he first encountered real peasant dance, during the performance of a peasant from Kunszentmiklós.[734]

Writer and village researcher Zoltán Szabó (1912–1984) chose the village of Tard as the location for his study, where the local children's choir had joined Gyöngyösbokréta from the beginning. Szabó's analysis of the Tard situation not only illustrated the villages poverty but also attempted to present the mentality of the villagers.

> "The effects of urban life and urban behavior are introduced into the village by the Gyöngyösbokréta performers. In addition to being selected, which already makes them prouder and more self-aware than the other young people, they bring with them a certain urban, even in some respects theatrical behavior, which they acquired not so much on the stage but rather in the audience. […] When I asked several of them whether they would return to the village from Budapest, the answer was always negative; they no longer wish to go back to collect, in order to bring back earnings, but to seek and live there."[735]

The quoted passage vividly illustrates what is confirmed by works written by other authors: the peasantry is striving for bourgeois development, and they use events such as the Gyöngyösbokréta and similar gatherings to advance their own progress, to travel, and to make deals related to the pieces of their folk costumes. The people of Tard no longer wore their traditional costumes in daily life; they mainly wore them for bokréta events.[736] In his work *Cifra nyomorúság [Gay Misery*], the author also addresses the humiliation of the peasantry, being reduced to a tourist attraction.[737] In this work, he further analyzes the detrimental effects of the city and the bourgeoisie's fondness for folk costumes, as well as the "bokréta cult", while no one attempted to help with the miserable conditions of the peasantry.

A portion of the intelligentsia, not associated with the populist writers, also sought to draw attention to the hopeless situation of the peasantry, often using the Gyöngyösbokréta as a focal point, which was seen as a propagator of a false image of the people.[738]

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[732] Veres 1954: 7–9.; Nyuli 1947: 108.
[733] Veres 1935b: 3.; Veres 1956: 5.
[734] *Köznevelés* 1968. április 12. 248–249.
[735] Szabó Z. 1937: 129–130.; Zsolt 1936: 1.
[736] Szabó Z. 1937: 160.
[737] Szabó Z. 1938: 74–75.
[738] Other writers also mentioned the movement in their works. (Illyés: 1946.; Borbély 1943: 497–499.)

One might raise the question, considering the entire Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, how much consideration was given to the folk tradition bearers themselves, the peasants. The performances organized on August 20 (and other spring/summer occasions) were problematic for the bokréta peasants, as most of them worked as farmers, and their already very low wages were further diminished when they were pulled away from agricultural work during its peak season. As Héra Éva, a folk culture organizer, highlights in her retrospective analysis of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement:

> "The peasantry, however, was merely a participant, not a creator of the movement. The participants were celebrated, shown the capital city – which most of them saw for the first time – received daily allowances, and nearly all of the surviving participants regard their performances in Budapest as the greatest experience of their lives. The peasants, however, were untouched by either nationalist slogans or leftist critiques: for the first time in their lives, they proudly wore their folk costumes and became aware of the value of their own culture."[739]

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, there was growing interest in the peasant class and the issues of rural Hungary during this period. This is when various village research movements began (numerous institutions were founded for folk research, such as the Hungarian Ethnographical Society /Magyar Néprajzi Társaság/, National Landscape and Folk Research Center /Országos Táj-és Népkutató Központ/, and the Extracurricular Folk Education Committees /Iskolánkívüli Népművelési Bizottságok/), and the populist writers began to form an increasingly populous group. The village research movement and the populist movement did not entirely overlap, but they were closely related.[740] The aim of the village researchers was to identify and address the problems in the villages.[741] Both within the intellectual community and in other classes and professions, there were calls to show the reality of the village beyond Gyöngyösbokréta.[742] This may have stemmed from the increasing circulation of village monographs, as well as from the growing frequency with which the difficult situation of the peasantry was discussed in the press, highlighting issues like the lack of lighting, roads, or doctors. An example of this is Buják, which was referred to as "Tuberculosis Village" in the press in 1936, because "Glatz Oszkár, the renowned painter's beloved Buják, the most beautiful village of Gyöngyösbokréta, is the tuberculosis village of Palócland. There are no more tuberculosis patients anywhere in the county than in Buják."[743] Village research also started in

[739] Héra 1981: 34.
[740] Nagy J. 2015: 40.
[741] Bodor 1935: 35.; Fodor 1937: 29.; Benkő 1943: 1–7.; Balla 1938: 261–266.; **Veres Péter 1935a: 25–28.;** Baky 1941: 6.
[742] Gunda 1944: 383.; Marjay 1934: 805–808.; I.M. 1936: 11–12.
[743] *A Község* 1936. február 1. 8.

Vojvodina, although it initially lacked authenticity, and its effects were compared to the Gyöngyösbokréta.[744] This is a particularly unfavorable opinion, especially given that the idea of the Gyöngyösbokréta in Vojvodina did not originate among the agricultural workers – meaning not among the peasants – "it is therefore natural that what they presented, whether it was dance, song, or drama, was not the manifestation of the broad rural masses, but rather of their urban, petit-bourgeois cultural expression."[745]

To sum up, it became obvious by the populist writers and the village researchers' experiences, that „[t]he entire Gyöngyösbokréta-movement and the »Hungarian, preserve your noble traditions« movement growing out of it could never become a force that seriously transforms the folk world. The people do not want to be folkloristic; they want to urbanize, or, to use a more beautiful old term, to bourgeoisify."[746] However, the process of bourgeoisification was not easy under the circumstances mentioned above, so the peasants seized every opportunity for advancement, as few paths were available to them due to their situation. The movement seemed like a good opportunity, as it temporarily relieved the peasants from hard labor during performances, allowed them to see the world by traveling to the capital and even abroad – places they had never before visited – and, through the daily allowances, their financial situation, though not dramatically, improved.[747]

4.2 Staging traditions: Gyöngyösbokréta and parallel folk culture movements

After examining the social conditions of the peasantry and the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement itself, I will now explore how peasant culture was represented on stage during the same period. As I presented before, by the early 19th century, during the era of Romantic nationalism, Hungarian intellectuals identified the elevation of Hungarian language and culture as central to the project of nation-building. Within this framework, the cultural traditions of the peasantry were increasingly viewed as the most "authentic" repositories of national identity. Folk dance, in particular, came to symbolize this ideal, regarded as an uncorrupted expression of national spirit. From the late 18th century onward, traditional dance was incorporated into elite cultural discourse as a means of asserting Hungarian distinctiveness. This notion persisted well into the 20th century, where the interwar period saw a renewed drive to nationalize stage culture following the trauma of the First World War and the Treaty of Trianon. In this context, the use

[744] Kiss 1937: 1.
[745] Szabó J. 1936: 7–9.
[746] Keresztury 1941: 210.
[747] Ujváry 1980: 42.

of folk elements on the urban stage served both artistic modernization and national ideological purposes.

It is also worth to mention, that in the aftermath of World War I and the political upheavals of 1918–1919, Budapest increasingly came to be perceived by conservative political and cultural elites as an alienated, cosmopolitan space – an "un-Hungarian" city disconnected from the nation's authentic cultural roots. This perception intensified in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly after the Trianon trauma, prompting cultural policy initiatives aimed at "re-Hungarianizing" the capital through the elevation of rural folk traditions. It was within this ideological and demographic context that the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement emerged, offering staged performances of village folk dance and customs as a means of symbolically reintegrating national heritage into the urban cultural landscape.[748]

While Gyöngyösbokréta was one of the key initiatives of the period, this subchapter aims to highlight its contemporary movements that employed folk art in varying theatrical forms to reinforce Hungarian national identity in order to better understand their differing uses and objectives and the idea of Gyöngyösbokréta.[749] This also includes the previously mentioned and thoroughly discussed *János Háry*, which, through both its music and staging, evoked the world of the Hungarian peasantry.

4.2.1 Choreographing the Nation: The integration of folk elements into Hungarian ballet

The ambition to modernize Hungarian ballet art is evident in the repertoire of the Royal Hungarian Opera House from the 19th century onwards, where productions largely adhered to Western traditions, yet periodically included ballets that sought to foreground a distinctly Hungarian character.

Following the early efforts to establish a Hungarian national ballet tradition – marked by productions such as *Fából faragott királyfi [The Wooden Prince]* (1917) by Béla Bartók and *Magyar ábrándok [Hungarian Dreams]* (1933) – a series of initiatives emerged in the 1930s that further advanced this cultural ambition.

These included dance artist-choreographer Gyula Harangozó's (1908–1974) works – particularly *Csárdajelenet [Tavern Scene]* (1935) and his adaptation of *Polovec táncok [Polovec Dances]* (1938) – introduced character ballets drawing on Hungarian folk motifs. Parallel to Harangozó's paths, Aurél Milloss's *Kuruc mese [Kuruc fairy tale]* (1935), based on Kodály's music, which, despite its artistic shortcomings due to a weak libretto, signaled a

[748] Kavecsánszky 2023: 2–3.
[749] Ábrahám 2002: 105; Kavecsánszky 2023: 4–5.

serious attempt to merge folk elements with modern choreography. Milloss's success came later with *Karnevál [Karnival]* (1935), and most notably with *Magyar Csupajáték* (1938), a stylized stage dance work created in collaboration with Béla Paulini.

"It is a production that pulsates with the decade-long desire to create a national ballet, the quest for the possibilities of staging popular culture, the modernism that pervaded the artistic life of the period, and the equally dominant folklorism."[750]

4.2.2 The „Magyar Csupajáték": Stylized folk stagecraft in interwar Hungary

> „Let us admit, the *Gyöngyös Bokréta* seemed to have stalled somewhat. At its most recent appearance, it became evident that it either needed to be further developed in some form, or returned to its original folk framework – in other words, it needed to be restored to its mission of preserving traditional Hungarian dance and folk play heritage. Béla Paulini recognized this clearly, and thus set himself a new task."[751]

The *Magyar Csupajáték*, conceived by Béla Paulini and choreographed by Aurél Milloss, emerged in 1938 as a culturally significant response to the perceived stagnation of the Gyöngyösbokréta movement. Presented at the Művész Színház [Artist Theater] during the 34th International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest, the production sought to reimagine Hungarian folk elements through a stylized theatrical lens rather than mere folkloric reproduction.[752] While drawing inspiration from traditional music, dance, and rural aesthetics, the *Csupajáték* was a consciously modern stage experiment, integrating professional choreography, music, and scenography into a new national theatrical idiom.[753] (Fig. 39.)



Fig. 39. Csodafurulya, scene of *Csupajáték*. „Bethlen Margit grófnő színházi levele." *Színházi Élet* 1938, no. 23: 6–10. (Photo: Angelo)

[750] Kavecsánszki 2023: 7.
[751] *Népszava* 1938. május 22. 8.
[752] OSZMI TA. HGY34. Magyar Csupajáték I.
[753] Kővágó 1986: 25–42.

Hungarian Csupajáték was a groundbreaking production that reflected a decade-long ambition to create a national ballet by fusing elements of popular culture, folklorism, and modernist theatrical aesthetics. Rather than aiming for ethnographic authenticity, the performance stylized folklore – librettos, music, costumes, and dance – into a theatrical form that retained a clearly Hungarian character. Although *Csupajáték* had no direct successors, it marked a turning point in Hungarian stage dance, laying the conceptual foundation for the future evolution of both ballet and folk dance in Hungary.[754]

The production's success led to a 1939 London tour at the Adelphi Theatre under the title *Hungarian Play of Plays*, where it received enthusiastic critical and public reception. Notably, the BBC broadcast select segments, making it one of the first Hungarian stage productions to be televised internationally.[755]

4.2.3 Olga Szentpál and the role of movement art in the interpretation of folk traditions

Olga Szentpál (1895–1968), a key figure in the development of Hungarian modern dance, drew significantly on folk culture in her choreographic work. Although trained in modernist movement traditions, she incorporated folklore as both thematic material and movement vocabulary. Her 1935 piece *Magyar halottas [Hungarians Lamenting the Dead]* reflected funeral rites, while her 1938 choreography *Mária lányok [St. Mary's Daughters]* was directly inspired by motifs she collected from Gyöngyösbokréta performances in Budapest.[756]

4.2.4 Counter-Bokréta: Muharay's vision at the Fóti Faluszínpad

One of Paulini's major critic, choreographer Elemér Muharay (1901–1960), had already challenged the principles of Gyöngyösbokréta in the 1930s in the staging of traditions and dances and their authenticity: this was when the controversies on the directions and perspectives of the dance movement initiated.[757] Muharay established the Fóti Faluszínpad /Village Stage of Fót/ in 1938/1939 as a "counter-Bokréta" initiative.[758] While Gyöngyösbokréta focused on reviving and showcasing folk costumes and dances, Muharay's Fóti Faluszínpad sought a deeper cultivation of Hungarian rural culture through continuous practice and artistic development. The goal was to elevate folk traditions to a high cultural level by involving people from all social backgrounds, thereby integrating folk dance and drama into

[754] Kavecsánszky 2023: 8–9.
[755] Tóvay Nagy 2002: 4–5.; *Magyar Nemzet* 1939. április 22. 13.
[756] Kavecsánszki 2023: 5.; Ábrahám 2022: 104.
[757] Muharay 1935: 44–47.
[758] Körtvélyes 1960: 13.

the living national culture. Muharay emphasized that folk ensembles should not only preserve traditions but also engage dynamically with modern artistic culture, fostering progress rather than mere revivalism.[759]

These productions, while shaped by both modernist and folklorist impulses, were fundamentally linked to the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, which served as a central source of inspiration or critical counterpoint. Choreographers and dancers often attended Gyöngyösbokréta performances to observe staged versions of authentic village dances, which they then adapted and reinterpreted within their own stylistic frameworks. In some cases, such as Olga Szentpál's, Gyula Harangozó's or Aurél Milloss', elements of folk tradition were integrated into modernist movement art. In other cases, such as Elemér Muharay's, the intention was to create a radically different form of staging. Collectively, these diverse responses to Gyöngyösbokréta reflect a dynamic period of experimentation and national self-definition in Hungarian stage dance, laying important groundwork for its later developments.

4.3 Wide network of involved groups and power structures

Beyond the presentation of the cultural and social spheres and related movements, it is essential – prior to engaging in detailed analysis – to illuminate the wide range of social strata mobilized by the movement. This includes identifying its supporters and opponents, as well as examining who participated, in what forms, and with what underlying motivations.

During the years of the movement, various social strata, actors, and professions have analyzed and evaluated the movement from diverse perspectives. In the subsequent analysis, I will endeavor to demonstrate the reception of the movement throughout its lifespan (1931–1948), the interpretations attributed to its actions and provide some insight into its societal impact.

The movement has had a significant impact on a broad segment of society as a whole. I will illustrate this influence by a few examples, as well as by discussing the perspectives of ethnographers, artists, and politicians described below. Following the first extensive recognition and media promotion, individual and collective viewpoints quickly surfaced in different platforms. The movement earned significant support, yet, given that it was the inaugural endeavor to showcase popular culture extensively, involving the peasants as the tradition-bearers directly, it faced substantial criticism. In this section, I aim to explore the diverse perspectives and degrees of engagement of the various actors and social groups involved in the movement.

[759] Muharay 1985: 146.

4.3.1 Politicians

Gyöngyösbokréta has had rapid and significant success within a short period of time, necessitating political intervention to establish regulations and limit concurrence. The press serves as a relevant source of knowledge regarding the instances when the prominent statesmen of the time encountered Gyöngyösbokréta. As an illustration, Kálmán Darányi (1886–1939), who served as Minister of Agriculture and later became Prime Minister, participated in the bokréta groups' performance during the Balatonfüred Wine Festival,[760] while Archduke József and his family attended bokrétás performances in Mezőkövesd, Pécs, and Budapest.[761]

> "Prime Minister László Bárdossy and Bálint Hóman, Minister of Culture, visited Gyöngyösbokréta on Margaret Island. Baron Dániel Bánffy, Minister of Agriculture, visited it at the Hungarian House of Culture. Dr. Ferenc Zsindely, the Minister of State for the Prime Minister's Office, attended every new presentation. László Bonczos, the State Secretary for the Interior, Károly Kádas, the State Secretary for Industry, and Géza László, the Head of Department at the Ministry of Trade, visited the Gyöngyösbokrét on the [Margaret] Island. Mayor Károly Szendy paid a visit to the House of Culture."[762]

The movement was therefore not unknown to politicians, and many in the political sphere supported Gyöngyösbokréta, mainly because it was a movement to strengthen Hungarianism and to show the situation of the peasantry in a positive light:[763] Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky (1886–1944), a prominent far-right politician and publicist, highlighted the significant benefit of the Gyöngyösbokréta, which distinguished it from other nations. Unlike in other countries, Hungarian folk art was not performed by actors, but rather by the Hungarian peasantry themselves.[764] Multiple Members of Parliament, including Károly Andreetti, Ernő Csikvándy, and Gyula Somogyváry, advocated for the movement's sponsorship.[765] Additionally, Ferenc Zsindely (1891–1963), who later served as the State Secretary for Culture, addressed the topic of the Gyöngyösbokréta at a 1933 session of the House of Representatives.[766] Ferenc Zsindely was not only a regular visitor of the Gyöngyösbokréta evenings,[767] but for years he also led the procession of the bokréta groups with his wife in the Budavár procession[768], and he also opened

[760] *Borászati Lapok* 1935. szeptember 14. 308.
[761] *Magyarság* 1939. március 6. 9.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1935. augusztus 22. 12.; *Kis Újság* 1936. február 6. 3.
[762] *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. (2.) 9. 1.
[763] Czakó 1940: 13.
[764] Bajcsy-Zsilinszky 1937: 7.
[765] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1934. május 19. 6.; *Az Est* 1934. május 20. 2.; Csikvándy 1934: 2.; *Pesti Napló* 1936. május 8.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1936. május 8. 6.; Csikvándy 1934: 7.; *Az Újság* 1937. május 22. 3.; *Magyarság* 1936. június 4. 5.
[766] *Képviselőházi Napló* 1933. március 22. 255–256.
[767] *Dunántúl* 1938. augusztus 28. 6.
[768] Szekér (szerk.) 2021: 124.; 231.; 416.; *Az Újság* 1941. augusztus 22. 3.

the exhibition of the Bokréta Association.[769] In his journal, he expresses his respect for the movement with the following words:

> "I consider the Bokréta Association to be the most meritorious movement in which I have participated or become acquainted with. Because it is Hungarian, because it builds, because it is honest, because it teaches fraternity, – it opens up a treasure-house of ancient beauties and reaches out to the pride of the peasant. I would also like to include it in the National Political Service /Nemzetpolitikai Szolgálat/, because there is no more militant propagandist for eternal Hungarianism than this. Up until now, I have attempted to provide assistance to it while being associated with the Ministry of Culture, but what about Hóman? He provided me with little assistance due to his apprehension of my unwavering enthusiasm, but he was unaware of its significance."[770]

Bálint Hóman (1885–1951), the Minister of Religion and Education, provided institutional support to the Bokréta Association, as did other prominent politicians who attended the sessions of the Gyöngyösbokréta. It was during Hóman's tenure that the movement received recognition and official support through decrees starting in 1934.[771] (Fig. 40.)



Fig. 40. The delegation of Gyöngyösbokréta, led by Béla Paulini, paid homage to Minister of Culture Hóman Bálint. (*Képes Pesti Hírlap*, August 26, 1937.)

The leading politicians of the capital city supported and acted as organizers of the movement,[772] (Fig. 41–42.) while at the local (regional) level, representatives and county officials also supported the Gyöngyösbokréta. For instance, the deputy prefect of Baranya County was the first to regulate the operation of Gyöngyösbokréta within his jurisdiction through a regional

[769] *Országos Tudósító.* 1938. augusztus 12.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1938. augusztus 13. 7.
[770] Szekér (szerk.) 2021: 11.
[771] *Magyarság* 1934. május 13. 14.; *Kis Újság* 1934. május 24. 9.
[772] *Hungarian Studies Newsletter* 1998. (15.) 51–52. 1–2.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1938. augusztus 18. 12.; Sipos – Donáth (szerk.) 2000: 124.; *Pesti Napló* 1937. február 11. 13.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1934. augusztus 22. 6.; *Kis Újság* 1938. január 12. 6.; *Fővárosi Közlöny* 1934. (45.) 1934. december 11. 59.; *Fővárosi Közlöny* 1937. (54.) 1937. októbeer 19. 1730.

decree in 1937.[773] Additionally, Imre Németh, a representative from Kőszeg, led and supported the perenyei bokréta group from his district in Budapest.[774]





Fig. 41–42. Gyöngyösbokréta group visiting Mayor Károly Szendy in the courtyard of the City Hall, 1938. (FSZEK Budapest Archive 022501); The mayor, Aladár Huszár, caresses one of the beautiful main characters of Gyöngyösbokréta on the courtyard of the city hall. (*Az Est Hármaskönyve 1934*, 403.)

The political significance of the movement is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that, as mentioned in the subchapter "From local performances to national political events and performances abroad", Prime Minister Pál Teleki (1879–1941) delivered a speech on its ten-year anniversary, emphasizing the cultivation of the Hungarian spirit and thinking.[775] Further prestigious recognition came in 1943 when the governor himself awarded Paulini Béla, the leader of the movement. In Töreki Imre's local history writing about Szany, it is mentioned that Paulini did not gain Horthy's personal sympathy due to his sudden popularity, which seemed suspicious, and because he was forgotten to be invited to the 1931 Gyöngyösbokréta event.[776] However, in 1943, the Governor himself awarded Paulini with the title of Hungarian Royal Government Councilor for his outstanding achievements in the field of Hungarian tourism.[777] The governor met with Gyöngyösbokréta on several occasions (at the reception of the Italian royal couple, during the Hungarian troops' entry to Košice, at the celebration of mothers with many children at Harkány[778], and at the Hungarian Bread Festival in Subotica[779]), but in 1941, he also attended the Budapest Gyöngyösbokréta demonstration with his wife.[780] The newspapers obviously reported on the various encounters of the Horthy family and the

[773] Simon 1937: 4.
[774] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1935. augusztus 28. 7.; *Szabadság* 1935. szeptember 1. 7.
[775] *Nemzeti Újság* 1940. augusztus 20. 7.; *Délmagyarország* 1940. augusztus 20. 2.; *Magyar Élet* 1940. augusztus 20. 7.; Szabó Dezső 1940: 7.; *Magyar Jövő* 1940. augusztus 20. 3.
[776] Töreki 2001: 5-6.
[777] *Függetlenség* 1943. december 25. 4.; *Magyar Sajtó* 1940. szeptember 15.; *Függetlenség* 1943. december 28. 6.; *Esti Újság* 1943. december 27.
[778] *Pesti Hírlap* 1935. augusztus 31.; *Mohácsi Hírlap* 1935. augusztus 25. 3.
[779] *Magyar Nemzet* 1941. július 29. 5.
[780] *Magyar Nemzet* 1941. augusztus 24. 12.; *Új Sopronvármegye* 1941. augusztus 25. 4.

movement: Horthy István, the governor's brother, visited the performance of the Tápé bokréta group as part of a horseback ride,[781] and the papers also published a photograph of young Horthy Miklós when he danced with the bokréta members at the inauguration of the Buják Castle.[782] (Fig. 43.) They also reported on a similar event organized by the governor's elder son, István Horthy, at the 5th Hungarian Pilots' Picnic in Szeged, where the participants were so captivated by the performance of the Tápé bokréta dancers that "around midnight, they eagerly tried to learn the basic elements of the csárdás and danced the csárdás with the lads and ladies of Gyöngyösbokréta, humming Hungarian folk songs, to the delight of the English gentlemen and pilot ladies..."[783]



IFJABB HORTHY MIKLÓS BUJÁKI MENYECSKÉVEL TÁNCOL A KASTELYAVATÁSON.

Fig. 43. Miklós Horthy Jr. is dancing with a young woman from Buják during the castle inauguration. *Az Est*, July 22, 1938, 13.

Gyöngyösbokréta was frequently used by politicians for representational purposes. On several occasions, they sent prestigious foreign guests to witness Gyöngyösbokréta demonstrations or organized Gyöngyösbokréta presentations in their honor (for more details, refer to Chapter 6.3 on Welcoming foreign guests with bokréta performances). Here is an example of Prime Minister Gömbös Gyula's participation in the 1935 Gyöngyösbokréta demonstration, where he also invited Austrian Vice Chancellor Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg and engaged in conversations with the participants for the purpose of photography.[784] (Fig. 44–45.)

[781] *Délmagyarország* 1935. június 7. 3.
[782] *Az Est* 1938. július 22. 13.; *Magyarság* 1938. július 22. 4.
[783] Giczi 1997: 124.
[784] *Pesti Napló Képes Melléklete* 1935. június 16.



Fig. 44–45. Prime Minister Gömbös with Gyöngyösbokréta girls on the balcony corridor of the City Theater. (*Pesti Napló Képes Melléklete*, June 16, 1935.); Duke Starhemberg attended the Monday performance of the Gyöngyösbokréta play at the City Theater with Prime Minister Gömbös. (*Képes Pesti Hírlap*, June 12, 1935.)

However, the movement has received a lot of criticism mostly due to cases like these. Critical voices have also emerged against the movement among politicians: Tildy Zoltán (1889–1961), a politician from the Smallholders' Party, who served as Prime Minister and later as President of the Republic, criticized the movement in 1938 during his time as a representative, arguing that it exploits peasants and functions as entertainment for the elites.[785]

4.3.2 Writers, poets

In Subchapter 4.1.1 (Gyöngyösbokréta as a social issue of the peasantry – Criticism from the populist writers), I have already discussed the perspectives and comparisons between the realities of rural life and the representations offered by Gyöngyösbokréta. I would now like to examine the views of other writers and figures connected to literature on the movement, as it was a highly contested and debated topic at the time among them.

The political rise of nationalism in the 19th century went hand in hand with a deep nationalization of culture, including literature.[786] Between the two world wars, nation-building efforts intensified, as previously noted, resulting in a strong literary foundation that both reflected and shaped national identity. Writers once again engaged with national questions during this period, focusing especially on the peasantry, and their way of writing about Gyöngyösbokréta demonstrate what they considered as authentic folk culture and nation.

[785] *Az Újság* 1938. február 15. 5.
[786] Thiesse 2023: 2.

Keresztury Dezső (1904–1996), a literary historian, critic, and translator had a similar view to the populist writers, emphasizing the false village image portrayed in Gyöngyösbokréta.[787]

Balogh Edgár (1906–1996) was a journalist and editor, as well as a prominent figure in the cultural life of Upper Hungary and later Transylvania. He expressed concern for the fate of the emerging Transylvanian folk-art presentations and proposed an alternative approach, rather than Gyöngyösbokréta.[788]

On the other hand, numerous literary figures, regardless of their political perspectives, endorsed the movement and perceived it as a beneficial and constructive transformation for rural people. In his article *Deception of morality [Ámítás az erkölccsel]*, which has a very evocative title, socialist writer Béla Révész (1876–1944) highlights the concern over the decline in moral values among villagers due to the movement, and mentions, that while Hungarian voices are against the peasants' performances, foreign experts argue that the Gyöngyösbokréta should be displayed in numerous locations to promote Hungarian art to a larger audience and to instill a sense of value in the peasants' artwork.[789] Sándor Hunyady, the dramatist (1890–1942), acknowledges the numerous issues faced by the village, however, he regards Gyöngyösbokréta as significant since it helps the inhabitants escape from their daily concerns and acquaints the urban population with the captivating folk art of the rural areas.[790] Ernő Szép (1884–1953), a poet, writer, and playwright, appreciates Gyöngyösbokréta's performances and contemplates the difficulties faced by the village in his works on the movement.[791] Similarly, Sándor Dutka (1881–1972), a poet and writer, aims to enhance the quality of life for rural communities through the Gyöngyösbokréta.[792] Lajos Kassák (1887–1967), a multifaceted individual who excelled as a writer, poet, literary translator, and artist, also regarded the movement as a favorable trajectory.[793]

As mentioned before, Zsigmond Móricz (1879–1942), one of the most famous writers of the era, often depicted the peasant life and countryside in his works, drawing inspiration from folklore and folk traditions. In his adapted novels, bokréta members played a role, but in his stage plays (Ludas Matyi, Kismadár), he also wanted to feature Gyöngyösbokréta peasants. Móricz discusses the Gyöngyösbokréta in multiple articles, highlighting the significance of

[787] Keresztury 1941: 202–203.
[788] Balogh 1936: 14.
[789] Révész 1937: 2.
[790] Hunyady 1938: 8.
[791] Szép 1934: 12.; Szép 1937: 8–11.; Szép 1939: 10.
[792] Dutka 1935: 2.; Dutka 1936: 2.; Dutka 1941: 2.
[793] Kassák 1934: 183–188.

proudly showcasing one's own values in rural life, which also showcases the theatrical artistry of the Hungarian people. In a 1935 article, he cynically states that Budapest lacks any other noteworthy spectacle apart from the Gyöngyösbokréta shows, which have their origins in the rural areas.

Undoubtedly, Paulini was also encouraged by his friends and colleagues. Zsolt Harsányi (1887–1943), a writer and literary translator, collaborated with Paulini in writing Háry János and also endorsed the movement. Writer Sándor Dallos (1901–1964), published multiple favorable pieces about the Gyöngyösbokréta. Over a span of three years, he toured the country with Paulini to enlist new communities and highlighted the ethnographic significance of the Gyöngyösbokréta villages in radio broadcasts.

4.3.3 Artists

Evidently, visual artists were not only impacted by the movement but also had diverse ties with it. Gitta Mallász (1907–1992), a graphic artist, and István Pekáry (1905–1981), both a graphic artist and painter, collaborated on designing the sets for the Gyöngyösbokréta presentations in Budapest and the *Hungarian Full Play [Csupajáték]*. Pekáry also created a collection of etchings depicting the different dances of the movement. (Fig. 46.)



Fig. 46. Copper engraving of Pekáry about the Gyöngyösbokréta dances. „A Gyöngyösbokréta képeskönyve." *Magyarország*, September 23, 1934, 10.

Ferenc Mohácsi Regős (1917–2003), painter and graphic artist, still in 1946, recalled Paulini's merits in his writing, highlighting the important role of the movement in the promotion of folk art. (Fig. 47–48.)



Fig. 47–48. Prints by Ferenc Mohácsi Regős of Gyöngyösbokréta members. (*Demokrácia*, August 18, 4.)

Oszkár Glatz (1872–1958), a painter, had a particular interest in depicting peasant life. After completing his studies abroad, he traveled throughout the country and painted peasants in various locations. His preferred venue for this subject matter was the village of Buják in Nógrád county.[794] Glatz advocated in several forums for the significance of conserving traditional attire, and as this aligned with the Gyöngyösbokréta's objectives, he backed the movement and Paulini.[795] The residents of Buják bestowed an honorary citizen's diploma upon the painter, who was actively involved in their village.[796]

Another great supporter of the Hungarian dress was the renowned fashion designer of the era, Klára Tüdős Mrs Szunyogh (later Mrs Zsindely) (1895–1980), who for years led the Gyöngyösbokréta procession with her second husband, Ferenc Zsindely, the Secretary of State,[797] and in addition to attending the shows, she also gave lectures to draw attention to the great merit of the movement in bringing different social classes closer together.[798] Klára Tüdős also drew inspiration for her Hungarian dresses from the different regions' bokréta groups' folk costumes and designed Bokréta Dama dresses for the women who supported the movement.[799]

[794] NM EA 21750. Balassagyarmat Balassi Bálint Gimnázium Honismereti Szakkör: "Régi fényképek nyomában – Az őrhalmi gyöngyösbokréta" 1983.
[795] *Délmagyarország* 1936. március 13. 5.; Glatz 1941: 4.; Benkó 2009: 12.
[796] *Pesti Hírlap* 1935. június 19. 12.
[797] Szekér 2021: 124.; 231.; 416.; *Az Újság* 1941. augusztus 22. 3.; *Esti Újság* 1941. augusztus 21. 5.; *Új Magyarság* 1941. augusztus 22. 5.
[798] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. július 27. 7.; *Esti Újság* 1939. augusztus 2.
[799] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1935. május 30. 9.; *Magyarság* 1935. június 9. 19.

Among the fashion representatives, Tüdős and the handicraft magazine *Muskátli* (1931–1944) took a stand against the accusations against Gyöngyösbokréta.[800]

4.3.4 Dancers and actors

The representatives of "related professions" also felt compelled to comment on the Gyöngyösbokréta's emergence. The Gyöngyösbokréta's look caused division even among dancers. As previously mentioned, dance artists like Gyula Harangozó or Olga Szentpál, made multiple visits to the villages of Gyöngyösbokréta in order to study the authentic folk dances and use them as inspiration for his choreographies.[801] Rezső Brada (1906–1948), the ballet master of the Opera House, and Edit Weber Mrs Elekes (1896–?), a physical education teacher and folk-dance expert, author of numerous dance history writings, both held a favorable view of the movement.[802] Géza Haits /Haitsch/ (1895–), a music critic, also provided a favorable evaluation of Gyöngyösbokréta, deeming its portrayal of rituals and dances as the forerunner of Hungarian art's future.[803] Conversely, the *Tánctanítók Lapja* issued a harsh review of the Gyöngyösbokréta performances.[804] The *Tánctanítók Lapja*, the official journal of the National Association of Hungarian Dance Teachers, criticized the Gyöngyösbokréta for distorting the authentic Hungarian essence of the Csárdás.[805] The participants were accused of engaging in distasteful behavior by shouting and waving their arms in a tasteless manner. The story was published by other daily newspapers including *Az Est, Budapesti Hírlap*, and *Magyarország*. These newspapers also came to the defense of Gyöngyösbokréta.[806] In response to the accusations, Paulini addressed the issue in his own newspaper.[807]

There was disagreement on the place (both physical and metaphorical) of the Gyöngyösbokréta. Various opinions suggested hosting it at either the music hall/variety or the National Theatre, while others expressed a desire to hold it outdoors, which faced opposition from many.[808] According to the newspapers, the actors and artists were not pleased with the success of the Gyöngyösbokréta and the contracts offered to the "peasant actors", as they were concerned about their own positions. However, Paulini, who did not accept these contracts,

[800] *Muskátli* 1941. (10.) 9. 67.
[801] Tóth Aladár 1936: 23.; *Színházi Élet* 1936. 51. 30–32.; *Az Újság* 1937. május 19. 13.; Szapudi: 1997.
[802] Elekesné Weber 1938: 62.
[803] Haits 1938: 375.; *Új Magyarság* 1939. június 25. 19.
[804] Brada 1936: 68.
[805] *Tánctanítók Lapja* 1937.
[806] *Az Est* 1937. november 12. 6.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. november 12. 5.; *Magyarország* 1937. november 12. 9.
[807] Paulini Béla 1937a: 1–2.
[808] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1933. augusztus 5. 9.; Kállay 1934: 322.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1934. augusztus 30. 5.; Incze 1936: 18–19.; Domanovszky 1940: 177–178.; *Esti Újság* 1942. július 17.

continued to perform as usual on St. Stephen's Day. This helped to calm down the Actors' Union /Színészszövetség/ and the Hungarian Association of Circus Artists /Artistaegyesület/.[809]

4.3.5 Ethnographers

As stated in the previous chapter, Paulini initially sought assistance from the personnel of the Ethnographic Museum to create a map of settlements where traditional clothes and traditions were still practiced. The first ethnographer's opinion, published in the pages of a newspaper, was a response to the opinions published in the pages of the daily *Magyarság*. Zsigmond Bátky (1874–1939), an ethnographer and the director of the Ethnographic Museum (at that time the Ethnographic Department of the Hungarian National Museum), wrote a response to a letter from the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, István Milotay,[810] and a reader who identified themselves as "a person from Mezőkövesd, who had been torn to a Pester". In their letter, they expressed dissatisfaction with the limited involvement and the lack of professional support provided by ethnographers in Gyöngyösbokréta.[811] Bátky endorses the movement in his response, expressing his admiration for Paulini. However, he believes that showcasing authentic folk art should also be considered and suggests the establishment of a committee to fulfill this objective.[812] But once Gyöngyösbokréta became successful and had ministerial support through official decrees, Paulini no longer sought the assistance of ethnographers. Yet, when criticism became especially severe and public, he was left with no alternative, and several members of the Ethnographic Society were chosen to participate in the verification of authenticity of the movement. Starting in 1936, Edit Fél, Sándor Gönyey, István Györffy, László K. Kovács, and Ákos Szendrey systematically studied the traditions and outfits of the bokréta groups.[813] During this occasion, ethnographers, particularly the personnel of the Museum of Ethnography, recorded numerous traditional customs and dances from the bokréta communities,[814] and conducted anthropological research as well.[815] László Lajtha, Gyula Ortutay, and Sándor Bálint were also involved in the project of Gyöngyösbokréta,[816] the latter of whom said of Paulini: "I met him in Szeged, I didn't like him at first. When I realized the immense importance of his

[809] *Az Újság* 1934. október 21. 21.
[810] *Magyarság* 1933. augusztus 27. 1–2.
[811] *Magyarság* 1933. augusztus 29. 8.
[812] Bátky 1933: 4.; Bátky 1933:179–180.
[813] Györffy 1937: 98.; Kolozsvári Magyar Királyi Ferenc József Tudományegyetem Bölcsészet-, Nyelv- és Történettudományi kar tanácsülései, 1942–1943/2, Kolozsvár, 1943. április 8., IV. rendkívüli ülés 50–51.
[814] Bartucz 1937: 497.; NM EA 22766 Gönyey Sándor: „Gyöngyösbokréta" táncainak véleményezése (Töredék) (1936–1940). 3–4.
[815] Bartucz 1939: 95.
[816] Fogarasi 2019: 298–299.

work, I began to respect him."[817] Ákos Szendrey and Zsigmond Szendrey contributed essays to the publications *Bokrétások Lapja* and *Hagyomány Szava*.[818] Folk song collector and composer István Volly (1907–1992) worked and collected alongside Paulini during the movement, and even in 1990, decades after the end of the Gyöngyösbokréta, he thought it would be worthwhile to restart the movement and started to organize it, but due to lack of financial support, this was not possible.[819]

The movement involved ethnographers, those from closer and narrower circles, both who contributed their perspectives on the movement. In one of his addresses, Count István Zichy (1879–1951), who served as the Director of the National Museum and President of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society, mentioned Gyöngyösbokréta as a commendable model of preserving traditions.[820] It was during the performances of Gyöngyösbokréta, that music historian Bence Szabolcsi (1899–1973) discovered the Kapuvár Verbunk dance and music.[821] Géza Szathmári (Sauerwald) (1897–1978), a composer and critic, expressed a favorable view about the movement's contribution to the integration of rural culture into the broader national culture.[822] However, János Gergely (1911–1996), a composer, musicologist, and linguist, offers a critique of Gyöngyösbokréta for making folk art as an entertainment for urban dwellers, so distorting its original essence.[823] In his assessment of "middle ground", Lajos Horváth Pálóczi (1899–1976), a folk music researcher and translator, emphasizes that although every opinion has some reliability, both Paulini and the movement are highly beneficial and are worthy of support.[824]

The composer and folk music researcher Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967), who was already mentioned in the previous chapters, made several notes about Gyöngyösbokréta. As a researcher of folk music, his main criticisms concerned the musical part of the performances.[825] In 1943 he attended the rehearsals of the bokréta groups and provided Paulini and the local leaders with professional advice on the musical material and authenticity.[826] (Fig. 49.)

[817] Ifj. Lele 1990: 159.; Coeuroy 1936: 155–156.
[818] Szendrey Zs. 1941b: 1–2.; Szendrey Á. 1942: 5.; Szendrey Á. 1944: 1.
[819] Volly 1964: 643.; Volly 1990: 6.; Csoknyai 1999: 363.
[820] *Ethnographia* 1940. (51.) 1. 3–6. 6.
[821] *Új Idők* 1936. (42.) 18. 663.; *Új Idők* 1936. (42.) 18. 649.; Szabolcsi 1956: 262.
[822] Sauerwald 1936: 465.
[823] Gergely 1937: 128.
[824] Pálóczi Horváth 1938: 11.
[825] Balogh Jenő főtitkár címzés nélküli levele [Horváth Jánosnak] MTAK Kézirattár RAL 1490/1934. Budapest, 1934. december 3. 54. 177.; Vargyas (szerk.) 1989: 319.
[826] *Új Magyarság* 1943. augusztus 2. 8.; *Film, Színház, Irodalom* 1943. (6.) 36. no



Fig. 49. Zoltán Kodály participated in the rehearsals of Gyöngyösbokréta as well.
Film, Színház, Irodalom 1943. no. 36.

In his subsequent writings, he warned against the movement's primary aim being tourism. He considered it important for Gyöngyösbokréta to leave the people in their sense of self and dignity, which is a way of representing the idea of Hungarianism, but he also pointed out as a negative that the bokréta members had started to sell their goods.[827]

The sharpest criticisms of the movement were published by ethnographer János Bartók (Béla Bartók's nephew). In his articles he writes about the destruction of tradition, the eradication of old cultural goods, romantic folk views and the violent distortion of folk customs.[828] In 1946, responding to the Muharay article mentioned above, he stressed that Gyöngyösbokréta was a flawed effort of the defunct regime.[829] The sharp criticisms are also interesting because Bartók was in contact and in correspondence with Paulini: Paulini sent János Bartók to research bokréta settlements, including the bokréta settlement of Tápé, where he tried to improve the musical aspect in the local bokréta group's performance in particular.[830]

4.3.6 Local leaders

Paulini served as the central figure and overall leader of the movement; however, at the local level, he was supported by regional bokréta leaders who assisted in its implementation. In

[827] Kodály 1989: 317–318.
[828] Bartók 1940: 1–3.; Bartók 1945: 17.
[829] Bartók 1946: 22.
[830] NM EA 19037. 36/44. Bartók János néprajzkutató 1944. január 19-i levele Paulini Bélának.; NM EA 19037. 40/43. Bartók János néprajzkutató 1944. január 21-i levele Paulini Bélának.; NM EA 20408. ifj. Lele József Gyöngyösbokrétától a Pávakörig. (A tápai néptáncmozgalom története.) 1979. Érk. az 1979. évi Országos Néprajzi és Nyelvjárási Gyűjtőpályázatra. 27–28.

subchapter 3.2.2, I briefly discussed the role of the bokréta leaders and provided some examples; however, it is important to further elaborate on their roles and backgrounds in order to understand the social network underpinning the movement.

The bokréta groups were led by local intellectuals who held positions as rural teachers, cantors, priests, or notaries.[831] During that period, the listed roles were predominantly occupied by men, resulting in most of the leaders being men as well. However, a contemporaneous newspaper article highlights that women have a strong inclination towards folk art.[832] In the case of Galgamácsa, there is an exception where Juli Dudás, a young girl with a passion for sketching and an interests of collecting folk songs and traditions, assumed the role of group leader. Ethnographer Sándor Gönyey collected her drawings with a folk subject, and with his assistance and support, she founded the Galgamácsa group, who performed her own collection of songs and folk plays at Gyöngyösbokréta in Budapest.[833] (Fig. 50.)

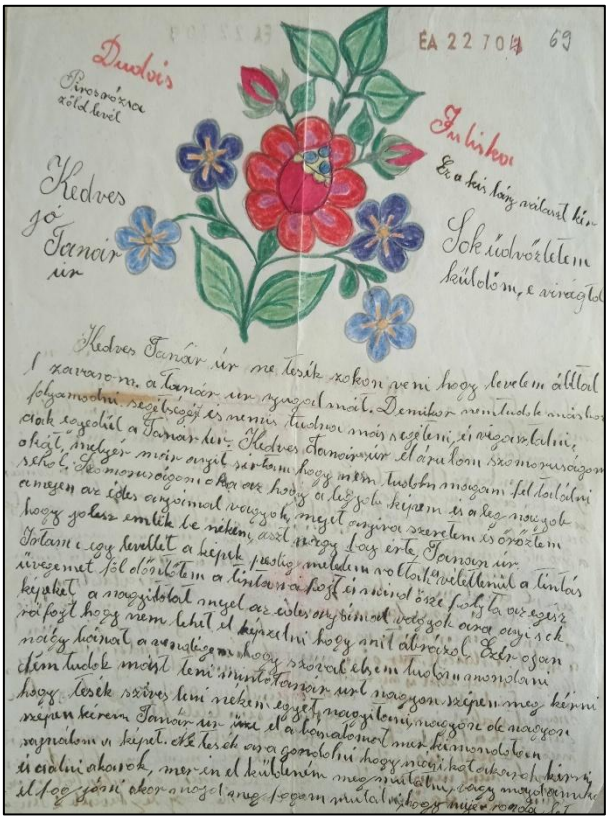

Fig. 50. Letter from Juli Dudás, Gyöngyösbokréta group leader, to ethnographer Sándor Gönyey, 1942. (NMEA22704. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection)

[831] Petur 1933: 11–12.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1935. augusztus 24. 8.
[832] Oszoly 1934: 501.
[833] Vankóné Dudás 1983: 54–55.; Rácz 1983: 8.; NM EA 22704 Gönyey Sándor Levelezések kb. 1920-tól. 64. Vankó Imréné levele Gönyey Sándornak.; NM EA 22704 Gönyey Sándor Levelezések kb. 1920-tól. 62. Vankó Imréné és Hegybányayné iskolaigazgató 1948. március 18-i levele Gönyey Sándornak.

The personality and position of the local leader significantly influenced the composition and functioning of the group. For example, if the group in a village was established by a church leader, membership was typically limited to individuals from that church community.
If the group was founded by a teacher, members were typically selected from among his own students. This pattern is particularly noteworthy in larger settlements, where many (young) individuals were available to participate in the movement. Some of the leaders maintained close relationships with Béla Paulini; they were his friends, aides, and occasionally his advisers.

As mentioned above, a bokréta group could not be established without a leader, and the leaders' attitudes toward folk culture varied considerably. Due to the lack of ethnographic training among teachers and leaders during that period, it was common for them to frequently attempt the reconstruction of customs and attire. Consequently, many people urged to provide training for instructors in ethnography in rural areas.[834] Nevertheless, a significant number of the leaders made efforts to maintain ethnographic accuracy and conduct on-site research during their participation in Gyöngyösbokréta. They also aimed to minimize any impact on the villagers' lives, except for increasing their awareness of the significance and value of their own traditional art.[835] The majority of the leaders regarded leading bokréta groups as prestige and actively engaged in the movement. Additionally, many of them authored motivational essays regarding the Gyöngyösbokréta[836] and actively participated in its preservation throughout their lifetimes and beyond.[837]

4.3.7 Churches

The priests and pastors who worked in the villages had a close relationship with the bokréta groups. As mentioned earlier, many of these groups were headed and sponsored by the local pastor or the cantor teacher. Several church periodicals argued that church educators serving in rural areas should be trained to assess the actual conditions of village life, and that the cultivation of local culture – in the form of Gyöngyösbokréta – is only possible if appropriately trained church teachers act as leaders. Additionally, some of them were also involved in local ethnographic collections. As part of the extracurricular cultural work of schools and the education of peasants, Gyöngyösbokréta was also highlighted as a positive way of promoting tradition keeping, in which rural religious leaders play a major role.[838] However, many

[834] Fraknói 1935: 23.; Kopronczay 1937: 74.; Pártos 1937: 540.; Kiss I.1942: 106–107.
[835] T. Gy. 1934: 7.; Viga 2017: 222.; Horváth : 1980.
[836] Kokas 1938: 35–39.; Kokas 1940: 753–755.; Kokas 1941: 6.
[837] Szeghalmy 1939.; Balázs Kovács 2011: 287–358.; Pap 2003: 25–31.; Ujváry F. 1984.
[838] Boross 1940: 306.

statements also indicate that church representatives, both Catholic and Reformed, regarded the detrimental impact of the movement as more significant and emphasized its adverse influence on the moral values of the village.[839] In 1937, a diocese of the Reformed Church advocated for restrictions on Gyöngyösbokréta.[840]

4.3.8 Bokréta peasants

Finally, it is essential to recognize the peasants and farmers as the principal representatives and key actors of the movement. As previously mentioned, only a small segment of the peasantry participated in Gyöngyösbokréta; thus, it cannot be seen as representative of the entire social class. Moreover, the peasantry itself was far from homogeneous. I have aimed to highlight the diversity of the performers' backgrounds, including the variety of settlements they came from. Most were agricultural laborers, though not all, and even among them, landholdings varied considerably. One of the key questions raised by the movement is how accurately the participants – and by extension, the peasantry – were portrayed on stage, and whether this representation distracted from the real socio-economic problems of rural agricultural workers.

Nevertheless, as demonstrated above, while Gyöngyösbokréta was widely discussed and critiqued by various commentators, the voices and perspectives of the bokréta peasants themselves – and the peasantry they represented – remained largely absent from published discourse. Therefore, I seek to incorporate sources that offer glimpses into their own perspectives, while also examining external evaluations of both the movement and its peasant participants. (Even the terminology – such as the frequent use of the word 'peasant' – was employed to emphasize the idea of the peasantry as the bearer of national culture.) Initially, the rural peasants were confused by the sudden attention towards their customs and were hesitant to participate in the movement. In several locations, they refrained from getting involved, perceiving it as a frivolous spectacle for the upper classes.[841] Subsequently, certain bokréta members' travel journals,[842] originating from journeys abroad or performances in Budapest, included and discussed the bokréta peasantry.[843] Furthermore, the participating peasants'

[839] *Makói Újság* 1936. november 7. 3–4.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1936. november 6. 10.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1936. október 4. 17.; Radványi 1937: 843.
[840] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. május 5. 4.; A Magyarországi Reformált Egyház Egyetemes Konventjének Jegyzőkönyve 1937. 1937. május 3–4. 34.; *8 Órai Újság* 1937. május 5. 9.; *Harangszó* 1937. május 16. 161.; *Magyarország* 1937. május 5. 2.
[841] Makkai 1941: 361.; Horváth Kamillus: 1980.
[842] Lukács 1935: 11.; Máriáss 1936: 8.
[843] *Magyarság* 1935. augusztus 24. 10.; *Magyarság* 1939. augusztus 20. 8.

involvement in scandalous events was extensively covered by the media,[844] but their idea on the movement or presenting folk traditions was rarely asked.

The overview of various socio-cultural groups demonstrates that the movement exerted broad influence across society. While some individuals actively supported it, others voiced opposition, and many participated in diverse ways. The fact that individuals outside these categories – e.g. Károly Gundel, a renowned restaurant owner,[845] a Golden wheat ear farmer (aranykalászos gazda),[846] a tourist guide in Budapest[847] and private citizens through readers' letters in newspapers[848] – also voiced their views on the movement demonstrates that it resonated across various strata of society and elicited a wide range of public responses.

After presenting the history of the movement, its context and its agents, in the following three sections, I will examine the roles of Gyöngyösbokréta. In the first section, I will demonstrate the movement's role in nation-building during the decades after the Treaty of Trianon, specifically the image it aimed to convey about Hungarians – a model to be followed by the Hungarian people. The following chapter will shed light on the Gyöngyösbokréta's role in cultural diplomacy, illustrating how the movement represented Hungarians to foreign audiences. After that, I will investigate the heritage narrative shaped by Gyöngyösbokréta concerning Hungarian (folk) culture, highlighting its principles for preserving and safeguarding the fading peasant culture.

As highlighted in the history of Gyöngyösbokréta, the primary focus of the Budapest folk custom exhibitions was tourism. This significantly influenced what was presented, how groups were recruited, and the representation of folk culture. With the growing success of tourism, the movement assumed increasingly important roles: the leader of the movement himself regarded the preservation and presentation of folk culture as Gyöngyösbokréta's noblest goal. However, this success also served functions in the nation-building process and the representation of Hungary abroad.

[844] *Kis Újság* 1936. február 14. 6.; *8 Órai Újság* 1934. szeptember 4. 6.; *Friss Újság* 1934. szeptember 7. 4.
[845] Gundel 1983: 323.
[846] Vörös 1937: 5.
[847] *Az Est* 1935. augusztus 14. 9.
[848] *Magyarság* 1933. augusztus 29. 8.; *Mohácsi Hírlap* 1937. június 6. 4.

5. Representing Hungarian folk art for Hungarians – Nation-building by means of Gyöngyösbokréta

> „They sang and danced – the bokréta groups. Didn't they do anything else? To the superficial observer, no. However, anyone who gave it a little thought could undoubtedly notice that through the Hungarian songs and Hungarian dances, they successfully strengthened the Hungarian spirit."[849]

The politics and daily life of the Horthy era were defined by the trauma of Trianon,[850] prompting the re-emergence of the question: "What is Hungarian?" New guidelines emerged from the pens of politicians and social scientists, leading to the creation of various programs aimed at utilizing both tourism and culture to reshape or reinforce national identity. The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, shortly after its formation, became one of the instruments for this purpose, as it is presented in Subchapters 5.1–5.5. To understand how the Ministry of the Interior and other ministries used the movement to shape the national identity, it is not about understanding the concept of the nation through Gyöngyösbokréta but rather focusing on the question of *who* belonged to the Hungarian nation by its narrative. I will analyze this question in Subchapters 5.6–5.7.

To grasp the image the movement projected domestically (and later abroad), it is useful to consider the following concept pairs: village-city, peasantry and the rest of society, minorities within Hungary – Hungarians living in the (re)annexed territories, and the East-West dichotomy. These pairs can be traced throughout the movement's history:

- The village-city contrast symbolized the unity of the nation, which the movement conveyed.
- Through the representation of folk culture, the symbolic "integration" of the peasantry as a social class into society, and the dissemination of peasant/folk culture to the upper classes (through the fashioning of folk attire and the transformation of folk customs into national symbols, reflecting the history and suffering of the entire Hungarian nation).
- The central representation of Hungarians from the borderlands in the movement (with borderland group formations, tours, and events).
- The almost complete exclusion of national minorities within Hungary from the movement (the discourse surrounding the inclusion of minorities, which contrasted with the inclusion of Hungarians from abroad).
- The East-West dichotomy (the Gyöngyösbokréta slogan: "Western on weekdays, Eastern on holidays," symbols).

It is important to emphasize that, like the formation of the national and folk culture image,[851] the image created by Gyöngyösbokréta and the nation it represented evolved over time. The

[849] Paulini Béla 1943: Az ország bokrétája. *Országépítés* 1943. december 1. 6.
[850] Bottoni 2002: 4.
[851] Barna 2011.

image and the movement's role in nation-building continually changed over the course of the movement's existence of more than a decade and a half.

The use of folk culture in nation-building was not new in the era, as from the 18th century, the return to the people and the use of folk culture had become a vital part of shaping national imagery.[852] During the revolutions and the Romantic era, the folk element became central to the national history.[853] The nationalization of folk culture primarily manifested in external elements, such as folk customs, folk attire, and folk art, which were derived from the externalities of the festive aspects of communal life.[854] In these cases, they did not aim to present actual peasant and folk culture, but a carefully curated image, or folklore. For example, in a study on 19th-century national imagery, Albert Réka points out the stereotypes surrounding folk culture, which were applied in the creation of national culture.[855] Folklore can be viewed as an expression of ethnic or national identity — eclectic, containing elements of popular, pseudo-folk, national, literary phenomena. These elements were seen as symbols of national unity, pride, and loyalty.[856] As in many cases during the selection process, in the shaping of Hungarian national heritage, specific geographic and cultural regions were chosen to symbolize the authenticity of folk culture. In contrast, the Gyöngyösbokréta, although it included representatives of regions such as Matyó, Kalocsa, and later Kalotaszeg, did not base its selection of regional dances and attire on such principles.[857] Instead, the movement emphasized that many villages still preserved unknown customs and dances.[858] In some cases – for example, with Jazygian [Jász] and Cuman [Kun] groups – the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement provided a platform for these lesser-known customs.[859]

Despite this, the movement was criticized from many perspectives for not presenting the true soul of the people, but rather a constructed folklore image.[860] Ethnographers of the era, as we have seen, were often involved in the movement's professional oversight and support. However, for instance, the ethnographer Aurél Vajkai drew attention to "the unfortunate fact that our ethnographic interest and activity often assumed a false guise and drifted into the realm of amateurish pretentiousness. [...] Today, the interest is external, superficial, an admiration for some crude beauty that is fully dissolved and exhausted in special institutions, such as the

[852] Hopkin 2012.
[853] Gyáni 2021: 111–112.
[854] Barna 2011: 64.
[855] Albert 2009: 27–31.
[856] Dégh: 1988.
[857] Barna 2011: 68.
[858] B. Gelencsér 2011: 434.
[859] Bánkiné Molnár 2015: 272.
[860] Pártos 1937: 539–543.

Exhibition of Native Talents and the Gyöngyösbokréta, where it finds its expression. As a result, the sentiment is depleted and extinguished."[861] This also gave rise to further contentious debates regarding what ethnographers considered authentic and worthy of preservation. A positive aspect is that although the post-Trianon borders complicated ethnographic fieldwork, Gyöngyösbokréta and its supporters facilitated the study of these regions.[862]

The greatest merit of the Gyöngyösbokréta, however, was that it showcased the customs and dances of the peasantry, thus integrating the peasantry into society through its culture. The movement sought to strengthen Hungarian national consciousness through the peasantry.[863] It is not unique to Hungary that elites take peasant culture as the basis for national identity. In Europe, peasants were often regarded as central to national identity, embodying the connection to the great ancestors through their traditions.[864] "The more European nations industrialized and urbanized, the more they defined their identities in reference to archaism and the rural world."[865] The folk customs presented on stage often represented past customs, rather than contemporary folklore, as village teachers aimed to show an idealized version of past customs.[866]

The question of whether the Gyöngyösbokréta represented the peasantry or just folk culture (or even just selected folklore) in the strengthening of national identity remained a point of continuous debate in the period and beyond. Research into folk music also draws attention to the peasantry,[867] ultimately focusing on the life reform movement and folk culture, in line with the Gyöngyösbokréta's representation of peasant life.[868]

5.1 Gyöngyösbokréta and its symbol system

> „This bouquet /bokréta/ is a symbol, as it expresses an indissoluble folk unity. At the same time, it powerfully demonstrates that a people who cling to their ancient traditions, customs, and attire cannot be lost."[869]

The great nation-building efforts took place in the 19th century, but during significant historical turning points in the 20th century – just as in the case of the Treaty of Trianon – debates on national character once again took center stage, specifically about what it means to be Hungarian.[870] Trianon, as a national catastrophe, became a part of the Hungarian historical canon.

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[861] Vajkai 1940: 341.
[862] Horváth 2018: 50.
[863] Várszeginé Gáncs 2012: 87–88.
[864] Thiesse –Norris 2003: 31.
[865] Thiesse – Norris 2003: 32.
[866] Dégh 1988: 593.
[867] Pávai 2013: 153–154.
[868] Kovács 2013: 252–253.
[869] *Székely Nép* 1943. március 5. 6.
[870] Madácsy: 2011.; Kovács G.: 2011.; Hoppál 2011.

> "The fact that the memory of historical Hungary, the cruelty of the Treaty of Trianon, and the necessity of a revision of the peace treaty undeniably became central to Hungarian public thought was ensured by cultural policy. Primarily, of course, public education, which, through its heavily nationalist curriculum in the so-called national subjects – Hungarian language and literature, history, and geography – tried to instill anti-Trianon sentiments (as well) in children from the age of six, laying the foundation for the development of national identity."[871]

To support this, cultural policy created and used numerous national symbols, which served to underpin the idea of Greater Hungary, revisionist politics, and cultural superiority.

> "When thinking of »national symbols«, most people first think of the distinguishing signs of the state (coats of arms, flags, anthems), but we know that the strongest identity-preserving elements of cultures are the music, dances, foods, and clothing elements that continue to live even in the third or fourth generation of emigrants, precisely because they symbolize the given culture and its common origin. One layer of identity symbols is certainly composed of these everyday cultural elements, soaked with emotional identification, which distinguish them from the corresponding elements of other cultures. Another group of identity symbols consists of the memories of the common past of the culture... The identity-defining moments of the shared past are elements of the folk traditions, folklore, and mythology that have become symbols […]."[872]

The above quote highlights that folk traditions and folklore are national symbols. Folk culture itself – both in terms of handicrafts and traditions, as well as folk songs, tales, and customs – is filled with numerous symbols and meanings. A large part of these is understandable only to the specific community and carry significant social meanings for these communities, but to an outside observer, these symbols may be invisible or unintelligible.[873] Criticisms of Gyöngyösbokréta often pointed out that its stage performances and political involvement altered traditional symbols,[874] which were crucial carriers of messages in peasant society. In my interpretation, the movement itself became such a symbol during the interwar period, as the preservation and fashioning of peasant culture, traditions, and folk clothing symbolized a strong, historical nation. Furthermore, Gyöngyösbokréta created its own symbolic system, drawing heavily from folk culture, but also influenced by the political ideas of the era. Below, I will show how naming, various slogans, and symbols positioned the movement and the image of Gyöngyösbokréta that emerged through them.

5.1.1 Denomination: Gyöngyösbokréta

> "But what does the word »Gyöngyösbokréta« mean? Well, it truly signifies a collection of the most exquisite folk-art beauties. But there is also an actual gyöngyösbokréta,

[871] Bottoni: 2015.
[872] Voigt: 2011.
[873] Hopkin 2012: 7.
[874] Verebélyi 2001: 1–10.

> made from real pearls; in some regions, and on special occasions, young men indeed wear such ornaments next to their hats. The Gyöngyösbokréta is displayed during the country's greatest national holiday, set by the capital city."[875]

The name of the movement is also attributed to its founder, Béla Paulini.[876] There was another idea for the name initially; they had intended to call the movement *Ispiláng Rose* /"Ispilángi rózsa"/.[877] This name was derived by the ethnographer and folk music collector Béla Vikár from a German children's song: "Ich spiel' ein...", though this suggestion was defended by linguist Zsigmond Simonyi, who traced it to the term "kis pilláncs" (small butterfly-flame).[878] The uncertain and somewhat non-Hungarian origin of the word was replaced by a more widely recognized term from popular speech, which also appeared in the customs of several regions; it generally referred to a gyöngyösbokréta (pearly bouquet) pinned to the groom's hat by the bride.[879] In Őrhalom, it was called a brass bouquet with a silver or gold lace, and it was sent by a girl to a young man who already had a lover.[880] A similar custom was also practiced in Matyóföld:

> "When a Matyó young man chose a lover, the girl made a bouquet and placed it on the groom's hat. It was a symbol, which the groom proudly wore until the wedding... This beautiful symbol, this emblem, was adopted by the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, which had more than 100 groups and 4,000 members."[881]

Thus, the name Gyöngyösbokréta was also used as a symbol for the movement: "The bouquet means beauty. Not just one, but many beauties. There, beside the hat, is the velvety flower, the colorful pearl, the golden thyme, rosemary, and crane feather. Each is a separate beauty, yet it all forms one bouquet. The village bouquet is only beautiful if it contains everything that is beautiful, everything that can be found there: beautiful customs, songs, tales, dances."[882] In the magazine *Hagyomány Szava*, Gyöngyösbokréta is referred to as a „hat accessory," a decoration that young men still wear on their hats in various regions of the country. Following this tradition, the capital city adorns itself with Gyöngyösbokréta during Saint Stephen's Day – considered the greatest national holiday.[883]

In addition to its symbolic value, the name Gyöngyösbokréta was a very good choice because it could be easily translated into foreign languages. In addition to the Hungarian-

[875] Paulini 1937b: 4.
[876] Ujváry 1984: 17.
[877] Pálfi 1970: 138.
[878] Volly 1977: 364.; Herman 1914: 435–441.; Szinnyei 1893: 44–45.; Vikár 1907: 291.; Vikár 1915: 593.
[879] Volly 1982: 163.
[880] Fél – Kovács 1937: 98.
[881] Kiss 2003: 19.
[882] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 1–2. 1.
[883] *Hagyomány Szava* 1940. (7.) 2. 5.

language posters, English, French, Italian and German versions appeared, where the movement was referred to as *Pearly Bouquet* and *Bouquet de Perles, Mazzo di Perle* and *Perlenstrauss*.[884]

Despite its symbolic value, the name Gyöngyösbokréta could still be creatively used when highlighting the lack of originality or shortcomings of the movement. This happened, for instance, in a newspaper article following the performance of the Mohács group, where the originality of the performances and costumes was questioned, and the writers suggested calling the production "*Artificial Pearly Bouquet" /"Műgyöngyös bokréta"/*. When groups in Transylvania began to form after the reattachment of the region, an article titled *Should the Transylvanian Gyöngyösbokréta be called Peasant Bouquet or Artificial Flower? /Parasztcsokor vagy művirág legyen-é az erdélyi Gyöngyösbokréta?/* appeared, suggesting that it would be better to assign a new name to the movement for the Transylvanian groups."[885]

As a result of the movement, the term Gyöngyösbokréta became so ingrained in the public consciousness that when folk-costumed village groups were seen, they were referred to as *gyöngyösbokrétások* (members of the Gyöngyösbokréta). Alongside the easily memorable name, Paulini also used two mottos, further reinforcing the Gyöngyösbokréta cult.

5.1.2 The Slogans of Gyöngyösbokréta – Eastern Hungarians

Paulini first used the motto *„Hungarian, preserve your noble traditions!" /„Magyar ápold nemes hagyományaidat!"/* from the 18th-century writer-poet József Gvadányi (1725–1801) in connection with the movement. In December 1940, the *Hagyomány Szava* journal recalled the event that József Gvadányi, had written his work *The Village Notary's Journey to Buda /A falusi nótárius budai utazása/* exactly one hundred and fifty years earlier. This work was inspired by Gvadányi's sorrowful realization, upon his arrival in Buda, that he hardly saw any Hungarian clothing and scarcely heard any Hungarian spoken. Already in the 1700s, Count Gvadányi had wanted to change this, thus becoming the guiding figure of the movement's ideology.[886] Through the choice of motto, we can see how the movement's leader sought to elevate the neglect of folk culture to a long-standing historical problem.

[884] Ujváry 1984: 17.; Volly 1977: 364.
[885] Nagy 1939: 238.
[886] Pintér 2005: 5.



Fig. 51. „Hungarian, preserve your traditions!” *8 Órai Újság*, August 18, 1939, 8.

In addition, Paulini introduced a catchy slogan to further express the movement's principles: “The Hungarian bokréta movement is the fairy tale come true. Eastern wonders amidst the most complete Western culture: »Weekdays West, Holidays East« is the motto now famous.”[887]

This slogan not only expressed the movement's vision but also raised an important issue in the search for identity: where does the Hungarian nation position itself in Europe – East or West? There was a heated debate at the time about whether Hungary and the Hungarians belonged to the East or the West. „The shock caused by Trianon once and for all planted in people's minds the fantasy of »Europe abandoned us,« or even »Europe turned against us.«”[888] As a result, anti-Western sentiment grew, yet, overall, Western values and Central-Eastern European identity continued to play a role in shaping national identity. Geographically, Hungary is placed in Central Europe, but as Catherine Horel puts it,

> “[t]he concept of the center, of being in the middle, changes significantly depending on where in Europe we stand. The countries involved do not like this designation because they feel it pushes them aside from the West, even though they have always aimed towards it. [...] Some actors start from the idea that only Western Europe (Europe occidentale) and Eastern Europe (Europe orientale) exist. The concept of the center has been relegated to the Eastern Europe (Europe de l'Est) term, which, contrary to this, tries to present these countries as closer to the West.”[889]

Furthermore, Stefano Bottoni points out that the concept of Eastern Europe is constantly changing, with different political or academic communities defining it based on emotional attachment rather than professional criteria: He notes, „[t]he matter of competing, and often contradictory, visions of Hungarianness was further complicated by anxieties about the country's relationship to Europe.”[890]

[887] Paulini 1937b: 4.
[888] Gyáni 2011.
[889] Horel 2011: 11.
[890] Bottoni 2015: 9.

This duality stretches far back and carries symbolism, as shown in the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, which positioned Hungary simultaneously in both the East and the West. The celebration on August 20, which provided a stage for Gyöngyösbokréta, commemorated St. Stephen, the first king of Hungary (reigned: 1000–1038). According to legend, he was baptized and offered the country to the Virgin Mary, thereby choosing Christianity and Western culture over the Eastern influences of Mongols and Ottomans. During the interwar period, the European Western orientation was supported by conservative and national liberals, with the widespread belief that Hungarian roots extended to Asia and that Hungarians carried Asian traits. Therefore, Hungary's place on the mental map of Europe was a matter of heated debate, with some viewing it as belonging to neither East nor West, while others regarded it as a meeting point of East and West, Asia and Europe.[891] In his book on the cultural diplomacy of the interwar period, Zsolt Nagy explains that this duality also featured prominently in Hungary's tourism image: Budapest was associated with modern, developing Western culture, while the countryside was identified with the romantic, traditional Eastern culture. These were not contradictions, but complementary elements of the different visions of Hungary.[892] The famous poet Endre Ady (1877–1919), in his 1905 poem, referred to Hungary as *Kompország* (*Ferry-Country*),[893] a metaphor that well encapsulates this duality. This stance was voiced by many during the period, and Hungary was considered to have a special role at the border between East and West, capable of bridging the two sides and thus fulfilling a civilizational mission.[894] This idea was reinforced by the more widely known motto of the Gyöngyösbokréta: "Weekdays West, Holidays East".

The phrase repeated by Paulini, which first appeared as the title of an article in 1935, refers to the widely discussed Eastern origins of the Hungarian people and their folk art.[895] The sentence reads: "... indeed, alongside the fullest expression of Western civilization, Hungarian holidays should be confessions of traditions with an Eastern flavor!"[896] In a 1939 article in *Bokrétások Lapja*, he writes: "The Gyöngyösbokréta is unique even on a global scale because the tasteful East, the East on which the purity of the West shines."[897] In a letter to Minister of Culture Bálint Hóman, Paulini also elaborated on the meaning of the slogan and emphasized the diversity of Hungarian traditions.:

[891] Nagy Zs. 2017: 171–172.; 183.
[892] Nagy Zs. 2017: 197.; Vargyas, 1969: 455.
[893] Ady 1905: Ismeretlen Korvin-kódex margójára.
[894] Nagy Zs. 2017: 80–81.
[895] Pálfi 1970: 133–134.
[896] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1935. (2.) 2–3. 5.
[897] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 9–10. 3–6.

> "During major holidays, the Hungarian Bokréta adorns celebrations, although the Bokréta varies in color across different regions of the country, with each region hosting its own Bokréta celebration. This, in turn, exemplifies the fullest expression of Western culture while simultaneously presenting a consistent declaration of Eastern traditions, as outlined in "Weekdays West, Holidays East"."[898]

The "Asian" heritage presented by Gyöngyösbokréta was seen as a valuable contribution to European culture.[899] "We are European values only if we can prove that the piece of Europe and the piece of Asia that we represent here is something unique, something new to others."[900] This motto, like the entire movement, was labeled with numerous negative epithets during the communist era, as it was often considered nationalist. However, dance historian Csaba Pálfi, who studied the movement extensively in the 1980s[901], argued that "there is no need to fear such slogans from Gyöngyösbokréta, like »Weekdays West, Holidays East«, which, translated, means that Gyöngyösbokréta saw the preservation of traditions as necessary in the face of the unavoidable and necessarily »corrupting« process of civilization."[902] The slogan became very popular,[903] and also as an advice for the middle class and intellectuals regarding festive dress.[904]

5.1.3 Seal, Badge, Guild-Signboard

The National Hungarian Bokréta Association, which united the bokréta groups, utilized a seal, badge, and guild-signboard, which served not only to emphasize the association's goals but also functioned as important tools for creating a cult and fostering community building.

The seal was meant to guarantee authenticity and certified artistic quality. These seals could be seen on items displayed at folk art exhibitions held at the National Salon.[905] (Fig. 52.)

[898] Debreczeni 1956: 100.
[899] Viski 1934: 416.
[900] Karácsony 1941: 6.
[901] BTK ZTI Akt.910 Pálfi Csaba: Kérdésgyűjtemény a Gyöngyösbokréta kutatáshoz.
[902] Pálfi 1980: 15.
[903] The popularity of the slogan evidenced by a charming reinterpretation of the slogan in the guesthouse in Boldog, which was built to host tourists interested in the village's folk culture – including the local bokréta group's presentation. In response to the increased tourism, the village converted a thatched-roof farmhouse into an inn. The former stable was replaced with a modern, water-equipped restroom. The cheerful builders of Boldog humorously altered the movement's slogan, changing it to "Elöl kelet, hátul nyugat" ("East in front, West behind"), referencing the transformed tourist facility (Ujváry 1984: 22.)
[904] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 1–3. 5.
[905] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 8. 8.





Fig. 52–53. Seal of the National Hungaria Bokréta Association. in: *Rimóci Újság* 2009, no. 15 (3): 8–9.; Bokréta badge. in: Lele, József, Jr. "A tápai bokréta." *A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve* 1980–81: 209.

In 1936, bokréta members were awarded a commemorative badge,[906] featuring a dancing couple and the inscription Gyöngyösbokréta. This was proudly worn by bokréta members, and if they saw someone wearing it who was unfamiliar, they would greet them as a brother or sister.[907] Group leader Kálmán Kokas reported that in Szany, wedding cakes were decorated with an enlarged replica of the bokréta badge,[908] so it became part of the local bokréta symbolism. (Fig. 53.)

The National Hungarian Bokréta Association's guild signboard, made of steel plate, was designed by painter István Pekáry. It was carried by the association's representatives to the Gyöngyösbokréta events. "On a massive white pole, in a white circle, the red letters M. B., made of steel plate, with bokréta ribbons attached to the pole." The ribbons were requested from the groups in specific sizes, and the name of the bokréta group had to be embroidered or woven onto the ribbon, and to be decorated with a distinctive folk-art motif from the locality.[909] (Fig. 55.)



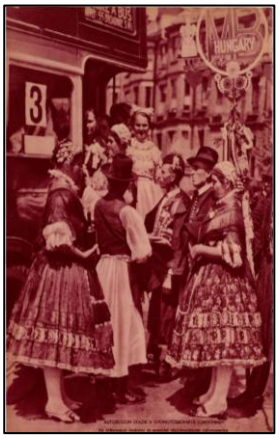

Fig. 54–55. Bokréta members promenading with the guild-signboard. "The Hungarian delegation parades." *The Sphere* July 20, 1935, p. 7.; The Gyöngyösbokréta travels by bus in London. *Pesti Napló Képes Melléklete* July 28, 1935.

[906] Lele 1981: 209.
[907] Ujváry 1984: 39.
[908] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 3. 3.
[909] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1935. (2.) 4–5. 8.

The ribbon-adorned guild signboard, decorated with local patterns, bears a strong resemblance to the tradition of the vőfély and the vőfély stick. Regionally, customs may vary slightly (Fig. 56–57.), but in most areas, the vőfély (wedding master of ceremonies) is still present at weddings. (Fig. 58.) The vőfély is "a multifaceted official at rural weddings, acting as the organizer of the celebration and the leader of its practical aspects. [...] The signs of the vőfély position are the decorations worn on his clothing, the vőfély baton/stick, and the decorated flask."[910] The vőfély stick, which symbolizes the vőfély's role at the wedding, is a wooden stick, often decorated with ribbons and scarves, indicating the official position of the vőfély and serving as a sign for the invited guests. During the invitation process, guests often tie additional decorations, such as ribbons or scarves, to the stick to signify their acceptance of the invitation. While the stick itself is a traditional accessory, the ribbons and scarves emphasize the vőfély's social role as the representative of the family.[911] Similarly, each group in the Bokréta Association placed scarves or ribbons on the guild signboard, symbolically accepting the invitation to the movement. (Fig. 54.)



Fig. 56–57–58. Vőfélys with their vőfély stick. Vőfély from Inaktelke, Transylvania at a Gyöngyösbokréta event in 1941. (NMF93236; Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.); Vőfély from Martos, Upper Hungary, 1939. (NMF 83582; Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.); László Koncz, a traditional vőfély and his assistant, with his vőfély stick, 2020s. (Photo from László Koncz)

5.1.4 Bokréta flags

For the tenth anniversary celebration of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, Béla Paulini commissioned the creation of flags for the bokréta groups. When it came to the flags, a key criterion was that they must clearly identify the group of people who bore them,[912] and for this reason, Paulini provided instructions. Regarding the flag's material, he stated that simple linen

[910] Vőfély címszó. Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon.
[911] Halász 2018: 91–100.; Klamár 2014. 68–76.; Vőfélybot, vőfélypálca címszó. Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon.
[912] Décsey 2014: 4.; Diószegi 2014.

could be used, adorned with local folk art decorations or embroidery. He advised that where there was no embroidery or weaving, it should not be invented or planned anew.[913] Of course, the national colors had to be included on both the flag and the flagpole.[914] Understanding that the bokréta groups had limited financial resources, he encouraged them to aim for minimal costs. However, if the expenses were still high, he suggested they appoint a "flag mother" who would procure the materials. In Hungarian tradition, women were always the ones to inaugurate the soldiers' flags, tie the ribbons, and thus assume the role of the "flag mothers". Only a woman of public esteem could be a flag mother.[915] Following this analogy, Paulini proposed that the wealthier and more respected women in the villages be chosen as bokréta flag mothers, who, by making sacrifices for the cause of the Gyöngyösbokréta and the preservation of Hungarian folk art, would also involve members of other classes in this effort.



Fig. 59–60. The members of the Báta Bokréta in Bácskertes in 1941. The Báta bokréta group in Bácskertes in 1941. http://www.sarkoz.extra.hu/elodeink.html

According to photographic sources (Fig. 59–60.), the Báta bokréta had two flags, which was likely an exceptional case due to the aforementioned costs. For the anniversary, flags from 50 settlements were created, 14 of which were exhibited at the folk-art exhibition held at the National Salon.[916]

[913] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1940. (7.) 5. 1–2.
[914] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1940. (7.) 2. 3.
[915] Diószegi 2014.
[916] Ujváry 1984: 44.*; Friss Újság* 1940. március 2. 4.; *Esti Újság* 1940. augusztus 12. 10.; Hattyasi 1940: 13–14.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1940. augusztus 20. 7.



Fig. 61. Gyöngyösbokréta promenade in the streets of Budapest. (*Magyar Futár,* August 21, 1941.)

In addition to the selection of flag mothers, Paulini also requested that wherever a local bokréta group organized a bokréta day, the flag should be inaugurated in a ceremonial manner.[917] In several locations, flag ceremonies took place, becoming significant events not only for the local members but also for the communities of the villages and many visitors from afar. (Fig. 61.) The movement's periodical reported on the inauguration of the Szakmár bokréta flag, which was attended by a 100-member delegation from Pest County.[918] Flag ceremonies also took place in the annexed regions: in the Slovakian area, a memorable flag inauguration was held in Kéménd, where State Secretary Ferenc Zsindely and his wife Klára Tüdős, as well as their guest, widow Mrs. Kálmán Darányi, and many influential figures participated. At the Bácskertes (Kupusina) flag ceremony, four guest bokréta groups were represented.[919] The Bácskertes people also elected a flag mother, as did the Gombos (Bogojevo) members.[920]

5.2 Folk Traditions and National Holidays

"For the propaganda of traditions is also a form of national defense."[921]

In addition to the creation of a symbolic system, the Gyöngyösbokréta also sought to establish its own traditions.

> "Four years ago, the heart of the country was struck by the Gyöngyös Bokréta. And today, the Gyöngyös Bokréta is not just an unprecedented world wonder, but – a tradition. […] A beautiful Hungarian tradition: let there be a festive period when the

[917] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1940. (7.) 4. 1.
[918] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1940. (7.) 6. 1–2.
[919] *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. (2.) 7. 7.
[920] *Hagyomány Szava* 1942. (3.) 9. 3.; *Függetlenség* 1943. június 5. 4.
[921] M. L. 1942: 5.

> largest Hungarian city embraces the smallest village with joyful tears, proudly crying that both the big city and the small village are Hungarian – and one."[922]

Paulini refers to the Gyöngyösbokréta's events in Budapest as a tradition after just a few years, since the yearly performances during the St. Stephen's Week became regular, familiar, and created a tradition. In addition to this, there were also several events connected to the movement that were created with the intention of establishing traditions. The initial Gyöngyösbokréta showcases held once a year were soon expanded to include more events. Paulini's credo was that "Every celebration must be Hungarianized, even down to the pig slaughter,"[923] which he envisioned being carried out with the participation of the bokréta performers.

The Hungarianization of holidays and the establishment of new holidays based on ancient folk customs also meant the creation of tradition within the movement, which, according to Eric Hobsbawm's definition, can be interpreted as "invented tradition," since we are talking about ritualization processes characterized by references to the past.[924] The public belief traces the origin of certain traditions back to ancient times, to "eternal reality," while they are actually products of the recent past (at most 100–150 years ago).[925] In this context, Soós Gábor explains that invented traditions

> "have their primary context in the (national) holiday and commemorative rituals. The revival of folk traditions also proceeded in a similar manner. The local or central (political and/or intellectual) elites create an ideal type of folk traditions based on the data available to them, establishing the »representative« folk traditions of a community (village, region, or nation). Thus, the tradition detaches from the context that created it and becomes national from local."[926]

Hobsbawm distinguishes between two main categories of processes of tradition construction: political (political-legitimizing traditions) and social (social-integrative traditions). The case of the traditions developed within the Gyöngyösbokréta movement offers a particularly compelling example for examining this distinction. On the one hand, local leaders of Gyöngyösbokréta – intentionally or unintentionally – created or revived folk customs. However, as we will see, Paulini himself also aimed to establish national holidays based on folk traditions. This effort initially achieved success at the local level, then it reached a national level, and with the state support, he was able to continue his initiatives, which clearly fall into the political category. Hobsbawm emphasizes that the "invention of political traditions" was

[922] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1934. (1.) 1. 3.
[923] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 10. 1-2.
[924] Hobsbawm 1983: 4.
[925] Barna 2011.
[926] Soós 1996.

more conscious and targeted, as they were carried out by state institutions to achieve political goals. New holidays and heroes played an important role in achieving these goals.[927]

5.2.1 August 20th – St. Stephen's Day and the Celebration of the Foundation of the State

The August 20th celebration, in which Gyöngyösbokréta was also organized, can be classified as part of the tradition-creating initiatives. In the first half of the 20th century, among the three major national holidays (March 15, August 20, and October 6), following World War I, the revolutions, and the blow dealt by the Treaty of Trianon, August 20 was the most significant holiday for preserving national identity in the country.[928] With government guidance, the St. Stephen's Day (August 20) observance was redefined from a religious feast to a national holiday. This holiday was intended to symbolize the Christian unity of the nation and to honor the country's Christian identity, which was viewed as a timeless bond connecting Hungary with Europe.[929] The significance of this day increased further in 1938, when the 900th anniversary of the founding king's death, the Eucharistic World Congress held in Hungary, the Golden Train tour of the Holy Right Hand, and the multi-day events of Gyöngyösbokréta all contributed to increasing national unity and festive spirit.[930] The way of celebrating August 20 became a topic of debate, questioning whether tourist propaganda should have a place in a state holiday.[931]

5.2.2 Hungarian Carnival, 3 February 1935.

On February 3, 1935, a Gyöngyösbokréta performance was held in Gyöngyös under the name of "Hungarian Carnival", in which villages around Gyöngyös participated. While there were displays of spinning and harvest celebrations, no traditional Carnival elements were featured in the program.[932] According to an article in *Pesti Hírlap*, however, the Carnival atmosphere was to be ensured by the jingling sleds.[933] After the event, Paulini stated, "With this Hungarian Carnival, we now begin to establish the nationwide folk-art celebration series, which we will conclude with the Hungarian Christmas."[934] On January 23, 1938, the city of Győr organized the Hungarian Carnival program with seven participating groups. On December 26, the Hungarian Christmas was also held in Győr, with the participation of six bokréta groups.[935] The

[927] Hobsbawm–Ranger 1983: 264–265. Zóka 2016: 35.
[928] Nagy 2017: 104.
[929] Nagy 2017: 104.
[930] Tóth 2009: 145.; *Új Magyarország* 1947. augusztus 23. 4.
[931] *Közlöny* 1936. október 30. 42.
[932] Gönyey é.n.: 9.
[933] *Pesti Hírlap* 1935. január 26. 12.
[934] *Az Est* 1935. február 6. 4.
[935] Gönyey é.n.: 9.

Christmas celebration happened once again on the December 6–8, 1940, when bokréta groups from Transylvania showcased their Christmas traditions in Budapest.[936]

5.2.3 Hungarian Pentecost, 16 May 1937.

On May 16, 1937, the Hungarian Pentecost was held as a nationwide bokréta event in Vác. Eight villages participated in the festival. The program began with a festive military band and a wreath-laying ceremony at the statue of the heroes. This was followed by the traditional Pentecost King election and running. The bokréta groups tailored their performances to the occasion: Tura presented Pentecost festivities, Galgahévíz performed May-walking, and Boldog presented a performance titled *Under the May Tree Hide-and-Seek*.[937] The Szada group performed for the first time, with their leader teaching them Pentecost customs. For this occasion, they learned the folk song *Ma vagyon, ma vagyon piros pünkösd napja [Today is, today is the red Pentecost day]*, a song that was not known in Szada.[938] In the case of the Hungarian Pentecost, the groups' performances were already aligned with the holiday by showcasing Pentecost traditions. However, this also meant that, in some cases – such as the Szada group – the groups did not present their own traditions. This illustrates the aspect of invented traditions in which local leaders, based on available data, create an idealized version of folk traditions, which then becomes a nationally representative tradition.

5.2.4 Harvest Festivals, Bread Festivals

Among Hungarian folk traditions, the harvest festivals are the most commonly discussed in relation to invented traditions. This is mainly due to ethnographer Ákos Kovács, who first showcased the evolution of harvest customs as a top-down created tradition in the exhibition *A kitalált hagyomány. Az aratóünnepektől az új kenyér ünnepéig [The Invented Tradition: From Harvest Festivals to the New Bread Festival]*[939] at the Ethnographic Museum, and later in his book *Kitalált hagyomány [The Invented Tradition]*.[940] The title of his book is self-explanatory, and although it mentions invented tradition, there is no reference to Hobsbawm's concept. Kovács rightly points out that this tradition played a role in each political era of the 20th century, yet little is known about its origin.

[936] *Hagyomány Szava* 1940. (1.) 3. 5.
[937] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3-4. 5.
[938] Kecskés (szerk.) 2012: 7.
[939] *A kitalált hagyomány. Az aratóünnepektől az új kenyér ünnepéig* 2003. jún. 29. – 2003. okt. 12. https://www.neprajz.hu/kiallitasok/idoszaki/2003/a_kitalalt_hagyomany.html
[940] Kovács Á. 2006.

At the turn of the 19th century, under the proposal of Ignác Darányi (1849–1927), Minister of Agriculture [1895–1903; 1906–1910], harvest festivals were introduced – or revived. These festivals aimed to foster a more cordial relationship between the harvest workers and the landowners through festive harvest presentations. However, this faced difficulties, as in many places no harvest traditions existed.[941] This is what cultural politics attempted to institutionalize within the framework of Gyöngyösbokréta, leading to the spread of harvest customs from various regions, which then served as models for other areas.[942] Moreover, two bread festivals were also held, aiming to promote these new traditions.

5.2.4.1 The New Bread Festival in Szeged, 29 June 1937.

On June 29, 1937, the New Bread Festival was held in Szeged.[943] Like the aforementioned Hungarianized customs, the New Bread Festival was not without precedent or origin. Ethnographer Ákos Kovács traces this custom to the medieval liturgical feast "The Division of the Apostles," celebrated on July 15, and to the 1899 decree of Minister of Agriculture Ignác Darányi on harvest festivals. However, there had been no previous harvest festivals held in Szeged, something that many people missed and advocated for.[944] Szeged was considered a good choice for this event because it is located in the Great Plain, where there are many farmworkers, and because it also represented the new national border, as emphasized by Géza Szabó, the councilor of the city:

> "The Hungarian bread, the blessed celebration of Hungarian life, brings a new light to Szeged and adorns the souls of the people of Szeged with its deep meaning. […] The significance of this celebration is especially great here, on the Trianon border, where, as a result of the dreadful blow, thousands of entire families, lost their bread."[945]

The quote, as well as the revitalized customs, clearly demonstrate an instance where invented folk traditions play a role in the construction of national consciousness by becoming part of an ideological framework.[946] In the case of Szeged's festival, the creation of this new custom also carried the idea of territorial expansion.

As the large-scale event grew beyond the city's capabilities, the relevant government bodies asked Paulini to organize it, who had already considered revitalizing this tradition in 1935: "Among the bokréta festivals to be held in rural towns, the largest scale will be the

[941] Illés 2008: 954–970.
[942] Balázs Kovács 2013: 331–332.
[943] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3–5. 5.
[944] Kovács 2004: 1.
[945] *Délmagyarország* 1937. július 1. 5.
[946] Soós 1996.

Hungarian Bread Festival. This will be a traveling festival […].”[947] Thus, the event became a tourist attraction promoting nation-building.[948]



Fig. 62. Aradi vértanúk Square, facing the Gate of Heroes, Szeged. Harvesters’ parade, 1937. Fortepan 118789.

At the festival, the bokréta groups adorned the Gate of Heroes, after which Szeged’s farmers, farm youths, millers, and bakers paraded with freshly baked croissants, pretzels, and guild signs. (Fig. 62.) The afternoon program included folk art demonstrations, the apotheosis of Hungarian bread, and a segment titled “Dances of Ancient Customs.” According to Ákos Kovács’ analysis, Paulini borrowed many elements from the previous proposals, but he added his own ideas to the festival to give it a more Hungarian character.[949] Several bokréta groups performed customs related to bread production and agricultural labor: the men from Tápé performed plowing, the men from Géderlak demonstrated sowing, the men from Érsekcsanád showcased harvesting, while the Báta bokréta presented a harvest festival, and the Kalocsa bokréta performed the custom of breaking the new bread.[950] Through these performances, Paulini wished to emphasize the importance of bread and the related labor, while the wedding and other customs demonstrated by the bokréta groups strengthened the emphasis on Hungarian folk spirit. However, the Szeged New Bread Festival did not become the tradition that its organizers had envisioned. The next Bread Festival would not take place until four years later, and it would become a much larger-scale national political event in Subotica.[951]

[947] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1935. (2.) 4. 3.
[948] Takáts J. 2005: 28.
[949] Kovács Á. 2002: 25–29.; Kovács Á. 2004.
[950] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 6. 1.
[951] *Délmagyarország* 1941. július 24. 3.

5.2.4.2 The Hungarian Bread Festival in Subotica, 27 July 1941.

On July 27, 1941, the National Political Service and the National Hungarian Bokréta Association organized the Hungarian Bread Festival in Subotica.[952] In the re-annexed territory, the Governor himself broke the new bread, and in his speech, he said: "The day when the southern region became Hungarian again has ripened, and as a result of the faithful labor of this land's people, it now places the bread of the nation on the table."[953] In the afternoon, at the Subotica stadium the Gyöngyösbokréta performance had taken place.[954] (Fig. 63.)



Fig. 63. Bátai bokréta members in Subotica, 1941. http://www.sarkoz.extra.hu/elodeink.html

This latter example most clearly highlights that the movement was endowed with national-building and national-political significance, rather than merely cultural, by the success of territorial expansion policies.

The celebrations realized through Gyöngyösbokréta aimed to elevate folk traditions into national traditions in different ways, using elements from various customs to shape these events. (Fig. 64–65.) However, a common feature was that in all cases, the Hungarian character was emphasized in their names.[955] These events, however, did not become regular occurrences. During my research, I found no reason for the ephemeral nature of the Carnival, Christmas, and Pentecost traditions, suggesting that alongside the outbreak of war, the lack of financial resources or higher-level directives/permissions could be possible explanations. In the case of the bread festivals, Ákos Kovács wrote that, in addition to financial reasons, they did not recur because "the political role intended for the Hungarian Bread Festival was taken over by the still-popular harvest festivals."[956] However, even as late as 1939, Paulini planned further

[952] Szentiváni 1942: 77.; *Magyar Futár* 1941. július 31.; *Zala Megyei Újság* 1941. július 28. 1.
[953] *Zala Megyei Ujság* 1941. július 28. 1.
[954] *Délmagyarország* 1941. július 26. 6.; *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. (2.) 7. 1–2.
[955] The New Bread Festival is named as Hungarian Bread Festival in the *Bokrétások Lapja.* (*B. L.* 1937. (4.) 6. 5.)
[956] Kovács 2006: 145.

Hungarianization of festivals, believing that a small country like Hungary needed to demonstrate its national consciousness multiple times, which could be facilitated by these events.[957] In contrast, the ongoing success and increasing audience and performances of the Budapest Gyöngyösbokréta performances, as well as participation in the procession, truly became a tradition and also became a defining element of another invented tradition: the Saint Stephen's Day/Week.

Through organizing such politically significant events and featuring the bokréta participants, Paulini increased the political role of the movement. However, statements such as those found in Ákos Kovács's writings, which attribute the responsibility for the Jewish labor service to the movement and its political performances, should be rejected: "The path that Paulini, and the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, had been following »with momentum and yet with caution« for years, ultimately led to what was shown partly by the Novi Sad tragedy, and also by the fact that the government decree 2870/1941, issued on April 16, 1941, obligated Jewish men to perform the so-called homeland defense auxiliary (labor) service."[958]



Fig. 64–65. Photo collage in the newspaper about the Hungarian Bread Festival. *Magyar Futár*, July 31, 1941.; Bokréta girls bring the crown at the Hungarian Bread Festival in Subotica, 1941. Photo: Elek Kozacsek. (NMF325179. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.)

Building on Hobsbawm's reflections, it is worth contemplating why these invented traditions have been able – or unable – to function successfully.[959] The vast majority of the cases presented above were strong attempts to establish national holidays based on folk traditions. However, as we have seen, these did not reach the level required to be regularly repeated. While the August 20 celebrations, which prominently featured Gyöngyösbokréta performances, worked well and met societal needs, other celebrations did not achieve significant success in the period, perhaps

[957] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 11. 2.
[958] Kovács Á. 2008: 22.; Viczián 2008: 155–159.
[959] Hobsbawm–Ranger 1983: 265.

because they targeted not the entire society but rather a narrower segment of it. As for the harvest festivals, although the preservation of the interwar-era Gyöngyösbokréta traditions was completely rejected after 1945, these traditions were nevertheless integrated into post-1945 heritage preservation efforts.[960]

5.3 Folk dances to national dances

The integration of folk culture into education was also seen as an attempt to nationalize folk traditions, as exemplified by Gyöngyösbokréta. One such initiative was the promotion of folk dance, as advocated by István Györffy, who believed that beyond the Gyöngyösbokréta performances, these dances should be adopted more widely, for example in the military. These dances were seen as excellent physical exercises: the „most beautiful, most Hungarian body movements that foster good posture and grace in young people."[961]

This movement followed several similar initiatives that sought to renew national culture through folk traditions, such as the creation of the verbunkos dances by the nobility in the late 18th century, which, though initially restricted to the upper classes, later became popular with the common people and were featured in the Gyöngyösbokréta performances. Likewise, in the 19th century, there was a promotion to elevate csárdás to a national ballroom dance. „This, however, was primarily in the realm of social dancing, aiming to bring folk dances into the elite ballroom settings."[962] A similar focus on folk dances occurred between the two world wars, alongside efforts to establish a national ballet that incorporated folk motifs.[963]

In terms of representation, it's important to note that, ballet and other prominent forms of dance art, such as motion art and social dance, did not receive state support and were tightly regulated by law. In contrast, the Gyöngyösbokréta, symbolizing national culture and unity, fit into the ideological framework of the regime and thus became a unique and supported art form of the era. Dance, being universally understandable and enjoyable due to the lack of language barriers, was effectively used by state propaganda.[964]

5.4 From traditional costumes to fashion

"...because the national costume embodies the soul, and under the Hungarian garment, the Hungarian heart always beats." – This was said by Horthy in his speech in 1923, where he also emphasized the importance of Hungarian women making their own textiles.[965] The Bokréta

[960] Vámos 2018: 31–42.
[961] Györffy 1939: 32.; Taylor 2008: 15–16.; Barna 2011: 69.
[962] Vitányi 1958: 58.
[963] Gara 2018: 199.; Kővágó – Kővágó 2016: 42.; Kodály Zoltán: „Magyarság a zenében". In: Visszatekintés 2, 235–259. 253.
[964] Kovács – Megyeri 2012: 72.
[965] *Tolnamegyei Újság* 1923. ápr. 28. 1–2.

Association played a role in this, as the groups presenting their traditions helped rediscover the old techniques and motifs of decorative folk-art, restarting its domestic production.[966]

The impact of this can be seen in the search for folk art motifs, the revival of long-forgotten old crafts and techniques, and the resurgence of fashion based on traditional costumes.[967] A nation's distinctive costume is one of the best tools for expressing unity and national sentiment. When the Gyöngyösbokréta performances were first organized and more and more groups joined the Bokréta Association, most peasants had already abandoned their traditional costumes. (Since the visual impact of the traditional costume was an important consideration when selecting groups, in the villages where the traditional attire had already disappeared, no Gyöngyösbokréta group could form.[968]) However, in many places, the costume was still alive or could be easily reconstructed. The revival of traditional costumes can also be interpreted as an invented tradition, as demonstrated by Hugh Trevor-Roper with the example of the Scottish kilt.[969]

5.4.1 The role of Gyöngyösbokréta in the revival of folk costumes

One of the main criteria for the selection of Gyöngyösbokréta groups was the inclusion of vibrant, colorful, and striking traditional costumes.[970] Despite the fact that many villages no longer wore these costumes, the movement led to the rediscovery of old garments, and with the help of ethnographers, costumes were reconstructed based on old records and patterns.[971] (Along with the costumes, folk art objects also became fashionable again; however, they lost their original functional purpose and were instead used as decorative items in rooms.[972])

The costume, as a central issue in the Gyöngyösbokréta recruitment process, was problematic in several ways. First, the issue of authenticity sparked significant debate (discussed in Chapter 6), with the primary cause being that during this period slow changes occurred in the lives of peasants, and urban fashion began to take hold.[973] Another controversial point was that, due to the costs of traditional costumes, only wealthy families could afford them, so only those from affluent backgrounds could participate, which led to social debates.[974]

[966] Kovács H. 2013: 6.
[967] Kokas 1940: 754.
[968] Bathó 2006: 108.
[969] Trevor-Roper: 1983: 15–42.; Soós: 1996.
[970] Lele 1983: 35-41.
[971] Ács 1989: 37.; Hofer 2000: 8–9.; Flórián 2000: 114.; Balázs Kovács 2006: 191–192.
[972] Szarvas 1985: 58–59.; Szojka 2006: 212.
[973] Romsics Ignác 2017: 177–178.
[974] Csánki 2005: 23–24.

A primary aim of the movement was to revive interest and admiration for folk art and costumes among both peasants and intellectuals, thus preserving and exhibiting traditional costumes, dances, and songs in their authentic state.[975] The movement accomplished this objective, often postponing the rural population's adoption of urban attire, a transition in which rural apparel progressively resembled that of urban residents.[976] Paulini confirmed this important achievement of the movement in 1936: "The peasant... realized the value of his unique and ancient culture, and he felt that his beautiful, old heritage was appreciated more than the trinkets it had collected in its vain attempts to imitate the upper class."[977] This success was also aided by the countryside's intellectuals' affection for folk costumes.[978] The reassessment of traditional clothing induced changes in the life of the peasantry, alterations sometimes regarded as external, adverse influences; moreover, the promotion of folk costumes was not devoid of propagandistic intentions.[979] Local historical studies point out that the Gyöngyösbokréta performances also brought change to the costumes of various regions.[980] The Kalocsa embroidery, for instance, became much more vibrant, larger, and more striking as a result of the Gyöngyösbokréta stage. Furthermore, the impact of the movement led to the nationwide recognition of Kalocsa embroidery and painting[981]: it became fashionable to embroider in the Kalocsa style and to decorate homes with it, even in more distant towns, resulting in local embroideries becoming much more vivid and captivating.[982] Another notable change brought about by the movement was the introduction of undergarments for girls. In the past, in most regions they did not wear closed underwear, but since the dancing on stage made visible what was (or wasn't) under the multiple layers of skirts, the movement introduced the wearing of panties.[983] Such compromises were necessary to preserve folk costumes.

As previously mentioned, in order to ensure that every bokréta group felt equally valued in terms of their traditions and costumes, Paulini did not allow any one group to receive more applause than another on stage, and he also disliked any form of competition or comparison between groups. The groups would easily become disheartened during award ceremonies if their costume was not selected as the most beautiful.[984] In 1940, Paulini Béla responded to the

[975] Szente 2017: 153.; Barabás 1932: 21.; Béres 2015: 56.; Steib 2018: 367.
[976] Flórián 2001: 314–316.; Horváth B. 1943: 3.
[977] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 9. 3–6.
[978] Szabó Z. 1938: 3.
[979] Nagy Zsolt 2017: 209–210.
[980] Kerecsényi 1977: 15.; Cseri 2009: 162.
[981] Filus 2016: 79.
[982] Bárth 1978: 37.; Filus 2016: 213.; *William Penn Life* 1989. (24.) 5. 9.; Klamár 2008: 193.; Flórián 2005: 235.; K. Csilléry 1983: 362–364.
[983] Paládi-Kovács (szerk.): 1997.; Czingel 2014: 85.; Flórián 2000: 171.
[984] *Komáromi Lapok* 1940. augusztus 17. 5.

costume awards initiated by the National Hungarian Tourist Office with a very upset article, arguing that this was not within the scope of the Office's responsibilities and that it had a negative effect on folk art.[985] Nevertheless, between 1940 and 1941, folk costume competitions were held in Kapuvár, Kalocsa, Mezőkövesd, and Kőrösfő with the participation of the Bokréta Association.[986] In 1942, the Bokréta Association organized four events to reward folk costumes in Kéménd, Nádasdaróc, Hollókő, and Doroszló, where delegates from the Ethnographic Museum participated and awarded the costumes with prizes. These awards were introduced by the organizers to encourage the preservation and enhancement of traditions and costumes.[987] This can be attributed to Paulini's varying, sometimes inconsistent statements, but it may also be explained by the fact that by 1940, peasants had come to appreciate their folk costumes.

One of the significant impacts of Gyöngyösbokréta was that peasants recognized the value inherent in their folk art and folk costumes, and instead of being ashamed, they wore them with pride. As a result, it can be said that in many cases, the movement led to the re-adoption or renovation of traditional costumes. The Szany group was designated as a model for bokréta groups due to its capacity to authentically renew its folk attire alongside its traditions.[988] Kálmán Kokas, the local bokréta leader, asserts that the movement contributed to the resurgence of the National Hungarian Bokréta Association's slogan – "West on weekdays, East on holidays" – thereby reinstating the costume's visibility during specific holidays, "undoubted delight of all those who understand and feel the beauty of Hungarian nature."[989] Sándor Gönyey specifically commended the Tiszapolgár bokréta group for successfully revitalizing the traditional outfit in its most authentic form.[990] The Boldog group utilized tourist profit from local bokréta performances to commission 10 pairs of red boots, reminiscent of those worn in the early 1900s.[991] The Csurgónagymarton group had commissioned new clothes for men, while the women had purchased new Viennese red scarves and commenced the creation of their "konty", the exquisite traditional headpiece of Somogy region. Zsigmond Szigethy, a local teacher, claimed that adults had instilled in children a revived love for the traditional costumes, and that during a performance, the smaller children were already reciting in old attire.[992]

[985] *Hagyomány Szava* 1940. (1.) 2. 5.
[986] Ablonczy 2008: 524–525.
[987] *Hagyomány Szava* 1943. (4.) 4. 8.
[988] *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. (2.) 3. 6.
[989] Kokas 1938: 35–39.
[990] Gönyey 1938b: 428.
[991] Ujváry 1984: 38.
[992] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 7–8. 3.

Gyöngyösbokréta significantly influenced the mitigation, or at least postponement, of the abandonment of traditional attire;[993] however, it could not reverse the irreversible.[994]

5.4.2 Gyöngyösbokréta and Hungarian fashion during the interwar period

Gyöngyösbokréta not only illuminated the value of peasants' customs and attire but also initiated a trend among the intellectuals. During the reform era, the adoption of folk crafts and the incorporation of folk motifs had commenced, and by the turn of the century – illustrated by events referenced in the second chapter (e.g., the Isabella Ball) – folk motifs were increasingly utilized. In the 1930s, the proliferation of Hungarian-style festive attire among the middle and upper classes evolved into a comprehensive initiative.[995] Organizations, publications, and events (gala balls, fashion shows) were established to promote Hungarian attire.[996] Hungarian balls were further organized abroad to enhance tourism, where Gyöngyösbokréta brochures were disseminated to international visitors, promoting the villages renowned for Gyöngyösbokréta (Kalocsa, Boldog, Mezőkövesd) as tourist attractions.[997]

The design of clothes including Hungarian elements was prevalent in all the salons, and a central role was played by Klára Tüdős Mrs. Zsindely (formerly Mrs. Szunyogh), the principal costume designer for the Opera House. Her costume designs emphasized folk tradition, avoiding imitation or exaggeration of folk art, influenced by the art of the re-annexed territories of Transylvania, the discovery of Székely (Szekler) folk art, and the traditional garments she encountered through the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement.[998]

The advertisements and slogans of the fashion salons distinctly promoted Hungarian attire. Hungarian fashion enjoyed widespread popularity, every design house's brochure promoting Hungarian garments, quoting actresses and models regarding Hungarian style.[999] Articles and sketches highlight Gyöngyösbokréta as a representative example or model for shaping national cultural fashion. (Fig. 66–67.)

[993] Kapros 2004: 137.; Szabó Z. 1938: 76–82.; Fülöp 2014: 103.
[994] Flórián 2011: 14.; Glatz 1938b: 35.; *Az Est* 1936. december 31. 8.; Kertes 1938: 839–841.; Bodor 1944: 9.
[995] Gergely 2006: 232–236. 234–235.; Fejős 1991: 143.
[996] Bajzik 2015: 30–50.; *Magyarság* 1939. április 7. 4.; Kresz 1952: 25–26.; F. Dózsa 1997: 99.; Halasy 1989: 303.; *Dunántúl* 1935. január 6. 10.; Kissné Tóth 1938: n.o.; Stella 1938: 5.; *8 Órai Újság* 1940. december 24. 5.; V. Perényi 1938: 4.; *Az Ojság* 1935. szeptember 1. 5.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. augusztus 5. 5.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1940. október 9. 7.; F. Dózsa 1989: 340.
[997] Kollár 2014: 114.; 125–126. []
[998] Bagyinszky 2011: 62.; F. Dózsa 1997: 100.
[999] MKVM KD 83.379.1.



Fig. 66–67. Vágó, Zsófia. 1941. „A gyöngyösbokréta ad ötletet…" *Az Újság*, August 27, 1941, 8.; V. Perényi, Irén. 1938. „Magyar Ünneplő." *Esti Újság*, July 31, 1938, 4.

In 1936, the Hungarian Fashion Hall set up a Gyöngyös Bokréta showcase in its shop, which is documented in one of their posters.[1000] (Fig. 68.)



Fig. 68. The window display of the Hungarian Fashion Hall in 1936.
(MKVM KF 501, Gyöngyösi Bokréta, 1936. Photographic Collection of the History of Commerce, Museum of Trade and Tourism, Budapest.)

Béla Paulini published inspiring pieces in the movement's newspapers, highlighting the significance of the Hungarian national attire. He informed readers that not only Hungarian fashion designers drew inspiration from the richness of Hungarian folk art and attire, but that designers from other countries also sought to study Hungarian garments.[1001] Elsa Schiaparelli, the renowned Parisian fashion designer, also visited Hungary and explored the Hungarian countryside, including Hortobágy and Mezőkövesd, where the traditional costumes are

[1000] MKVM KF 501.
[1001] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 2. 4.

distinctive and intriguing.[1002] He also referenced the prominent German publication Kraft durch Freude, which, in an article titled "Folk Costumes as Fashion Patterns," addressed Hungarian attire.[1003] Paulini's writings on this topic aimed to convince bokréta leaders and intellectuals to commission Hungarian attire for themselves. "It would be preferable for these distinguished intellectuals to don Hungarian attire during Hungarian holidays." He stated in 1935 that "West on weekdays, East on holidays" should be altered to "celebrations in Hungarian attire." His initiatives in this regard received backing from the bokréta leaders, although many blamed budgetary constraints. Paulini envisioned a Hungarian-inspired festive attire in black, maybe brown, navy blue, or grey, comprising a jacket and boots, complete with a drawstring.[1004] He presented each bokréta leader with a tie from Sárköz region to motivate them to create a Hungarian clothing.[1005] Paulini's endeavors among the bokréta leaders were successful, and at the jubilee assembly in the Vigadó's banquet hall, all attendees were attired in Hungarian garments.[1006] The Hungarian costume movement, influenced by the folk attire of the bokréta members, also targeted other segments of society.

> "We desire the middle class, serving as a transitional link between the aristocracy and the people, to overtly embody this function through their attire. We wish to see this group of people, at least on festive events, unified in asserting their own Hungarian style and daring to stand up for their national costume against the fashions of the West. The only way to stand out from the crowd of grey, small nations and attract the attention of the world at large, which loves beauty and originality, is to show off the characteristics of our race."[1007]

The quote indicates that the objective was to develop a unique Hungarian outfit that would enhance a sense of belonging and exhibit pride to the outside world. Supporters of preserving folk costumes and Hungarian attire within the upper classes included the painter Oszkár Glatz, who authored encouraging articles, delivered speeches, and immortalized the vanishing folk costumes in his paintings, advocating for both the costume movement and the Gyöngyösbokréta.[1008] Buják, Glatz's preferred location for painting folk costumes, conferred upon him the status of honorary citizen and hosted a Hungarian costume festival featuring a Gyöngyösbokréta demonstration. Glatz cited the creation of Hungarian clothes by Buják's

[1002] Bagyinszky 2011: 63.
[1003] *Hagyomány Szava* 1942. (3.) 3. 3.
[1004] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1935. (2.) 7. 8.
[1005] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1935. (2.) 2–3. 5.; Ujváry 1984: 43.
[1006] *Nemzeti Újság* 1940. augusztus 20. 7.
[1007] Vadon (szerk.): 1940.
[1008] Glatz 1935: 1–2.; *Magyarság* 1935. június 16. 19.; *Az Újság* 1935. június 16. 22.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1935. június 19. 12.; *Az Újság* 1935. augusztus 10. 10.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1935. július 20. 11.; *Délmagyarország* 1936. március 13. 5.; Glatz 1938a: 4.

intellectuals as an exemplar, emphasizing that this ceremonial attire would symbolize Hungarianness and positively influence tourism.[1009] An interesting side note about the event is that, despite the peasants and costumes of Buják being the focal point of the celebration, there was significant criticism in the media regarding the invitation, which was composed by the villagers and contained spelling errors.[1010] These subtle nuances exemplify that, despite peasant culture forming the foundation of Hungarian attire, peasants were often perceived unfavorably. The leadership of Gyöngyösbokréta encouraged the intellectual lady supporters to attend the events in their "Bokréta Dame Dress". As a supporter of the movement, Klára Tüdős was asked to design the "Bokréta Dame Dresses", which were presented in 1935.[1011] (Fig. 69–70–71.)

> "The premise was that metropolitan women ought not to don traditional attire, even amongst the prevalence of »folk art« trend, and gradually – due to factors largely beyond our influence – even in its excess. Is it difficult to refrain from dressing up? Once it catches on, it's hard to stop. Intellectuals engage in various activities related to folk arts beyond mere »practice«; nonetheless, there are instances where urban women should refrain from donning folk costumes. Klára Tüdős Mrs. Szunyogh, an artist and full member of the M. B. Association, has created »Bokréta dame dress« intended for urban ladies who are inclined to don Hungarian attire during significant marches and wish to demonstrate their support for the Gyöngyösbokréta cause."[1012]



Fig. 69–70–71. Bokréta Dame Dress, designed by Klára Tüdős. Fotó: Hungarian Heritage House Facebook page

Paulini attempted to exemplify the leaders and intellectuals of the bourgeoisie through his attire. His wife donned the Bokréta Dame Dress, for the public and (inter)national Gyöngyösbokréta events. (Fig. 73.) Gitta Marton Mrs. Farkass, the secretary of the National Hungarian Bokréta

[1009] Glatz 1936: 36.; Aradi 2010: 596.; *Színházi Élet* 1937. 35. 14–15.
[1010] *Magyarország* 1935. augusztus 13. 7.; *Magyarország* 1935. augusztus 20. 7.
[1011] *Magyarság* 1935. június 9. 19.
[1012] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1935. (2.) 5–6. 7.

Association, also donned a similar garment. (Fig. 72.) She was formerly a leader of the *Magyar Szivárvány* (not the Paulini one),[1013] mentioned in the second chapter, a wealthy woman[1014] who frequented several balls and social gatherings in traditional Hungarian attire.[1015] Tüdős herself, as a great supporter of the movement had also a Bokréta Dame Dress. (Fig. 74.)



Fig. 72–73–74. Gitta Marton Mrs. Farkass in her Bokréta Dame Dress. (*Nemzeti Újság*, April 25, 1937.); Béla Paulini's wife and Gitta Marton Mrs. Farkass in various Bokréta Dame Dresses. (Hungarian Heritage House Facebook page.); Klára Tüdős in her Bokréta Dame Dress. (*Népszabadság,* July 19, 1995, 14.)

The wife of the Governor herself decided to attend the Eucharistic procession in Hungarian dress, together with her entourage. Prior to this, on 3 April 1938, a Hungarian fashion show was held at the Opera House, where dresses for different occasions were presented under the patronage of the wife of the Governor and Archduchess Anna.[1016]

> "The great success of the Hungarian costume show at the Opera House gives hope that the Hungarian costume will become popular in the capital as well as in the countryside, and that the Hungarian dress with its Hungarian cut and decoration will not only be fashionable at the Eucharistic Congress, but will also be a part of the homes of Hungarian women and girls, and will become common in everyday life. We hope... there will be no women's dress in the future that is not decorated with a Hungarian motif."[1017]

The significance of the Hungarian dress project is shown by the fact that the First Lady herself often wore traditional dress inspired by the festive season when she made official appearances.[1018]

[1013] *Színházi Élet* 1934. 7. 73.
[1014] *Pesti Napló* 1914. január 30. 16.; Endrődi 1933: *Színházi Élet* 1933. 19. 61–64. 63.; *Az Újság* 1935. február 12. 9.
[1015] Oláh 1934: 7.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1935. május 30. 9.
[1016] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 1–3. 5.; Demeter 2000: 25.; Harsányi G. 1938: 570–574.; *Friss Újság* 1938. április 3. 3.; *Új Magyarság* 1938. április 5. 11.
[1017] *Komárommegyei Hírlap* 1938. április 9. 2.
[1018] Horel 2014: 233–234.

To give an overview of the movement's impact on folk costumes and Hungarian fashion, the first and most important effect of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement was that it made Hungarian peasants recognize the value of their folk costumes and emphasized the importance of each village rediscovering and wearing its original attire.[1019] The movement succeeded in encouraging them to return to traditional dress and to have costumes reconstructed, which in turn inspired fashion designers. As a result, not only the bokréta leaders but also members of the intellectual elite appeared at major events wearing formal Hungarian attire. In this context, the concept of "invented tradition" is applicable to the revived folk costumes, which the bokréta peasants increasingly wore with pride, but also to the "Bokréta Dame Dress" and the formal Hungarian attire. However, the outbreak of World War II thwarted the further promotion of folk costumes among the peasantry and the long-term success of the Hungarian fashion trend among the elite.[1020]

5.5 The St. Stephen Concept and the Unity of Village and City

Paulini and many of the leaders of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement repeatedly emphasize the importance of unity between village and city in the creation of national cohesion. "The true attraction of St. Stephen's Week is the Gyöngyösbokréta. Budapest, the capital, is proud of it… […] Budapest celebrates the countryside, and the countryside joyfully bows before the Hungarian capital,"[1021] writes *Az Est*, one of the largest daily newspapers, highlighting the Gyöngyösbokréta performances as a prime example of the encounter between rural and urban life.[1022] (Fig. 75.) According to this logic, the meeting of village and city also led to the meeting of different social classes. "The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement brings different social classes closer together, strengthens national consciousness," wrote László Vizslovszky, leader of the Géderlak group.

> "The audience included intellectuals, workers, and servant girls from the village, who had saved up the small entrance fee to mourn the beautiful, yet sad past they had to leave behind. There were also tears of joy as their brothers, the Hungarian peasants, finally had a place on the stage of Budapest theater. This was the »Gyöngyösbokréta spirit.«"[1023]

In connection with this, a tradition was established from the first performance onward: during the August performances of Gyöngyösbokréta, groups from the villages first visited the City

[1019] Fülemile 2020: 160.
[1020] Kassay 1943: 1.; NM EA 19037. 115/44. "Bözsi" 1944. április 4-i levele Paulini Bélához népviseleti vásznak tárgyában.; NM EA 19037. 113/44. György Gergely vertcsipke készítő 1944. március 28-i levele a M. Bokréta Szövetség vezetőségének csipke alapanyag küldésének tárgyában.
[1021] *Az Est* 1934. augusztus 19. 4.
[1022] *Friss Ujság* 1935. augusztus 22. 2.
[1023] Ujváry 1984: 15.

Hall of the capital to express their gratitude for the city's hospitality. This included symbolic expressions of thanks. Similarly to the harvest festivals, where it was customary to greet the landowner, the mayor greeted the peasants, who reciprocated with gifts.[1024]



Fig. 75. Men in festive attire, Gyöngyösbokréta participants at the Buda Castle, near the base of the Saint Stephen statue, 1940s. Photo: István Szendrő. (NMF328777. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.)

5.6 The formation of Gyöngyösbokréta groups in the (re-)annexed territories[1025]

The question of „who belongs to the Hungarian nation" has another aspect, namely the situation of Hungarians living beyond the borders. The major issue resulting from the Treaty of Trianon was the situation of the Hungarian population that found itself outside the new borders, which led to changes in the identity of these social groups.[1026] This also resulted in a „mutual fear relationship" between Hungary and its neighboring states, since, "when any Hungarian community beyond the borders suffers harm, Hungary may perceive it as a violation of part of the nation. If the Hungarian state or public opinion protests, the other state and its public may view it as interference in their internal affairs."[1027] According to minority researcher Nándor Bárdi, in the context of conceptual history, the expression "national minority" was used to

[1024] *Pesti Napló* 1939. augusztus 17. 10.; *Új Budapest* 1935. október 26. 2–3. 2.; https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=299
[1025] Andor 2022: 70–84.
[1026] Bárdi 2004: 16–17.
[1027] Bárdi 2004: 15.

define the Hungarians living outside Hungary between the two World Wars, which referred to a smaller portion of a nation living as a minority in another country. This term did not deny belonging to the other nation but signified the unequal relationship. After World War II, the term "nationality" appeared, which became a distinct entity and no longer referred to the connection with the majority nation of the mother country.[1028] This shift also illustrates that the political situation in the interwar period was built around the fresh trauma of Trianon, and the foreign policy of Hungary, as well as the vision for the Hungarian diaspora, were similar: both were defined by a desire for revision.[1029] As Bárdi puts it, research on the Hungarian diaspora distinguishes between three or four approaches: one is the history of suffering, which defines the fate of Hungarians beyond the borders as a series of grievances, not seeking solutions but rather traumatizing. In contrast, another approach chooses conflict management, starting from conflicts that are sparked from above (politics, intellectuals, foreign powers), which otherwise do not exist between the peoples living alongside each other. Alternatively, it suggests that Central European nations know very little about each other, and if they did, there would be fewer conflicts. The third approach, which the author himself applies, believes in the continuous self-reconstruction of communities, "viewing the history of Hungarian minorities as a dynamic system of internal and external responses. It considers the problem not solvable but manageable, primarily as a social and political issue, not a security issue."[1030]

The ideology driving the domestic politics and diplomacy of the era, revisionism, naturally appeared on Gyöngyösbokréta stage, with the participants of the movement acting as effective representatives of this idea. The news of Gyöngyösbokréta reached the annexed territories via the radio – often provoking disapproval from the new country, not without Hungarian propaganda.[1031] Initially, the Bokréta Association faced difficulties in integrating groups from territories that had been annexed by the Treaty of Trianon. Officially, the Association could not yet admit these groups into its branches, but they were in constant correspondence with them. Once certain territories – Upper Hungary, Transcarpathia, Transylvania, and Vojvodina – were reintegrated into Hungary by the Vienna Awards, the groups from these areas were added to the Association's roster. Newspapers frequently

[1028] Bárdi 2004: 19.
[1029] Bárdi 2004: 15.
[1030] Bárdi 2004: 10.
[1031] Nagy, Zsolt 2017: Great expectations and interwar realities. Hungarian cultural diplomacy, 1918–1941. 259–261.

highlighted the participation of groups from these "returned" territories, like: *"The capital city organizes this year's St. Stephen's Day celebrations in the spirit of national enlargement."*[1032]

> "The entire Hungarian press recorded with relief that in Yugoslavia, the Hungarian minority supported the government because, after direct negotiations, it allowed »Hungarian cultural associations and reading circles to operate freely, Hungarian Gyöngyösbokréta celebrations and amateur performances to take place, meetings to be held, Hungarian teachers to be reinstated, and Hungarian schools to be authorized. In addition – says Dr. Imre Váradi, the leader of the Hungarian minority – the government made a serious promise to fulfill the Hungarian minority's further legitimate and realistic requests and remedy its grievances.« The Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia had long since gone beyond these demands. Meetings, Hungarian amateur performances, Hungarian theater, Gyöngyösbokréta here were no longer an issue."[1033]

This quote illustrates that bokréta groups in the territories of Vojvodina and Upper Hungary were able to operate with the support of the local governments, and Gyöngyösbokréta became one of the most important elements of the cultural life of Hungarians beyond the borders. It symbolized belonging to a shared culture and was an expression of common values.[1034] "These groups, even during the occupations, often took the name »Gyöngyösbokréta«, although they could not officially form according to the association's bylaws, they still existed in spirit."[1035] After these regions were reintegrated into Hungary, they became important members of the association, representing their areas at various large-scale events.[1036]

5.6.1 Upper Hungary

In accordance with the First Vienna Award, bokréta groups from Upper Hungary were first able to participate in Budapest in 1939. However, local groups had been established in the region as early as 1935.[1037] One of the largest public gatherings of the Upper Hungary's Hungarian community took place in 1935 in Levice [Léva], where the Gyöngyösbokréta festival featured prominent public figures, as well as foreign visitors.[1038] (Fig. 76.) Groups from various regions (Zoboralja, Ipoly Valley, and Garam Valley) performed, with thousands attending.[1039] The

[1032] Bárdi 2004: 10.
[1033] *Népszava* 1937. január 24. 4.
[1034] Urbán: 2011.
[1035] *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. (2.) 4. 1–2.
[1036] This issue remains relevant to this day: „The application of the term of national cultural heritage in the law of 2003 to express the unity of all the Hungarians living in and around Hungary is a fuzzy solution to a so far unsolved problem of Hungarian nation-building since the treaty of Trianon, i.e. the lack of overlapping of the territory of the State of Hungary and that of the Hungarian nation." (Sonkoly, Gábor 2006: "Cultural Heritage Building in Hungary: Models and Approaches". *Martor* 11: 9–12. 149.)
[1037] Schubert 1939: 130.
[1038] *Simándi 1940: 2.;* B. L. 1935: 3.
[1039] Prágai Magyar Hírlap 1935. szeptember 3. 2.

success of the event led to the decision to hold it regularly.[1040] However, in 1938, the press reported that due to the limited space and the lack of further development opportunities for Gyöngyösbokréta, the event shifted focus to a performance of *János vitéz* songplay instead.[1041] *Bokrétások Lapja* also reported on the Martos bokréta group, which in 1938 was not officially part of the Association, but it was considered part of it "perhaps even more so than some groups living in free territories who, while technically members, did not feel the full significance of the Gyöngyösbokréta »role«.[1042] The "Upper Hungarian Gyöngyösbokréta" was promoted as one of the main attractions of the Esztergom Feast of the Assumption procession in 1939,[1043] and newspapers also reported that the Bart bokréta group participated in the 1939 Budapest presentation.[1044] Among the most notable Upper Hungarian events were the Entry of the Hungarian troops in Kassa (Košice), the Košice Arts Week, and the 1942 Kéménd folk costume competition. The 1941 Kéménd Bokréta Day was even covered by the Hungarian newsreel.[1045]



Fig. 76. The *Bokrétások Lapja* report on the Levice Bokréta celebration. *Bokrétások Lapja.* 1935. 2, no. 9: 5.

5.6.2 Transcarpathian

From the region currently belonging to Ukraine, only one group, the Dercen, participated in the Gyöngyösbokréta festivals. In 1940 and 1941, they performed in Budapest, showcasing their shepherd dances.[1046] Their leader, László Füsty, director–teacher, spoke on behalf of the bokréta participants from the newly reintegrated Transcarpathian and Upper Hungary during the

[1040] *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* 1938. április 10. 12.
[1041] *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* 1938. augusztus 14. 5.
[1042] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 10. 3.
[1043] *Esztergom és Vidéke* 1939. augusztus 3. 1.
[1044] *Magyarság* 1939. augusztus 19. 11.
[1045] https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=4278 – accessed: 2020. március 10.
[1046] Pálfi 1970: 149.

Bokréta Association's anniversary celebration.[1047] He expressed: "Now, when we are able to return, we joyfully come to show that no trickery from the Czech occupation could sever the spiritual connection between the Motherland and her separated children [...]."[1048] While bokréta events were organized in some towns,[1049] officially, only the Dercen group joined the movement.

5.6.3 Transylvania

In 1939, the idea of establishing bokréta groups in Transylvanian villages emerged, and during a wedding demonstration in Györgyfalva (Gheorghieni), a debate took place about the character of the future Transylvanian Gyöngyösbokréta. Local ethnographer Ödön Nagy (1914–1995) envisioned a purer folk tradition display there, free from tourism and theatrical elements.[1050] While groups in other annexed regions formed independently, in Transylvania – which held a special place in the national imagination[1051] – it was Paulini and Gönyey who traveled there to organize groups.[1052] Between 1941 and 1943, the Szekler [székely] groups performed in Budapest.[1053] The traditions of the Székely people were represented by the Kecsetkisfalud [Satu Mic] ensemble, who had already begun stage performances before joining the movement.[1054]

Before the reintegration of Transylvanian territories, publicist Edgár Balogh (1906–1996) organized a "Gyöngyösbokréta" in Kolozsvár (Cluj), which represented a different concept. Balogh's focus was not on rural peasants, but rather on organizing balls for young workers and servants from various villages in 1937.[1055] After the territories were reintegrated, Gönyey published articles on folk costumes of Transylvanian regions in *Hagyomány Szava*,[1056] and reports emerged about the 1940 Christmas celebration of the Transylvanian bokréta in Budapest[1057] with the statement: "Now there is no separate Hungarian and Transylvanian Gyöngyösbokréta, because the shared soul of Hungarians, reunited, flourishes in the same bokréta forever."[1058]

[1047] A miniszterelnök beszédet mond a Bokrétaszövetség mai ünnepén. Esti Újság 1940. augusztus 19. 8.
[1048] „Úgy jöttem ide mint szövetségekhez." *Hagyomány Szava* 1940. (1.) 1. 1–2.
[1049] *Nemzeti Újság* 1936. augusztus 6. 10.; *Új Sopronvármegye* 1940. augusztus 29. 4.
[1050] Nagy 1939: 237–240.
[1051] Kürti: 2001.
[1052] *Pesti Hírlap* 1940. október 25. 9.
[1053] Martin 1981: 239–288.; Keresztúry 1941: 84.
[1054] Pálfi 1981: 317–319.
[1055] Barta 2014: 149.
[1056] *Hagyomány Szava* 1940. (1.) 9. 3–4.
[1057] *Az Újság* 1940. november 29. 3.
[1058] *Hagyomány Szava* 1940. (1.) 4. 3–4.



Fig. 77–78. Girls from Györgyfalva in festive attire: pearl-embroidered párta (bridal headdress), mejjrevaló (vest), and embroidered shirt. Gyöngyösbokréta participants in Budapest, 1941. Photo: István Szendrő. (NMF305238. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.); Csángó man (possibly from Gyimes) in festive attire. Gyöngyösbokréta participants in Budapest, 1941. Photo: István Szendrő. (NMF305235. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.)

5.6.4 Vojvodina

An active Hungarian cultural life thrived in Vojvodina, and soon after, the first bokréta groups were formed, but these groups were officially able to join the Bokréta Association only after the re-annexation in 1941.[1059] In 1936, the first Gyöngyösbokréta gathering took place as part of the Gombos Farmers' Day, that attracted thousands of people.[1060] Later, it was held in various towns across Vojvodina,[1061] supported by the local Hungarian newspaper *Reggeli Újság*.[1062] Although these groups hoped to perform in Budapest before the annexation, they were not granted permission.[1063] However, the five Vojvodina bokréta groups were already performing in major cities of Vojvodina, and they symbolized "Hungarian propaganda at a time when speaking was not allowed."[1064] Daka Popović, a minister from Novi Sad who had studied in Hungary, later published an article titled "*The Life of Our Minorities" [Kisebbségeink élete]*:

[1059] Silling 2017: *A kisbíró.* 38.; 67; 95.; Hornyák: 2011.
[1060] http://www.keskenyut.hu/page/234/art/833/akt/1/html/a-magyar-kozosseg-szerbiaban.html#_ftn70 – accessed: 2019. május 14.
[1061] Bárdi 2012.
[1062] Bárdi – Filep – Lőrincz 2014.
[1063] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1940. (7.) 4. 1–2.
[1064] Hegedűs 1944: 3.

> "Leaders of our Hungarian and German minorities have prepared a rich program for this summer season. They have left the domestic political troubles to us Slavs. Our people are killing each other in political rallies and meetings […] Meanwhile, our minority leaders are organizing outdoor performances for their masses with excellent cultural and educational programs."[1065]

As mentioned earlier in the chapter discussing the history of the movement, the Gyöngyösbokréta still lives on in Vojvodina today, celebrated in the form of a festival.

5.6.5 Events with bokréta groups in the re-annexed territories

Since the first years, bokréta groups participated in various events.[1066] Bokréta groups also participated in tours where representatives of the Hungarian army were present.[1067] Starting in 1940, four tours were organized with the bokréta groups in Transylvania,[1068] in 1943, during a week-long tour of Transcarpathian, they visited communities in Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, Perechyn, Svalyava, and Khust,[1069] and also toured Vojvodina with the Ministry of Defense covering the expenses.[1070] As a result of a trip by József Janda, the leader of the Zsámbok bokréta, to Lučenec [Losonc], the local high school invited the bokréta to perform, but this did not come to fruition.[1071] Trips to Transcarpathian were also planned but could not take place.[1072]

5.6.5.1 The Budapest Gyöngyösbokréta performances and events in the countryside

Although the borderland groups could only participate in events during the reannaxation — meaning they did not take part in foreign performances or receptions of foreign dignitaries — their showcases at the capital's Gyöngyösbokréta events were considered a major sensation. (Fig. 79.) As the movement aimed to spread folk art throughout the countryside, several locally organized events became of national importance, such as flag-raising ceremonies. In the region of Upper Hungary, a memorable flag-raising took place in Kamenín [Kéménd], where State Secretary Ferenc Zsindely and his wife, Klára Tüdős, as well as many influential figures,

[1065] Kende 1936: 380–387.
[1066] *Népszava* 1935. június 12. 8.; *Az Est* 1936. június 24. 6.; *Pesti Napló* 1937. június 16. 4.; *MTI* 1932. szeptember 25.; *Hagyomány Szava* 1942. (3.) 5. 1.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1932. szeptember 27. 4.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 4–6. 6.; Márai 1936: 5.; *Győri Hírlap* 1935. május 30. 3.; *8 Órai Újság* 1936. március 14. 6.
[1067] *Hagyomány Szava* 1943. (4.) 4. 8.
[1068] *Keleti Újság* 1942. november 14. 8.; *Új Sopronvármegye* 1942. december 9. 2.; *Dunántúli Hírlap* 1942. december 12. 3.; *Új Sopronvármegye* 1942. december 18. 2.; *Új Somogyvármegye* 1943. január 28. 3.; Gaal 1943: 3.; *Új Somogyvármegye* 1943. március 2. 4.; *Új Somogyvármegye* 1943. április 22. 2.; NM EA 19036. 80/44.; NM EA 19036. 75/44.; NM EA 19036. 103/44.
[1069] *Hagyomány Szava* 1943. (4.) 10. 1.
[1070] Horváth B. 1943: 3.
[1071] NM E 19036. 18/44.
[1072] NM EA 19036. 87/44.

participated. At the flag-raising in Bácskertes (Kupusina), four guest bokréta groups were represented.[1073]



Fig. 79. Doroszló group in Budapest in 1941. Photo: Eötvös
(NMF 305333. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.)

5.6.5.2 The Bokréta Association at the Entry of the Hungarian troops in Kassa (Kosice)

> „During the days when Kosice was fervently preparing for the arrival of Governor Miklós Horthy, who was leading troops toward the city, István Bárczy, the State Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office, called on the National Hungarian Bokréta Association to represent itself at the entry."[1074]

Although it wasn't possible for the entire Bokréta Association to march into Kosice, about sixty bokréta members participated.[1075] (Fig. 80) On the first anniversary of the Kassa entry, a series of events called *Kassai Művészeti Hetek* (Kosice Art Weeks) was organized, where eleven bokréta groups performed.[1076] The programs were accompanied by an eight-day folk art exhibition.[1077]

[1073] *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. (2.) 7. 7.; *Hagyomány Szava* 1942. (3.) 9. 3.
[1074] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 11. 4.
[1075] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 11. 4.; Petneki 2016: 105.; *Dunántúli Hírlap* 1943. november 6. 3.
[1076] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 10. 2.
[1077] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 11. 3.



Fig. 80. Bokréta girls at the Kassa Entry, 1938. *Pesti Hírlap,* November 13, 1938, p. 4.

5.6.5.3 Country Flag Wreath-Laying Ceremonies

During the yearly Gyöngyösbokréta performances, groups from the villages visiting the capital would first go to the City Hall to thank the city direction for its hospitality. After the reannexation of the regions, this ceremony expanded to include a march to the Liberty Square (Szabadság tér),[1078] to pay homage to the Country Flag and the Irredenta Statues symbolizing the North (Slovakia), East (Transylvania), South (Vojvodina), and West (Burgenland). Thousands of Hungarians and foreigners, along with politicians, would greet the procession.[1079]

The Country Flag movement was born out of the pain of the Trianon Treaty. It represented the recognition that the bond of belonging to the same nation remains intact, even when borders separate the communities. As a symbol of this unity, the Relic Country Flag [Ereklyés Országzászló] was erected in 1928 in the capital, with a Hungarian flag flown at half-mast, and the statues symbolizing the four cardinal directions were designed with romantic symbolism, with the aim of becoming a national historical pilgrimage site.[1080] Later, similar flags were raised in other cities.[1081] This complex of memory and heritage manifests the hegemonic discourse of nationalism, a perfect example of a „government-sponsored constructions with such clear aims" encouraging visitors to embrace national goals by using the past. "The viewing of heritage sights by domestic tourists is a key aspect in the formation and maintenance of a national identity, especially when nationalism is understood as an »imagined community.«"[1082]

[1078] Horel 2014: 159.
[1079] Pesti Napló 1939. augusztus 17. 10.
[1080] see: Zeidler Miklós 2011.; Bottoni 2015: 9.
[1081] http://www.trianonmuzeum.hu/index.php?page=post&id=194 – accessed: 2020. március 20.
[1082] Pretes 2003: 126.

In 1939, Béla Paulini, representing the Bokréta Association, laid a wreath at the Country Flag and the Irredenta Statues, and the speech was held by the bokréta leader of Kéménd, Upper Hungary, emphasizing in his speech that true happiness would come only when they could "bring back our Hungarian siblings still in captivity."[1083] In 1941, the statues representing North, East, South were adorned with wreaths by delegates of the three reannexed territories.[1084] A 1943 report on the wreath-laying ceremony at the *Country Flag* in Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc) described how, to the tunes of the *Hymn* and *Rákóczi's March*, four Székely youths carried the flag and lowered it to half-mast. The article emphasized: (Fig. 81.)

> "Symbolically, this Bokréta represents the unbreakable unity of the people. At the same time, it powerfully proves that a people who cling to their ancient traditions, customs, and attire cannot perish. If ever there was time for this undeniable and unequivocal demonstration, it is now. Everywhere, folk groups are wreathing the Country Flags."[1085]



Fig. 81. Celebration in front of the Country Flag. *Hagyomány Szava,* 1941. 2, no. 9: 1.

5.7 Minority cultural groups

"But why don't we at least show today that those who live here, though not Hungarians, live freely, without taking their language, songs, or customs, but respecting them?"[1086] – this question was raised by Kodály in connection with preserving domestic minority traditions.

While the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy included several national minorities of which five were attaining or exceeding one million each (German, Slovak, Romanian, Serbian, Croatian) within Hungary,[1087] within the borders defined by the Treaty of Trianon, the size of

[1083] *Pesti Hírlap* 1939. augusztus 17. 5.
[1084] *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. (2.) 9. 1.
[1085] Székely Nép 1943. március 5. 6.
[1086] Vargyas (szerk.) 1989: 318.
[1087] Tarafás 2016: 109.

minorities was less significant. Based on current research, there is little evidence of performances by minority groups at Gyöngyösbokréta events. According to Gönyey's memoirs, in 1934, the German community from Ágfalva performed at a local Gyöngyösbokréta event, the Rábaközi Bokréta, but they did not become officially part of the Bokréta Association.[1088] In 1933, a newspaper article noted that "the hardworking and Hungarian-minded Swabian people of Bezedek village" could add a new dimension to Gyöngyösbokréta by presenting their customs.[1089] From 1939 onward, there were only plans to invite minority groups to the national folk-art celebrations in Budapest and to include them in the procession.[1090] However, the outbreak of World War II and Hungary's political alignments were not conducive to these considerations. There is no subsequent record that the mentioned groups joined or performed, despite the existence of local minority groups who performed in their respective areas (such as the Tótkomlós Slovak group).[1091] The only exception was the Mohács Sokac (Croatian minority in Mohács) group, who participated in the 1938 procession. Nonetheless, their costs were not covered by the capital, as was the case with other groups, but by the local *Mohács Sokac Hungarian Reading Circle* and they did not have the opportunity to perform on the Gyöngyösbokréta stage.[1092] Despite this, folk performances were regularly held in Mohács and the nearby city of Pécs.[1093] During the later years of Gyöngyösbokréta, particularly in 1946–1947, the Sokac group participated in local performances.[1094] A regional newspaper from 1952 noted that, while those days the Sokac minority has the opportunity to showcase its culture, Gyöngyösbokréta performances only included wealthy peasants, leaving no space for minority groups.[1095]

In the 1940s, some newspaper articles reported that Gyöngyösbokréta events were held with the aim of fostering good relationships between the neighboring nations and minorities. For example, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia showcased their customs at a Slovak cultural association's event in Hungary,[1096] and the Mohács Sokac group performed at a Hungarian-Yugoslav event.[1097] As seen, the borderland bokréta groups became symbols of the revisionist

[1088] Gönyey é.n.: 9.
[1089] *Dunántúl* 1933. október 29. 8.
[1090] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 7. 1.; *Új Sopronvármegye* 1941. augusztus 18. 5.
[1091] *Orosházi Friss Újság* 1937. március 4. 7.; *Orosházi Friss Újság* 1937. április 11. 2.
[1092] *Mohácsi Hírlap* 1938. augusztus 28. 4.
[1093] *Dunántúl* 1934. szeptember 11. 8.; *Dunántúl* 1935. június 3. 8.; *Mohácsi Hírlap* 1937. június 27. 4.
[1094] *Új Dunántúl* 1946. november 19. 5.; *Új Dunántúl* 1946. november 22. 4.; *Dunántúli Népszava* 1946. november 26. 2.; Füzes Miklós (szerk.) 2002: 26.
[1095] *Dunántúli Napló* 1952. február 26. 3.
[1096] *Új Magyarság* 1943. március 17. 8.
[1097] *Új Dunántúl* 1947. március 13. 2.

mindset, and the representation of minorities was very limited. When it did happen, it rarely received much public attention.

The position of the Gypsy population within the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement is also noteworthy, as the well-known Gypsy dances were not included in the program. This may be attributed to the possibility that news of the movement did not reach these communities – or reached them only later – or that local authorities did not take steps to organize Gypsy groups, despite their reputation for music and dance. In contrast, Gypsy musicians regularly provided the music for Gyöngyösbokréta performances. Due to the limited number of local ensembles capable of providing live instrumental accompaniment for the dancers – and the even more limited capacity to transport additional musicians – performers at the Budapest (and international) Gyöngyösbokréta showcases were accompanied by famous urban Gypsy music bands of the capital contracted by the organizers.

Since the 19th century, Gipsy musicians played a vital role in shaping national identity, particularly through the genres of verbunkos and Hungarian nóta. Drawing on Hungarian musical traditions and Western stylistic influences, they forged a distinctive style marked by technical virtuosity, improvisational skill, and artistic innovation, which was different from folk music. As Gipsy orchestras/bands performed in cafés, restaurants, and other public venues, their music became an integral part of urban leisure culture and everyday social life. Within Gipsy community, these musicians came to form a cultural elite and were recognized in broader society as important representatives and mediators of Hungarian national culture.[1098]

Despite the talent of these Gypsy musicians, this arrangement with the Gyöngyösbokréta performances proved problematic for several reasons. The Gypsy musicians were unfamiliar with the local folk songs and musical traditions, and their highly virtuoso style differed significantly from the regional folk idioms, which ultimately affected the quality of the performances.[1099] Zoltán Kodály also raised concerns about this.[1100]

> "Who has ever seen a Gypsy play from sheet music? Surely no one. I did – only once. At the Gyöngyösbokréta performances. Because there they really had to accompany the people's songs. And the Gypsy didn't know them. So he had to learn them and somehow accompany them. That's why, in the Gyöngyösbokréta, the music is the weakest part. Because the Pest Gypsy gropes along, plays the unfamiliar melodies without soul or conviction."[1101] – *Zoltán Kodály, circa 1940*

[1098] Kállai 2018: 120–141.
[1099] Szekfű 1939: 411.; R. L. 1936: 22.
[1100] *Fővárosi Közlöny* 1937. május 7. 766–767.
[1101] Vargyas (szerk.) 1989: 319.

There were other difficulties with this type of Gypsy music: in 1935, the music was provided by Rácz Zsiga and his Gypsy orchestra. A central point of contention was whether the dancers should adjust to how the Gypsy played, or whether the Gypsy should adapt his playing to the dancers' movements.[1102] As recalled by a bokréta leader in a later account, the Hortobágy group, whose musical accompaniment proved so challenging for the band that the rehearsal had to be restarted three times. In frustration, one of the herdsman/horse-herder [csikós] cracked his whip above the orchestra pit, prompting the musicians to threaten to walk out. Considerable effort was required to persuade them to stay and reconcile with the dancers. Kodály documented this memorable episode as well: "Gyöngyösbokréta: The Hortobágy herdsman may have behaved rudely with Magyari[1103], threatening him with his whip. A person to be trampled on – an outlet for unfulfilled authoritarian impulses."[1104]

Despite these issues, the performances were still successful, and the festivities often continued afterwards in nearby restaurants or taverns. There, bokréta participants danced to Gypsy music, and were frequently joined by foreign tourists, turning the musicians themselves into part of the attraction.[1105]

The issue of cultural and ethnic diversity was further complicated by the so-called "Jewish question," which had become increasingly politicized during the interwar period.

The government-supported Bokréta Association, which also performed in Nazi Germany, could not have featured Jewish groups or customs within a movement that emphasized the superiority of the Hungarian race and culture. The only Jewish leader briefly appointed within the movement was quickly replaced.[1106] Various newspapers mocked the idea of a "Jewish Gyöngyösbokréta," creating parody articles imagining what such performances might look like.[1107] While writing this chapter, a re-examination of Benedict Anderson's theory – particularly his discussion on national language – prompted the reflection that Gyöngyösbokréta, as a representational tool, may have been problematic not only due to the inclusion of performers from various nationalities, but also because their non-Hungarian language performances potentially undermined the very ideals of national unity that the representation aimed to project.[1108]

[1102] Ujváry 1984: 24.
[1103] Imre Magyari (1894–1940) Gypsy prímás, lead violinist.
[1104] Vargyas (szerk.) 1989: 53.
[1105] *8Órai Újság* 1936. augusztus 15. 12.
[1106] NM EA 19037. 167/44. A mikóházi körjegyző 1944. június 5-i levele Paulini Bélának.
[1107] *Az Ojság* 1936. augusztus 2. 7.; *Új Magyarság* 1940. január 4. 2.; *Sorakozó* 1939. március 18. 8.; *Magyarság* 1939. augusztus 18. 7.
[1108] Anderson 1983: 105–109.

To conclude the question of minorities and Hungarians beyond the borders, it becomes evident that the primary aim of representation was to assert the unity and belonging of all Hungarians – even those who had been annexed or reannexed. The bokréta groups from these (re-)annexed territories played a prominent and symbolic role in the performances, as their participation embodied the idea of national togetherness.[1109] In contrast, ethnic and religious minorities were largely absent from the stage. As we have seen, the reasons and circumstances varied; there were plans to include minority groups, but the political climate was not favorable to this. Some groups wished to participate, yet they were mostly limited to local (rather than capital city) events. Although the rural Gypsy population possessed a rich musical and dance culture, their way of life likely prevented the movement's message from reaching them. In contrast, urban Gypsy musicians played a crucial role in the movement, as they provided musical accompaniment. This also highlights the broader challenge of securing authentic folk music accompaniment for folk dance performances during the period, which gave rise to various difficulties.

Events of national interest where Gyöngyösbokréta participated		
Date	**Event**	**Location**
25 September 1932	Unveiling of Queen Elizabeth's (Sisi's) statue	Budapest, Hungary
3 February 1935	Hungarian Carnival	Gyöngyös, Hungary
2 May 1937	Unveiling of Francis Rákóczi II's statue	Budapest, Hungary
16 May 1937	Hungarian Pentecost	Vác, Hungary
29 June 1937	New Bread Festival (Új Kenyér Ünnepe)	Szeged, Hungary
23 January 1938	Hungarian Carnival	Győr, Hungary
26 December 1938	Hungarian Christmas	Győr, Hungary
19 August 1940	10th Anniversary of the Gyöngyösbokréta	Budapest, Hungary
6 –7–8 December 1940	Hungarian Christmas (with bokréta groups from Transylvania)	Budapest, Hungary
27 July 1941	Hungarian Bread Festival (Magyar Kenyér Ünnepe)	Subotica, Vojvodina
2–3 May 1942	Saint Ladislaus-week in Oradea	Oradea, Transylvania

[1109] The issue of cultural and ethnic diversity was further complicated by the so-called "Jewish question," which had become increasingly politicized during the interwar period. The government-supported Bokréta Association, which also performed in Nazi Germany, could not have featured Jewish groups or customs within a movement that emphasized the superiority of the Hungarian race and culture. The only Jewish leader briefly appointed within the movement was quickly replaced. Various newspapers mocked the idea of a "Jewish Gyöngyösbokréta," creating parody articles imagining what such performances might look like. (NM EA 19037. 167/44. A mikóházi körjegyző 1944. június 5-i levele Paulini Bélának. *Az Ojság* 1936. augusztus 2. 7.; *Új Magyarság* 1940. január 4. 2.; *Sorakozó* 1939. március 18. 8.; *Magyarság* 1939. augusztus 18. 7.)

1940–1943	Transylvania tours (4)	Important Hungarian cities in Transylvania
7–15 February 1943	Vojvodina tour	
25–30 September 1943	Transcarpathian tour	Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, Perechyn, Svalyava, and Khust, Transcarpathian
11 November 1938	Entry of the Hungarian troops in Kassa (Kosice)	Kosice, Upper Hungary
11 November 1939	1st anniversary celebration of the Entry of the Hungarian troops in Kassa (Kosice)	Kosice, Upper Hungary

Table 3. Events of national interest where Gyöngyösbokréta participated

5.8 Conclusion on the role of Gyöngyösbokréta in nation-building

In this chapter, I aimed to demonstrate the tools with which the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement participated in the nation-building efforts during the interwar period. Through various symbols, the movement sought to strengthen its role, which was validated by its increasingly significant national political influence year after year. In the case of Gyöngyösbokréta, it was not simply about representing the nation through folklore, but the very guardian of folk traditions, the peasants, played a role in nation-building. This shifted attention toward the rich folk culture, but also toward the situation of the peasantry, thus calling into question the movement's objectives. For this reason, the movement was already divisive during its time, as many saw it as a form of (political) exploitation of the peasantry. Few sources are available regarding how the peasants themselves viewed it, but since they were proud of their folk culture thanks to the Gyöngyösbokréta, they felt a patriotic obligation to participate in the events. With the support of ministries, Paulini sought to extend his movement to all layers of society – through fashion and the Hungarianization of holidays, and by using the symbolism of uniting village and urban areas – while ensuring that the peasants remained at the front. A similar effort can be seen in Paulini's attempts to integrate groups from beyond the borders: Paulini treated these borderland populations as belonging to the nation, even assigning them a special role, whereas the minorities who remained in Hungary were excluded from the movement.

In response to accusations of nationalism, based on the phenomena discussed above, it can be argued that the movement increasingly contributed to the construction of national identity and engaged with revisionist events, such as the Country Flag wreath-laying ceremonies. In some instances, it even organized irredentist events (e.g., the Bread Festival in Subotica), yet in these appearances, Paulini saw the presentation of Hungarian folk culture and, by extension, the peasants. The peasants themselves had little said in the occasions on which they performed. Motivated by the glory of spreading national culture, they participated without

ideology. Thus far, we have seen the tools and image of Hungarianness promoted within Hungary through the Gyöngyösbokréta, and in the following section, I will explore how the movement represented itself abroad.

6. Gyöngyösbokréta representing Hungarian folk art for foreigners: diplomatic role

> „Diplomats travel and negotiate. They seek friends and find enemies. They proclaim peace and stir up discord. For us, Hungarians, there is little involvement in these crooked paths. We too send our envoys to distant foreign lands. […] The Hungarian »Gyöngyösbokréta« returned from London on Tuesday. They brought with them their experiences and memories of successes, but they left behind friends made through our kind's primal strength, our love for songs, and our eternal optimism."[1110]

In this chapter, I will present the results of my research on the role of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement in the formation of a national image and diplomacy. As discussed in the previous chapter, the movement established a system of symbols to reinforce national identity, contributed to the creation of a folk-based fashion, and served as a tool for inventing folklore-based traditions. However, the creation of a national image did not end at Hungary's borders; the presentation of folk dances by peasants conveyed a message to the outside world. Hungarian politics used culture as a primary tool to showcase Hungary's strength and civilization. After World War I, folk culture once again played a privileged role, as Hungary was one of the few places where living folk traditions could still be found. These traditions became an ideal narrative to demonstrate to foreigners the ancient culture preserved by peasants over centuries. Thus, Gyöngyösbokréta became a symbol of this ancient culture. Their performances were showcased at international political events, such as the 1936 and 1938 World Congresses for Leisure Time and Recreation, and the 1942 event for the Academy for Wounded Soldiers of the Associated and Friendly Nations. Gyöngyösbokréta delegations were also sent abroad to participate in (folk) dance festivals. Furthermore, the dancing peasants were part of the receptions for important foreign guests, including the President of Austria, the Italian royal family, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, and Germany's Undersecretary of State.

In the first part of this chapter, I will provide an overview of cultural diplomacy and Hungarian foreign policy during the interwar period. The first section will present a list of international events at which Gyöngyösbokréta delegations represented Hungary. I will briefly describe each of these events but will focus in greater detail on the 1935 International Folk Dance Festival in London, as it provides insight into the international perception of folk dance of the era. I will also examine the significance of Gyöngyösbokréta's participation in the Hamburg World Congresses for Leisure Time and Recreation, which illustrates the political use of folk culture, folk dance, and peasants. Lastly, I will discuss the Grandes Fêtes des Pays

[1110] *Kis Újság* 1935. július 24. 5.

Romantiques festival in Cannes, which presents a unique example of international relations in which (folk) culture played a key role.

In the second part of the chapter, I will analyze the diplomatic visits of foreign politicians to Hungary where bokréta groups performed. I will focus on the reception of the Italian monarchs, as this event involved significant duties for Gyöngyösbokréta and Paulini, and on the visit of the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, which highlights the relationship between Hungary and its neighboring country, and it also refers to how the movement managed to persist in Vojvodina.

6.1 Culture in diplomacy, cultural diplomacy

„Culture matters in domestic and international politics, as shared culture can create a powerful sense of community. It can also be used to consolidate a given collectivity or to shape its image in the international arena."[1111] Since the beginning of interactions between nations, culture has spontaneously influenced international relations, but the conscious use of culture in diplomacy was not always evident.[1112]

Cultural diplomacy plays a central role in bridging international relations with cultural history, intellectual history, and social history. The boundaries between cultural, political, economic, and strategic diplomacy are not totally clear, and have become increasingly difficult to discern since the "cultural turn" of the 1970s and 1980s. Modern diplomatic studies now incorporate cultural dimensions, analyzing how cultural exchanges, values, and norms influence decisions and behaviors on the global stage. Cultural diplomacy often intersects with public diplomacy, which includes not only cultural exchanges but also national branding and soft power. Both are shaped by state or para-state structures and informal networks, aiming to influence public perceptions through the dissemination of cultural representations. While cultural diplomacy retains strong ties to cultural policy and actors within the cultural sphere, public diplomacy focuses more explicitly on political communication, often using cultural content to support a broader political agenda. Over time, these practices have evolved, especially through concepts like soft power and nation branding, which prioritize the strategic use of cultural resources to enhance a country's international image and influence. Both cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy are situated in a nebulous space that encompasses cultural exchanges, national branding, and soft power. They articulate the dissemination of cultural representations and content and their impact on broader audiences beyond just diplomats. They also share the common characteristic of being managed by state or para-state structures, though

[1111] Carbó-Catalan – Roig-Sanz 2022: 1.
[1112] Környey Ágnes A kulturális diplomácia tegnap és ma 2.

they also rely on more informal networks and channels. They involve an "arrangement of heterogeneous elements" – different institutional actors, as well as various media and information channels – set up to transform individuals. Cultural diplomacy, for its part, maintains very close conceptual and even institutional ties with cultural policy and, more broadly, with certain actors within the cultural field. Public diplomacy, on the other hand, is more aligned with political communication and explicitly instrumentalizes the cultural content disseminated through this channel. However, there is indeed a political, even ideological, dimension in the former, just as the latter uses cultural productions and representations to support its discourse.[1113]

Regardless of calling it cultural diplomacy or public diplomacy, the role of culture and civilization in international relations is now widely recognized, and by the late 19th century, not only spontaneous cultural effects but also conscious cultural cooperation emerged. The mid-twentieth century was marked by ideological struggles, and by the mid-1930s, this struggle began to influence the realm of cultural diplomacy.[1114]

In the interwar period, after Hungary's defeat in World War I, when it was isolated and weakened, most governments realized the potential of culture in propaganda activities.[1115] In the aftermath of World War I, Hungary actively engaged in cultural diplomacy to revise the post-war order. Facing economic and military limitations, Hungary utilized cultural initiatives to project its influence. Hungarian cultural diplomacy emphasized the nation's contributions to European and global culture. In a competitive regional environment, Hungary sought to demonstrate its cultural superiority over neighboring countries.[1116]

Since the 1920s, efforts were made to use culture as a primary tool in communication with foreign countries. Kunó Klebelsberg (1875–1932), Minister of the Interior (1921–1922) and Minister of Religion and Education (1922–1931), emphasized the idea that Hungary could be made strong not through weapons, but through culture.[1117] The promotion of cultural superiority and propaganda aimed at foreign countries became a program starting in the early 1920s.[1118] This program sought to both educate the masses and rebuild the institutions of high culture. Emphasizing the key role of cultural policy was particularly important after World War I, as new borders fragmented the scientific networks.[1119] Revisionist efforts also influenced

[1113] Gillabert 2017 : 12–16.
[1114] G. Martin – Piller: 162.
[1115] Környei 2015: 1–35.
[1116] Nagy 2021: 231.
[1117] Klebelsberg 1927: 604.
[1118] Drabancz 2000: 195–199.; Nagy 2017: 8.
[1119] Ujváry 1995: 180.

cultural politics, and the government, which feared severe international sanctions, framed and kept the desire to revise the Treaty of Trianon within the "cultural superiority program" without provoking the animosity of the great powers.[1120]

Hungarians were always concerned with how they were viewed by the West, especially by the French and the English, as they considered the West as a model. A common belief was that the West failed to recognize Hungary's role in building civilization, and that the humiliating peace treaty was a result of misconceptions about the cultured Hungarian nation.[1121] It was further aggravated by the fact that understanding Hungarian (literary) culture was deemed impossible without knowing the Hungarian language.[1122] Writers and politicians of the era also expressed their opinions on the matter, sparking intense debates about why Hungary was so negatively perceived abroad,[1123] with Sándor Eckhardt offering a detailed examination of Hungary's image abroad.[1124]

Prime minister István Bethlen (1874–1946 [14 April 1921– August 1931]) and Klebelsberg's cultural policy considered the promotion of Hungarian culture abroad and the presentation of the political and economic situation as key tasks. Hungary made significant efforts to build international cultural relations through the establishment of embassies, Hungarian academic institutions abroad and the promotion of Hungarian culture. One example is the establishment of institutions like the Collegium Hungaricum in Vienna, Berlin, and Rome.[1125] Key cultural diplomatic events included major events like the Fourth World Scout Jamboree in 1933 and the Year of St. Stephen celebrations in 1938, which aimed to elevate Hungary's cultural presence on the global stage.[1126]

In line with the spirit of spreading Hungarian culture, the French-language journal *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie* was launched in 1932, which conveyed domestic achievements to Europe and helped familiarize European values in Hungary.[1127] Among the journal's prominent articles, there were also pieces on ethnography and folk-art,[1128] with some even reporting on

[1120] Ujváry 2013: 65.; Ormos – Majoros (1998): 315–316.; Drabancz 2000: 195–199.
[1121] Nagy 2017: 92.; Majoros 2020: 203. See also: Majoros 2019: 11.
[1122] Hatos 2012: 6.
[1123] E.g.: Szabó 1991: 787–788.; Balogh 1943: 616–620., Illyés – Keresztury 1943: 123–129., Illyés 1944: 313–319.
[1124] Eckhardt 1939: 87–136.
[1125] Pallagi 2012: 431.; 1927. évi XIII. törvénycikk a külföldi magyar intézetekről és a magas műveltség célját szolgáló ösztöndíjakról.
[1126] Nagy 2021: 233–236.
[1127] Cz. Farkas 2000: 187.
[1128] Györffy 1933: 258–267.; Györffy 1935: 485–494.; Szendrey 1935: 40–50.; Ortutay 1938: 324–329.; Lajtha 1941: 530–538. See also: Cz. Farkas 2004: 177–189.

Gyöngyösbokréta.[1129] Staying with French examples, the newly published volumes also contributed to the creation of a new, culture-based national image, one aspect of which was folk culture. Foreign books showcasing Hungary extensively analyze folk life, including folk costumes and customs.[1130] The *Portrait de la Hongrie*, published in 1939, dedicates chapters to folk culture and presents Gyöngyösbokréta in detail. The author recounts his experience of the performance: "I attended one of these shows, and I was mesmerized by the variety of the dances, the richness, and originality of the costumes. The artists are authentic peasants: it's easy to verify this by following them to the small tavern after the performance, where they eat and continue dancing for their own enjoyment."[1131] (A retrospective volume on Hungary also highlights the memory of the Gyöngyösbokréta from the period.[1132])

Another crucial aspect of diplomacy to highlight, within the context of this topic, is the emergence of bilateral treaties as a novel instrument of cultural diplomacy during the interwar period. Intellectual and cultural exchange agreements, once rare, became key in shaping European relations, with France pioneering intellectual accords in the 1920s and fascist Italy promoting cultural treaties in the 1930s.[1133] The cultural treaty emerged in the 1930s amidst geopolitical competition in Central-Eastern Europe, where nations vied for influence over the region's intellectual and cultural life. This period, defined by ideological struggles between liberalism and fascism, unresolved conflicts in the international system, and the backdrop of a global economic crisis, saw the cultural treaty as a product of its time.[1134] Hungary was active in advancing cultural diplomacy in this period, initiating a series of bilateral agreements focused on intellectual and educational exchange. Following Hungary's agreements with Italy, Poland, and Austria, it successfully encouraged Germany to sign its first cultural treaty, promoting the exchange of cultural and intellectual goods to foster mutual understanding between the nations.[1135]

The above-mentioned achievements were reinforced not only by the professionalism and commitment of cultural diplomats but also by the cultural outreach of social scientists, experts, and writers traveling abroad. This shows that non-governmental contacts, or „non-professional diplomacy", are an integral part of our cultural diplomacy.[1136] The first Hungarian-

[1129] *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie* 1935. (52.) 1. 95–100. 99.; Coeuroy 1936: 155–156.; Zichy Pallavicini 1938: 552.; Keresztúry 1941: 78–84.
[1130] Bierbauer 1938.
[1131] de Grunwald 1939: 139.
[1132] Baudy 1957: 115.; Fontaine 1957.
[1133] Martin 2021: 301.
[1134] Martin 2021: 316.
[1135] Martin 2021: 309.; 314.
[1136] Tabajdi 1990: 85.

language work on cultural diplomacy, published in 1936, defines cultural diplomacy succinctly as „generating foreign policy effects through cultural means."[1137] Today, economics and marketing sciences deal in detail with cultural diplomacy, and related concepts like national image. National image or national branding is formed by the various opinions and beliefs about a nation. According to different definitions, national image is a complex system of rational information and emotional impressions, both subjective and objective. It is important to note that a national image exists and affects external and internal perceptions, even if the nation does not actively manage it.[1138]

In the chapter reviewing the history of the movement, we saw how quickly Gyöngyösbokréta achieved tremendous success. The promotion of folk culture as a tourist attraction also perfectly served foreign propaganda purposes. "The most important breakthrough – from the point of view of nationalist critics of Budapest pre-war marketing strategies – was the creation of a professional dance team, the Gyöngyös Bokréta".[1139] Although with different means, it served the spirit of cultural superiority, supplemented with the narrative that Hungary is home to an ancient art preserved by the people, the peasantry. In this chapter, I show how Gyöngyösbokréta became a tool of folklore diplomacy in certain events. Media analysis also plays an important role: I attempt to demonstrate how the peasant performers of Gyöngyösbokréta were associated with national propaganda directed abroad.

Although in a different conceptual framework, similar expressions to the aforementioned national brand and national image appeared during this period. "*Gyöngyösbokréta became a global brand"* – just one of many catchy newspaper headlines that referred to the movement as a brand, even a world brand. The peasants themselves were often referred to as envoys or diplomats.[1140] Although folklore's role in cultural politics is significant – and as I referred to in the chapter presenting the movement, for example, folk groups' performances were essential at international exhibitions or at official events even in the socialist era – little research has been done on these connections. A recently published study, *The Tunes of Diplomatic Notes. Music and Diplomacy in Southeast Europe (18th–20th Century)*, explores the diplomatic role of (folk) music. In this context, it is important to mention the study *Folklore Diplomacy – the Role of Musical Folklore in Yugoslavia's Foreign Policy 1949–1971*, which

[1137] Hankiss 1936: 62.
[1138] Bennett (szerk.): 2019.
[1139] Vari 2011: 117.
[1140] *Kis Újság* 1935. július 24. 5.

also shows how the National Folk Song and Dance Ensemble of the People's Republic of Serbia performed abroad and how folklore was (possibly) used.[1141]

In a broader context, in her study *The Institutional Application of Folklore in Hungary*, Linda Dégh begins with the important observation that "power holders (state, clergy, elite interest groups), in their drive for power and dominance, have always used and manipulated folklore."[1142] The author mentions the church, the incorporation of folklore into literature, the use of proverbs adopted from the people by politicians, and even the recruitment of soldiers, where the most popular folk songs often served as carriers of political messages. Dégh notes that "one of the most notable attempts to propagate the peasant folk was the creation of the Pearl Bouquet. (sic) […] The cheering audience was instrumental in supporting and propagating the revival and reassertion of the old customs of performing villagers, and of folklore in general."[1143]

Undoubtedly, it was the acknowledgment of the audience that conferred legitimacy upon the initial doubtful attempt; yet it is crucial to highlight that the appreciation of international audiences was fundamental to its achievement. This was additionally reinforced by the presentations abroad and the receptions of the foreign political figures discussed below.

6.2 Representations abroad

The sudden popularity of the Gyöngyösbokréta not only boosted tourism but also sparked foreign interest. Since its first performance in 1931, there have been reports of invitations for the Gyöngyösbokréta to participate in foreign events and tours.[1144] Between 1931 and 1948, several groups represented the Bokréta Association on seven foreign trips: to Vienna in 1934, London in 1935, Hamburg in 1936, Cannes in 1937, back to Hamburg in 1938, Brussels in 1939, and a second time to Vienna in 1942. In addition, the troupe received numerous invitations that could not be realized for various reasons. According to press reports, they were invited for a tour in Italy in 1931,[1145] to Paris in 1934,[1146] and again to Italy in 1936 and 1938, specifically to Turin[1147] and Rome (the latter invitation was for an event honoring Mussolini).[1148] In 1938, discussions were held with two English theater directors about inviting

[1141] Hofman 2020: 203–229.
[1142] Dégh 1990: 195.
[1143] Dégh 1990: 200.
[1144] *Pesti Napló* 1931. november 5. 8.; *Kis Újság* 1933. augusztus 23. 7.; *Félegyházi Közlöny* 1935. augusztus 25. 3.; *Színházi Élet* 1935. 35. o.
[1145] *8 Órai Újság* 1931. szeptember 27. 6.
[1146] *Az Újság* 1934. október 18. 8.
[1147] *Kis Újság* 1936. július 22. 4.
[1148] Gách 1938: 41.

bokréta groups to the English premiere of Kálmán Imre's operetta *Marica Grófnő*,[1149] and in 1939, they received an invitation for a Stockholm folk dance festival[1150] that ultimately could not take place due to the political situation.[1151] Opportunities also arose overseas; in August 1937, Dr. László Telkes, director of the Hungarian Reference Library in New York, contacted the Budapest Tourism Office regarding the participation of the bokréta groups,[1152] and steps were taken in 1938 for their American debut.[1153] In 1940, a play was created based on the bokréta members' imagined romantic journey to America.[1154]

6.2.1 Vienna International Dance Congress, 8–11 June 1934.

The Bokréta group received its first international invitation to the Vienna International Dance Congress (Internationalen Tanzwettbewerbes und Volkstanztreffens)[1155] held from June 8 to 11, 1934, as part of the eighth Vienna Festival Weeks.[1156] This event featured competitions in both folk and modern dances, including performances of contemporary dances and the latest choreographies.[1157] Participants were required to be young dancers at the beginning of their careers, providing them with opportunities for exposure.[1158] A comprehensive study conducted in 2013 by Birgit Johler and Magdalena Puchberger examines the role of this event in highlighting the Austrofascist image of Austria and reinforcing Vienna's cultural significance.[1159] Central to the Austrian patriotic tourism propaganda was the positioning of the city as a hub for art, culture, and dance, represented by the Vienna Festival Weeks. The importance of music and dance for Vienna was particularly emphasized, with waltz and folk dance ideologically integrated into the cultural policies of the "corporate state," which focused on aesthetic, harmonious, and emotional elements.[1160] Folk dances were imbued with attributes of authenticity, naturalness, youth, beauty, and grace, alluding to a healthy body image.[1161] Announcements for the preliminary press reception of the dance competition clearly put an emphasis on the seriousness of the event and the expertise of the jury. Only groups presenting authentic dances true to their national character were permitted to participate, explicitly

[1149] *Az Est* 1938. január 9. 10.
[1150] *Hétfő* 1939. március 6. 8.
[1151] Journal of the International Folk Music Council 1 (1949): 3–4.
[1152] BFL IV. 1501.b. Budapest Székesfőváros Idegenforgalmi Hivatala Ált. Iratai. 1934. 118. kd.
[1153] *8 Órai Újság* 1938. augusztus 7. 8.
[1154] *Magyar Lapok* 1940. december 27. 8.
[1155] *Magyar Távirati Iroda* 1934. június 13. 14:55.
[1156] Johler – Puchberger 2013: 70.
[1157] Brin Ingber 1984: 1–2.
[1158] Championnats. *La Tribune de la Danse* 1934. (2.) 5. 8.
[1159] Johler – Puchberger 2013: 68–93.
[1160] Johler – Puchberger 2013: 73.
[1161] Johler – Puchberger 2013: 74.

avoiding stylized or grotesquely distorted folk dances. It was highlighted that the preparatory committee consisted of recognized experts in folk art, and it was also stated that the folk-dance meeting would be a gathering of nations based on camaraderie. The folk dance was presented as a national dance, representing one of the most valuable traditions and essences of each nation. The dance competition was held under the patronage of the federal president, Wilhelm Miklas.[1162]

While specific information on the number of participating countries is lacking, the Hungarian group performed alongside Romanian, Swedish, and Danish groups.[1163] Four bokréta groups from Hungary – approximately 70 members,[1164] specifically the Koppányszántó, Kunszentmiklós, Szentistván, and Szakmár groups[1165] – traveled by boat to Vienna to showcase Hungarian folk dance through eight different productions.[1166] This very first performance abroad already highlighted the national honor associated with these trips; for instance, one dancer from Kunszentmiklós remarked, "I didn't want to go because it was the busiest work period. But they said that Hungarian honor demands I dance. So, I went."[1167] According to reports from Hungarian newspapers, the performance of the bokréta group was awarded a diploma of distinction by the jury of the dance competition.[1168] There is no information on whether all groups received diplomas or if only a few did, and it is unclear if there was an official ranking. In a 1935 reflection, Paulini noted that he did not inquire about the number of diplomas awarded because the Hungarian success was significant, and he was preoccupied with the further programming of the Bokréta Association.[1169] The *Pesti Napló* reported a first place ranking for the Hungarian performance.[1170] Hungarian newspapers, citing the Austrian press,[1171] spoke of a tremendous success[1172] and noted that this achievement sparked foreign interest in Hungarian tourism.[1173] The capital took advantage of the occasion, distributing 25,000 colorful brochures about the Gyöngyösbokréta to promote the Budapest

[1162] Johler – Puchberger 2013: 78.; *Kis Újság* 1934. július 22. 6.
[1163] Johler – Puchberger 2013: 80.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1934. június 17. 8.
[1164] *Színház Élet* 1934. 24. 22.
[1165] *Magyar Hírlap* 1934. június 10. 15.
[1166] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1934. június 17. 8.
[1167] Diószeghy 1934: 7.
[1168] *Vasárnap* 1934. július 29. 11.; *Kis Újság* 1934. július 22. 6.; *Pesti Napló* 1934. július 22. 22.
[1169] Paulini 1935b: 3.
[1170] *Pesti Napló* 1934. július 4. 10.
[1171] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1934. június 15. 8.
[1172] *Kis Újság* 1934. június 16. 7.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1934. június 15.
[1173] *Új Barázda* 1934. június 24. 5.; J. S. 1934: 13.

performances.[1174] Many Hungarians living in Vienna, as well as Hungarian celebrities participating abroad, also attended the Bokréta group's performances.[1175]

6.2.2 London – International Folk Dance's Festival, 14–20 July 1935.

In 1935, Gyöngyösbokréta received an invitation to the first International Folk Dance Festival in London. The event was organized by the English Folk Dance and Song Society and the British National Committee on Folk Arts from July 14 to July 20, 1935.[1176]

Both the English press and the organizers emphasized that this was the very first international folk dance assembly, with its objectives outlined in three points:

> 1. "To promote understanding and friendship between nations through the mutual interest of folk-dance.
> 2. To demonstrate the value of folk-dance in the social life of today.
> 3. To study by means of comparison and contrast the origin and relationship of the folk-dances of the various countries."[1177]
>
> The festival featured multiple presentations by the groups and a professional conference.[1178]

The conference segment of the festival facilitated the establishment of networking connections and the advancement of collaborative efforts.[1179] The conference's scientific findings, primarily derived from the analysis and comparison of the festival's dances, received commendation from *Nature* magazine, which emphasized the necessity of continuing the initiated efforts.[1180] Plans were made to establish an international folk-dance committee[1181], and to organize the festival every four years, with the subsequent event slated for Stockholm in 1939; however, the war hindered the happening of international events.[1182] (The organization of the event in Stockholm and the sending of invitations were completed, but the event could not take place.[1183]) Nonetheless, the enduring consequences of the event include the formation of the International Folk Music Council in 1948.[1184]

[1174] *Nemzeti Újság* 1934. július 22. 23.; *Pesti Napló* 1934. július 4. 10.; *Pesti Napló* 1934. július 22. 22.
[1175] *Pesti Hírlap* 1934. július 17. 13.; Paulini 1935b: 3.
[1176] Illustrated London 1935. július 27. 170–171.
[1177] An International (European) Folk Dance Festival. Folklore, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Sep., 1934), pp. 193–194.
[1178] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1935. (2.) 8. 4–6.
[1179] Myres 1935: 137–139.
[1180] Nature 1935. július 27. 135.
[1181] G. le F. 1935: 28.
[1182] Journal of the International Folk Music Council 1 (1949): 3–4.
[1183] *Hétfő* 1939. március 6. 8.
[1184] Williams, Ralph Vaughan1958: 110.



Fig. 82. International Folk Dance Festival. Illustrated London News, July 27, 1935, pp. 170–171.

The festival's significance is underscored by the patronage of British Royal Princess Mary.[1185] The organizing committee sent invitations to countries in Europe and the United States; however, only 22 countries accepted, primarily owing to financial constraints, resulting in the festival being conducted with 17 participating nations.[1186] The participating countries included Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Soviet Union. Moreover, Yugoslavia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, and the Irish Free State accepted the invitation; however, delegates from these nations were eventually unable to attend. Attempts by Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Iceland, the USA,[1187] and Yugoslavia to dispatch dancers were futile.[1188]

The newspapers emphasize the participation of dancers from Soviet Russia and Hitler's Third Reich, alongside representatives from other nations involved.[1189] The internationalism, objectives of the festival, and the expressive potency of folk dance raise the issue of national representation in relation to folk dance. A central focus of the conference was "the relation

[1185] Folklore 47, no. 1 (1936): 4–10. 5.; Pesti Napló 1935. július 13. 13.
[1186] Howes 1935: 1–16.; *Városok Lapja* 1935. augusztus 1. 383.
[1187] Folklore 47, no. 1 (1936): 4–10. 5.; F. H. 1935: 845.
[1188] Howes 1935: 1–16.
[1189] Pesti Napló 1935. július 13. 13.

between the scientific study of the folk dance and the revival of folk dancing as a means of individual, social and national expression."[1190] Using the German example, it is evident that Nazi Germany's objective was to send a representative dance and group that would embody the German national identity. The Hungarian press emphasizes that "the Germans are sent a forty-eight-member dancing ensemble from the renowned medieval town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, with the explicit support of the Hitler regime."[1191] Throughout the Nazi era, Rothenburg ob der Tauber was utilized to exemplify the attributes of the nation and history deemed essential to Nazi ideology, serving as a representation of the Nazi landscape and national identity. The party intended to utilize Rothenburg as a model to cultivate national identity, illustrate the government's dedication to improve the material, physical, and spiritual well-being of the German nation, and to project a positive image of the regime both at home and abroad.[1192] The Rothenburg folk dance group, the Shepherd Dancers, which was one of the first folk dance groups in Germany and which also participated in the London Festival, was founded in 1911 and received special recognition from the Nazi Party.[1193] German conference participant Dr. Charles Goetsch also referred to the relationship between folk dance and national expression in Germany when he summarized recent efforts to develop a system of dance figures in keeping with the national characteristics of the German people.[1194]

The representatives of the countries present at the event were greeted one by one, and Hungary was welcomed by the following words of Lord Rennell of Rodd: "I have myself never seen the famous Czardas danced anywhere but in a private ball-room, and only very rarely there. I am looking forward to seeing it interpreted here by the welcome group from Hungary with all the variations it assumes in the villages of that very sympathetic country."[1195] As reported by newspapers, the British Foreign Office sent an invitation to the Hungarians,[1196] and the Ministry of Culture in Hungary requested the Bokréta Association to serve as its representative. Alongside the Csárdás referenced in the toast, the Hungarian delegation also showcased performances such as verbunk, bottle dance, and bridesmaid dance.[1197] The initial communicates present conflicting details regarding the Hungarian delegation's composition: the newspapers report a contingent of 16-18-20-22 members highlighting that Paulini attempted

[1190] Nature July 27, 1935. 154.
[1191] Ráskay 1935: 13.
[1192] Hagen, Joshua 2004: 207.
[1193] Hagen, Joshua 2004: 218.
[1194] Myres1935: 137–139.
[1195] Howes 1935: 9.
[1196] Esti Kurír 1935. július 13.
[1197] M.I. 1935: 7.

to arrange the ensemble in order to showcase a vibrant representation of Hungarian folk dances and costumes. Consequently, hardly one or two individuals or couples from eight communities were permitted to attend.[1198] The organizing committee stated that Hungary's delegation comprised 24 members, matching the average size of other delegations.[1199] Prior to departure, a rehearsal took place in Budapest with the selected number of participants[1200] who traveled by train to England.[1201]



Fig. 83–84. Members of Gyöngyösbokréta in the rooftop garden of Selfridge's in London, with a sculpture group depicting Britannia and the English lion behind them. *Esti Kurír*, July 21, 1935, p. 12.; Folk Dancing in Regent's Park. *The Times*, July 20, 1935.

Already before the departure, the Hungarian press expressed enthusiasm regarding the forthcoming international engagement of the bokréta members. National publications reported on the Gyöngyösbokréta's second international debut (Fig. 83.; Fig. 85.), while local newspapers also covered the participants from their own regions.[1202] All accounts lauded the Gyöngyösbokrétas' performance in London as a significant success[1203]: that the most exquisite costume belonged to the Hungarians,[1204] and that they were the most extensively featured in newspapers. (Fig. 84.) Furthermore, it states that the Hungarian Csárdás was the widespread dance, taught by Hungarian dancers to others, and that there was a universal desire to participate in it.[1205] It was also common to publish the English newspapers' mentions about the Hungarian group: "The Times, in its concise review of the ceremony, notably highlights that the Hungarian

[1198] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1935. (2.) 7. 5.; *Esti Kurír* 1935. július 13. 5.; *Pesti Napló* 1935. július 13. 13.
[1199] Howes 1935: 1–16.
[1200] *Magyar Hírlap* 1935. július 13. 9.
[1201] Magyarság 1935. július 12. 12.
[1202] Hírlap 1935. július 11. 4.
[1203] Soproni Hírlap 1935. július 24. 3.; Függetlenség 1935. július 23. 6.
[1204] Pesti Napló 1935. július 13. 13.
[1205] *Az Est* 1935. július 18. 11.

ensemble, adorned in exquisite folk costumes, consisted solely of Hungarian peasants who executed traditional dances with remarkable proficiency."[1206] A newspaper reports that the Hungarian bride was designated "the belle of the festival" by the *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.*[1207] The *Népszava* article acknowledges the achievement, yet emphasizes that "while it represents a triumph of Hungarian folk culture and art, which elicits more genuine joy than any athletic victory, the shining folk costume often masks the hardships of the Hungarian peasant's daily existence. It would be beneficial if this success were evident not only internationally but also within our homeland."[1208] Still in early 1936, the *Budapesti Hírlap* published an article regarding the event, which enumerated various articles about the Hungarian Gyöngyösbokréta in English newspapers and highlighted the favorable coverage provided by the festival organizers about the Hungarian event: "during the Folk Dance conference, Dr. Elise Van der Ten remarked on Hungary: We cannot concur with those who assert that folk art has become extinct in Central Europe. Hungary serves as an illustration. In Hungary, with official endorsement, local leaders have successfully stimulated the people's interest in their traditional dances and music. This resulted in a significant rebirth and preserved Hungarian traditional art from extinction."[1209]

One newspaper reported that the members of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement arrived with a gift for the English king – a gesture that, through the Gyöngyösbokréta itself, served to represent the Hungarian people.[1210] (Fig. 86.) Certain Hungarian newspaper stories lauded the Gyöngyösbokréta's performance as a type of national self-representation, comparable to the mentioned German dance ensemble:

> "The Gyöngyösbokréta [...] marched in an international dance show and conquered London. This, in short and dry words, is a fact and an event that once again vindicates Hungary and the Hungarian nation in the eyes of world public opinion. The English newspapers, commenting on the event with celebratory eulogies, are unanimous in their opinion that in picturesque splendor and artistic merit the songs and dances performed by the Hungarian folk group are far above the productions of other nations. Another Hungarian success and another foreign recognition of what is Hungarian. Another satisfaction before the world for the unjust persecutions of the past and another living and triumphant refutation of all the savage slander our enemies have heaped upon us before foreign countries. The London newspapers are writing with a tone of sincere ecstasy about the Hungarian Gyöngyösbokréta's appearance in London, and as proudly happy as we are to note the great success of the simple Hungarians of the Gyöngyösbokréta, so gladly and gratefully do we thank that policy, which, in its ideas of nation-building for the future, appeals to the ancient strength of the nation, to the

[1206] *8 Órai Újság* 1935. július 23. 8.
[1207] *Magyarság* 1936. május 7. 11.; Howes 1935: 1–16.
[1208] *Népszava* 1935. július 23. 9.
[1209] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1936. május 3. 14.
[1210] *Esti Kurír* 1935. július 14. 7.

inexhaustible power of the people's spirit, the national creative spirit, and goes down to the depths, to the source and the nugget, in order to bring up from there all the treasure on which it wants to build and which is the only foundation on which it is possible to build. Ten years ago, Gyöngyösbokréta may have been a mere dream, but today it is a deed and a reality. A thought made deed and reality among the many that have already emerged to go on the path where the nation's genuine, enduring aspirations safeguard the future."[1211]



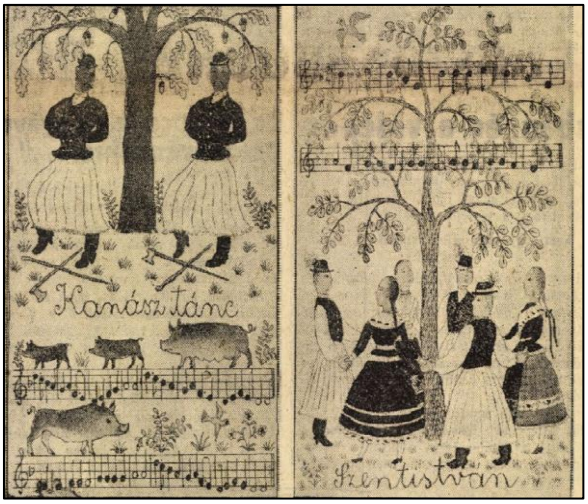

Fig. 85–86. „A Gyöngyösbokréta jóképű táncosa beszél londoni élményeiről." *Magyarország*, July 24, 1935, 4.; The members of the Gyöngyösbokréta traveled to London with a Hungarian decorative album for the English king. The album is adorned with illustrations by István Pekáry. *Esti Kurír*, July 14, 1935, p. 7.

A same narrative evolved with the portrayal of the bokréta members as delegates or diplomats: they were described in articles as "our true delegates"[1212] who "bring fame and honor," "embark on a world-conquering tour," "amass success after success,"[1213] and "bring glory to their homeland."[1214] It was depicted as a true honor that Hungary's representatives were peasants. Numerous newspapers emphasized that the bokréta peasants were not dazzled by the allure of London; they discussed agriculture throughout their trips,[1215] and upon returning home, they promptly resumed work in their villages,[1216] "shedding their festive attire and pearl adornments to transform back into the diligent workers of the Hungarian soil."[1217]

The question at hand is whether the participating nations sent peasants or trained dancers to perform live folk dance. Newspaper articles and interviews present varying perspectives on this issue. It was previously reported that "the primary purpose of the unparalleled celebration in London is the presentation of folk dances from various nations; therefore, the guests will largely consist of peasant folk, as it is primarily among the peasantry that ancient rhythms and

[1211] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1935. július 19. 5.
[1212] *Kis Újság* 1935. július 24. 4.
[1213] *Friss Újság* 1935. július 14. 12.
[1214] *Soproni Hírlap* 1935. július 24. 3.
[1215] *Az Est* 1935. július 18. 11.
[1216] *Szabadság* 1935. július 28. 7.
[1217] *Esti Kurír* 1935. július 24. 3.

dances continue to thrive. Consequently, the English capital will host a grand international peasant festival."[1218] Prior to the festival, several English newspapers characterized the gathering as a meeting of peasants, referring to participants as gypsies, canters, shepherds, woodcutters, mountain men, and cowgirls.[1219] However, this portrayal is contradicted by *The Times*, which emphasized that the Hungarian group consisted exclusively of peasants.[1220] Additionally, some reports noted that "peasant dresses are often worn by enthusiastic students and teachers during performances."[1221] Interviews with the Hungarian participants suggest that the other groups may not have been composed of peasants, as they changed out of their performance attire following the event, while the Hungarian peasants wore their same clothing to the performance and the everyday life.[1222] Additionally, the example of the previously mentioned German dance group illustrates that even when local individuals engage in traditional customs, they often serve as custodians of cultural heritage rather than embodying a strictly peasant identity.

The performance of the Hungarian peasant group, as I have attempted to express, was a significant source of pride for the press; nonetheless, a question remains regarding the peasants' personal experience of the journey. Certain interviews with them will reveal their personal sentiments over the journey, as well as how these discussions depicted the peasants along the route. The pre-departure interviews with the bokréta members assessed the knowledge of the peasants – some of whom had never visited Budapest[1223] – regarding "Londonland" and their preparations for the journey.[1224] Journalists inquired about their experiences and perceptions upon their return home. The interviews further reinforce what has been already articulated: that the Hungarians were highly respected.[1225] They enjoyed themselves, encountered novel experiences, viewed the sea, participated on excursions, resided in hotels, savored delightful meals, and were "much cherished" by their hosts. Newspaper headlines also cite the remarks of the Gyöngyösbokréta: "The Londoners departed from us in tears.",[1226] "I have established brotherhood with all nations!"[1227]

[1218] Ráskay 1935: 13.
[1219] Edinburgh Evening News 1935. július 13. 12.; Daily News 1935. július 15. 3.
[1220] Az Újság 1935. július 23. 11.; Az Est 1935. július 28. 4.
[1221] *Az Est* 1935. július 18. 11.
[1222] Lukács 1935: 11.
[1223] Esti Kurír 1935. július 13. 5.
[1224] Soproni Hírlap 1935. július 24. 3.; Az Est 1935. július 18. 11.
[1225] Magyarország 1935. július 24. 4.
[1226] Lukács 1935: 11.
[1227] Paulini 1935a: 3.

Although the articles enhanced the importance of the peasantry and the Gyöngyösbokréta members concerning their success in London, a noticeable tone of condescension and scrutiny towards the peasants is also noticeable. Interviews ridicule their dialect and pronunciation of English terms (e.g., "Gud baj"),[1228] along with their naive curiosity.[1229] Additionally, caricatures were produced portraying them. (Fig. 87.)



Mühlbeck-híradó. A Gyöngyösbokréta angol és francia lapokból értesül világraszóló londoni sikeréről. Illetve: csak szeretne értesülni, de abban a ménkű nagy angol faluban valami furcsa tájszólás divatos

Fig. 87. "Mühlbeck Report. The Gyöngyösbokréta learns of its world-renowned success in London from English and French newspapers. However, it would like to be informed, but in that vast English village, a strange dialect is all the rage." Új Idők, 1935, p. 200.

Overall, the participation of the Hungarians – particularly the Gyöngyösbokréta – can be viewed as a form of propaganda, resulting in the English BBC requesting coverage of the Gyöngyösbokréta's performances during the following year's June Weeks /Júniusi Hetek/ in Budapest. Interestingly, in September 1935, the BBC broadcast from Szany, highlighting that "these Szany residents were the ones who visited London a few months ago and are now joyfully shouting English words into the microphone."[1230] Furthermore, the group's performance in England had the potential to lead to a film project by the Hungarian-born filmmaker Sándor Korda, who, inspired by the Gyöngyösbokréta's London appearance, intended to direct a film framed around the group.[1231] However, as noted in the introductory chapter, this film ultimately did not come to fruition.

6.2.3 Hamburg 1936; 1938. (World Congress for Leisure Time and Recreation, 23–30 July, 1936; Kraft durch Freude Festival, 10–12 June 1938.)

In 1936, bokréta groups participated in the World Congress for Leisure Time and Recreation (Weltkongress für Freizeit und Erholung), held in Hamburg.[1232] During the congress organized by the National Socialist Kraft durch Freude (Strength through Joy) movement, they seized the

[1228] M.I. 1935: 7.; Soproni Hírlap 1935. július 24. 3.
[1229] Esti Kurír 1935. július 24. 3.
[1230] Polonyi 1935: 6.
[1231] Magyarság 1935. szeptember 1. 21.
[1232] *Magyar Hírlap* 1936. július 30. 8.

opportunity to demonstrate the necessity of utilizing folklore. The ideology of the conference was that the rational organization of workers' leisure time is essential not only for social peace within countries but also for political peace between nations.[1233] In a monumental parade, representatives from various invited nations, along with representatives from different German provinces, symbolized the German past with flags, decorated carts, and models.[1234] Folk dances comprised an impressive part of the German repertoire, as German culture had been promoted by the government and its propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels. The other participants presented mostly folk dances, too.[1235] Folk dance was also a way to underline the importance of the masses, the togetherness.[1236] As Anne-Marie Thiesse puts, "[i]n the 1930s, folklore regularly provided a point of reference for working-class youth associations, whether rightwing or leftwing, confessional or secular, in the leisuretime recreations. […] all of them received within their respective movements a solid formation in national and international folklore. Almost all the European governments in the inter-War years, although their political orientations differed (to say the least), encouraged initiations into folklore during primary education."[1237]

The event had around 3,000 participants from 61 countries to discuss the organization of leisure and recreation. While promoting the idea of "Joy and Peace!" as a means of fostering international cooperation, the congress also served as a platform for Nazi Germany's "Strength through Joy" initiative, emphasizing Germany's leadership in recreational organization and subtly protesting against the League of Nations and the ILO.[1238] When the invitations were sent out, the political propaganda role seemed clear to many countries, which is why not everyone agreed to participate.[1239]

For the bokréta dancers, who traveled with the support of the Ministry of Religion and Education,[1240] the trip to Hamburg was also a German tour, as they performed in several places.[1241] Károly Balogh, a bokréta member from Derecske, documented their journey in a travel diary published in the *Budapesti Hírlap*, detailing the stops on their German tour alongside their performances in Hamburg. They first stopped in Passau, where, after

[1233] Vallantin 1999: 483–486.
[1234] Tanay 1936: 8.; Thiesse 2021: 208.; Hamburg 1937 – KdF Umzug – inkl. „Hakenkreuz Karneval" – 'Kraft durch Freude' Reichstagung. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmBZGT32moo It was mistakenly dated to 1937.
[1235] Hayley 2006: 40.
[1236] Hayley 2006: 42.
[1237] Thiesse 2021: 208.
[1238] Daisuke Tano 2010.
[1239] AD Télégramme de Francois Poncet, Berlin, 24 juillet 1936.
[1240] *Nemzeti Újság* 1936. július 26. 4.
[1241] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1936. július 22. 8.; *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* 1936. július 24. 8.

sightseeing, they showcased their presentation to the locals and danced a csárdás together. During their Hamburg performances, they recorded their dances on film, and their songs were broadcast on the radio. They also visited the Neuerburg tobacco factory,[1242] where they performed also, participated in a horse show, enjoyed a boat trip, and before heading home, they laid a wreath[1243] at the statue of the heroes.[1244] Reports had mentioned that the bokréta groups' final destination would be the Berlin Olympics;[1245] (Fig. 88–89.) however, this did not happen because the Olympics fell in August, and the dancers had to perform at the St. Stephen's Day celebrations in Budapest.[1246]





Fig. 88–89. "The Gyöngyösbokréta has set off for the Berlin Dance Olympics. In the center is Béla Paulini, the organizer of the Bokréta." *Az Est* July 23, 1936.; „A police officer shows the way to three young women from Gyöngyösbokréta in Berlin." *Délibáb*, April 13, 1940, p. 33–34.

It becomes clear that folk dance and folk culture in a broader sense, was considered as

> "[t]he precious treasure, piously handed down among the peasantry across the centuries, was promoted as the model for the leisure of the twentieth-century masses. And it was immediately applied in the innumerable festivities created in the urban centers, which were both touristic spectacles and communitarian self-celebrations: the folkloristic groups that sang and danced, one after another, under the benevolent eye of the authorities represented in a particularly attractive and sparkling manner the unity of a population that was usually divided in its way of life and its interests. On a deeper level, however, it was expected that popular traditions would regenerate the proletariat and offer it a dignity that it was thought to lack at the outset. For decades, many initiatives were taken to give the proletariat a spiritual elevation by means of folklore, and to fight against those products of the leisure market that were declared to be adulterated and harmful…"[1247]

Clear from the above, the German National Socialist Party used (folk) dance as a tool of propaganda in these years. This is best demonstrated by the fact that in 1936, dance was one art

[1242] *Magyarság* 1936. augusztus 2. 8.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 8. 9.
[1243] *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* 1936. július 30. 5.
[1244] Máriáss 1936: 8.
[1245] *Az Est* 1936. július 23. 7.
[1246] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1936. (3.) 7–8. 4–5.; *Kis Újság* 1936. július 22. 4.
[1247] Thiesse 2021: 206.

form that the Germans wanted to add to their Art Competitions during the Olympic Games: attempts were made to include "dance an official Olympic event, its role in the Games was instrumental in emphasizing German cultural dominance."[1248] Even though this could not happen, Germany organized an International Dance Competition (Internationale Tanzwettspiele Anlasslich der 11. Olympiade Berlin [International Dance Competitions on the Occasion of the 11th Olympiad Berlin]) as a prelude to the Olympic Games itself, where all the participating nations of the Olympics were invited to participate.[1249] Due to the temporal and ideological proximity of the two events, some Hungarian newspapers reported that the Gyöngyösbokréta would perform at the Olympics in Berlin,[1250] and this was mistakenly communicated[1251] along with a photograph in the press.[1252] Another reason for the confusion was the International Dance Competition in Berlin where folk dance had a major role, and a newspaper article noted the absence of the Hungarians, highlighting that other folk dance groups from Hamburg participated in the Berlin celebrations.[1253]

The participation of the peasant dancers of Gyöngyösbokréta in these spring and summer events was not straightforward, as they had to leave their villages amidst major agricultural work, but it still brought them honor.[1254] It remained unclear whether representatives from other groups were also farmers or professional dancers, but the mentioned diary entry noted, "The injustice was that not every nation showcased its true people, but rather actors."[1255] The press reported their performance as a great success,[1256] highlighting that their dances were filmed at the Neubabelsberg studio.[1257] (See: section 3.3.2.3 on motion pictures)

The leisure congress was held annually in Hamburg, and in 1938, the dancers participated again. This time, the Ministry of Religion and Education arranged for the group to attend the Hamburg presentation. Paulini did not participate in this trip, but a 24-member group represented Hungary. The composition of the traveling group was completely different to allow new participants to take part in foreign performances. According to one report, one evening during the Hamburg performances, a Hungarian night was held, featuring only Hungarian

[1248] Hayley 2006: 39.
[1249] Countries participating in the competition: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Switzerland and Yugoslavia. (Hayley 2006: 40.)
[1250] *Magyar Hírlap* 1936. július 23. 7.
[1251] *Az Est* 1936. augusztus 12. 4.
[1252] *Délibáb* 1940. április 13. 33–34.
[1253] Marik 1936: 102–103.
[1254] Papp (é.n.): https://www.muharay.hu/img/file/hosszuheteny.pdf
[1255] Máriáss 1936: 8.
[1256] *Magyarság* 1936. július 30. 12.
[1257] *8 Órai Újság* 1936. augusztus 25. 11.

music, so everyone danced the csárdás on that occasion as well. There was also time to sightsee between performances.[1258](Fig. 90–91.)





Fig. 90–91. Bokréta members on the Wilhelm Gustloff ship (1938). "Bokrétások Hamburgban – másodszor." *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938, no. 5 (1938): 3, 4–6.; A group from Gyöngyösbokréta performing in Germany at the Hamburg port. *Képes Pesti Hírlap*, August 6, 1936, p. 2.

Interestingly, the Hungarian press did not report at all on the trip, while in *Bokrétások Lapja*, a participant's account, photographs, and later a brief news item were published.[1259] Additionally, the local Hamburg newspapers featured photographs of the Hungarian participants. (Fig. 92–93.)


HANSESTADT HAMBURG

„Volk spielt für's Volk" gestern abend in der „Hanseatenhalle"

Pauſenlos rollt die Lawine des Frohſinns

Trachtengruppen des In- und Auslandes geſtalteten den Abend — Eine Meiſterleiſtung der Regie — Begeiſterte Zuſchauer

Fig. 92–93. Hungarian ladies in the newspaper of Hamburg. *Hamburger Tageblatt,* June 12, 1938, 5.; "Hungarian bottledance." *Hamburger Tageblatt*, June 11, 1938, 2.

The performances of Gyöngyösbokréta in Germany concluded here, although there were plans for further invitations. In 1939, Hungarian delegates at the congress emphasized the necessity of Gyöngyösbokréta's participation.[1260] In 1941, according to newspaper reports, Joseph

[1258] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 4–6. 3.
[1259] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1938. (5.) 4–6. 8.
[1260] *Győri Nemzeti Hírlap* 1939. augusztus 6. 6.

Goebbels (1897–1945), the Reich Minister of Propaganda [1933–1945], invited the Gyöngyösbokréta, for a tour in Germany.[1261]

6.2.4 Cannes – Grandes Fêtes des Pays Romantiques, 29 March – 1 April, 1937.

In March 1937, a large group of performers from Gyöngyösbokréta traveled to the French Riviera at the invitation of the city of Cannes. By the early 20th century, Cannes had already become a well-established resort town, popular with tourists. Over the decades, it became known not only as a seaside resort but also as a city of sports (golf, fencing, sailing, etc.). Additionally, the town's leadership worked to provide tourist attractions throughout the year, and in the 1930s, they launched a large-scale program series for the Easter period.[1262] For example, in 1935, as part of the annual Easter celebrations (Les Grandes Fêtes de Printemps), an event called *Les Fêtes de la Méditerranée Française* was organized with the participation of Algeria, Morocco, Corsica, and Tunisia.[1263] For Easter 1936, a major international equestrian competition was planned, which would have included Hungarian participants, but due to diplomatic complications, only French groups performed.[1264]

The program selection for the 1937 celebrations was likely influenced by the fact that, during the 1936 spring event, the famous Cadre Noir de Saumur riding school was supposed to perform, but heavy rainfall prevented their participation.[1265] The Cadre Noir originated in 1825 as a response to the need for standardized equestrian training for the French cavalry following the Napoleonic Wars, bringing together elite riding instructors to train officer cadets. As mechanization transformed the military landscape in the 20th century, the Cadre Noir evolved into a center for high-level equestrian education and civilian sport.[1266]

The organizers of Cannes had hoped to feature the Cadre Noir de Saumur in the Easter celebrations of 1937, and in that spirit, they decided on equestrian and dance performances. The original plan was to invite the famous Vienna Riding School as the second equestrian act,[1267] but Austrian domestic political circumstances precluded their involvement.[1268] Consequently,

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[1261] *Ellenzék* 1941. január 22. 4.; *Felsődunántúli Hétfő* 1941. január 27. 4.; *Új Sopronvármegye* 1941. január 21. 5.
[1262] *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 1936. (33.) 2. 20. ; *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 1936. (33.) 4. 5. ; *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 1936. (33.) 2. 25.; *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 1936. (33.) 6. 38.; *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 1936. (33.) 6. 38.
[1263] *La Saison de Cannes et des Alpes* 1935. április 1. 7.
[1264] *Le Littoral* 1936. április 5. 1.; *Le Littoral* 1936. április 12. 1.
[1265] *Le Littoral* 1936. április 19. 1.; *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 1936. (33.) 8. 31.; *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 1937. (33.) 3. 20.
[1266] https://www.ifce.fr/en/cadre-noir/the-cadre-noir/the-history/
[1267] *L'Écho de Paris* 1937. március 4. 4.
[1268] AD C123. 12. P. E. Bousquet 1937. január 28- i levele a Külügyminiszterhez.

the idea of inviting an Italian equestrian group was considered: Dr. Pierre Bousquet (1885–1954), the President of the Festival Committee (Comité des Fêtes) suggested either the Turin Military Riding School (*Scuola di Applicazione di Cavalleria*[1269]) or the Roman Mounted Police (*Polizia a Cavallo a Roma*[1270]),[1271] but ultimately, according to the decisions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Defense and War, there was no need for another military equestrian group to challenge the Cadre Noir.[1272]

The event held from March 29 to April 1, 1937, eventually took place without the Italians, under the title Les Grandes Fêtes des Pays Romantiques (The Celebration of the Romantic Countries),[1273] with participation from France, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.[1274] The term 'romantic' is somewhat ambiguous, but it likely refers to the romanticizing of folklore and folk life. This catchy label might also have been chosen because these countries were not easily grouped into a cohesive entity; only their Central European nature was highlighted.[1275] In fact, there had even been plans to invite Yugoslavia and Romania,[1276] but uncertain participation further complicated the name choice. (The meeting between the Cadre Noir de Saumur and the Vienna Opera Ballet was considered exceptional and less romantic by the press.[1277]) Additionally, the French Air Force Band (Musique de l'Armée de l'Air) and the Republican Guard's band (Fanfare et la Clique de la Garde Républicaine) also took part.[1278]

The following groups represented their respective countries during the event: From Switzerland, the Traditional Group of Sissach (Trachtengruppe Sissach) and the Olympia Basel Fife and Drum Corps (Les Fifres et Tambours de l'Olympia de Bale) from Austria, the Alpine Society of Salzburg (Alpenverein Salzburg), the Vienna Opera Ballet accompanied by the Deutchmeister Kapelle, and a Tyrolean dance and singing group (Tyroler National Sanger un Tanzer Trupp Mayer) supported by the Innsbruck riflemen's band. Czechoslovakia was

[1269] https://www.assocarri.it/old/Unita_carriste/Scuola_Cavalleria/Scuola_Cav_Scheda_base.htm
[1270] https://www.poliziadistato.it/articolo/polizia-a-cavallo-1
[1271] AD C123. 12. 1937. február 10. 158. Participation éventuelle École de Cavalerie italienne aux fétes de Cannes.; AD 1D60. Compte 1937. Comité des Fetes. Fonds répartis á diverses fetes locales. Comité de Propagande.
[1272] AD C123. 12. 2333. A Nemzetvédelmi és Hadügyminisztérium (Le Ministre de la Défense Nationale et de la Guerre) 1937. február 15-i levele a Külügyminiszterhez (Ministre des Affaires Étrangéres); AD C123. 12. 82. 1937. február 20. Participation éventuelle d'une École de cavalerie italienne aux fêtes de Cannes.; AD C123. 12. 255. 1937. március 3. Participation éventuelle d'une École de cavaliere italienne aux fétes de Cannes.; AD C123. 12.1937. március 30. 377. Fétes de Cannes. Concours hippique de Paris.
[1273] *L'Écho de Paris* 1937. március 4. 4.; *Le Littoral* 21. March 1937. 2.
[1274] *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 1937. (34.) n. hors-serie 1937. július 14.
[1275] *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 15 april 1937. 26–27.
[1276] *Le Littoral* 21 March 1937. 1.
[1277] Eparvier 1937: 2.
[1278] *Le Littoral* 28 March 1937.; *L'Ouest Éclair* 1937. április 20. 6.

represented by the Fleurs de Tchécoslovaquie (Flowers of Czechoslovakia), a traditional folk-dance ensemble.[1279]

As for Hungary, the Gyöngyösbokréta group brought together dancers from various villages, including Géderlak, Őcsény, Kunszentmiklós, Karád, Hevesaranyos, Hortobágy, Egerbocs, and Mezőkövesd. The dancers performed a range of Hungarian folk dances, showcasing the diversity and richness of the country's traditional music and choreography.[1280]



Fig. 94–95–96. Photos of the Gyöngyösbokréta in the French press. *Excelsior*, April 2, 1937, 8.; *Le Petit Niçois*, April 1, 1937, 3.; *La Liberté*, April 6, 1937, 2.

The city of Cannes covered the travel and accommodation expenses for the bokréta groups.[1281] During the two-day train journey, they made stops in Trieste, Genoa, and Ventimiglia.[1282]

Numerous photographs of the Hungarian group were published in the French press, with *Liberté* highlighting that "the Hungarian 'Gyöngyös Bokréta' group attracted great attention, with the goal of introducing Hungarian folk customs, lifestyle, dances, and songs abroad. The group consisted of about sixty peasants and peasant girls, accompanied by a folk Gypsy orchestra."[1283] This was also emphasized during the Hungarian group's performances, where it was underlined that in Hungary, peasants preserve the folk traditions.[1284] (Fig. 94–95–96.) Many photographs[1285] and newsreel films were taken during the event,[1286] with the Hungarian Gyöngyösbokréta group featuring prominently. (Fig. 97–98.) The French newspapers deemed the event a great success.[1287]

[1279] *La saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes* 15 april 1937. 26–27.
[1280] *Az Újság* 1937. március 26. 9.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. március 26. 5.
[1281] Bende 1937: 7.
[1282] *Kis Újság* 1937. április 4. 2.
[1283] *La Liberté* 1937. április 6. 2.
[1284] *Magyarság* 1937. április 4. 14.
[1285] SBG0180; SBG0181; SBG0182; SBG0189; SBG0190 Séeberger Frères/Centre des monuments nationaux.
[1286] https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000026603/2/tradizioni-confronto 1.html?startPage=0; https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=2282; https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/43442/
[1287] *L'Éclaireur du Soir* 1937. március 31. 1.; *L'Éclaireur* 1937. április 1.; *Le Littoral* 1937. április 4. 1.; *Le Figaro* 1937. április 9. 2.; *Le Cri de Paris* 1937. április 9. 5.; *Le Littoral* 1937. április 11. 1.



Fig. 97–98. The photographs of the Hungarian participants by the Séeberger brothers, the photographer siblings from Cannes. SBG0182 és SBG0189 Séeberger Frères/Centre des monuments nationaux

The Hungarian press carefully reported every detail of the trip to Cannes from the time of the news of the trip to the time of the return,[1288] and of course the appearance abroad was presented as a triumph, a great success.[1289] As with the trip to London (and foreign trips in general), it was pointed out that the Hungarian peasants were not dazzled by the foreign country, and immediately after arriving in Budapest they rushed to work in the fields.[1290] The success of national representation by the people was also noted: „[i]n the international competition, the Hungarian group has achieved a sincere and great success, both artistically and nationally",[1291] or that „[t]he idea of the Gyöngyösbokréta is an excellent means of creating sympathy for Hungarians", [1292] „[w]e are very sure, that the bokréta members will bring new glory to the Hungarian peasantry in the eyes of Europe,"[1293] or that „besides being fascinating, it creates sympathy for the whole Hungarian nation, and this is the greatest significance of all in the idea of the bokrétás."[1294] Paulini shares this idea in his paper, when he writes that „[t]he foreign trips – even though we do not force ourselves to make many of them – are a good way of stimulating the interest of the masses who have not moved towards us."[1295] The *Bokrétások Lapja* describes

[1288] *Az Est* 1937. március 31. 6.; *Képes Pesti Hírlap* 1937. március 31. 2.; *Somogyi Újság Képes Híradója* 1937. április 4.; *Új Magyarság* 1937. április 6.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1937. április 6. 11.; *Tolnai Világlapja* 1937. április 14. 55.; *Új Nemezdék* 1937. április 22. 4.; *Keleti Újság* 1937. április 30.
[1289] *Pester Lloyd* 1937. április 3. 4*Kalocsai Néplap* 1937. április.; *Friss Újság* 1937. március 26. 2.; *Magyar Szó* 1937. március 27. 3.; *Brassói Lapok* 1937. március 28. 8.; *Keleti Újság* 1937. március 28. 6.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1937. április 1. 3.; *Esti Kurír* 1937. április 4. 6.; *Friss Újság* 1937. április 4. 7.; *Az Est* 1937. április 4. 3.; *Magyarország* 1937. április 4. 9.; *Esti Újság* 1937. április 4.; *Az Újság* 1937. április 4. 17.; Simon 1937: 7.
[1290] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. április 7. 6.
[1291] Kelecsényi 1937: 23.
[1292] Eötvös 1937: n.o.
[1293] *Kis Újság* 1937. március 28. 12.
[1294]*Népszava* 1937. április 4. 4.
[1295] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3–5. 1–4.

the abroad trip through the travel notes of one of the participating bokréta member, and Paulini has also collected articles from French and Hungarian newspapers in a small booklet and analysed the reports.[1296] (Fig. 99–100.)

Taking advantage of this opportunity abroad, the capital city also made an effort to promote Budapest among foreign visitors on this occasion. The Gyöngyösbokréta group was provided with artistic brochures by the Budapest Tourist Office, which highlighted the city's landmarks and the events of St. Stephen's Week. These materials were distributed by the group members during the Cannes celebrations.[1297]

Upon their return, they were celebrated as local heroes both at the station in Budapest and in their villages, bringing pride to their communities.[1298]



Fig. 99–100. Photos in the Hungarian press. *Tolnai Világlapja*, April 7, 1937, 4.; *Képes Pesti Hírlap*, April 6, 1937.

This celebration did not have a continuation, as each year new programs with different themes and invitations to different countries were announced for the Easter season on the Riviera. For example, in 1939, an event called *Grandes fêtes de l'Amitié* was planned with the participation of England, Germany, and Italy.[1299] However, like the previous trips, this also represented a tremendous opportunity for the Hungarian peasants to travel, and they kept the memory of the journey for a long time. In addition to local memory, for some families, the photographs from the Cannes performance and the postcards sent from France became cherished mementos, symbolizing their successes in Cannes for generations. (Fig. 101–102–103.)

[1296] OSZMI HGy36. A Magyar Bokréta története V.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3–5. 6.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3–5. 7.
[1297] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. március 31. 2.; *Friss Újság* 1937. március 31. 4.; *Magyarság* 1937. március 31. 12.; *Pesti Napló* 1937. március 31. 12.
[1298] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3–5. 1–4.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1937. április 4. 11.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. április 4. 11.
[1299] AD C123. 11. F8/5. 76. 1939. január 6. Fête de Cannes.



Fig. 101–102–103. Postcard and photo from Rita Rajna's family heritage, descendant of a participant from Mezőkövesd.

The celebration was particularly memorable for the bokréta members, because, as participants, they were presented with five flags from the city of Cannes, each bearing the inscription *Fêtes de Cannes* (Cannes Festivals). Upon their return, the bokréta peasants proudly handed these flags over to the local authorities, and they kept them as treasured items, with one flag being preserved in the Bokréta Association.[1300] When, in 1940, Paulini instructed the bokréta groups to create flags for their local groups, some of them tried to replicate the design of the flags they had received in Cannes, instead of the centrally recommended model.[1301] Unfortunately, most of these flags were lost or destroyed during World War II or the communist era. A fortunate exception is in Őcsény, where the flag received in Cannes was preserved, restored, and proudly

[1300] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3–5. 1–4.; M. Ő. K. 1937: n.o.
[1301] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1940. (7.) 5. 1.

displayed in the local cultural center. The flags were the works of local artists,[1302] and the photos below show that each one was made with different colors and patterns. (Fig. 104–105–106.)







Fig. 104–105–106. The Cannes flags in photos. *Függetlenség*, April 7, 1937.; Photo from the family album of Rita Rajna.; Own photo of the Cannes gift flag kept in Őcsény.

Although it was reported after the performance that the next trip for the Gyöngyösbokréta group would be the Paris World Expo,[1303] this was the group's first and only performance in Cannes and France. However, the relationship did not end there, as the leadership of Cannes sought to further develop ties with the Hungarian capital. To understand this connection better, it is worth reviewing the relations between Cannes and Budapest during this period, focusing on key events and figures surrounding the Gyöngyösbokréta group's performance in Cannes.

One of the key figures in the event was István Lenke, who accompanied the Gyöngyösbokréta group throughout their performance in Cannes.[1304] The press reported that "István Lenke, a Hungarian who settled in France and is a member of the Comité des Fêtes, the organizing committee of the Cannes festivities, played a significant role in the invitation of the Bokréta group."[1305] (Fig. 107.)

Lenke had previously been a member of the board of the Nice Tourist Association and had already written articles in 1933 for the *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* to promote tourism in the

[1302] AMC 1J23. Comité des fêtes. Budget et l'Exercice 1936; AMC 1J23. Compte du Comité des Fêtes. 1938.
[1303] Eötvös 1937: n.o.
[1304] *Népszava* 1937. április 4. 4.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3–5. 1–4.
[1305] Kelecsényi 1937: *Pesti Napló* 1937. április 4. 23.

French Riviera (particularly in Nice and Cannes), showcasing the region's attractions and events for Hungarian-speaking audiences. Hungarian dances had already appeared in the Cannes atmosphere prior to the Bokréta groups' 1937 performance. In his 1933 article, Lenke wrote that "the Hungarian delegation held Csárdás nights at the casinos in Nice, which had been a huge success the previous year in both Nice and Cannes."[1306] A further article titled *Propagande en Hongrie* was published, where Lenke, while organizing the Gyöngyösbokréta groups appearance in Cannes, also wrote several articles about Cannes for Hungarian newspapers during his visit to Hungary.[1307]



Fig. 107. The Bokréta Association's representation in Cannes with István Lenke (in the center). *Új Idők* 1937, 43(17): 621.

Lenke István played a significant role in establishing the tourism relationship between the city administrations of Budapest and Cannes. In 1938, the mayor of Cannes, Pierre Nouveau (1883–1967 [1935–1940; 1953–1959]), reached out to the leadership of Budapest, including Károly Szendy (1885–1953 [1934–1944], the mayor, to initiate a dialogue about strengthening the tourism ties between the two cities. This was likely the first of such formal communications, with Pierre Nouveau addressing a letter to Károly Szendy, who had participated in various foreign study trips as a municipal councillor and mayor.[1308] In 1937, Szendy also represented Budapest at the Paris International Exhibition.[1309]

[1306] Lenke 1933: 17.
[1307] *Le Littoral* 2 May 1937. 2.
[1308] BFL IV. 1402b. 1713. 1931. Szendy Károly dr. székesfővárosi tanácsnok külföldi kiküldetése, 1931.; BFL IV. 1402b. 0644. 1932. Dr. Szendy Károly tanácsnok németországi kiküldetése, 1932; BFL IV. 1402b. 0363. 1934. Szendy Károly ausztriai és németországi tanulmányútja
[1309] BFL IV. 1501b. 1937. 161. 5687/3304. 1937. Szendy párizsi utazása.

The mayor of Cannes had already discussed with Vidor Dénesfay Dinich, a Hungarian envoy visiting Cannes, the possibility of strengthening the friendly relations between the two countries.[1310] In February 1938, he formally invited Károly Szendy, the mayor of Budapest, to Cannes for the Flower Festival, with the aim of discussing the development of tourism ties. Since the Cannes tourist season typically ends early in the spring, as the large crowds move on to cooler vacation destinations as the summer heat arrives, the mayor saw an opportunity to expand connections with Budapest. The Budapest press eagerly reported the invitation, as the potential arrival of tourists from the prestigious Cannes resorts could give a significant boost to the burgeoning tourism sector in Budapest.[1311] For the mayor of Cannes, the Budapest connection became an important matter. Since the February meeting could not take place, in April, he renewed the invitation to Szendy, this time sending his Hungarian-born secretary, the above mentioned journalist István Lenke, to Budapest.[1312] Following Lenke's visit, an article titled *La Hongrie vous invite* /Hungary Invites You/ was published in *La Saison de la Cote d'Azur et des Alpes*, detailing the attractions of Budapest and the Hungarian countryside.[1313] Though Mayor Szendy was unable to travel to Cannes in 1938 due to official duties, he reciprocated by inviting the mayor of Cannes to Budapest, deeming it important to continue developing the relationship between the two cities.[1314] Together with the Budapest Metropolitan Tourist Office, Szendy organized the visit,[1315] and the invitations were extended to both Pierre Nouveau, the mayor of Cannes, and Fernand Pons, the director of the Cannes Tourist Office.[1316]

On September 21, 1938, the southern French delegation arrived in Budapest, where they immediately began discussions on tourism matters with their Hungarian counterparts. From the Hungarian side, Géza Tormay (1879–1940), the president of the National Hungarian Tourist Office, Count Nándor Zichy (1907–1994), the director of the National Hungarian Tourist Office, Oszkár Bársony (1879–1943), CEO of the Tourist Procurement and Travel and Transport Company, and Zoltán Szviezsényi (1887–1977), executive director of the Health and Resort Committee, participated in the meeting. Mayor Károly Szendy began his speech with the following words:

[1310] AMC 2D95 Lettre de Pierre Nouveau, maire de Cannes á Charles Szendy, maire de Budapest. 15 Février 1938.
[1311] *Magyar Országos Tudósító* 1938. február 19.; *Fővárosi Hírlap* 1938. február 23. 6.
[1312] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1938. április 10. 10.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1938. április 10. 18.; *Az Újság* 1938. április 12. 7.
[1313] Lenke 1938: 17.; *Magyarország* 1938. május 28. 8.
[1314] BFL IV. 1501.b. 4847. Szendy Károly 1938. május 12-i levele a cannes-i polgármesterhez.; BFL IV. 1501b. 5625. Szendy polgármester. Cannesi polgármester meghívása.
[1315] BFL IV. 1501b. 8629. Budapest Székesfőváros Idegenforgalmi Hivatalából 1938. június 8-i levél Cannes Polgármesteréhez.
[1316] BFL IV. 1501.b. 8629. Szendy Károly 1938. május 30-i levele a cannes-i polgármesterhez.

> "Cannes and Budapest are, by nature, not rivals to each other, and the friendly ties that have existed between these two cities are evidenced, on the one hand, by the many Hungarian spa-goers and vacationers who pilgrimage to Cannes' beautiful coastline year after year, and on the other hand, by the warm and honored friendship with which the citizens of Cannes last welcomed our Gyöngyösbokréta group. The mutual attraction and friendship that have existed between us have led us to work together in light of the changing tourism situation: to direct the foreign tourists' masses toward one another and to facilitate the exchange of tourists between our citizens."[1317]

Both the capital's and national newspapers regularly reported on the visit of the Mayor of Cannes and his delegation to Hungary, outlining their goals.[1318] Some of these reports even highlighted the "Hungarian-friendly Mayor of Cannes,"[1319] noting that "he had repeatedly demonstrated his affection for Hungarian affairs in the past, and among other things, he was the one who made the Gyöngyösbokréta group's journey to France possible through his financial and moral support."[1320] The *Új Nemzedék* newspaper emphasized that "he is the first of the French city leaders to officially visit Budapest since the World War," and in an interview with Nouveau, the Mayor of Cannes himself said, "I could say that among the cities of the French Riviera, we are the sincerest Hungarian friends – we were the first to host the Gyöngyösbokréta ensemble,"[1321] and also, "I am the first French mayor to officially stay in Budapest."[1322]

According to initial plans, the Cannes delegation was to be taken to Kékes, Lillafüred, Mezőkövesd, Hortobágy, and Debrecen by Hungarian tourism experts.[1323] (The newspapers particularly highlighted Hortobágy and Debrecen.[1324]) To commemorate the meeting, a porcelain doll depicting a Hungarian peasant woman was gifted to the Mayor of Cannes and his wife.[1325] In October, Pierre Nouveau sent eight photographs to Budapest from the meeting as a token of gratitude for the pleasant occasion.[1326]

Thus, the connection was not severed. In December 1938, Szendy sent the 1939 program calendar from Budapest to the Mayor of Cannes, so that they could know when to send tourists

[1317] BFL IV.1501.b. 8629. Szendy Károly köszöntő beszéde az idegenforgalmi megbeszélésen.
[1318] *Magyar Nemzet* 1938. augusztus 28. 21.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1938. augusztus 30. 7.; *Fővárosi Hírlap* 1938. augusztus 31. 6.; *Független Budapest* 1938. augusztus 31. 7.; *8 Órai Újság* 1938. szeptember 27. 10.; *Fővárosi Hírlap* 1938. szeptember 28. 6.; *8 Órai Újság* 1938. szeptember 22. 10.; *8 Órai Újság* 1938. szeptember 23. 10.; *Pesti Napló* 1938. szeptember 23. 13.
[1319] *Magyar Országos Tudósító* 1938. szeptember 22. 63.
[1320] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1938. szeptember 23. 8.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1938. szeptember 23. 14.
[1321] *Új Nemzedék* 1938. szeptember 24. 3.
[1322] *Magyarország* 1938. szeptember 25. 1.
[1323] BFL IV. 1501b. 8629. Székesfőváros Idegenforgalmi Hivatala tervezete.
[1324] *Magyar Nemzet* 1938. szeptember 23. 5.
[1325] BFL IV. 1501b. 8630. 1938. szeptember 26-i keltezésű bizonyítvány ajándékozásról.
[1326] BFL IV. 1501.b 8629. Pierre Nouveau 1938. október 10-i levele Markos Bélához.

vacationing in Cannes to specific programs in Budapest.[1327] However, the outbreak of World War II interrupted the further development of this relationship. Nonetheless, the Gyöngyösbokréta's performance in Cannes can be seen as a key milestone in the effort to establish stronger tourism ties between the two cities.

6.2.5 Brussels – International Dance Competition, 1 May 1939.

In 1939, an international dance competition was held in Brussels with sixteen participating nations.[1328] The opening evening showcased the Hungarian Cecilia Choir, directed by Lajos Bárdos, which performed religious, liturgical, and folk compositions. Bárdos sought to exhibit the folk songs he conducted for the choir throughout their European tour, in both the choir's performances and those of the peasants.[1329] As previously mentioned, Paulini consistently endeavored to offer opportunities for diverse local bokréta groups to engage in international events; however, on this occasion, only the group from Karád performed,[1330] as numerous folk songs had been collected there, which were also showcased by the peasants themselves. Zoltán Kodály, together with his students, collected songs from this region and created a compilation entitled *Karádi Nóták (Songs from Karád)* for the 800th anniversary of Karád in 1934.[1331] Bárdos incorporated Kodály's songs into the Cecilia Choir's repertoire, following which the bokréta group from Karád performed with singing and dancing.

The Hungarian presentation on the evening of May 1, 1939, at the Palais des Beaux Arts garnered very favorable publicity in the Belgian media.[1332] *De Standaard* highlighted that, luckily, traditional dancing continues to be attractive and dynamic in Hungary, rather than foreign dances dominating.[1333] Another Belgian journal noted that the dancing group was affiliated with Gyöngyösbokréta, which annually presents their performances in Budapest during the St. Stephen's Day national festival.[1334] Various publications lauded the aesthetic appeal of the peasant costumes, the distinctiveness of the dances, and the uniqueness of the

[1327] BFL IV. 1501b. 8629. Pierre Nouveau 1938. október 1-i levele Szendy Károlyhoz.; BFL IV. 1501b. 8629. Szendy Károly 1938. december 3-i levele Pierre Nouveau-hoz.
[1328] de Geinst 1939: 5.
[1329] AD Français á l'étranger. 300. Demande de visas de M. Bardos le 26 avril 1939.; *Magyar Nemzet* 1939. április 22. 13.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1939. április 30. 17.; *Magyar Nemzet* 1939. május 13. 13.
[1330] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 4. 1.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 5. 1.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 6. 1.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1940. (7.) 4. 2.; *Hagyomány Szava* 1942. (3.) 6. 1–2.
[1331] Herk 1985: 166–168.; Szapudi: 1996.; Happ: 2017.; Kocsis: 2018.; Karád honlapja. https://www.karad.hu/index.php/telepulesunk/nevezetessegek/karadi-nepdalok; Vikár 1987: 171–182.; *Somogyi Újság* 1934. augusztus 25. 1.; Móser 2011: 110.; *Somogyi Néplap* 1980. augusztus 14. 9.
[1332] *Le Peuple* 1939. május 4. 8.; *Pesti Napló* 1939. május 4. 14.
[1333] B. v. d. Voorde 1939: 5.
[1334] Closson 1939: 2.

performances, all of which garnered fervent ovation from the crowd.[1335] An exception was an article in *Nation Belge*, which lauded the authenticity of the Cecilia Choir's performance, emphasizing how effectively the songs portrayed the life of rural Hungarian peasants, while expressing disparaging opinions on the bokréta's performance, asserting that most dances were overly rudimental to possess authentic folkloric significance and lacked distinctive characteristics.[1336] Hungarian publications characterized the performance as a notable national achievement, highlighting that "the bokréta members promote genuine Hungarian folk art in Brussels."[1337] They specifically referenced a comprehensive and commendatory article from the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*, which expressed a highly favorable view on the bokréta group's dancing performance.[1338] Upon returning home, the Karád group conducted local presentations to share their experiences.[1339]

6.2.6 Vienna – Entertaining event for wounded soldiers, 4 June 1942.

In June 1942, at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a group of Gyöngyösbokréta traveled to Vienna for an international event honoring the wounded soldiers of European nations fighting on the Russian front: Academy for Wounded Soldiers of the Associated and Friendly Nations (Akademie für verwundete Soldaten der verbündeten und befreundeten Nationen).[1340] The event was organized by the Foreign Organization of the National Socialist Party (Auslandorganisation der N.S.D.A.P) and the Reich Propaganda Office Vienna (Reichspropaganda-amt Wien), and included the diplomatic representatives of the Axis states, with groups from Italy, Finland, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, and Romania performing alternately with German groups.[1341] Participants from Hungarian villages included Szakmár, Karád, Szatmárököritó, Nádasdaróc, and Derecske, with the Nádasdaróc group being particularly notable as they represented the reclaimed Transylvanian territory on this foreign trip. This was the first – and ultimately the last – foreign performance where the bokréta groups from the territories returned under the Vienna decisions participated.[1342]

[1335] d'Angle 1939: 3.; *Het Laatste Nieuw* 1939. május 3. 1.; de Geinst 1939: 5.; Closson 1939: 2.; *La Libre Belgique* 1939. május 3. 5.
[1336] Ph. M. 1939: 4.
[1337] *Pesti Hírlap* 1939. április 22. 12.; *Népszava* 1939. április 22. 8.
[1338] *Le Soir* 1939. május 3. 2.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 5. 1.; *Új Magyarság* 1939. május 10. 11.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 4. 1.; *Magyar Nemzet* 1939. május 11. 13.; *Pesti Napló* 1939. május 10. 15.; *Az Újság* 1939. május 10. 8.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1939. május 10.
[1339] *Somogyi Újság* 1939. május 10. 3.; *Új-Somogy* 1939. május 10. 3.
[1340] *Hagyomány Szava* 1943. (4.) 4. 8. *Hagyomány Szava* 1943. (4.) 4. 8.; Ujváry 1984: 48.; Veder 1942: n.o.
[1341] *Hagyomány Szava* 1942. (3.) 6. 1–2.
[1342] Veder 1942: n.o.




Fig. 108–109. Photos of the event. *Hagyomány Szava* 3, no. 6 (1942): 1–2.

The newspapers sought to highlight the political significance of the event: “In honor of the wounded from the nations fighting shoulder to shoulder for a new Europe, the German Empire held its first grand performance evening in Vienna. Hungarian, German, Italian, Finnish, Croatian, and Slovak soldiers enjoyed half an hour of music from home, marveling at the colors and traditional costumes they hadn’t seen in a long time, momentarily forgetting the difficult times.”[1343] (Fig. 109.) Paulini wrote of the event: “But this proud Gyöngyösbokréta, which had a strangely beautiful almost foreign policy meaning, was accompanied by a tearful yet joyful »domestic political« encore: forty wounded Hungarians being cared for in Vienna, particularly happy on the afternoon of Corpus Christi.”[1344] (Fig. 108.)

6.3 Welcoming foreign guests with bokréta performances

Gyöngyösbokréta was primarily established for tourism purposes, with the goals of attracting foreign currency to Hungary and regaining the respect and friendship of other nations after the Treaty of Trianon. To achieve this, they sought to promote Hungary abroad through the St. Stephen Weeks and the Gyöngyösbokréta programs. In certain cases, when foreigners visited Hungary, they highlighted the term “pro-Hungarian,” (magyarbarát) and in these instances, Gyöngyösbokréta was seen as a means of winning foreign support for Hungarian causes and as a form of representation for this effort.[1345]

Starting in 1934, when the government began supporting the movement, an increasing number of foreign guests visited Hungary, and the press enthusiastically reported on these events. The Gyöngyösbokréta performances were typically held in Budapest when foreign visitors arrived during the St. Stephen Weeks. In some cases, however, special performances

[1343] *Magyar Futár* 1942. június 17.
[1344] *Hagyomány Szava* 1942. (3.) 6. 1–2.
[1345] *Nemzeti Újság* 1937. augusztus 10. 10.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1937. augusztus 22. 12.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1937. augusztus 20. 5.

were organized at various locations for the foreign guests. It was also common for them to be taken to rural areas where the local bokréta groups performed their folk customs and dances.

During St. Stephen Weeks, numerous study tours and group trips were organized to Budapest. For example, foreign students visiting Budapest,[1346] or the students participating in the University of Debrecen's summer program (from 1937 to 1943),[1347] Viviani della Robbia (1905–2003), the founder of Italian women's agricultural organizations,[1348] opera singer Carolina Segrera (1905–1998) from Milan's La Scala, Fanni Luukkonen (1882–1947), the leader of Finland's Lotta Svärd voluntary women's aid organization,[1349] Polish Deputy Minister of Transport Aleksander Bobkowski (1885–1966),[1350] Lord Kenneth Lindsay (1897–1991) of the British Navy,[1351] the Chief of Staff of Nepal,[1352] Belgian foster parents,[1353] Russian scientists and composers,[1354] members of the Spanish royal family,[1355] the Siamese royal couple,[1356] a Hindu Maharaja,[1357] and the police chief of Uganda,[1358] The Governor of the Philippines and his wife[1359] (Fig. 110.) all visited and attended Gyöngyösbokréta.



Fig. 110. The Governor of the Philippines and his wife in Matyó folk costumes. *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939, 6(8): 5.

[1346] *Pesti Hírlap* 1935. augusztus 23. 8.; *Magyar Hírlap* 1935. augusztus 10. 4.
[1347] *Debreceni Szemle* 1937. (11.) 3–4. 72.; *Pesti Újság* 1938. augusztus 26. 4.; *Függetlenség* 1943. augusztus 22. 10.
[1348] *Pesti Napló* 1934. augusztus 24. 6.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1934. augusztus 24. 5.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1934. augusztus 31. 6.
[1349] *Reggeli Magyarország* 1942. január 18. 4.; https://lottasvard.fi/en/front-page/
[1350] *Új Nemzedék* 1938. október 13. 10.
[1351] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1936. szeptember 4. 5.
[1352] *8 Órai Újság* 1937. augusztus 18. 7.
[1353] *Pesti Hírlap* 1936. augusztus 22. 14.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1936. augusztus 22. 10.
[1354] *Délmagyarország* 1946. június 22. 2.; *Szegedi Kis Újság* 1946. június 25. 2.
[1355] *Az Est* 1935. augusztus 24. 11.; *Magyarság* 1935. augusztus 24. 7.
[1356] *Kis Újság* 1934. augusztus 14. 9.; *Magyarország* 1934. augusztus 15. 4.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1934. augusztus 14. 11.
[1357] *Kis Újság* 1934. június 28. 5.
[1358] *Az Újság* 1934. augusztus 23. 8.
[1359] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1939. (6.) 8. 5.

Additionally, members of the Bulgarian Cooperative Movement[1360] and the German-Hungarian Livestock Breeding Commission,[1361] German doctors on study trips,[1362] journalistic delegations,[1363] as well as visitors who came to Hungary for hunting,[1364] horseback riding,[1365] or to tour the Hungarian countryside by car,[1366] often visited rural towns where the Bokréta performances were part of the program. Participants of the international pilot picnic visited Hungary on several occasions, and on each occasion, local Bokréta groups performed for them.[1367] Visitors who came for the Hungarian air races either attended Bokréta performances in Budapest or in the countryside.[1368] In 1937, Edward, the Duke of Windsor (1894–1972) (formerly King Edward VIII of the United Kingdom: 20 January – 11 December 1936) and his wife, Wallis Simpson (1896–1986), visited the Borsodivánka castle, where the Mezőkövesd Bokréta performed for them, and there were discussions about repeating the Bokréta evening.[1369] Many famous or influential foreigners, whether privately or as part of official visits, were guided by their hosts to experience these performances, such as Ludwig Steeg (1894–1945), the Mayor of Berlin, who visited the performances as a guest of Károly Szendy,[1370] or Prince Starhemberg, who attended the folk art performances as a guest of Gyula Gömbös.[1371] (Fig. 111.) During her visit to Hungary, the widow of General Harry Hill Bandholtz also visited the Boldog and Sárköz bokréta groups' performances with Klára Tüdős.[1372]

[1360] *Kecskeméti Ellenőr* 1941. május 19. 2.
[1361] *Dunántúli Hírlap* 1943. július 17. 4.
[1362] *Orvosi Hetilap* 1935. (79.) 39. 1058.; *Kis Újság* 1935. augusztus 22. 2.
[1363] *Pesti Hírlap* 1936. szeptember 10. 11.
[1364] *Soproni Hírlap* 1935. szeptember 8. 3.
[1365] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1936. augusztus 23. 14.
[1366] *Magyarország* 1936. szeptember 30. 14.
[1367] Magyar 1935: 2.; *Magyarország* 1938. június 28. 2.; *Pesti Napló* 1938. július 15. 9.
[1368] *Magyarország* 1935. június 12. 4.; *Az Est* 1938. augusztus 5. 12.; *Az Est* 1938. augusztus 9. 12.; *Magyar Szárnyak* 1938. szeptember 1. 6–7.
[1369] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. szeptember 8. 7.; *8 Órai Újság* 1937. szeptember 10. 12.; *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. szeptember 10. 5.
[1370] *Friss Újság* 1939. augusztus 23. 7.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1939. augusztus 25. 8.
[1371] *Az Est* 1935. június 12. 3.
[1372] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. július 23. 7.; *Kis Újság* 1937. július 24. 6.; *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* 1937. augusztus



Fig. 111. Prince Starhemberg, together with Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös, as well as the participants of the round-trip flight, at the Gyöngyösbokréta performance. *Budapesti Hírlap Képes Melléklete*, June 12, 1935.

The Gyöngyösbokréta performances were considered important by the second-generation Hungarian delegates from the United States, as well as by those arriving for the Second World Congress of Hungarians,[1373] who came to Hungary during the Saint Stephen's Week.[1374] Additionally, several groups interested in folk art visited, for whom watching the Gyöngyösbokréta performances was part of their study of Hungarian folk art. Newspapers reported that "the folk art leader of the largest women's organization in the United States is coming to Budapest just to study Gyöngyösbokréta."[1375]

A regular visitor to Hungary was the International School of Art, organized by Elma Pratt (1888–1977), which consisted of American female painters and sculptors.[1376] They studied folk art and attended the Gyöngyösbokréta performances on several occasions. An interview with Pratt reveals that she and her group were well acquainted with Paulini, worked with the Gyöngyösbokréta performers,[1377] followed the group's activities, were aware of their London performance, and would have liked to invite them to America, but were unable to do so.[1378]

The above – likely incomplete – list shows the wide range of audiences to whom Gyöngyösbokréta was presented as a tourist attraction. In addition to students, trade unions, and participants of group tours, members of the aristocracy and professional enthusiasts also formed the audience for the peasant dance performances. This was a practical choice for presenting

[1373] *Pesti Napló* 1938. augusztus 18. 2.
[1374] Takaró 1935: 26.
[1375] *Kis Újság* 1937. augusztus 14. 5.; *Amerikai Est Kurír* 1937. augusztus 14. 2.
[1376] *Pesti Napló* 1935. július 25. 10.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1935. augusztus 3. 14.; *Magyarság* 1937. július 25. 20.; *Dunántúl* 1937. július 23. 5.
[1377] *Bokrétások Lapja 1936.* (3.) 7–8. 1.; *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 1–2. 1.
[1378] *Pesti Napló* 1935. augusztus 3. 8.

Hungary to foreign audiences, as there were no (or very minimal) language barriers. Music and dance are universally understandable and clearly symbolize the character of a region or a people. This was further reinforced by the uniqueness and beauty of the traditional costumes, which not only posed no obstacles to understanding but were also highly marketable as a spectacle. As the list indicates, many diplomats attended the Gyöngyösbokréta performances either on their own or at the invitation of various politicians. In some cases, Gyöngyösbokréta demonstrations and parades were organized as part of diplomatic receptions.

The period from autumn 1936 to spring 1937 was particularly significant for Hungarian diplomacy, as reciprocal visits between heads of state took place between Hungary and its key allies, Austria and Italy.[1379] The emphasis on Italian and Austrian relations during the 1930s was no accident, as it was a central aspect of Horthy's foreign policy.[1380] Although he failed to invite the most prominent political figures, such as Hitler and Mussolini, to Hungary, he worked to establish direct relations with the Italian King and the Austrian Federal President, leveraging the enthusiasm and hospitality of the Hungarian people as a strong foundation for these ties.[1381] To make this more palatable to the public, Horthy not only relied on political gestures but also gave significant importance to "folk festivals", seizing every opportunity to captivate citizens with grand celebrations, spectacular decorations, and parades.[1382] In 1937, in return for Governor Miklós Horthy's 1936 visits to Vienna and Rome, the President of the Republic of Austria, Wilhelm Miklas, and his delegation arrived in Budapest on May 3, followed by the King of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele, along with his wife, daughter, and entourage, on May 19.[1383]

The outbreak of the Second World War also boosted diplomatic visits, particularly the two notable visits concerning the Gyöngyösbokréta: the reception of Yugoslav Foreign Minister Aleksandar Cincar-Marković and German Justice Minister Franz Schlegelberger in 1941.

6.3.1 Reception of Wilhelm Miklas, President of the Austrian Federation, 3 May 1937.

First, Austrian Federal President Wilhelm Miklas (1872–1956) [1928–1938] came to Budapest on May 3, 1937. The significance of the visit is demonstrated by the fact that Miklas was the first head of state to formally visit Budapest since the first World War,[1384] even though the visit's date itself reflected diplomatic tensions.[1385] State Secretary István Bárczy (1882–1952) [1928–1944?] organized the ceremonial welcoming preparations,[1386] and following the

[1379] Horel L'Amiral Horthy. Le régent Horthy 1920–1944. 20.
[1380] Sóti 2021: 249–250.
[1381] Bán 2008: 79.
[1382] Sóti 2021: 249–250.
[1383] Horthy 2023: 223.
[1384] Murber 2015: 196.
[1385] Bán 2008: 79.
[1386] *Ellenzék* 1937. május 5. 8.

president's arrival at Keleti station, they drove the Austrian head of state in the adorned Mussolini Square, where Mayor Károly Szendy was waiting for them.[1387] In addition to all sorts of military parades and displays, there was also a parade of bokréta members.[1388] (Some of them were the same bokréta dancers who had taken part in the 1934 Vienna celebrations, whose main patron was Wilhelm Miklas.[1389]) Five thousand kids cheered the head of state on Fisherman's Bastion, "while a few hundred members of Gyöngyösbokréta cheered them on St. George's Square."[1390] The organization of the visit most likely began early, but only six days before the president's arrival did the Bokréta Association receive instructions to mobilize the groups. Despite this, it was still possible to get in touch with most locations, and the costumed peasants from the bokréta settlements closest to Budapest attended the Austrian president's reception.[1391] Wilhelm Miklas was met by a delegation consisting of twenty-four groups of several hundred people from the Danube–Tisza Interfluve, Sárköz, and Matyóland (Matyóföld) districts,[1392] according to press accounts.[1393]

6.3.2 Visit of the Italian monarchs, 19 May 1937.

Italian King Victor Emmanuel III (1869–1947) [1900–1946] cancelled and postponed his trip to Hungary several times for family and domestic political reasons. The postponement or possible cancellation of the visit of the King of Italy could also be justified by Italy's foreign policy. Although Italy and Hungary were signatories to the Rome Protocol, in February 1937 Italy and Yugoslavia signed a friendship treaty recognizing the territorial integrity of the southern Slav state – a move that was completely at odds with the Hungarian revisionist aims that Mussolini had supported in his Milan speech in the autumn of 1936. However, Italian imperial ambitions and the growing German influence in the Danube Basin weakened Italy's position in Central Europe.[1394] Horthy recalls in his memoirs: „In diplomatic etiquette, special significance is attached to the shorter or longer time that is allowed to elapse before a visit is returned. The suggestion had been made that King Victor Emmanuel should be spared the fatigue of a long journey, but the King had scouted it with the reply, »No, no, I am going myself.«"[1395] This should therefore be seen as a gesture in itself, especially as it was the seventh

[1387] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. május 4. 1–4.
[1388] *8 Órai Újság* 1937. május 4. 3–5.
[1389] *Nemzeti Újság* 1934. július 22. 23.; *Kis Újság* 1934. július 22. 6.
[1390] *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* 1937. május 4. 1.
[1391] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3–5. 2.
[1392] *Friss Újság* 1937. május 4. 1–3. 2.
[1393] *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* 1937. május 4. 1.
[1394] Sóti 2021: 249–250.
[1395] Horthy: 2023.

international visit of Emperor Victor Emmanuel since his election as King in 1900,[1396] but it was also significant because it was the first royal visit to Hungary since the World War.[1397] The second half of the 1920s saw the beginning of a strengthening of Italian-Hungarian relations in political, economic and cultural terms.[1398]

Naturally, the visit of the Italian king and his delegation to Hungary attracted significant international attention, providing an opportunity to advance relations between the two countries.[1399] The leaders and embassies of various nations closely monitored how different countries responded to the visit, including how the press interpreted it.[1400] French diplomacy, for example, evaluated the Italian-Hungarian meeting in a lengthy report, discussing the development of Italian-Hungarian political relations and how Hungary's rapprochement with Italy could influence the reordering of power dynamics in Europe. The report also touches on the earlier Austrian-Hungarian meeting, attempting to understand the connections between the two events. Additionally, the document examines the subtle reactions of the German press, as the leadership of Nazi Germany was keenly interested in anything related to the „Danube issue" and its potential implications.[1401]

Horthy and King Viktor Emmanuel's meeting also facilitated political discussions between the foreign ministers – Count Ciano (1903–1944) [23 June 1935–11 June 1936], Kálmán Kánya (1869–1945) [1933–1938] , and prime minister Kálmán Darányi (1886–1939) [1936–1938].[1402] Strengthening good relations was in Hungary's interest, as at the time, the Hungarian government considered Rome its most important ally. The 1927 Hungarian-Italian treaty had helped the country emerge from its international isolation, while the 1934 Italian-Austrian-Hungarian agreement contributed to post-crisis stabilization.[1403] To further strengthen ties between the two nations, the Italian delegation was received with great pomp. Military demonstrations, parades, and elaborate carriages awaited the Italian guests, and the most striking moment of the reception was the procession of the bokréta groups. (Fig. 112.)

[1396] Sóti 2021: 250.
[1397] Olasz 2020: 223.
[1398] Éder 2020: 185.
[1399] AD Z901.4. Les Souverains Italiens á Budapest.
[1400] AD Z901-4. 122–137. Rapport pour Son Excellence Monsieur Yvon Delbos Ministre des Affaires Etrangères au sujet: Voyage des Souverains d'Italie á Budapest, le 29 mai 1937.
[1401] AD 126. Z901-1. 99. Berlin, le 20 mai, 1937. L'Allemagne, la Hongrie et le problème danubien.
[1402] Horthy: 2023.
[1403] Olasz 2020: 223.



Fig. 112. „Taken on the occasion of the visit of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy to Budapest on 19 May 1937, of the parade of the Gyöngyösbokréta members." (Sattler Katalin/Fortepan 146146. 1937.)

At the very front of the massive crowd stood the bokréta groups, who, on behalf of the Hungarian countryside, greeted the royal delegation.[1404] The Governor placed particular importance on the presence of the rural population in such a representative manner, as it not only aimed to emphasize the social support for his regime but also to express sympathy toward the Italian monarch.[1405] Some articles even mention that "Governor Miklós Horthy eagerly and proudly explains which groups are passing in front of the royal guests."[1406]

As in the case of the Austrian head of state's visit, the organization of the procession—lasting approximately a quarter to half an hour[1407] – was also entrusted to the Hungarian Bokréta Association[1408], which mobilized around six hundred bokréta members[1409] from thirty-some villages.[1410] However, while the Bokréta Association had only a few days to recruit bouquet bearers for Wilhelm Miklas' visit, this time, delegations of larger, more numerous folk costume groups arrived from all over the country. Their role was more prominent and important, and their participation garnered significant media attention, especially the procession and greeting

[1404] *Az Est* 1937. május 20. 8.
[1405] Olasz 2020: 228.
[1406] *Pesti Hírlap* 1937. május 20. 5–6. 6.
[1407] *Felsőmagyarországi Reggeli Hírlap* 1937. május 20. 1–2. 1.; *Délmagyarország* 1937. május 20. 1–2. 2.
[1408] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 3–5. 2.
[1409] *8 Órai Újság* 1937. május 20. 1–4.
[1410] *Az Est* 1934. május 20. 12.; S. Mária 1937: 4.

by the Gyöngyösbokréta group. (According to the French report, Miklas' reception, in general, was less elaborate and of a more modest nature.[1411])




Fig. 113–114. BTM Kiscelli Múzeum Fényképgyűjtemény ltsz.2017.1.2; MNM TF, Magyar Eseménytörténet I/B, 62.2403.

Newspapers reported in four- to five-page articles on every detail of the visit of the Italian dignitaries to Budapest, often dedicating a full page to the description of the bokréta groups' procession. Numerous capital city newspapers individually introduced the various bokréta groups and their traditional costumes, noting the villages or regions they came from, the items they carried (such as flags, agricultural tools, baskets, cakes, straw and other decorations), and the distinctive features of their attire.[1412] The articles also reflected a romanticized portrayal of Hungarian peasants: the strong, beautiful types of people, the charm and vividness of the folk costumes were often praised. "Now, »Gyöngyösbokréta« is marching by – the delegation of 34 villages, dressed in picturesque folk costumes, brings their simple, heartfelt homage to the royal guests. The colorful procession looks like a fresh bouquet of wildflowers. Proudly, we admire the fine specimens of humanity, and we would like to embrace each laughing-eyed village beauty and shake hands with the handsome young men."[1413] (Fig. 113–114.)

The newspapers also reported that the radio recorded "the Hungarian countryside's procession in front of the Italian royal couple," which was then transmitted to America.[1414] In addition, numerous photographs and video recordings were made of the event, highlighting the bokréta groups' procession. The Hungarian newsreel featured an extended segment showcasing the folk groups in their traditional costumes,[1415] and the Italian version also followed the

[1411] AD Z.901.4. Ministère des Affaires Etrangères 1930–1940. Hongrie. 126. Les Souverains Italiens á Budapest.
[1412] Máriáss 1937: n.o.; *Friss Újság* 1937. május 20. 1–4. 3.; *Délmagyarország* 1937. május 20. 1–2. 2.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1937. május 20. 1–4. 4.; *Magyar Jövő* 1937. május 20. 1–2. 2.
[1413] S. Mária 1937: 4.
[1414] *Az Est* 1934. május 20. 12.
[1415] III. Viktor Emánuel olasz király Magyarországon. 4'10–4'57. https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=2318 1937. május. Magyar Világhíradó691.

+folklore procession" for quite some time, with the Italian narrator commenting on the display of "one or more typical Hungarian rural folk costumes."[1416] (Fig. 115–116.)

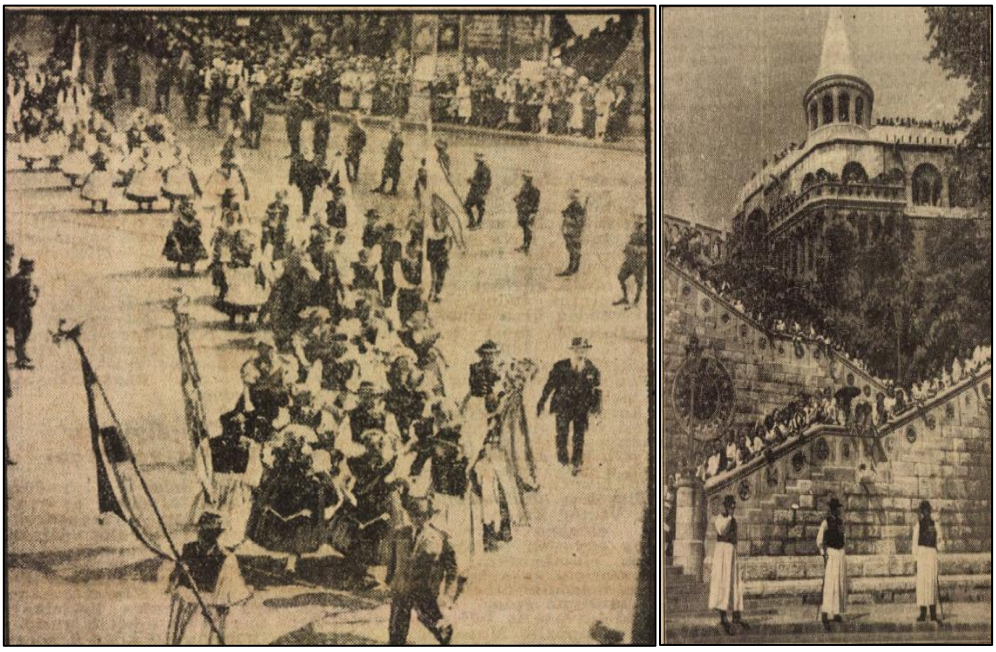

Fig. 115–116. The parade of the Gyöngyösbokréta folk groups from the Hungarian countryside. *Friss Újság*, May 20, 1937, 4.; The crowd waiting for the royal couple under the Fisherman's Bastion. In front stand the Gyöngyösbokréta members. *Az Est*, May 20, 1937, 3.

Gyöngyösbokréta played an additional role in the royal program: for the hunting trip in Gödöllő, a reception was held in the castle gardens in honor of the delegation from the capital, where the local residents, dressed in traditional costumes, formed an honor guard. The bokréta groups traveled in straw carts, and in a gesture of goodwill toward the Italian royal couple, "by swapping the order of the kerchiefs tied for Pentecost, the girls from Szada now represented the Italian tricolor."[1417] During the reception, Béla Paulini – along with several police officers involved in the organization and maintenance of order[1418] – was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Italian Order of the Crown by the Italian King.[1419] (Fig. 117.) After receiving the decoration, Paulini commented, "I accepted the award as a tribute to all the bokréta groups, indeed to every bokréta members involved in the alliance."[1420]

[1416] Prima giornata dei reali italiani. Giornale Luce B/B1100 https://patrimonio.archivioluce.com/luce-web/detail/IL5000023075/2/prima-giornata-reali-italiani.html&jsonVal= 0:15'–0:45'
[1417] Kecskés (szerk.) 2002: 7.
[1418] *Magyarország* 1937. május 25. 7.
[1419] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1937. június 5. 8.; *Nemzeti Újság* 1937. június 5. 9.
[1420] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1937. (4.) 6. 2.; Ujváry 1984: 35.

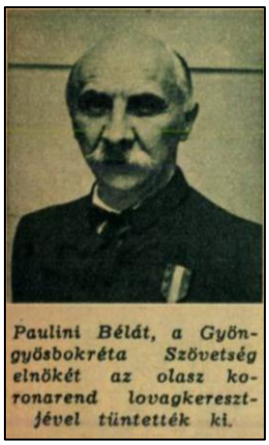

Fig. 117. Béla Paulini, the president of the Bokréta Association, was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Italian Order of Merit. *Képes Pesti Hírlap,* June 12, 1937.

For the bokréta members, as with their foreign appearances, this performance also remained in memory as a beautiful and patriotic act.[1421]

6.3.3 Aleksandar Cincar-Marković, Yugoslav Foreign Minister's Visit, 1 March 1941

The next significant diplomatic visit involving the bokréta groups took place on March 1, 1941, when the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, Aleksandar Cincar-Marković (1889–1947) [1939–1941], visited Hungary. The occasion for his visit was the finalization of the Yugoslav-Hungarian Friendship Treaty.[1422] In the chapter that reviews the history of the movement, I have already presented the history of Yugoslav–Hungarian (Serb–Hungarian) relations, including the Eternal Friendship Treaty, so I will briefly touch on some of its details here: Horthy had proposed the mutual agreement between the two countries, with the first signing taking place in Belgrade on December 10, 1940, by Hungarian Foreign Minister István Csáky (1894–1941) [1938–1941]. The formal exchange of the treaties occurred on February 27, 1941, after Csáky's death, and was welcomed in Budapest by the new foreign minister, László Bárdossy (1890–1946) [4 February 1941 – 3 April 1941, prime minister: 3 April 1941 – 7 March 1942], who received Cincar-Marković.

The essence of the treaty was to provide a "solid and lasting foundation for the relationship between the two peoples, with the belief that strengthening and deepening the mutual political, economic, and cultural ties would serve the interests of both neighboring countries, as well as the peace and prosperity of the Danube region." The treaty did not address the situation of the minority populations in Vojvodina or the issues of territorial revisions.[1423]

[1421] Witt 1983: NA 1694/83.; Máriáss 1937: n.o.
[1422] *Reggeli Ujság* 1941. február 28. 1.; Balla 1941: 132–133.
[1423] *Külügyi Szemle* 1941. március 1. 189–192.

Originally, Cincar-Marković's visit was scheduled for January, but due to other official visits and the health of the Hungarian foreign minister, it had to be postponed.[1424] Eventually, the Yugoslav foreign minister was received at the end of February 1941.[1425] The Hungarian press, of course, reported on every detail of the visit, and foreign media also followed the signing of the treaty between the two neighboring states with great interest.[1426]

During the visit, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister was received by Governor Miklós Horthy,[1427] and after his official engagements, he also participated in some tours. In his diary entry from February 25, 1941, Ferenc Zsindely [1891–1963], commenting on Cincar-Marković's arrival, notes that the Yugoslav guest had two specific requests for his visit to Hungary: "To see *Fidelio* at the Opera and to see folk costumes."[1428] On March 1, both of these wishes were fulfilled: he attended *Fidelio* at the Opera House[1429] and, on his last day in Hungary, had also the opportunity to experience live Hungarian folk art. The National Hungarian Bokréta Association was tasked with organizing the event for this occasion.[1430] In addition to the local Tura bokréta group, participants from Galgahévíz, Zsámbok, and Boldog also performed.[1431] The Yugoslav delegation was invited and accompanied by Ferenc Zsindely,[1432] who, as previously mentioned, was a great supporter of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, alongside his wife, Klára Tüdős, a fashion and set designer. In his diary, Zsindely recalls the day with fondness:

> "We had the bokréta groups from Galgahévíz and Boldog summoned to Tura, Béla Paulini decorated the school, and Klára and I went out around 10:30. The plan was for the Yugoslav delegation to arrive by 11, but they were delayed. Meanwhile, all the colorful Hungarians were freezing. I was very angry – at every nation in the world. Because these good Hungarians were waiting for the old enemy with love and enthusiasm. Finally, after an hour's delay, they arrived. They danced and sang for them and offered them cakes and wine. He liked the display, drank about five glasses of peach juice, and happily posed for photographs with the girls in folk costumes. In fact, he enjoys being photographed. He even told my wife: »I know my peasants will be pleased to see that here too, I'm showing an interest in the peasants.« It seems that's why he was so keen on folk art. The excursion was a success…"[1433]

[1424] *8 Órai Ujság* 1941. január 9. 2.; *Magyarság* 1941. január 16. 2.
[1425] *Magyar Élet* 1941. február 28. 1.; Zsindely 2021: 30.
[1426] *Függetlenség* 1941. március 1. 2.; *Új Magyarság* 1941. március 1. 4.; *Függetlenség* 1941. február 28. 1–2.
[1427] *Az Újság* 1941. február 27. 3.
[1428] Zsindely 2021: 29.
[1429] *Függetlenség* 1941. március 1. 2.
[1430] *Debreczeni Újság* 1941. március 2. 3.
[1431] ZTI AKT1001. Ujváry Ferenc: *A Gyöngyösbokréta boldogi csoportjának története.* 116.
[1432] *Uj-Somogy* 1941. március 1. 1.; Zsindely 2021: 31.
[1433] Zsindely 2021: 32.

At the event, a folk-art exhibition was organized, showcasing local folk-art objects, and the delegation was presented with embroidered pieces and decorative souvenirs[1434] after a performance featuring folk dances and songs.[1435]

Ferenc Ujváry, in his local history writings, also mentions that the organizer from the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that the toast be given by a bokréta member (i.e., a peasant). Naturally, this caused a stir among the event organizers, as it was highly unusual for an official event to feature such a thing. There was also concern that a "simple peasant" might touch upon sensitive topics (the situation of Hungarians in Vojvodina or the issue of territorial revision were particularly contentious at the time), which could have easily caused diplomatic complications.

According to Ujváry's recollections, they chose József Kepes, a traditional master of ceremonies (vőfély), to deliver the speech. This was deemed a practical decision, as in folk culture, the vőfély has a role at weddings as the one who delivers speeches, humorous rhymes, and also takes on a directing role. This ensured that someone confident and experienced in delivering speeches was selected. Kepes greeted the high-ranking Yugoslav guest in the following manner:

> "»Mr. Minister! Welcome to our land! A bad neighbor is the greatest curse. Until now, we have been bad neighbors to each other, but from now on, let us be good neighbors and help each other! We thank you for coming to see our customs. When you return home, please tell them what you have seen. Also, tell your people that we honor the Yugoslav nation and the many Hungarian brothers living there. Please take this small gift as a memento of our friendship.« (With that, the master of ceremonies took the bouquet from his staff and handed it to the minister.) »God bless you!«
> The minister stepped towards the master of ceremonies, embraced him warmly, and only then did he clink glasses with him."[1436]

At the end of the performance, Cincar-Marković conversed with Béla Paulini, the organizer of the Gyöngyösbokréta, and according to newspaper reports, during their conversation, the idea of jointly organizing a Yugoslav-Hungarian folk-art celebration was also discussed.[1437]

This celebratory demonstration of friendship between the two nations could have remained a symbolic gesture of goodwill; however, to fully contextualize the event, it is essential to acknowledge the political tensions that overshadowed it. In the subchapter addressing the revival of the movement in Vojvodina, I already noted the strained relations

[1434] *Nemzeti Ujság* 1941. március 2. 5.
[1435] *Kecskeméti Közlöny* 1941. március 1. 1.; *Nyírvidék – Szabolcsi Hírlap* 1941. március 1. 1.
[1436] Ujváry 1984: 46.
[1437] *Nemzeti Ujság* 1941. március 2. 5.; *Új Magyarság* 1941. március 2. 2.; *Népszava* 1941. március 2. 2.; *Pesti Hírlap* 1941. március 2. 3.; *Ellenzék* 1941. március 3. 8.

between Hungary and Yugoslavia; however, it is necessary to contextualize this particular meeting again. While the press portrayed the event as a symbolic and harmonious encounter, diplomatic relations at the time were marked by significant tension. The occasion was framed around the ratification of the Treaty of Eternal Friendship between the two nations. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, Hungary's participation in the German-led invasion of Yugoslavia on April 11, 1941 – primarily aimed at reclaiming Vojvodina – led to the treaty's effective annulment.[1438] This turn of events created serious challenges for Hungarian foreign policy. Prime Minister Pál Teleki died by suicide on April 3, 1941, largely in response to Hungary's involvement in the campaign, which he perceived as a profound moral and political failure. Although not opposed to territorial revision per se, Teleki had firmly insisted that any military action must follow the formal dissolution of Yugoslavia, avoid crossing historical Hungarian borders, and prevent Hungarian forces from operating under German command – all conditions that were ultimately ignored. Teleki also regarded the treaty as a personal diplomatic achievement, and its collapse represented, in his view, not only a failure of policy but also a betrayal of national honor.[1439]

6.3.4 Franz Schlegelberger's visit to Lake Balaton with the bokréta group of Karád, 1941.

Franz Schlegelberger's (1876–1970) visit to Budapest in October 1941 was the final significant diplomatic visit where Gyöngyösbokréta also performed.

Franz Schlegelberger was a senior official in the Reich Justice Ministry during the Nazi regime, where he initially worked on drafting legislation and rose to key positions, including State Secretary. He accepted the legitimacy of the Nazi government, even though its rise involved violence and intimidation, and became an enthusiastic supporter of Hitler, justifying the regime's actions and retroactive legislation. Schlegelberger advocated for the legal justification of Nazi policies, such as the persecution of Jews and the euthanasia program, emphasizing the importance of following Hitler's orders as lawful. Despite his initial reluctance towards some Nazi actions, he aligned with the regime's legal framework and later defended his role as simply adhering to the law. After the war, he portrayed himself as a neutral legal professional, downplaying his enthusiastic support for the regime's illegal actions.[1440]

His visit in Hungary, like the previous ones, was a reciprocal gesture following a foreign visit by a Hungarian politician. Schlegelberger, as German Undersecretary of State [30 January

[1438] Romsics 2020: 189.
[1439] Ablonczy 2016.
[1440] Nathans 2000: 281–304.

1941 – 19 August 1942],[1441] came to Hungary in return for László Radocsay's (1878–1978) September visit to Germany as Hungary's Minister of Justice [9 November 1939 – 22 March 1944].[1442]

During his stay in Hungary, Schlegelberger visited various provincial judicial institutions,[1443] attended professional meetings, and was subsequently received by the Governor. Horthy awarded Franz Schlegelberger the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of Hungary, the highest distinction that can be conferred by the Hungarian state, in its second class.[1444]

Accompanied by his wife and delegation, Schlegelberger also visited the National Hungarian Bokréta Association to view the folk craft exhibits there.[1445] Another program with Gyöngyösbokréta ties during their Hungarian tour was a "colorful showcase of Hungarian folk life" in Balatonfüred,[1446] where they attended a performance by the Karád bokréta group.[1447] To entertain the distinguished guests, the 12-member Karád bokréta group performed traditional Hungarian folk dances and plays. (Fig. 118.) Additionally, the local mayor gifted them two bottles of Balaton wine as a token of hospitality.[1448]

As in previous examples, the press portrayed these Gyöngyösbokréta events as cheerful and friendly gatherings – which they indeed were on the surface and likely experienced as such by participants – yet they also accompanied politically fraught moments, particularly during the years of World War II.

[1441] *8 Órai Újság* 1941. október 9. 6.
[1442] *Nemzeti Újság* 1941. szeptember 7. 3.; *Délmagyarország* 1941. szeptember 10. 5.
[1443] *Külügyi Szemle* 1941. (18.) 6. 587–588.; *Függetlenség* 1941. október 10. 3.; *Kárpáti Híradó* 1941. október 11. 5.
[1444] *Magyarság* 1941. október 11. 8.; *Magyar Nemzet* 1941. október 11. 5.; *Pesti Újság* 1941. október 11. 2.; *Az Újság* 1941. október 11. 3.
[1445] *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. (2.) 11. 1.
[1446] Zehery: 1941: 355.
[1447] *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. (2.) 11. 1.
[1448] *Zalai Magyar Élet* 1941. október 9. 1.; *Zalai Magyar Hét* 1941. október 13. 3.; P. Miklós 2021: 33.; MTI 1941. október 15.



Fig. 118. „Behind the group of bokréta members, from left to right, stand: Béla Térfy, ministerial counselor, Jenő Lutilszky, ministerial head of department, Dr. Gramm, imperial court judge, Ferenc Schlegelberger, imperial undersecretary, and László Radocsay, Minister of Justice." *Hagyomány Szava* 1941. 2(11): 1.

International representations of Gyöngyösbokréta		
Date	**Event**	**Location**
8–11 June 1934	Vienna International Dance Congress (Internationalen Tanzwettbewerbes und Volkstanztreffens)	Vienna
14–20 July 1935	International Folk Dance's Festival	London
23–30 July 1936	World Congress for Leisure Time and Recreation (Weltkongress für Freizeit und Erholung)	Hamburg
29 March – 1 April, 1937	Grandes Fêtes des Pays Romantiques	Cannes
3 May 1937	Visit of Wilhelm Miklas, President of the Austrian Federation	Budapest
19 May 1937	Visit of the Italian monarchs	Budapest, Gödöllő
10–12 June 1938	Kraft durch Freude Festival	Hamburg
1 May 1939	Brussels International Dance Competition	Brussels
1 March 1941	Visit of Aleksandar Cincar-Marković, Yugoslav Foreign Minister	Tura
12 October 1941	Visit of Franz Schlegelberger, German Undersecretary of State	Budapest, Balatonfüred
4 June 1942	Academy for Wounded Soldiers of Allied and Friendly Nations (Akademie für verwundete Soldaten der verbündeten und befreundeten Nationen)	Vienna

Table 4. International representations of Gyöngyösbokréta.

6.4 Conclusion: Gyöngyösbokréta's role in cultural diplomacy

In this chapter, I have attempted to highlight the role of the Gyöngyösbokréta in foreign representations. As a major tourist attraction in the capital, foreign visitors, including many famous and influential figures, attended its performances. The increasingly successful attraction also drew foreigners to rural areas, thus boosting rural tourism. The press played a significant role in this, as continuous reports and coverage increasingly reinforced – also for the Hungarian audience – that Gyöngyösbokréta had become an international attraction.

After just a few years, the Bokréta Association received invitations abroad, and between 1934 and 1939, and lastly in 1942, the various groups performed at international (dance) events. A brief description of the foreign invitations reveals that these invitations were very different in nature: while the events in Hamburg mainly aimed to present the people as a representative social group with a strong culture, in Brussels, Gyöngyösbokréta performers appeared only as supporters in the performances of folk songs (arranged for choirs and presented in an archaic manner by the people). The 1942 performance in Vienna, on the other hand, had a more political undertone. The longer-analyzed performances in London and Cannes also present different lessons. The Cannes case, for which I had the opportunity to research at the Cannes archives, the French diplomatic archives, the Budapest City Archives, and in local and family collections, goes far beyond a simple international dance gathering. The invitation of Gyöngyösbokréta can be seen as an early step in establishing tourist relations between the two cities, and an important thread in this context is the Hungarian-born secretary of the Mayor of Cannes. Therefore, the "diplomatic" role of the Gyöngyösbokréta in this case – unlike the German and Austrian cases – was not, or not solely, between two nations, but rather at a different level: an element of the rapprochement between two cities. The 1935 international folk-dance festival aimed to showcase and scientifically analyze live folk dances, and the Gyöngyösbokréta's participation was evident, as Hungarian peasants presented their own dances and customs within this framework. At similar folk dance gatherings, the question arose as to whether it was the people or professional dancers who should perform. The Hungarian press – and the performers themselves – emphasized that the peasants themselves represented Hungary at these events.

The same narrative appeared in connection with the reception of foreign guests by Gyöngyösbokréta. It is symbolic that at the most significant diplomatic visits of the era, the people, dressed in traditional folk attire and presented as custodians of ancient traditions, were showcased. During the visit of the Italian royal couple, Gyöngyösbokréta performers played an important role twice, similarly to the visit of the Yugoslav foreign minister, who specifically requested to see live folk art and was honored by the "men of the people".

Gyöngyösbokréta performers were often referred to as diplomats, representatives of Hungarian culture, and during their foreign performances, the press often endowed them with the role of (national) heroes. Foreign interest and positive reactions had a great impact on the success of Gyöngyösbokréta. This also made the Hungarian audience, and more importantly, the peasants themselves, aware of the value of folk culture, and its potential use in national (self)representation.

7. Heritage preservation – the first movement in Hungary to preserve intangible heritage

> „With respectful love and esteem, they preserve the intangible heritage left to them by their forefathers, the old Hungarian traditions of life, from which the urban mixed population can often easily free itself. It was named »Gyöngyösbokréta«, a solemn presentation of old Hungarian folk traditions, folk art, ancient dances, songs, and clothing."[1449]

The selected quotation for the chapter's motto, a news article regarding a presentation of Gyöngyösbokréta, designates Gyöngyösbokréta as a heritage, specifically an intangible heritage. The foundational document of the Bokréta Association, along with Paulini's works and several press pieces, associates Gyöngyösbokréta with the cultivation of tradition and the safeguarding and transmission of (folk) heritage. Certainly, the context and vocabulary diverge from contemporary institutional heritage preservation standards; yet, at that era, Gyöngyösbokréta unequivocally launched a discourse aimed at the preservation and transmission of folk dances, folk songs, folk traditions, and folk costumes. Initially designed for tourism, the Gyöngyösbokréta shows garnered significant success and attracted numerous participants, thereby highlighting the vanishing traditions and attire. The movement's emergence sparked a debate including all societal sectors, centered on authentic heritage preservation. Paulini established a comprehensive set of principles, under the auspices of the Bokréta Association, regarding the collection of living traditions and the encouragement of traditional communities to safeguard, transmit, and present them.

I suggest that the challenges faced by the movement closely resemble those encountered by heritage protection efforts under UNESCO in recent decades. A comparative analysis of these issues and their resolutions reveals both similarities and differences between the Hungarian movement at the national level, aimed at safeguarding intangible folk heritage during the interwar period, and international heritage protection initiatives of the past few decades.

In this chapter, I seek to answer the question of who guided this discourse on heritage protection by examining the principles upheld by Paulini and the Bokréta Association, the perspectives of ethnographers as a profession, and the role of the rural peasant groups as custodians of tradition. This aspect, together with ethnographers' standpoints, most clearly indicates the conflict in connection with the movement's activities previously outlined (diplomacy, construction of national identity, tourism marketing), as these were deemed inaccurate and detrimental to the preservation of folk culture. The movement, along with its

[1449] Az ősi magyar szépségek nagy szloveszkói bemutatójára készül Léva. *Prágai Magyar Hírlap* 1935. augusztus 25. 13.

implications for tourism and propaganda, has faced criticism mostly about authenticity. In this part I present the various facets of authenticity that were highlighted from the very beginning of the movement – which are still debated today, especially in relation to the presentation of indigenous cultures to tourists.

7.1 Key points on the preservation of folk heritage and authenticity

Heritage is a dynamic and multifaceted concept that has been widely studied and continuously reinterpreted across disciplines. While its definition and scope have evolved over time, the term "heritage' has become a cornerstone in understanding cultural identity, memory, and the relationship between past and present societies.[1450] My objective in this chapter is not to elucidate the essence of the concept, but to emphasize some elements that will facilitate my analysis. The legal term „heritage" has expanded to incorporate a much broader meaning in nearly every language, including all tangible and intangible goods that are considered worthy of preservation from previous generations.[1451] The French neologism „patrimonialisation" effectively describes the process of appropriation. „In essence, we can regard the unique appropriation of existing cultural traditions as the core of heritage creation – while simultaneously expanding this tradition and oneself through new exploration methods."[1452]

Heritage is a legacy inherited from the past, resulting from a process of selection in which we identify and adopt what we deem to be our heritage.[1453] The dimensions, utilization, framework of heritage, and the institutions that embody and provide access to it – specifically, those that uphold the canon and govern access – collectively shape what can be termed the social imagination. The social imagination, which governs the present and future, is largely contingent upon the construction of the past.[1454] Archaeologist and heritage theorist Laurajane Smith argues that there is a dominant Western discourse about heritage, the "authorized heritage discourse", which "draws on and naturalizes certain narratives and cultural and social experiences – often linked to ideas of nation and nationhood."[1455] It relies on the power/knowledge assertions of experts and is institutionalized inside state culture agencies and amenity organizations. Heritage shapes how the past is understood and its significance for the present, with these meanings often legitimized through (inter)national institutionalization via laws and conventions. It functions as a tool of governance, used by governments and

[1450] Lowenthal: 1998.
[1451] Erdősi – Sonkoly 2005: 74.
[1452] Sonkoly 2005: 54.
[1453] Wessely 2005: 20.
[1454] György 2005: 8.
[1455] Smith 2006: 11.

bureaucracies to regulate social and cultural values, as well as the historical narratives that support them.[1456]

Monument protection is the direct precursor and starting point of this process, as it has broadened the range of objects that are worthy of preservation, commencing with the protection of historically significant artifacts from both art history and historical perspectives. We can also consider nature conservation as one of its precedents. This concept is rooted in the idea that the remaining commodities, which are deteriorating as a result of the effects of industrial-consumer society, should be protected from destruction at the last minute.[1457]

The evolution of heritage regimes indicates that, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the notion of heritage was employed to the protection and (national) approbation of tangible artifacts challenged by modernization. By the 2000s, this concept had expanded to include all aspects traditionally associated with identity and culture in the humanities and social sciences.[1458] This latest approach includes, among other aspects, the safeguarding of intangible heritage, focusing on the preservation of practices endangered by social, economic, or political transformations that uphold the identity of a living community.[1459]

In the Hungarian context the use of the term „intangible" is quite problematic, since „intangible (szellemi) means »spiritual« as opposed to the »material«-ness of the tangible heritage giving the philosophical scent of the 19th century to the debates about the definition and the meaning of this new term."[1460]

Certainly, not solely due to difficulties with translation/adaption of the notions such as this, but the term „heritage" was not used in the contemporary sense during the time of Gyöngyösbokréta; rather, it was used to describe the dowry that was inherited from one's parents. However, it has also been used in a few instances in connection with folk culture, such as „the values of pure, ancient folk heritage"[1461] or the dances that were „handed down from father to son as a heritage of old shepherd life."[1462] The term „heritage" is also used in relation to the Gyöngyösbokréta in a similar context. For instance, "the Gyöngyösbokréta [...] developed from the ancient heritage what the holy king intended as a high European Hungarianism."[1463] The colors and forms of Hungarian folk costume are „what a fairy miracle, what a dazzlingly

[1456] Smith 2011: 11.
[1457] Erdősi – Sonkoly 2005: 74.
[1458]Sonkoly 2019: 5.; Geismar 2015: 72.
[1459] Sonkoly 2009: 204.; Keszei 2002: 255–268.
[1460] Sonkoly 2006: 9–12.
[1461] Makkai 1943: 287.
[1462] *Eger* 1936. augusztus 4. 3.
[1463] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1936. május 16. 7.

beautiful heritage,"[1464] and the people of the Gyöngyösbokréta „with respectful love and esteem, they preserve the intangible heritage left to him by their forefathers..."[1465] Lastly, and perhaps most revealingly, „Twelve villages, one by one, take to the stage to demonstrate the heritage that the people have inherited from their fathers, mothers, and ancestors. What they inherited... and what they have preserved of their great heritage, of the colorful folk fantasies, of the playful imagination, of the striving for beauty, of the artistic inclination, temperament, spirit, and virtue of their ancient manifestations."[1466]

This narrative framework is typical, as the quest for identity and a reconnection with environment and community were hallmarks of the life reform movements prevalent in Hungary at that era. "The most typical life-reform motif, the quest for authenticity, purity, and originality, is seen throughout the movement from multiple perspectives. The village's uninterrupted society encompasses untainted forms of dance, attire, and traditions. The traditional method of knowledge transmission is equally significant. The knowledge is passed on intact, and the method of transmission is likewise ancient." [1467]

Despite the fact that authenticity remains a primary consideration in the preservation of historical values today, this concept encompasses multiple meanings that have evolved over time. As a term used within philosophical and ethical discourse, authenticity has a long history, and analyses of the subject indicate the diverse applications of the term across different eras and disciplines, leading to the absence of a unified definition of authenticity.[1468] Anthropologist Dimitrios Theodossopoulos raises the question: is there only one authenticity or many?[1469]

In this part I briefly examine how the concept of authenticity is manifested within heritage preservation and the challenges associated with maintaining authentic quality. The professionalization and institutionalization of various areas of heritage protection have resulted in a scholarly approach to the preservation of authenticity, codified in various normative documents.

In the context of built heritage, numerous guidelines exist regarding restoration, reconstruction, renovation, and conservation. The first guidelines for monument protection were articulated in Greece in 1931 – the same year as the first Gyöngyösbokréta presentations took place in Budapest –, with representatives from 22 countries striving to preserve

[1464] *Délibáb* 1940. április 13. 33–34.
[1465] Koperniczky 1935: 13.
[1466] Kassai 1943: 6.
[1467] Kovács 2013: 256.
[1468] see: Adorno: Jargon of Authenticity; Somogy Varga Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal.
[1469] Theodossopoulos: 338.

authenticity in the protection of built heritage.[1470] The 1964 Venice Charter explicitly states that monuments must be handed down to subsequent generations "in the full richness of their authenticity."[1471] On the 30th anniversary of this document, an international committee convened in Japan in 1994, as articulated in the *Nara Document on Authenticity*, which acknowledged that "the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture", indicating that rigid requirements cannot be established.[1472] The Riga Charter, signed in 2000, emphasizes the importance of authenticity in the conservation and reconstruction of cultural heritage, advocating for a careful balance between preserving historical integrity and allowing for contemporary interpretations.[1473]

In relation to tangible heritage and museums, the authentication of artifacts, collections, and finds is fundamental, as is the development of procedures for creating authentic replicas. Nevertheless, issues surrounding authenticity remain contentious. Open-air museums and the objects and buildings relocated there, for instance, face criticism regarding authenticity because they have been removed from their original contexts – where they were created and fulfilled their functions.[1474]

While discussions on authenticity and the principles for its preservation have emerged relatively quickly in the domains of architecture and tangible heritage, the case of folklore and intangible heritage is more complex. Regina Bendix's 1997 work, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*, highlights that folklore has long served as a means of seeking authenticity, fulfilling a desire to escape from modernity. The ideal folk community, envisioned as pure and free from the evils of civilization, served as a metaphor for everything that was considered non-modern.[1475] Within the UNESCO framework, expressions of intangible heritage, including customs, observations, music, dance, traditions, rituals, and games, do not place as much emphasis on authenticity, as establishing originality is considerably more challenging due to the oral transmission and the proliferation of various versions. In the case of the "pure", untouched folkloric communities mentioned by Bendix, folklorists have long regarded the anonymity of the people as another factor contributing to authenticity.[1476] In 1977, UNESCO first examined the possibility of extending copyright to

[1470] Athéni Karta (1931.)
[1471] Velencei Karta (1964.)
[1472] Narai dokumentum a hitelességről (1994.)
[1473] *Riga Charter on authenticity and historical reconstruction in relationship to cultural heritage* https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/publications/2020-05/convern8_07_rigacharter_ing.pdf
[1474] Füzes 1998: 471–475.
[1475] Bendix 1997: 7.
[1476] Bendix 1997: 15.

folklore. As a result, a proposal for the legal protection of folklore was articulated in 1989.[1477] Although there was already a demand in 1973 for the protection of traditions and intangible heritage following the issuance of UNESCO's cultural heritage convention, these recommendations emerged only a decade and a half later, and traditional knowledge and performing arts have been recognized as a form of world heritage only since 2003.[1478] However, this declaration does not emphasize authenticity, at least not in its scientific sense, but rather focuses on the community and the customs they consider important and valuable, thus granting them the authority to decide which rituals and customs to present and how. In her 2015 work *Heritage and Authenticity,* Helaine Silverman argues that the authenticity of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) should be viewed as a dynamic and context-dependent concept, rooted in the lived experiences of communities. She emphasizes that authenticity is not a fixed attribute in this context as the elements have been merging, evolving, sometimes disappearing.[1479] The document *Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which complements the Convention in 2015, adds that „authenticity and exclusivity should not constitute concerns and obstacles in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage."[1480]

Despite this, various methods and concepts are being developed and reinterpreted within the scholarly and professional domain to grasp the authenticity of folklore. As with heritage preservation, the concept of authenticity is intricately linked to modernity. On a moral level, modernity introduces the possibility of "endless reproducibility", increasingly highlighting the question of authenticity.[1481]

With the advent of modernity, tourists seek a "romanticized authenticity unaffected by modernity" in the traditions and cultures presented to them. Dean MacCannell, author of numerous studies on tourism phenomena and creator of the concept of "staged authenticity," argues that tourists seek access to the social world beyond "staged" presentations.[1482] This desire, closely related to the questions of modernity, is captured by the term "fakelore," which refers to the commodification of folklore, marking capitalism and profit orientation as dangers to authentic folkloric performances.[1483] From here, two additional concepts arise in the context of folklore studies related to modernity and authenticity. Fakelore not only encompasses the

[1477] *Ajánlások a Hagyományos Kultúra és a Folklór Védelmére.;* Cseh 2022: 593.; Verebélyi Kincső: A folklór jogi védelme. EFI Communicationes 4.
[1478] *UNESCO 2003: Egyezmény a Szellemi örökség védelméről.*
[1479] Silverman 2015: 75.
[1480] Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. https://ich.unesco.org/en/ethics-and-ich-00866
[1481] Somogy Varga: 4; 158.
[1482] Theodossopoulos: 343; MacCannell 1976.
[1483] Dundes 1985: 15.; Theodossopoulos: 342.

commodification of folklore but also the phenomenon of "invented traditions", which is associated with the recreation of traditions in the context of nationalism, regarded as one of modernity's most successful political movements, along with the nationalist appropriation of folk culture.

Folklore is a complex and multifaceted concept that often implies issues of authenticity by itself.[1484] However, in relation to folklore and authenticity, several concepts have emerged, a few of which I will highlight.

Folklorism or folklorismus refers to the phenomenon of the secondary transmission and performance of folk culture, often characterized by a departure from its original context and authenticity.[1485] According to Hans Moser, who first articulated the concept, folklorism can take three forms: performances of folk culture that occur outside their local settings, playful imitations by different social classes, and the invention of new folkloric elements for specific purposes.[1486] This concept underscores the tension between authentic cultural expressions and those that are constructed or staged for political, tourism or other reasons.[1487] Hermann Bausinger highlighted that the notion of folklorism covers different linguistic and cultural areas. He noted, among other aspects, that the Hungarian concept of folklorism, in contrast to the aforementioned explanation, was primarily perceived as the incorporation of folklore expressions into the (high) cultural and literary realm.[1488] In Hungarian, the question is characterized by the distinction between the expressions 'népi' (literally from/by the people, popular, folk) and 'népies' ('folkish', the imitation of folk).[1489]

Another similar notion is the term "fakelore", first used by folklorist Richard M. Dorson in 1950, refers to the portrayal of "spurious" or "synthetic" cultural expressions as if they were authentic folklore.[1490] Dorson distinguished between genuine folklore, which arises organically from communities, and fakelore, which is often fabricated or altered to fit nationalistic narratives. Folklorist Alan Dundes argues that fakelore frequently arises from feelings of national inferiority, where cultures attempt to improve their reputations by creating heroic narratives or embellishing existing folklore.[1491] He mentions Hungary as one of "certain small countries suffering from poor self-images vis-a-vis other nations" and emphasizes the

[1484] Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995: 367–380.
[1485] Utz, Jeggle 1979: 242.
[1486] Moser 1964 18.
[1487] Newall 1987: 131.
[1488] Bausinger 1983: 436.
[1489] Bárczi – Országh (ed.) 1959: V.
[1490] Dorson 1950: 12–15.
[1491] Dundes 1985: 13–14.

correlation that these nations have been notably engaged in the collection and study of folklore.[1492] Fakelore is the antithesis of folklore; in contrast to folklore, which serves a critical role in large nation-states, fakelore is a contributor to social coordination and ideological and cultural hegemony.[1493] This concept is closely related to "invented traditions," – as an example of it[1494] – which refer to practices that are consciously created or modified to fulfill cultural needs, particularly in times of national crisis or identity formation.[1495]

Invented traditions, a term often referenced in the context of nation-building (see: Chapter 4), highlight the constructed nature of what is presented as authentic.[1496] The emergence of the concept motivated anthropologists, folklorists, and historians to trace the modern origins of practices previously considered ancient.[1497] Theodossopoulos points out in relation to Hobsbawn's text that when he „juxtaposes invented with genuine traditions, he indirectly associates the invented with the inauthentic", instead, he suggests the concepts of „revitalization," „revival,", „revaluation", „transformation" or „restructuring".[1498] In her 1989 study titled *Inventing Traditions for Whom?* Regina Bendix examines the Swiss resort of Interlaken to illustrate how locals respond to tourism-related objectives and how they shape their folkloric displays based on their intended audience. Rather than solely focusing on attracting foreign visitors, Bendix argues that the locals actively cultivate a distinctive local identity through these cultural presentations.[1499] What was the case with Gyöngyösbokréta local communities?

As I indicated in this introduction, tangible and intangible heritage, along with folklore, are complex notions, and their association with the search for authenticity has also presented several challenges since the emergence of these categories. In the following, I will outline these issues associated with the Gyöngyösbokréta.

7.1.1 Gyöngyösbokréta: An early Hungarian example of safeguarding intangible heritage

Gyöngyösbokréta was evidently an instrument for heritage construction. The Bokréta Association, as an institution, along with Paulini, decided what aspects of a disappearing popular culture would be maintained for present and future generations. Paulini articulated the

[1492] Dundes 1985: 14.
[1493] S. Fox 1980: 252.
[1494] Dundes 1985: 15.
[1495] Hobsbawm, 1983.
[1496] Hobsbawn 1983.
[1497] Bendix 1997: 13.
[1498] Theodossopoulos 350.
[1499]These folklore presentations analyzed by Bendix were called as folklorismus by German historian and folklorist Hans Moser, because of the event's organized (and not spontanous). Bendix 1989: 131–146.

process of heritagization and heritage protection through a series of articles and lectures, asserting that only the originating local community could cultivate and present its traditions.[1500] He urged intellectuals to support the movement, but explicitly opposed the appropriation and presentation of peasant folk customs.[1501] He recognized the success of tourism in showcasing traditions solely through the peasantry: „One of Hungary's unique attractions, even by European standards, is that it is the people [peasants] who genuinely foster folk art, so rendering this folk art credible."[1502] Although ethnographers participated briefly in the canonization process, their technical expertise conferred legitimacy to the movement, while the political endorsement of the Bokréta Association was proven by official decrees. The outcome was a national framework that enabled groups with diverse traditions to unite and engage.

In a previous paper, I examined the extent to which the Gyöngyösbokréta of the first decades of the 20th century and the heritage protection canonized under the auspices of UNESCO in the last third of the century responded in similar or different ways to the recurrent needs to cultivate and collect folk traditions as national and cultural assets.[1503] To prevent anachronisms, I have endeavored to demonstrate that, despite differing conceptions and terminology, comparable concerns and efforts to deal with them emerged in the context of Gyöngyösbokréta, as they did decades later under the UNESCO-centric paradigm of heritage protection.

The two practices will be examined from the following perspectives: the scope of the values to be safeguarded, the state's involvement in protection, the communities' participation in conservation, and the challenges of preservation, mediation, transmission.

The 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* defined the concept of intangible cultural heritage as follows: „The »intangible cultural heritage« means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage." [1504]

The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement may be regarded as an early Hungarian instance of intangible heritage preservation, as it was established to showcase customs and various forms of expression (dance, song, music), along with associated tools and objects (costumes, musical

[1500] Paulini 1939b: 1–3.
[1501] Paulini 1936a: 2.
[1502] Paulini 1940: 2.
[1503] Andor 2020: 209–230.
[1504] UNESCO 2003: I.2. https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention#art2

instruments, sticks, glasses used for dancing, etc.). The movement originating from Gyöngyösbokréta presentations significantly contributed to the safeguarding of folk culture, as its principal objective was to encourage in Hungarian peasants an awareness of the need of valuing their cultural history and traditions.

Under the heading of "safeguarding", the Convention highlights initiatives to promote the identification, research and safeguarding of such heritage, i.e. it includes „measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage."[1505] This definition aligns with the objectives established by the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, formulated and executed eight decades ago, at a time when there was no precedent for the intricate safeguarding of what are now considered intangible heritage practices in Hungary, despite the fact that the collection of folk music in Hungary had commenced decades earlier.[1506] The importance of the unity of music, singing and dancing was discovered by László Lajtha, who proposed as early as 1928 that dances should be recorded alongside folk music and singing during field collections.[1507] The movement was then launched as an idea, initially without a secure background, to cultivate and present folk traditions.

Although, unlike UNESCO's practice, Gyöngyösbokréta did not arise from international collaboration, wherein States Parties committed to safeguarding heritage within their jurisdictions upon ratifying the documents; the state's role in protecting folk traditions as national and cultural assets was delineated in a comparable manner.[1508] According to the UNESCO Convention, it is the responsibility of the State Party to „adopt a general policy aimed at promoting the function of the intangible cultural heritage in society, and at integrating the safeguarding of such heritage into planning programmes".[1509] The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement has undergone a remarkably analogous process, characterized by decrees from the Ministry of Religion and Public Education and the Ministry of the Interior aimed at preserving and showcasing folk art solely in alignment with the "principles and work plan"[1510] of the Bokréta Association, while also incentivizing local bokréta leaders to identify and promote their

[1505] UNESCO 2003: I.2.3.
[1506] Béla Vikár conducted folk music collecting expeditions from 1895 to 1896. Zoltán Kodály and Béla Bartók succeeded him by not just collecting but also publishing, arranging, and categorizing folk tunes. At this point, they had amassed several folk tales and folk ballads (Dömötör 1990: 7–11).
[1507] Jávorszky 2013: 18–24.
[1508] How to ratify the 2003 Convention? UNESCO. (https://ich.unesco.org/en/how-to-ratify-00023 – Accessed: 2020. 05. 22.)
[1509] UNESCO 2003: II.13.a.
[1510] Molnár 1935: 3.

traditions, both financially and ideologically. Beginning in 1934, during the initial phases of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, the state commenced its financial and legal backing for the initiative. In my view, the government was meeting its 'responsibility' to implement „appropriate legal, technical, administrative and financial measures"[1511] through the decrees and financial backing of the Ministry of Commerce.

The subsequent action for the Gyöngyösbokréta to „designate or establish one or more competent bodies for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory"[1512] was executed by the Ethnographic Society, which was commissioned by the Ministry of Religion and Public Education to conduct field verification activities over several years. This aligns with the contemporary necessity for heritage protection to „foster scientific, technical, and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies, with a view to effective safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular the intangible cultural heritage in danger."[1513] Thus, it is evident that the government endorsed the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement in a manner analogous to the current obligations of a State Party within UNESCO. It is important to note that the Ministry of Religion and Public Education and the Ministry of the Interior, while advocating for the preservation of folk heritage, were simultaneously advancing the organization in the context of cultural policy, perceiving rural folk costume organizations and their performances as instruments of propaganda.

For an intangible heritage element to be inscribed on the UNESCO list, whether at the national or international level, the community must first recognize and appreciate the practice or content as a tradition, and subsequently illustrate its significance and role in the community's life.[1514] Consequently, while the institutional structure for heritage certification is present, the determination of content – what is deemed significant and worthy of preservation against what is not – is entrusted to the respective communities. The "heritage process" has delineated an alternative trajectory in the instance of the Gyöngyösbokréta. The national heritage preservation advocacy for Gyöngyösbokréta by ethnographers, folk art devotees, and tourism experts in the capital was primarily focused on safeguarding and showcasing the vanishing traditions of the peasantry. In other words, the initiators of the movement themselves made the peasants aware of their everyday socio-cultural practices. During the initial sessions, only the villages suggested by the ethnographers were showcased in the Gyöngyösbokréta performances.

[1511] UNESCO 2003: II.13.d.
[1512] UNESCO 2003: II.13.b.
[1513] UNESCO 2003: II.13.c.
[1514] SZKÖI (http://szellemikulturalisorokseg.hu/index0.php?name=f21_jegyzekre_vetel – Accessed 2020. 05. 22.)

However, as soon as the peasants (and the leaders of the groups) realized the potential of folk traditions, they themselves applied to the Bokréta Association.[1515]

According to the analysis of folk-dance teacher Henrik Kovács, the role of the community can be analyzed at several levels simultaneously in the case of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement: the village unit, the community of bokréta groups and the nation (the unity of town and countryside) as a community.[1516] The narrower community, also known today as the "heritage community"[1517], refers to the individual bokréta groups that have cultivated and presented the traditions of their settlements. At this level, the transfer of knowledge between generations was important, since the survival of the tradition was made possible by the elderly teaching the young the customs and dances. In many cases, it was thanks to the influence of the Gyöngyösbokréta that young people learned local traditions from the elders, and thus many forgotten customs were cultivated. The movement was also the first to bring together groups from different villages, providing an opportunity to build relationships, share methods and exchange experiences between leaders. However, this required a cohesive force capable of mobilizing communities at several levels. Béla Paulini's role was also essential in holding together the large Gyöngyösbokréta community, which had grown to several thousand members over a decade and a half of activity, because he knew personally not only the bokréta leaders but also the members.[1518] But community building should not only be about the members of the Bokréta Association, because – perhaps more importantly – the movement also created a link, a kind of group cohesion, at the micro and macro level, between the village and the (capital) city, which could have an impact on wider sections of society.[1519]

UNESCO's *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore,* published in 1989, deal specifically with the preservation, conservation and transmission of folk traditions:

> "Conservation is concerned with documentation regarding folk traditions and its object is, in the event of the non-utilization or evolution of such traditions, to give researchers and tradition-bearers access to data enabling them to understand the process through which tradition changes. While living folklore, owing to its evolving character, cannot always be directly protected, folklore that has been fixed in a tangible form should be effectively protected."[1520]

[1515] Szendrey 1941: 1.
[1516] Kovács 2011: 46. Vö.: Szente 2017.
[1517] Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. Faro, 2005.; van Knippenberg – Van Gils 2021: 41–43.
[1518] Ujváry 1984: 21.
[1519] Szente 2017: 153.
[1520] UNESCO 1989: C.

As the performances of the Gyöngyösbokréta were partly still alive, partly only in the memory of the elderly, the problem of the tradition's stiffness arose already in the first performances. But as Csaba Pálfi's evaluation already quoted shows, the material of the performances represented mostly still living, valuable traditional material, most of which would have disappeared without the Gyöngyösbokréta. The demonstrations thus played an important role in both preserving and solidifying the tradition. During the performances of the Gyöngyösbokréta, more than 200 variations of some 75–80 types of dances, 35–40 games and customs were performed. In many cases, local teachers recorded these plays and customs with texts and songs with sheet music, and photographs and some film footages were also taken, which also formed part of the documentation and were in fact used for stiffening.[1521] They have ultimately become a source of ethnographic research, enabling researchers to study the causes and ways in which traditions have changed.

The *Recommendations* state that conservation pertains to both folk traditions and the safeguarding of their transmitters. Proposals are made to secure economic support and recognition of folk traditions through the incorporation of folklore education in both formal and informal curricula. In 1939, István Györffy, an ethnographer involved in initiating the Gyöngyösbokréta, proposed the incorporation of folklore instruction in schools, alongside the displays, as a fundamental component of national education.

> "They should record all the dances that the old people still know on a musical, colourful film. They should be taken to museums to be processed. Once the dance and music folklorists have identified the ancient, characteristic Hungarian dances, we can then, through the schools, give back the dances of each region on sound film and, in addition, teach the most beautiful dances of other regions of the country. But if we only teach dance traditions in the villages to the people, we will not achieve much. It will then only be a »Bokréta« for the entertainment of the middle classes."[1522]

Although we do not know of any wider teaching of the folk traditions that became the focus of interest, Gyöngyösbokréta itself became a subject of study: the *Bokrétások Lapja* reported in 1936 that a textbook entitled *Faithful Hearts – Introduction to the Homeland for the 3rd and 4th Grades /Hűséges Szívek – Szülőföld ismertetése a 3. és 4. osztály számára/* had been produced in Zemplén County, in which the homeland is introduced and the meaning of being a bokréta group of a locality is taught.[1523] The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement itself, which became even more active in teaching and monitoring after its institutionalization, can be understood as extracurricular education. The 1989 Recommendations on preservation also emphasize the need

[1521] Pálfi 1970: 146.
[1522] Györffy 1939: 32.
[1523] Paulini 1936a: 1.

to focus on folklore in a broader sense, "taking into account not only village and other rural cultures but also those created in urban areas by different social groups, occupations, institutions, etc." – and the *Magyar Százszorszép (Hungarian Daisy)* initiative, based on the idea of the Gyöngyösbokréta, which presents the dances and customs of the intelligentsia, can be compared to this.[1524]

7.2 The question of authenticity

"The evolution and development of the Hungarian folk-dance movement offers a distinctive perspective throughout Europe. Its distinguishing feature from comparable revival initiatives in Europe is its deliberate connection to the original content. In Hungary, the issue of authenticity was a pivotal concern even in the initial phases of the movement's development, particularly during the Gyöngyösbokréta and the Regős Scouting. To what extent is the material presented by the ensembles accurate and ethnographically authentic?"[1525] – public education specialist Éva Héra discussed the Hungarian folklore movements. Paulini frequently employed authenticity to legitimize his movement: "Authenticity! The entirety of Hungarian folk art and its various branches thrive in this enchantment or – fade away as badly as no beautiful cause has ever faded."[1526] Ethnographer Sándor Varga states that „[i]n public discourse and the tradition-keeper movements, the term »authentic« is typically employed as a favorable descriptor, frequently linked to the concepts of persistence and constant good quality. The issue with this is that nothing in history is permanent or static, and folklore has never been so. Narrow-minded nationalist ideology often draws on the notion of static authenticity, »lost in the mists of history«, to rationalize its historically authorized position, originality, and uniqueness."[1527] – and numerous researchers in folk dance and folk music, such as György Martin and Lajos Vargyas, have since proven this.[1528]

Gyöngyösbokréta was the first Hungarian folk-dance performance and folk theatre that featured peasants portraying the cultural traditions of their respective regions, and it has faced criticism primarily about its authenticity. The Budapest Gyöngyösbokréta performances were the very first initiative to showcase folk customs at risk of extinction, with tourism playing a significant role from the outset. Subsequent initiatives also utilized the material gathered by Gyöngyösbokréta, either adapting their ideals to it or contrasting with them. It is important to

[1524] It was Paulini's idea to establish singing and dancing groups drawn from the youth of the intelligentsia, modeled after the Gyöngyösbokréta movement, but with the revival of traditions more fitting to the intellectual class (*Függetlenség* 1939. november 25. 6.)
[1525] Héra 1993: 57.
[1526] Paulini 1936b: 4.
[1527] Varga 2024: 5–9.
[1528] Vargyas 1969: 455–456.

highlight that the organizers and participants folk tradition presentations in the interwar period encountered numerous challenges that remain pertinent today regarding the safeguarding of intangible heritage. However, for Gyöngyösbokréta, many inquiries were posed for the first time, frequently lacking the appropriate terminology for the issues. Whether considering contemporary heritage protection principles or early traditional practices, the question of whose perspective defines authenticity becomes paramount. This underscores the absence of a universally recognized approach to preserving authenticity in traditions, as well as the varying delineations of authentic and inauthentic tradition-keeping established by different social actors. This research examines the evolution of debates concerning the principles of tradition preservation and the representation of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, as well as the varying perceptions and approaches of different stakeholders regarding authenticity. This analysis elucidates the origins and transformations of the quest for authenticity in traditions. My objective is to demonstrate the evolution of the concept of authenticity since the beginning of Gyöngyösbokréta, the critiques directed at the movement, and the contributions of ethnographers in fostering authentic tradition preservation.

Regarding Gyöngyösbokréta, authenticity and originality were essential concepts in the presentation of traditions; nonetheless, the vocabulary of the era predominantly highlighted authenticity in relation to authorship, document verification, legal texts, historical accuracy, and artistic integrity.[1529]

Lexicon articles, intended to express the meaning or essence of a concept, continuously construct their definition of the term "Gyöngyösbokréta" around the authenticity (or its absence), irrespective of the period. The first relevant lexicon article originates from 1936, some years after following the beginning of the Gyöngyösbokréta and two years subsequent to the establishment of the Hungarian Bokréta Association. *The Lexicon of the Pesti Hírlap Newspaper /Pesti Hírlap Lexikona/* states: "[...] a collected showcase of authentic Hungarian folk costumes, folk dances, singing plays, and folk traditions."[1530] In 1938, the *Encyclopedia of Modern Times /Uj Idők Lexikona/* highlighted that "[t]here are no actors with a professional background" and also underscored the originality of the attire.[1531] The subsequent articles regarding Gyöngyösbokréta were written after the end of the movement; for instance, the *New Hungarian Lexicon /Új Magyar Lexikon/* of 1960 adopts an entirely different perspective on the authenticity of Gyöngyösbokréta performances: "The ensembles revitalized local dances, dance

[1529] Balla (ed.) 1939: 3312.
[1530] Pesti Hírlap Lexikona. 1938. 426.
[1531] Uj Idők Lexikona. (11–12.) 1938. 2884–2885.

plays, and folk songs, typically performing them in authentic costumes, yet in numerous instances, the performances were altered into superficial renditions for the sake of stage effect."[1532] The 1969 *Theatre Encyclopedia /Színházi Lexikon/* characterizes the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement as pseudo-folk, in contrast to which Elemér Muharay "started the village stage movement in Fót in 1938 to cultivatee and develop our folk traditions of dramatic value in the face of pseudo-folk."[1533] In the 1969 *Hungarian Biographical Dictionary /Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon/,* the article about Béla Paulini discusses the movement, describing it as "formed for the revival and theatrical presentation of »folk« traditions, marked by the typical false folkness of the era."[1534]

The position of the ethnographic profession is illustrated in the glossary of the 1980 *Hungarian Ethnographic Dictionary /Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon/*, which includes an excerpt from the article on the movement's history authored by dance choreographer Csaba Pálfi and published in 1969 in *Dance Studies /Tánctudományi Tanulmányok/*.[1535] The article states that

> "while only the basic theatrical requirements were met, yet there was room for presenting the tradition in a more or less authentic form. Due to the inconsistent quality of the performances, the Ministry of Education and Religion requested that specialists from the Ethnographic Museums evaluate the presentations beforehand; nevertheless, the »authentication« process was quickly suspended. Dances and customs that were locally reconstructed for the stage presentations and later perceived by scholars as »authentic« traditions are still included. The performances played a crucial part in both preserving and conserving the tradition."[1536]

The exact same highlighted part was applied in the *Small Encyclopedia of Folk Dance* / *Néptánc kislexikon*/ released in 1997.[1537] The latest encyclopedia I discovered, featuring an article on Gyöngyösbokréta, the *Hungarian Dance Encyclopedia /Magyar Táncművészeti Lexikon/,* published in 2008, asserts regarding the authenticity of traditional performances that "[t]he performances are derived from local traditions and are exhibited with minimal staging (...) Experts from the Ethnographic Museum are consulted to evaluate each performance beforehand and review the quality of the staging. The content of the performances is now among the most significant resources for folk dance research."[1538]

From the provided list, I concluded that authenticity was consistently a fundamental element in connection with Gyöngyösbokréta, as evidenced in the lexicon articles. A

[1532] Berei et al. (ed.) 1960.
[1533] Bálint (ed) 1969.
[1534] Kenyeres (ed.) 1969: 374.
[1535] Pálfi 1970: 115–161.
[1536] Ortutay (ed.) 1980: 368–369.
[1537] Pálfy – Récsey (ed.) 1997: 58–59.
[1538] Dienes (ed.) 2008: 70.

chronological evaluation of the lexicons revealed the contemporaneous opinion on the movement's authenticity during the Gyöngyösbokréta, followed by evaluations in the subsequent Communist system, and the evolving perception of its authenticity until the latest lexicon article of 2008, which characterized the presented customs and dance material as "one of the most valuable sources of folk-dance research." The aforementioned professional encyclopedias, namely the *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon (Hungarian Ethnographic Dictionary)* and the *Néptánc kislexikon (Small Encyclopedia of Folk Dance),* articulate the perspectives of ethnographers and dance scholars, emphasizing the significance of authentication and acknowledging that, despite the questionable authenticity, the movement contributed substantially to the research and preservation of traditions.

The term Gyöngyösbokréta, a quasi-genre term, was utilized also as a comparative reference. On one such occasion in 1940, when the *Székely Ballada* arrived in Budapest, the directors proclaimed: "What we present is neither Gyöngyösbokréta nor Revue, but Peasant Theatre, in the truest sense of the term."[1539] During this period, any performance with a folkloric or folk-art character was generally referred to as a "Gyöngyösbokréta." This term was applied not only to foreign folklore-themed shows[1540] but was also frequently used by the press to describe performances by children or amateur groups.[1541] It is not surprising, therefore, that efforts to promote authentic folk performances first sought to challenge competing initiatives operating under the name "Gyöngyösbokréta."

7.2.1 Rivalry

One facet of safeguarding authenticity was combating the rivals of Gyöngyösbokréta. In his work on *Authenticity as an Ethical Ideal*, Somogy Varga, drawing on Benjamin's ideas, points out that "it is only against the modern background of endless reproducibility that the concept of authenticity becomes intelligible in the first place."[1542] Béla Paulini, in correspondence with Bálint Hóman, the Minister of Culture, requested assistance in suppressing the "peasant cabarets" and "competing patriotic interventions" that aimed to promote Hungarian folk art beyond Gyöngyösbokréta.[1543] At one point, the Hungarian Bokréta Association included the following statement on its stationery: "[those] who, in pursuit of any »fashion« and under various pretenses, initiate independent actions by emulating their theories and forms, do not

[1539] I. M. 1940: 6.
[1540] *Nemzeti Újság* 1937. augusztus 18. 11.; *Magyarország* 1939. december 3. 8.; *Népszava* 1935. október 5. 4.
[1541] *Pesti Napló* 1934. december 9. 23.
[1542] Somogy Varga 158.
[1543] Debreczeni 1956: 99–100.

contribute to the Hungarian folk art movement; rather, they disrupt the potential for a cohesive direction in the work and fragment the bokréta of the country.[...] The Hungarian bokréta-movement serves as a custodian of Hungarian spiritual unity, and it demands that its intentions and benevolence be honored by all."[1544]

This is no coincidence, since the sudden success of the Gyöngyösbokréta performances – which had the shortcomings described above – prompted a proliferation of rival groups and performances. As a newspaper article aptly stated: "Rural cabarets solicit dozens of »authentic« peasant actors."[1545] Proponents of the »cult of folk art« sought to showcase, for instance, a shepherd's procession named after Governor Miklós Horthy[1546] or Lili Sopronyi's ensemble, who executed performances in a renowned hotel along the Danube in Budapest, and, as reported by *Bokrétások Lapja*, they received invitations to perform internationally.[1547]

A group of 300 people was established in Northern Hungary, called as Magyar Búzavirág /Hungarian Cornflower/, to showcase the regional folk costumes and customs; certain newspaper headlines labeled these performancess as Gyöngyösbokréta.[1548] Mrs. Máday, the leader of the Magyar Búzavirág group, attempted to lure the bokréta group of Szentistván in the North-Hungarian region to abandon the Bokréta Association in exchange for increased remuneration.[1549] Mrs. Máday's letter to the Szentistván Bokréta leader reached the Parliament, where the initiative was perceived as a deterrent, prompting sixty representatives to sign a petition advocating for the Bokréta Association's protection from commercialization and profit-seeking.[1550] The leader of the Szentistván group rejected any financial remuneration and continued with the Gyöngyösbokréta, while the Cigánd group, previously affiliated with the Magyar Búzavirág, severed ties and expressed intention to join the Hungarian Bokréta Association,[1551] resulting in the Cigánd bokréta members to have the possibility to perform in London as well.[1552] The Nagykálló group's case is particularly remarkable regarding the parallels between Gyöngyösbokréta and Magyar Búzavirág. The Nagykálló group, renowned for performing the Kállai kettős, participated in Gyöngyösbokréta, while another ensemble led by Mrs. Máday emerged in Nagykálló, performing the same dance in Magyar Búzavirág. Ultimately, following a nationally reported debate, the latter sought to challenge the authenticity

[1544] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1934. (1.) 1. 16.
[1545] *Magyarság* 1934. május 20. 21.
[1546] Paulini 1935c: 1–2.
[1547] Paulini 1937b: 3.
[1548] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1933. augusztus 27. 14.
[1549] Paulini 1934: 9.
[1550] *Képviselőházi napló* 1931. 23. 1934. május 17. – 1934. június 26. 87.
[1551] Paulini 1934: 9.
[1552] Pálfi 1970: 122.

of the dance material – validated and documented by ethnographers[1553] – that had been researched and staged by the leader of the local bokréta.[1554] The local newspaper reported on the Nagykálló group's 1934 Magyar Búzavirág performance in Miskolc: "The renowned Kállai kettős dance showcased during the performance was spectacular, genuine, and quintessentially Hungarian."[1555] The article indicates that, for many, this performance possessed the same authenticity as the Gyöngyösbokréta. Paulini sought to dissociate himself from the aforementioned organizations under any circumstances,[1556] as these perceived the chance not as an ethnographic heritage but rather as a profitable spectacle. Neither of them possessed an ethnographic background; however, Lili Sopronyi, a dance instructor, sought to establish contracts abroad,[1557] while Mrs. Máday, president of the local Greek Catholic Women's Association,[1558] aimed to initiate a series of regional productions similar to Paulini's, despite lacking ethnographic expertise, sometimes by luring already existing groups. Paulini has constantly opposed this and has even reported as a cautionary example the rare instances in which bokréta leaders affiliated with the Bokréta Association were prepared to stage a "false bokréta show" for economic gain. (This struggle persisted until 1944, as the bokréta leaders occasionally appeared with bokréta groups at local events without Paulini's awareness, and these programs frequently featured performances of questionable quality and authenticity beside the bokréta groups.[1559])

Paulini's request for support from the ministry was taken into account, and the aforementioned "pseudo-bokrétas" were opposed by decree, granting a monopoly to Gyöngyösbokréta.[1560] In subsection 4.3, I have attempted to illustrate how many agents from different backgrounds have supported (and opposed) the cause of the Bokréta Association. The initiative has ascended to the ministerial level, with multiple parliamentary speeches endorsing the efforts of the Bokréta Association and its operation without competition.[1561] As noted in subsection 3.3, the Ministry of the Interior issued decrees to facilitate the operational efficacy of the Bokréta Association: the initial decree was enacted in April 1934, permitting the establishment of the Association, followed by a subsequent decree in November 1934 urging

[1553] Szabó 1934: 2.
[1554] *Budapesti Hírlap* 1934. szeptember 1. 4.
[1555] *Nyírvidék Szabolcsi Hírlap* 1934. augusztus 22. 2.
[1556] Debreczeni 1956: 102.
[1557] Lenkei 2014: 79.
[1558] *Miskolczi Kath. Értesítő* 1923. december 25. 10.
[1559] NM EA 19036. 164/44. Kokas Kálmán szanyi bokrétavezető 1944. június 7-i levele Paulini Bélának.
[1560] *Magyarország* 1934. május 24. 10.; *Magyarság* 1934. május 24. 5.
[1561] *Képviselőházi napló, 1931. 14. 1933. március 8. – 1933. április 7.* 255–256.; *Képviselőházi napló, 1935. 8. 1936. május 19. – 1936. június 6.* 397–398.; *Képviselőházi napló* 1935. 13. 1937. május 10. – 1937. május 26. 432–433.; *Képviselőházi napló, 1931. 23. 1934. május 17. – 1934. június 26.* 87.; Vonó 2015: 357.

teachers to investigate and promote folk art at the local level. The June 1935 edict outlined the objectives and operations of the Bokréta Association, stipulating that folk art exhibitions and the trading of folk-art objects could only be traded within the Association's framework and without financial profit.[1562] The discord between genuine traditional performances and those motivated by commercial interests, along with the associated issues, has periodically been highlighted regarding Gyöngyösbokréta.

The marginalization of rival initiatives and the introduction of regulations favoring the Bokréta Association effectively established the monopoly of Paulini and the Gyöngyösbokréta. Paulini exercised firm control over the Association, centralizing decision-making and prohibiting group leaders from performing without his prior approval. Through his publications and public lectures, he propagated his views on tradition preservation, publishing only the perspectives of scholars and agents who shared his views. In doing so, he secured the dominance and success of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement.

Since Paulini himself was not an ethnographer either, some of the criticism was directed at his role as well.[1563] This is illustrated in the following caricature, which depicts Paulini teaching the women of the Gyöngyösbokréta group how to perform the pillow dance. The women stand before this new representation of folk art either in confusion or laughter. (Fig. 119.)



Fig. 119. Paulini and the bokréta girls in a caricature. *Hagyomány Szava* 3, no. 10 (1942): 4.

Due to Paulini's lack of ethnographical knowledge and other concerns over authenticity, the performances of Gyöngyösbokréta and the productions of groups wishing to join it were subjected to ethnographic examination.[1564]

[1562] Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára 1867–1945. 1935/113. A m. kir. belügyminiszter 1935. évi 178.437. számú rendelete, a "Gyöngyösbokréta" elnevezésű népművészeti előadások rendezésének és rendőrhatósági engedélyezésének szabályozásáról. 357–358.
[1563] Bartók 1946: 6.
[1564] Saád 1934: 5.; Bende 1937: 7.; K. Pap János 1939: 1.

7.2.2 Ethnographic verifications of authenticity

> "It is essential to portray an authentic and accurate representation of our people's lives for our country's tourism. Foreigners possess superior ethnographic education compared to our urban populace and significantly surpass us in the preservation of traditions. The Tourist Board has acknowledged this, and Géza Tormay, the Secretary of State and Chairman of the Board, has set aside a budget of 3000 pengő for the verification of the performance measurements of the Gyöngyös Bokréta. Béla Paulini has already remitted a portion of this amount, specifically 750 pengő, to the Hungarian Ethnographic Society." [1565]

This is how Györffy described in 1937 the initiation of ethnographers' validation of the customs and dances performed by the bokréta communities. At this point, the dispute around authenticity had escalated to the extent that the Ethnographic Museum considered it necessary to publish an essay addressing the skepticism regarding the performances' authenticity and the absence of expert oversight. Zsigmond Bátky, the director of the museum, addressed the allegations presented in this article:

> "Currently, the Gyöngyösbokréta is a splendid spectacle that evokes tears of delight, with the credit and honor attributed to Béla Paulini. However, it can also be accomplished by different approaches, ensuring it authentically represents the vibrant heritage and traditions of a remarkable populace with a rich culture and exceptional ability, while preserving its beauty. However, this requires ethnographic expertise. Bátky advocated the establishment of an advisory council to aid in the preservation and presentation of authentic traditions with professional backing. Until 1936, financial constraints limited oversight to ethnographers attending Budapest concerts a few hours prior, resulting in minimal or no changes to the compositions they had previously learned."[1566]

Bátky, already in 1933, advocated the establishment of an advisory council to facilitate the authentic preservation and presentation of traditions with expert assistance. Consequently, in 1934, the Ministry of Religion and Public Education requested the experts of the Ethnographic Museum to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the presentations.[1567] Ethnographers were displeased that the "»Bokréta Association«, established without their involvement, later sought collaboration with the Hungarian Ethnographic Society solely to gain endorsement from ethnographic experts."[1568] However, members of the Ethnographic Society consented to cooperate, believing their engagement would better contribute to the preservation of traditions than mere criticism. The official journal of the Ethnographic Society, *Ethnographia*, also reported on the beginnings of the cooperation, "welcoming the Association's decision to seek

[1565] Györffy 1937: 98.
[1566] *Magyarság* 1933. szeptember 7. 4.
[1567] MNL OL K 150-1943-VII-5-184455-6194.Ob_Szü. 531–545.
[1568] Győrffy 1939: 86.

closer contact with the Hungarian Ethnographic Society and, through the Society, with experts in Hungarian ethnography, with a view to better preserving Hungarian ethnographic values."[1569] To facilitate collaboration, an action was adopted at the Ethnographic Society's general meeting to dispatch László Madarassy, Secretary General, to the Hungarian Bokréta Association, and to propose István Györffy, Károly Viski, Sándor Gönyey, Zsigmond Szendrey, László Lajtha, and Ákos Szendrey for the expert committee.[1570] Until 1936, supervision was limited to ethnographers attending Budapest performances a few hours prior, due to insufficient funding, resulting in minimal or no changes to the practiced customs.[1571]

Beginning in 1937, an increased number of ethnographers visited the villages and assisted in the validation of the performances in the capital. These authentications typically assessed the authenticity of the dances, traditions, and attire, while several customs were also described. Based on prior ethnographic records held by the ethnographers, they provided guidance on the attire and hairstyles of the bokréta members and occasionally requested the enactment of plays and rituals exclusive to their location, rather than the folk traditions already showcased.[1572]

The authenticity reports were from 1937 and 1938; however, subsequent field authentications were likely not conducted due to insufficient funds. It may be assumed that during this period, the local and central leaders of Gyöngyösbokréta were endeavoring for more authentic representations of traditions, influenced by ethnographic support; yet critiques regarding authenticity persisted much after 1938. Györffy's 1939 proposal advocates for

> "Gyöngyös Bokréta to be placed under supervision and examined by professionals in rural areas to prevent any falsification or manipulation of tradition. Ultimately, specialists should be dispatched to all the towns of Bokréta that have been previously mentioned to verify the authenticity of the presented tradition, and anyone's invention or modifications should be eliminated. This must be undertaken with urgency, as time will legitimize the false traditions. In a generation, the youth will perceive these fabricated customs as a respected ancestral legacy, and future ethnographers will catalog them as ancient heritage, ultimately leading to the establishment of scientific theories based on these false traditions."[1573]

In Gábor Sonkoly's analysis of Hollókő, one may inquire whether cultural practices and expressions that have lost their original social function and are now staged are deserving of preservation. Furthermore, for ethnographers, as experts documenting folk heritage, the

[1569] *Ethnographia* 1934. (45.) 191.
[1570] *Ethnographia* 1934. (45.) 191.
[1571] Györffy 1937: 98.
[1572] Fél – Kovács 1937: 98–100., Gönyey 1938a: 426–427., Gönyey 1938b: 226–229., Gönyey Sándor 1938b: 427–429., Györffy 1937: 97–99.
[1573] Györffy 1939: 79–80.

question arises whether folk practices that have been commodified for tourism merit ethnographic study, and if they do, how their interpretation alters the traditional ethnographic framework.[1574] Györffy's account reveals that the Hungarian Ethnographic Society had previously invited rural folk groups to showcase their traditions at Society meetings prior to the war, and that the Ethnographic Museum had similarly arranged presentations in rural areas to gather traditions.[1575] Consequently, the validation of the bokréta groups' performances also aimed to facilitate the professional collection of traditions from this perspective.

Gönyey, for instance, who had been involved in the movement from its inception – both supporting it and researching to identify new groups with unknown traditions – undertook systematic documentation of the participating communities, including photographic records. He frequently traveled alongside Paulini and made use of the Budapest Gyöngyösbokréta performances to further his ethnographic work, documenting traditional costumes, as well as the dances, folk plays, and customs presented during these events. (Fig. 120.)



Fig. 120. Photograph by Sándor Gönyey of the Vitnyéd bokréta group. According to the records of the Museum of Ethnography, the photograph was taken in Budapest, where the Vitnyéd group annually presented its local traditions between 1935 and 1944. 1938. (NMF80097. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.)

A documentation of the ethnographers' "observations of scientific and practical significance" resulted from the on-site evaluation of the bokréta groups' performances, was provided to Béla Paulini and the Hungarian Bokréta Association for practical assessment and evaluation, and subsequently published in *Ethnographia* for academic research purposes.[1576] The authentication process not only legitimized the traditions and presentation of the peasants by declaring them

[1574] Sonkoly 2016: 114.
[1575] Györffy 1937: 97.
[1576] *Ethnographia* 1937. (48.)

as being worthy of presentation, but also legitimized the ethnographers and the ethnographic profession by approving their own views on authenticity.[1577]

However, the authentication of the productions remains in question, as the sources provide little insight on the documents and sources that were employed to validate the garments and traditional performances, and how this impacted the continuation and consolidation of the tradition. As presented in the theoretical section, the search for and relation to authenticity becomes problematic in this context due to the transformative nature of folklore and intangible heritage. Authenticity is not a fixed attribute, as cultural elements continuously evolve, merge, and sometimes disappear, making the lived experiences of communities fundamental in defining authentic heritage.

In the case of Gyöngyösbokréta, the community's role was significant because, according to the principles of the Bokréta Association, only peasants could present the customs of their own settlements. In section .3.1.2, titled *Joining the Gyöngyösbokréta*, it was mentioned that after Paulini's recruitment, groups could apply to the Association with their traditions, meaning that the community was partially represented, along with the customs deemed important and worth showcasing in the community's life. Nonetheless, it was primarily the opinions of ethnographic experts that determined which customs and dances could be presented.



Fig. 121. Glass dance performance by the Gyöngyösbokréta members from Nagybaracska, 1941. Photo: István Szendrő. (NMF305217. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.)

A dispute emerged between ethnographers and the custodians of traditions regarding an "authentic" tradition: the legitimacy of the bottle dance performance was contested; ethnographers deemed it no longer a living folk tradition, whereas peasants regarded it as a significant custom as part of their lives, transmitted through generations. In his analysis of the role of peasants in preserving tradition, Paulini astutely observes that "we should really ask the

[1577] Bendix 1997: 7.

»peasants«, if they are still » involved« in folk art."[1578] This did occur in 1943, when people were addressed on behalf of the Bokréta Association. Jenő Padányi Gulyás, an architect known for his significant contributions to Hungarian folk architecture[1579], published an article in *Reggeli Magyarország* titled *Is there a bottle dance?* This article was inspired by the Gyöngyösbokréta performances in August, featuring groups such as Nagybaracska and Szeremle, where women showcased bottle dances.[1580] The inquiry may appear ludicrous; nonetheless, the rationale was that

> "There was a scientific opinion that claimed there is no bottle dance in Baracska and Szeremle. The issue, however, is that it has reappeared, even though it had already disappeared. According to this opinion, from a strict scientific perspective, this bottle dance is no longer authentic because the people simply started it up again, and – heaven forbid – it's even possible they were inspired to revive it after seeing others do it. To top it off, it might even have happened that the leader of the bokréta encouraged the young women to dance this forgotten dance again. From a strictly scientific standpoint, however, this is considered falsification. Only what the people dance on their own, without any external influence, is authentic. As soon as any external factor intervenes, its originality and authenticity are lost, and ethnographic science rejects such a practice, making its revival a matter of contention and opposing it."[1581]

The author thereafter articulates the perspectives of the participants (members and musicians) and residents of the bokréta groups in Szeremle, Nagybaracska, and Báta, who were interviewed by the Bokréta Association. I will mention two examples that demonstrate the significance of the bottle dances to the locals, who, in their own manner, were able to substantiate the existence of these traditions decades prior. Widow Mrs. János Török, an 85-year-old inhabitant of Szeremle, stated: "Dear Mr. President, I am an 85-year-old elderly woman, and I wish to convey that in my young times we performed the bottle dance in the street, accompanied by music, while we balanced bottles on our heads and danced in that manner." János Kovács, a musician, also reminisced about the presence and performance of the bottle dance. "I, János Kovács, as a musician, can attest that the bottle dance was performed at nearly every wedding. I am a 60-year-old man who has been a musician for 30 years, a pursuit that has been acknowledged and demonstrated by my ancestors." The article afterwards includes an interview with Károly Paprika, a small-scale farmer and the temporary leader of the bokréta group in Őcsény, who emphasizes that dancing with a bottle cannot be learned quickly, it takes a lot of practice since early childhood, and is a dance that is passed down from mother to daughter. The article questions if this contradicts ethnography. The author's response was that "[t]his is not

[1578] Paulini 1940: 2.
[1579] https://jelesnapok.oszk.hu/prod/unnep/padanyigulyas_jeno_szuletesnapja__1900
[1580] Bottle dance: A type of implement dances, in which women balance a bottle on their heads or dance around.
[1581] Padányi Gulyás 1943a: 13.

ethnography; this is life. Let us define a clear distinction between the discipline of ethnography and the realities of life, and let us not perceive it as an affront if life persists beyond these boundaries, as the objective is not science but life itself. Furthermore, let us contemplate the fate of future ethnographers if we stop life today and want to put all its phenomena in museums?"[1582] (Fig. 121.)

This case is a striking example of the presence of the authorised heritage discourse raised at the beginning of this chapter, and of the dilemma that UNESCO's Intellectual Heritage Convention addresses about the involvement of the community.

Notwithstanding the imperfections and inquiries, it is significant that for such a pioneering movement, the connection between ethnographers and heritage bearers to validate traditions has been established and executed, particularly given that similar dilemmas were encountered several decades ago in the case of Hollókő and remain pertinent today.

The authentic presentation of customs, as the Györffy quote above illustrates, was motivated not only by the professional criticism of ethnographers, but also by tourism interests. In 1937, the Tourist Board had already realized the importance of authentic traditional presentations, and money was set aside to monitor the performances.[1583]

7.2.3 Peasants on stage: debates on staged authenticity

7.2.3.1 Staged authenticity

The staged presentation of folk traditions has also raised questions regarding authenticity. Some opinions rejected the idea of showcasing folk traditions in a theatrical framework, citing its negative effects. István Györffy highlighted that: „The great sin of the Gyöngyös Bokréta is that it reduces Hungarian dance to a rhythmic gymnastics exercise on stage, erasing all individuality." In his view, this could be remedied by creating colorful sound films during dance collections, which would cultivate folk dance in its original form, allowing for more authentic learning.[1584] An article from 1939, marking the establishment of the Gyöngyös Bokréta in Transylvania, also emphasized the negative impacts of the stage:

> „The future Gyöngyös Bokréta must reflect the life and art of our peasantry; it must serve as a demonstration of human life, attire, song, dance, customs, and decorative arts. [...] The place for showcasing folk traditions is not the city, nor the stage, but the natural environment of the village. It should be organized where life is normally lived: in the familiar landscape, among the homes and the people of the community."[1585]

[1582] Padányi Gulyás 1943b: 2.
[1583] Györffy 1937: 98.
[1584] Györffy 1939: 33.
[1585] Nagy 1939: 237-240.

In 1940, an article titled *Destruction of Tradition /Hagyománypusztítás/* appeared in the journal *Kelet Népe*, stating that even if peasants played and sang as they would at home, the audience could not experience authenticity, because in folk games, the performers and audience do not separate. „And as soon as it becomes a production, it immediately loses its flexibility, spontaneity, variability, in a word, all those characteristics we consider most typical of folk plays. A conscious performance for an audience kills authentic originality at its root, not only in plays but in all kinds of Gyöngyösbokréta showcases."[1586]

This can be linked to the assertion of Dean MacCannell, the creator of the concept of „staged authenticity", which posits that what tourists receive during a demonstration is not authentic. MacCannell coined the term „staged authenticity" to describe experiences or spaces that are fabricated and inauthentic, specifically designed for tourists.[1587] The use of this concept has become widespread in recent decades, particularly in analyses related to the anthropology of tourism or indigenous tourism. One of its examples is the 2016 study of Kithiia Justus and Reilly Shanelle regarding Far North Queensland's indigenous societies. They discussed ideas about the authenticity of the indigenous people's touristic performances, that may relate to the situation of Hungarian peasants featured in Gyöngyösbokréta during the 1930s and 1940s: The tourism industry is often accused of objectifying people and cultures, where marketability is the primary concern. „Since any presentation of culture outside its traditional context can betray cultural heritage, those opposed to indigenous tourism also accuse its practitioners of the unlawful sale of cultural traditions and practices."[1588] This dual-authored study also points out that the staged or contextually detached presentation and commodification of traditions may yield positive outcomes, as „its economic gains can lead to increased cultural preservation." Moreover, the success of these presentations is highlighted as an incentive for communities holding these traditions, thus ensuring their transmission.[1589]

In terms of presenting traditions in an authentic environment – given that „the numerous stage performances influenced the dances and made some groups' dances appear theatrical."[1590] Györffy proposed that folk demonstrations could be relocated to open-air museums.[1591] Here, the performers could showcase their customs in a village setting rather than on a stage.

[1586] Kelet Népe 1940. szeptember 1. 1.
[1587] MacCannell 1973: 589–603.
[1588] Kithiia – Reilly 2016: 1.
[1589] Kithiia – Reilly 2016: 4.
[1590] Gönyey é.n.: 8.
[1591] Györffy 1939: 82.

In the case of Gyöngyösbokréta, the move to the stage, or the detachment from the original context, resulted in changes to the customs (performing in festive clothing, rhythmic, spectacular movements), and instances of „betrayal of cultural heritage" were also observable, as practices like weddings, Pentecost celebrations, and Christmas plays were performed for the stage's sake, even in the absence of the occasion, outside of their original locations. However, it was also evident in the case of Gyöngyösbokréta that in exchange for the benefits (economic or other) provided by the stage, research into local traditions and their transmission from generation to generation began to take place.

As demonstrated by the encyclopedia entries published after the end of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, the concept of authentic tradition preservation remained central to the discourse on the movement. In section 2.6.1 of the dissertation, I presented the position taken after 1948, when the methods of the Gyöngyösbokréta were criticized, opposed, and the socialist folk dance culture was established on new foundations. In 1977, dance scholar and choreographer György Martin commented on the legacy of the movement, stating that „[t]his widespread and influential movement affected nearly 100 settlements in the Hungarian folk region, sometimes contributing to the spontaneous continuation of dance traditions, while in other cases, it solidified them, occasionally pushing everything else aside."[1592] During the socialist era, official cultural policy supported staged folk art, characterized by stylized, folkloric presentations. The Soviet Moiseyev Ensemble, which served as a model, focused less on the authentic stage presentation of Russian folk dances, instead showcasing choreographies mixed with ballet that were more visually appealing on stage. Hungarian folk dance choreographer Miklós Rábai followed this approach as well, though it should be emphasized that in the Hungarian case, „the original folklore was mixed with ballet's fundamental techniques, as opposed to the Soviet model."[1593]

It is interesting to observe that in the debate that emerged in the 1940s between the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement and the Muharay-led folk ensembles, the central critical principle was the authenticity of the original dances and their high-quality stage presentation (Chapter 3.4.1). Progress was primarily seen in the artistic choreography, the adaptation of folk art, and its transformation for the stage. A document produced between 1946 and 1950, which aimed at establishing the Dance Academy, proposed the „creation of a stage dance style based on Hungarian folk dance." The document devotes a lengthy paragraph to the shortcomings of Gyöngyösbokréta, and although it highlights that Muharay's goal, in contrast, was to present

[1592] Martin 1977: 170–171.
[1593] Lelkes 2006: 89.

folk dances authentically on stage, this approach was also condemned by the authors of the document:

> „Gyöngyösbokréta or similar endeavors, despite their appeal, are flawed for three reasons. First, because they seek to cultivate, or even revive, a folk tradition that has lost its mythological foundation and social function, and is therefore inherently unviable. Second, they aim to transfer folk dance to the stage in its original form but detached from its organic context, where it becomes meaningless, false, and unsustainable, as the stage lacks the ancient order and structure that justify and regulate folk dance customs, and it also loses the elements of spontaneity and improvisation. Furthermore, it undergoes a transformation once removed from its original environment. Third, the Gyöngyösbokréta-type movement is flawed because it handles sensitive dance material with unskilled hands, much like when medieval frescoes were restored by retired art teachers. In cases where local organizers of the Gyöngyösbokréta – enthusiastic parish teachers and notaries – felt that something was missing or the forms did not satisfy their taste, they supplemented or modified the tradition according to their own judgment and aesthetic preferences (and the list of errors could go on). Even Muharay's work shows a tendency to transfer folk dances verbatim to the stage, and we find this aspect of their otherwise commendable work to be flawed."[1594]

The contrast between folklore and folklorism is most pronounced here. Although the terms were not available, it was this opposition that caused the greatest conflict between the perception of Gyöngyösbokréta and folk ensembles. This "stylisation"[1595] was opposed during the time of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement. Althought an anonymus newspaper article from 1934 lamented the lack of "integration into an artistic concept" and its "further development by artistic hands"[1596] and thus raised the idea, but parliamentary speeches[1597] and statements by Paulini[1598] emphasized that the movement's goal was the preservation and presentation of original dances and customs by peasants. In relation to the Kállai kettős dance, briefly presented as an example, István Volly questioned in 1991, during the reorganization of Gyöngyösbokréta with groups from old Bokréta towns, whether the people of Nagykálló knew the original version of the dance or the revised version staged by Rábai in the 1950s.[1599] This raises the broader question of whether the "authentic interpretation"[1600] of Gyöngyösbokréta, free from artistic intervention, or the choreographed dances remain cultivated as the dance tradition of certain villages.

From the 1970s onwards, there was an alternative path alongside the folk ensembles' dance presentations for the acquisition and practice of authentic dances. The dance houses, established in 1972 based on the model of Transylvanian (Széki) weaving gatherings, provided

[1594] Bolvári-Takács (publishes) 2013: 184–215.
[1595] J. Newall 1987: 134.
[1596] *Szabadság* 1934. augusztus 26. 11.
[1597] *Képviselőházi napló, 1935. 13. 1937. május 10. – 1937. május 26.*
[1598] Paulini 1936a: 2.; Paulini 1939b: 1–3.
[1599] Volly 1991: 114–115.
[1600] Körtvélyes 1977: 55–57.

a communal space for learning and practicing the dance steps and songs of various regions (often sourced from peasant tradition bearers, collectors, or dance teachers), primarily aimed at young people.

> „The exploration, discovery, and mastery of the authentic forms of Hungarian folk dance had a protest-like character, opposing the forms established during the official presentation of folk traditions and the ideologies conveyed by those forms. Experiencing and recreating dance in the field evoked a sense of freedom. The practice of this freedom represented the rediscovery of true Hungarian nationality and history, in contrast to the values promoted by the socialist state."[1601]

The dance house movement remains a vibrant practice today. „*Táncház method: a Hungarian model for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage"*, selected as an element on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2011.[1602]

7.2.3.2 Folk traditions in the light of authenticity

> „Let us not deceive ourselves into believing that the dances presented by the Gyöngyös Bokréta during the St. Stephen's Day celebrations are still alive. In most places, the people no longer perform these dances. The few young individuals who do showcase them in the Gyöngyös Bokréta learned them mostly from the elders. In many cases, the teacher pieced together fragmented dance movements from elderly people, who were no longer capable of dancing, and to make the dances more stage-worthy and distinct, they supplemented and »improved« them according to their own imagination."[1603]

The above quote comes from ethnographer István Györffy, and his colleague shared a similar opinion. In his 1938 review, Sándor Gönyey stated that Gyöngyösbokréta continued to receive deservedly critical comments, which referred to the „inauthentic, contrived, and rehearsed performances." This was because even after all this time, the importance of tradition and authenticity had not been conveyed to many group leaders. Critics recognized that with the growing success of the movement, there needed to be a greater emphasis on preserving authenticity.[1604]

> „Our Gyöngyösbokréta must be described as beautiful, but not authentic. We could call it a »synthetic bouquet.« The dances are a mix from here and there. The clothes are all »store-bought goods.« We ask for folk art, if there is any left. These girls will never wear these outfits again, and perhaps even their grandmothers never wore such clothing. It was essentially created for the purposes of the Gyöngyösbokréta. What they presented no longer exists and perhaps never looked like this in the first place."[1605]

[1601] Verebélyi 2001: 6.
[1602] https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/tanchaz-method-a-hungarian-model-for-the-transmission-of-intangible-cultural-heritage-00515 accessed: 25 May 2024.
[1603] Györffy István 1939: 35.
[1604] Gönyey 1938: 427.
[1605] *Mohácsi Hírlap* 1937. június 6. 4.

– wrote the *Mohácsi Hírlap* in 1937 about a local Gyöngyösbokréta performance, thus, the criticism did not only come from professional circles; even ordinary people noticed the alterations made to their local customs.

It was not only the leaders of the Gyöngyösbokréta groups but also the organizers of the Budapest performances who committed breaches against authenticity. The greatest success of the first year's Gyöngyösbokréta was the performance by the people of Mezőkövesd and Szentistván, who presented their harvest festival and polyphonic vocal performances at every show. Audiences watched both performances with great enthusiasm, despite neither being authentic representations.[1606] Even Paulini's advisors objected when he included the 24-member children's choir from Szentistván, who performed three-part folk song arrangements – which do not exist in Hungarian folk music – led by a young conductor barely 14 years old, dressed in traditional Szentistván attire.[1607]

Analyzing the above-mentioned cases and considering that the movement was orchestrated by passionate amateurs and ethnographic experts, it sought to reinforce folk traditions, especially in the realm of dance. The movement's founders and organizers aimed to consolidate authentic dance traditions and theatrical performances that – sometimes – had been either reconstructed or were only inferior variations.[1608]

Among the dances and traditions presented by the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, an interesting example is the Kállai kettős, a structured dance with a history traced back to the 17th century. First performed on stage in 1931, this presentation helped ensure the dance's continued survival.[1609] To accommodate the stage performance, the original text had to be shortened, and as a result, the Gyöngyösbokréta performances ultimately condensed the Kállai kettős' musical accompaniment into three songs.[1610] Ethnographer Lujza Ratkó highlights that the staging of the Kállai kettős and other regional dances led to an increased emphasis on livelier, faster-paced dances, which garnered more applause and audience approval. This, in turn, caused even traditionally slower dances, such as the Kállai kettős, which was usually performed by older dancers, to be danced in a faster, more rhythmic manner to better appeal to the audience.[1611] In the 1950s, Miklós Rábai created a choreography based on the Kállai kettős.

In 2002, history teacher Ákos Kovács raised the question of

[1606] Kovács 2002: 25–27.
[1607] Volly 1982: 163.
[1608] Verebélyi 2001: 5–6.
[1609] Ratkó 2020: „223.
[1610] Paksa 2010: 302.
[1611] Ratkó 2020: 240–241.

> „where Paulini »discovered« and »staged« the Mezőkövesd harvest tradition. According to the literature, no harvest festival was ever held in Mezőkövesd. Moreover, this impoverished village, with its limited resources and fragmented plots of land, could not sustain its population and thus annually sent out thousands of seasonal workers. […] Paulini essentially staged a »public exhibition of the Hungarian national spirit« in the setting of a never-existing Mezőkövesd harvest festival."[1612]

The staging of the Gyöngyösbokréta also had the effect of moving peasant dances from the local to the national level, thus providing an opportunity for political propaganda.[1613] The previous examples refer to the concept of invented traditions to varying degrees, and these „traditions" have been invented with both political and tourism-related perspectives in mind. The main issue with these changes was that such fabrications could be mistaken by future generations as original traditions, further compromising the authenticity of Hungarian folk heritage.

In addition to preserving traditions, some widely known dance names today also originated from Paulini, such as *fergeteges*, *kun legényes*, and *pajtástánc*. Several recollections mention the naming of the *fergeteges* dance performed by dancers from Szatmárököritó, though with varying details.[1614] In reality, this was a *Szatmári csárdás,* but during one rehearsal, Paulini referred to it as *fergeteges* (meaning "tempestuous"), and the name stuck, becoming recognized as if it were the dance's original, folk-given title. Today, dancers from Ökörítófülpös proudly carry on this legacy with the name Fergeteges Dance Ensemble (Fergeteges Táncegyüttes).[1615]

The musical performance of the Gyöngyösbokréta presentations were also criticized for its inauthentic form. The primary issue in the musical domain was the lack of local bands, necessitating the reliance on gypsy musicians from Budapest cafés to accompany folk groups from different regions. Ferenc Ujváry, the leader of the bokréta in Boldog, documented the historical account of the local bokréta group. He highlighted the challenges encountered during the rehearsals in 1935, specifically regarding the music arrangement by Zsiga Rácz and his gypsy band. The central debate revolved around whether the dancers should adapt their movements to the gypsy's music or if the gypsy band should adjust their performance to synchronize with the dancers.[1616]

Zoltán Kodály emphasized the importance of enhancing the musical component of performances in his notes and speeches.[1617] He specifically pointed out that the inclusion of

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[1612] Volly 1982: 163.
[1613] Varga 2024: 5–9.
[1614] *Kelet-Magyarország* 1993. július 21. 12.
[1615] Https://Okoritofulpos.Hu/Kozelet/Fergeteges-Tancegyuttes.Html – accessed*: 2020. január 3.*
[1616] Ujváry 1984: 24.
[1617] *Fővárosi Közlöny* 1937. május 7. 766–767.

non-folk music by the gypsy musician accompanying the dances detracts from the overall quality of the production. As a result, the music in Gyöngyösbokréta's performances is considered to be the weakest element.[1618]

László Lajtha, another folk music collector, held an even more unfavorable view of Gyöngyösbokréta than Kodály. This was because the collection included songs that were claimed to be folk songs but were actually "adapted" versions of hit tunes. These songs were falsely recorded as original folk songs by collectors, including the young folklorist Lajos Vargyas:

> "I was eighteen when I first met Lajtha. Kodály sent me to him, to whose university folklore course I submitted my modest compilation of folk songs, recorded during a scout camp in a village in Sárköz. He reviewed my sheet music but found little of interest, as he had previously collected in the same location, and even before, Béla Vikár had done so. The "resource" was a renowned village in the region for its folklore, and it had also performed with a vibrant ensemble at the then-popular summer folklore event "Gyöngyösbokréta". An elderly lady, from whom I documented songs among other matters, was a primary source and »instructor« for the group. At one point, Lajtha vociferously rebuked me for the »swinishness« of the »Gyöngyösbokréta«. The paper in his hand contained the most contemptible item from my »collection«, a hit-like folk song of the era, composed of motifs from the German Christmas carol O Tannenbaum. »And they broadcast it on the radio as a Hungarian folk song!« – he exclaimed."[1619]

Károly Viski, who was also working in the ethnography department at the time, noted that the musical part of the productions was often incomplete, because they left out the most precious and the most ancient part, the "instrumental noise."[1620] (Fig. 111.)

Criticism of the musical accompaniment came not just from music experts and folklorists but also from several newspaper articles and reader correspondence, which emphasized the insufficiency of the accompaniment.



Fig. 122–123. Dance with an accordion. *Képes Krónika*, August 27, 1938, 17.; Flutist. János Dömötör, shepherd. Photo: János Manga. (NMF93196. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.)

[1618] Vargyas (ed.) 1989: 319.
[1619] Vargyas 1984: 390.
[1620] Viski 1934: 411.

The authenticity of the music accompanying the dances was also contested. Recollections indicate that the bokréta groups performed dances accompanied by "melody-taste" songs.[1621] However, a 1934 newspaper article reports that Hungarian bokréta marchers were accompanied by an orchestra of Austrian railwaymen in Western Hungary.[1622] The leader of the Szada group instructed her bokréta group on the folk song *Ma vagyon, ma vagyon piros Pünkösd napja [Today is, today is the red Pentecost day]*, and a "bokázó" dance set to the tune Ritka búza, ritka árpa, ritka rozs. Neither of these songs were known in Szada. She likely was unaware that the latter was folksy song from a folk theater play and the bokázó is unrelated to either folk dance or Szada.[1623] The last instance exemplifies how a group, along with its leader, could blend real folk songs and composed folk-style art music, resulting in a production that has both elements, although neither the folk song cannot be linked to the locality or region. Kata Galambosné Riskó examines the dissemination of the song *Ritka búza, ritka árpa, ritka rozs* in her musicology dissertation. In the context of Gyöngyösbokréta, she notes that this folk song was incorporated into the repertoire of urban gypsy bands while also being part of folk tradition. However, its authenticity was not recognised by folklorists of the time, so they tried to replace it in Gyöngyösbokréta productions with other folk songs typical of the given regions.[1624] The inclusion of composed folk style art songs in the Gyöngyösbokréta was not a unique example, as Gönyey also indicates in his validation of the Gyöngyösbokréta performances.[1625] However, nothing illustrates the enduring presence of composed art songs in the program more effectively than the fact that in 1938 – in the eighth year of the movement! – the widow of the renowned gypsy songwriter Pista Dankó (1858–1903) filed a lawsuit against the Hungarian Film Office due to the bokréta members performing a Dankó composition in a film newsreel.[1626]

7.2.4 Authenticity of tangible heritage

Although the Gyöngyösbokréta primarily focused on the presentation of customs and dances, it also extended to tangible heritage, taking measures to preserve these artifacts, particularly with regard to their authenticity. In this part I examine the Gyöngyösbokréta trademark and the concept of authenticity in connection with folk attires.

[1621] Kiss 2003: 21.
[1622] *Hétfő* 1934. szeptember 9. 3.
[1623] Kecskés 2012: 6.
[1624] Galambosné Riskó 2018: 33–61.
[1625] Gönyey 1938: 427.
[1626] *Népszava* 1938. november 19. 8.; *Az Est* 1938. november 19. 7.; *Népszava* 1938. november 19. 8.; *Délmagyarország* 1940. április 13. 6.

7.2.4.1 Gyöngyösbokréta trademark for authenticity

Similar to UNESCO's principles for safeguarding heritage, which distinguish between intangible and tangible heritage, the Bokréta Association has adopted a comparable approach for the Gyöngyösbokréta, striving to maintain the authenticity of tangible heritage while also preserving traditions through different approaches. Ethnographers examined not just the costumes, instruments, and tools throughout the authentication process, but also the artifacts of "folklore significance" that the association exhibited or offered. (Fig. 124.)



Fig. 124. The opening of the Gyöngyösbokréta exhibition at the National Salon, August 1938. From the right: Béla Markos and Dezső Zilahy, heads of the capital's tourism office; third is Béla Paulini, organizer of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement; next to him is Ferenc Zsindely, cultural state secretary; from the left, the fifth person (with his head turned sideways) is Béla Mátéka from the Budapest Tourism Office. 1938. (FSZEK 022733.)

In 1941, during the exhibition at the National Salon, *Hagyomány Szava* remarked on the authenticity seal: "The seal of the National Hungarian Bokréta Association, the sole official representative of the village's art, certifies the originality and artistic merit of all exhibited objects."[1627] It was promoted and disseminated that only folk-art products conforming to the criteria of the Gyöngyösbokréta Trademark should be acquired.[1628] (Fig. 125.)

[1627] N.N. 1941.
[1628] Pap 2003: 39–43.



Fig. 125. Original Hungarian Folk Art. Trademark of the Gyöngyösbokréta. *Bokrétások Lapja* 6, no. 10 (1939).

The "tradition" of the trademark has persisted since the post-Göngyösbokréta period and continues to exist within the Hungarian folk-art milieu, alongside discussions on the authenticity of material folk art. In her study, *Reviving Authenticity through Traditional Crafts and Folk Art in Hungary,* ethnographer Fruzsina Cseh analyzes aspects of authenticity and notes that the uninformed audience cannot distinguish between "folkish" art and "folk art", especially between authentic and counterfeit products.[1629] The Peacock trademark (Páva védjegy) was established in 1986 and renewed in 2015 to promote "authentic" folk art. The Hungarian Heritage House [Hagyományok Háza], in collaboration with the Association of Hungarian Folk Artists [Népművészeti Egyesületek Szövetség], deems it essential that in today's globalized free market, there exists a label that assists consumers in identifying authentic folk-art products."[1630] The Peacock trademark website highlights that "the creations of folk-art artisans are evaluated by an official jury, composed of distinguished experts, ethnographers, art historians, and craftsmen, at the request of the artisans, in a worldwide unique way in Hungary."[1631]

7.2.4.2 Authenticity of folk costumes

The ethnographers of the Ethnographic Museum primarily sent Paulini, and later he also traveled to search for new bokréta groups, to places where the local folk costumes had been well-preserved, such as in Őrhalom[1632] and Hasznos. Regarding the latter, Sándor Gönyey noted that during the authentication process, he primarily examined the costumes, which he deemed necessary due to the opinions circulating that the Hasznos attire did not meet the requirements

[1629] Cseh 2022: 590.
[1630] https://www.pavavedjegy.hu/pava-vedjegy/
[1631] https://www.pavavedjegy.hu/
[1632] Fél – Kovács 1937: 98.

of the Gyöngyösbokréta and the standards expected in Budapest.[1633] Nevertheless, the authenticity of the costumes posed a significant challenge for the organizers of the Gyöngyösbokréta for a long time.

In 1937, when ethnographers from the Ethnographic Society visited several bokréta locations for the purpose of authentication, they focused particularly on the question of costumes. The colorful, original attire was considered an entry ticket into the bokréta groups and, alongside the musical accompaniment, was the most contentious aspect of the Gyöngyösbokréta performances. (Fig. 126–127.)



Fig. 126–127. Young women in festive attire from Géderlak. Gyöngyösbokréta members in Budapest. Staged scene, 1941. Photo: István Szendrő. (NMF305269. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.); Female Gyöngyösbokréta group from Mecsekszabolcs in festive attire. Four girls and one young married woman in Budapest with the Gyöngyösbokréta, 1941. Photo: István Szendrő. (NMF305205. Museum of Ethnography, Photograph Collection.)

Two newspaper articles also point out that in certain villages, the traditional attire is no longer worn in daily life and is only donned for the sake of the Gyöngyösbokréta performances.[1634] Additionally, they note that the costumes appearing on stage were already in decline.[1635] In many places, the original costumes had already been discarded. For example, Edit Fél noted during one of her authentication visits that „the Karád attire has completely vanished,"[1636] while István Györffy remarked upon observing Gyöngyösbokréta performances: „There was a problem with the costumes as well. In many places, the ancient attire has disappeared, and the people appeared in the popular costumes of harvest festivals, or they adorned their non-

[1633] Gönyey 1938a: 226.
[1634] *Mohácsi Hírlap* 1937. június 6. 4.
[1635] Barabás 1937: 7.
[1636] Fél 1937: 499.

Hungarian clothing with national-colored ribbons to make it look like Hungarian dress."[1637] In cases where the costumes or their elements no longer existed in their original forms, the ethnographers conducting field investigations provided advice on how the bokréta members should dress, what garments to procure, and how to style their hair.[1638]



Fig. 128. "Gyöngyösbokréta in Budapest. - I would like a ticket for myself, one for my sweetheart, and two for her skirt." "Gyöngyösbokréta in Budapest. *Új Nemzedék*, August 19, 1940.

In pursuit of possessing the most eye-catching costumes, many local bokréta leaders intervened in the development of folk art and traditional attire. Research by ethnographer Imre Romsics reveals that in Kalocsa, the leaders of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement significantly influenced matters of folk art, establishing new songs and customs alongside the creation and organization of bokréta groups while also introducing new costumes.[1639] „By the late 1930s, instead of the colorful folk attire characteristic of the early Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, a style emerged that featured enlarged motifs, multiple colors, and brighter shades of cotton, which can no longer be considered traditional folk clothing."[1640] The Kalocsa folk art became widely recognized due to tourism and the Gyöngyösbokréta, so it is no surprise that the colorful, intricate Kalocsa folk art became ingrained in public consciousness.[1641] This recognition was partly due to the Kalocsa bokréta groups, which consisted of young members who were more inclined to wear colorful attire adorned with large flowers. Additionally, the transformation of the costumes was

[1637] Györffy 1937: 98.
[1638] Gönyey 1938: 225.
[1639] Romsics 1996: 78-94.
[1640] Csánki 2005: 23–24.
[1641] Romsics 1996: 83.

influenced by the bokréta leaders' requests to the embroiderers for larger flowers and patterns for better visibility during stage performances.[1642] Despite the fact that some local teachers altered the original costumes for the sake of creating more visually appealing and colorful attire or even designed new garments in the absence of traditional ones, in many instances, the movement delayed the change of clothing. Furthermore, under the influence of Gyöngyösbokréta, bokréta peasants began to wear or renovate their costumes once again. This was a lengthy process requiring significant effort; however, its beneficial effects soon became apparent.

> "The revival of folk costumes is also underway in several locations where they had completely disappeared: there is no doubt that this is a result of the Bokréta movement. Such reconstruction is by no means an easy task; it can easily go awry. The foundation is that the most recently worn attire must be reconstructed, as if this costume had merely been in a state of suspended animation and is now resuming its beautiful existence. It is essential to adhere closely not only to the form but also to the materials, which presents additional difficulties. On one hand, these materials are not inexpensive; on the other hand, local merchants naturally no longer stock them. It is necessary to investigate where the desired materials can still be found or where substitutes that closely resemble the original can be obtained, and to procure them from those sources. Subsequently, merchants must be encouraged to restock these materials.
> As for the issue of cost, it is a matter of choice. Reconstruction should not be pursued at any price. Poor reconstruction will merely result in a costume that is inadequate for its intended purpose. The reconstructed attire should be suitable for formal occasions at the very least. Thus far—considering all aspects—reconstruction has been most successfully achieved in Kiskunfélegyháza, where on September 2nd, approximately one hundred girls will present themselves in the reconstructed attire, which will hopefully mature into festive garments within a year or two."[1643]

These remarks by Paulini regarding the restoration of costumes illustrate the principles that governed the reconstruction of such heritage at that time.

The practice of the „reuse of the attires" can also be attributed to the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, which, in a sense, resulted in a revival of traditional attire and contributed to the revival of folk craftsmanship. However, there were also individuals who did not recognize the symbolic value of their traditional dress, instead selling their entire wardrobes for financial gain after their Gyöngyösbokréta performances.[1644] This commercialization of folk art and clothing is also mentioned in sociologist-writer Ferenc Erdei's (1910–1971) work *Futóhomok*, where Erdei highlights this as one of the movement's greatest flaws: „For the young person who performed in Bokréta, the most significant experience wasn't visiting Budapest – though they

[1642] Romsics 1996: 88–89; Eckert 1935: 55.; Filus 2016: 79.
[1643] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1934. (1.) 2. 11–12.
[1644] Csánki 2005: 23–24.

did express an excitement about that which was somewhat unbecoming for a peasant – but rather the fact that they sold a doll for 50 pengő and made hundreds for their entire outfit."[1645]

Overall, it can be said that the movement made significant efforts to preserve the authenticity of traditional attire. It not only helped rediscover original folk costumes, but also facilitated their reconstruction. Ethnographic authentication ensured that performers wore authentic clothing, not fake „Hungarian-style" outfits adorned with ribbons, and that the attire was worn as their ancestors had done.

Additionally, an entertaining yet characteristic anecdote from the period regarding the authenticity of the costumes: Although Paulini was not an ethnographer, the costumes that appeared on stage were mostly authentic. However, there is at least one instance where Paulini disregarded the authenticity of the attire. During the first performance by the dancers from Rimóc, when they were rehearsing their dance on stage, Paulini stopped their presentation during the spinning segment. He called the group leader over, saying there was a problem, and handed him a twenty-pengő bill, instructing him to buy underwear for the girls. From the audience's perspective, they could see under the skirts, and Paulini believed that the sight of girls without underwear would not reflect well on the show's reputation. The leader of the Rimóc group, Lajos Radványi, responded: „But they don't wear such things at home either. I said I would bring pure ethnography. Is this a problem for you?"[1646] The Rimóc Bokréta leader thus strived for complete authenticity in the attire. Later, he recounted this amusing and memorable story of his dancers in *Bokrétások Lapja*,[1647] which probably earned him a reprimand from Dr. Dezső Fényes, the then-director of the Palóc Museum. The Bokréta leader later replied to this scolding in a letter – now preserved in the Nógrád County Archives – defending his concerns about the authenticity of adding underwear to the costume: „Didn't I promise you that I would bring pure ethnography? As soon as we put underwear on them, it's the end of ethnography. But the old gentleman insisted, and so it happened that silk underwear slid onto those beautiful ancient thighs."[1648]

This case highlights that folk culture and peasant reality were not always stage-worthy, and in the following, and final subsection, I will aim to demonstrate how the era perceived the extent to which the staged folk customs beautified the reality of the village.

[1645] Erdei 1937: 260.
[1646] *Rimóci Újság* 2009. július. 14.
[1647] *Bokrétások Lapja* 1934. (1.) 5. (?)
[1648] Benkó 2009b: 14.

7.2.5 Gyöngyösbokréta and the reality of the village

As I have already shown in the chapter on nation-building, Gyöngyösbokréta has launched a discourse that affects society as a whole, and the situation of society - and of the peasantry in particular. While the movement was largely supported by politics, it was opposed in many respects by sociographers and popular writers. One reason for this was the misrepresentation of the reality of the village. This is also connected to the issue of authenticity, and it merits a little discussion. "The most typical life-reform motif, the quest for authenticity, purity, and originality, is seen throughout the movement from multiple perspectives. The village's uninterrupted society encompasses untainted forms of dance, attire, and traditions. The traditional method of knowledge transmission is equally significant. The knowledge is passed on intact, and the method of transmission is likewise ancient."[1649] During its own era and subsequently, there was significant discourse on the degree to which the movement accurately represents the reality of peasant and village life. To summarize the negative opinion about it, I cite Dezső Keresztury:

> "It is not coincidental that the skilled and sensitive tourism propaganda displayed the vibrant Hungarian folkloric facade, recognizing that the general public was more inclined to visit an idealized version of the country rather than its authentic reality." It is unnecessary to go through the phenomena of this folkishness [...] The colors of this imposed Hungarianism are evident in our proudly Hungarian fashion goods, and its lasting impact restricts the Gyöngyösbokréta to merely a tourist attraction, a superficial adornment, an artificial flower that conceals the authentic essence of the village."[1650]

As the quotation indicates, and as explored in the chapter addressing the national and societal issues revealed by the movement, critiques of Gyöngyösbokréta often centered on its inauthentic, superficial portrayal of village and peasant life. Similar to the case of Far North Queensland's indigenous societies, it should also be considered that tourism provided financial support to the villages, which contributed – modestly – to improving the peasants' daily lives and facilitated the preservation of traditions. Thus, the question of authenticity extended to an ethical dimension, particularly in light of the peasants' life circumstances.

7.3 Conclusion on Gyöngyösbokréta's relation to heritage protection and authenticity

Through numerous literal quotations – despite the potential loss of meaning in translation – I aimed to demonstrate the context and terminology in which the aspects of heritage preservation were raised, as well as the issues and solutions that emerged in the discourse on authenticity related to the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement. By comparing these discussions to the principles of

[1649] Kovács H. 2013: 256.
[1650] Keresztury 1941: 208.

heritage conservation established by UNESCO, I highlighted that, even during the time of Gyöngyösbokréta – considering the particularities of the era – similar dilemmas arose as those faced by today's tradition-keeping communities.

The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement sought to cultivate and showcase Hungarian popular traditions, but it was consistently scrutinized for the perceived lack of authenticity in its representations. Over time, lexicon entries shifted from recognizing its cultural value to labeling it as "pseudo-folk," reflecting the complexities surrounding the concept of authenticity in its practice. Competing initiatives promoting Hungarian folk art challenged the movement, leading Béla Paulini to seek government intervention to curb rival activities. The commercialization and staged nature of Gyöngyösbokréta performances further fueled debates about the detachment of customs from their original contexts. This is the point where it is questionable if we may speak about folklore or folklorism.

Ethnographic validations were introduced to enhance authenticity, particularly in response to tourism, ensuring that dances and customs aligned with local traditions. The movement also emphasized maintaining the authenticity of tangible heritage. The Bokréta Association introduced a trademark to certify the authenticity of folk-art products, and ethnographers evaluated the attires as well. This creates a tension between professional perspectives and the views of the tradition-bearers themselves, as seen in the bottle dance debate. At the core of this issue lies the question of whose heritage and whose claim to authenticity is most valid. Furthermore, the involvement of the peasants elevated the discussion to an ethical level.

One of the key debates of the time, which became evident through a comparison of the socialist dance culture's aspirations and the tensions between that and the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement, was the question of how to cultivate folk traditions for future generations. This could be achieved through the performances of professional dance groups, with choreographed, staged renditions, but there would always be a place for tradition-keeper groups that present and pass on their community's customs and dances to future generations. In the case of Gyöngyösbokréta, these two approaches contended for legitimacy. Following the banning of the Bokréta Association, during the socialist era, it was primarily the staged, professional performances of folk customs and dances that became the norm, but from the 1970s onward, the dance-house movement provided an opportunity for learning and practicing these traditions more informally, creating a more authentic and spontaneous experience for participants.

Paulini's principle, that only peasants should present their own community's traditions, was criticized at the time, but his pioneering work was also recognized, laying the foundation

for various folk preservation practices in later eras. Gyöngyösbokréta has facilitated the preservation of various customs, folk plays, and dances, through both community practices and documentary methods, including descriptions, films, and photographs.

In this framework, Gyöngyösbokréta engaged in what we would today call "tradition-preserving" activities, popularized through stage performances. Groups following similar principles today are referred to in Hungarian as „hagyományőrzők", a term that has been translated into English as „tradition-keepers." UNESCO uses the term „tradition-bearers" for communities that hold their own heritage, though the Hungarian term differs slightly, suggesting a more conscious effort in preserving and passing on their heritage. The debate at the time revolved around these two approaches to safeguarding traditions: Paulini's method of presenting the original customs and dances of peasants (with minor adjustments) on stage, and Muharay's choreographed adaptations of folk traditions for professional performances.[1651]

Consequently, debates over heritage protection and authenticity related to the movement have led to a multifaceted, multi-stakeholder discourse that has brought attention to several issues shaping contemporary heritage protection, mainly under UNESCO's auspices.

[1651] This duality also gave a unique role to the bokréta members as "adatközlők" (informants). Ethnographers, choreographers, folk music and dance collectors, as well as dance-house enthusiasts, sought them out for their knowledge and expertise during the golden age of Gyöngyösbokréta and subsequent decades. Many members, in fact, played dual roles as both informants and performers in socialist folk ensembles, contributing in multiple ways to the preservation of traditions. Several of them were later honored with the "Master of Folk Art" award, established in 1953, for their contributions to the preservation of various branches of folk art. (Subchapter 3.4.2.1)

8. Conclusion, limitations, outcomes, further goals

8.1 Conclusion

My dissertation has examined the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement as a multifaceted phenomenon deeply embedded in the cultural, political, and social fabric of interwar Hungary. I intended to show that, far from being a mere collection of folk performances, Gyöngyösbokréta operated as a dynamic site of negotiation over national identity, cultural diplomacy, and heritage preservation. Its evolving roles – shaped by shifting political priorities, internal tensions, and international influences – reveal much about the broader context in which Hungarian folk culture was institutionalized and instrumentalized during the period under study.

Although the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement existed for a relatively brief period – from 1931 to 1948, with its most active years between 1931 and 1945 – it underwent a remarkable and continuous transformation during this time. What began as a local folk show held on Saint Stephen's Day in Budapest evolved into a national cultural institution with wide-ranging political and diplomatic functions. Initially, the movement centered on collecting and showcasing living traditions: it brought together rural groups in which folk costumes, music, and customs were still actively practiced. This early phase aligned most closely with the movement's stated creed – heritage preservation as its principal mission. However, as Gyöngyösbokréta became increasingly entangled in broader nation-building goals and state-sponsored political agendas, questions around authenticity and ethics emerged. These tensions prompted the movement to turn back toward more "authentic" heritage safeguarding efforts, though its pioneering role meant that it often navigated uncharted territory, developing unique, sometimes contradictory responses to the preservation dilemmas it faced. What is particularly striking is how, even in the interwar period, the movement anticipated many of the core concerns that would later define contemporary debates around (intangible) cultural heritage. Through both its successes and limitations, Gyöngyösbokréta offered early answers to complex issues of cultural representation, authenticity, and community participation – long before UNESCO codified such concepts.

The institutionalization of the movement further accelerated its transformation. In its early years, Gyöngyösbokréta performances were largely limited to Budapest and a few regional events, without overt political engagement. A significant turning point came in 1934 with the state-supported establishment of the Bokréta Association, which initially aimed to protect authentic folk heritage from commercialization and cultural dilution. Béla Paulini, the leader of the movement positioned the Association as a safeguard against unregulated folk shows organized purely for tourism or financial gain. Yet, this consolidation of authority also

enabled him to monopolize the representation of folk traditions, and the state's financial and ideological backing soon brought obligations. As the movement came under increasing ministerial patronage, it was drawn into a range of national commemorations and revisionist events that reflected the dominant political mindset of the time – particularly Hungary's irredentist aspirations following the Treaty of Trianon. While Gyöngyösbokréta itself did not set out to serve general political aims, the political climate, the outbreak of the Second World War, and the symbolic victories of the First and Second Vienna Awards gradually deepened its engagement with state-driven narratives. This was equally visible in its role during official diplomatic visits and international performances, where the peasants were staged not only as tradition-bearers, but also as representatives of Hungary's national character and cultural legitimacy.

The history of the movement highlights that, at the core of the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement lays a tourism-driven impetus: the initial aim of the Budapest folk custom exhibitions was to attract visitors by showcasing the color and vitality of rural Hungarian life. This performative engagement with folk culture, designed primarily for entertainment and spectacle, gradually evolved into a complex vehicle for nation-building, cultural diplomacy, and heritage preservation.

By first exploring the movement's contributions to nation-building, I demonstrated how Gyöngyösbokréta actively participated in shaping a post-Trianon national identity. This identity was rooted in a romanticized image of the Hungarian peasantry as the guardians of ancient, authentic culture. Through symbolic gestures – such as the inclusion of borderland Hungarian groups, the symbolic incorporation of traditional folk elements into fashion for the purposes of cultural representation, and the careful selection of customs for national holidays – Gyöngyösbokréta helped to shape a cohesive vision of Hungarianness. However, the movement was not without controversy: while its leaders presented it as an inclusive cultural initiative, critics perceived its use of peasantry as politically exploitative, and its message as aligning too closely with nationalist and even irredentist agendas. Despite these tensions, the movement enjoyed wide participation among rural communities, many of whom took pride in being recognized as bearers of national culture.

In the second analytical section, I investigated Gyöngyösbokréta's role in cultural diplomacy, illustrating how the movement extended beyond national borders to represent Hungary on the international stage. Performances in Cannes, London, Vienna, Brussels and Hamburg were not merely cultural showcases – they were strategic acts of soft power. Through these international engagements, the movement not only boosted tourism, but also reinforced

the global value and prestige of Hungarian folk traditions among domestic audiences. Moreover, the peasants themselves – presented as living representatives of Hungarian heritage – became celebrated figures, sometimes even viewed as cultural diplomats or national heroes.

Finally, the third thematic section addressed Gyöngyösbokréta's complex relationship with heritage protection and authenticity. Here, I highlighted the internal and external debates surrounding the movement's legitimacy as a tradition-preserving initiative. While Paulini's vision emphasized rehearsed, community-based/local tradition performance, critics and rival movements challenged its staged character and the growing commercialization of folk culture. Debates emerged about the authenticity of the presented traditions (selection and ethnographic verification, the introduction of trademark for folk-art products, the acceptance of moral and financial help of the ministries), which prefigured many concerns that are central to contemporary heritage discourse, particularly as framed by UNESCO. These debates also raised important ethical questions: Who has the right to represent a tradition? Whose vision of authenticity prevails? And what is the role of state institutions in mediating such questions?

Taken together, these three dimensions – nation-building, cultural diplomacy, and authentic heritage protection – illustrate how Gyöngyösbokréta served as both a reflection of, and a response, to the cultural anxieties of its time. The movement navigated the tensions between performance and preservation, between state agendas and community expressions, and between past traditions and their modern reinterpretations. In doing so, it not only shaped how Hungarians viewed themselves but also how they were perceived abroad. Its legacy is therefore not confined to the interwar period: the questions it raised about identity, representation, and cultural continuity remain relevant today, especially in light of ongoing debates over intangible heritage in the global arena.

This study thus positions Gyöngyösbokréta as a key node in the development of Hungarian cultural politics and heritage thinking. While its methods and messages were not without contradictions, its impact – on communities, institutions, and narratives of national culture – was profound and enduring. As such, Gyöngyösbokréta should be understood not just as a historical movement, but as a formative moment in the genealogy of modern heritage practices in Hungary and beyond.

These three core functions – heritage preservation, nation-building, and cultural diplomacy – were all rooted in the original aim of serving tourism, yet they developed through a dynamic and often tension-filled interaction. Nation-building informed the messages conveyed abroad, while international recognition fed back into domestic identity politics, reinforcing the symbolic capital of rural traditions. The discourse on heritage preservation, in

turn, was shaped by the conflicting pressures of state ideology and tourist appeal, often forcing a compromise between spectacle and sincerity, between adaptation and authenticity. Paulini repeatedly emphasized the movement's role in cultural safeguarding, but the staged nature of its performances, and the selective presentation of customs, revealed a complex reality where heritage was curated as much for political resonance as for cultural continuity.

The interaction between tourism and heritage protection posed particular challenges: the need to stage appealing performances led to the stylization – and at times distortion – of traditions. Critics raised concerns about "fakelore," and the movement's own leadership sought to regulate representations through ethnographic verification, trademarks, and stylistic guidelines. Meanwhile, the increasing state support of Gyöngyösbokréta led to growing political importance, which prioritized symbolic representation over grassroots authenticity. The peasants – central to the movement's message of national continuity – were often unaware of the extent to which their participation served political ends. Their motivations ranged from local pride to a sense of patriotic duty, but their role also raises ethical questions about agency and exploitation.

On the international stage, the interplay between nation-building and diplomacy played out vividly. Foreign recognition – from tourists, cultural institutions, and international festivals – legitimized Gyöngyösbokréta at home, reinforcing its value as a national symbol. Events such as the 1934 Vienna Dance Festival, the London and Cannes performances, and diplomatic appearances in Hamburg or Vienna not only affirmed Hungary's cultural heritage abroad but also reinforced the political dimensions of its domestic performances. These moments simultaneously elevated the symbolic role of peasant performers and heightened the political stakes of their presence.

Finally, diplomacy and heritage protection were also closely linked. Foreign interest helped invigorate the peasants' appreciation of their own traditions, often leading to renewed efforts to document, preserve, and pass down dances, songs, and costumes that were otherwise at risk of disappearing. This transnational attention helped catalyze processes of cultural safeguarding that extended into the socialist period, laying the foundation for later ethnographic research and the revivalist dance-house movement of the 1970s.

8.2 Limitations

This dissertation has aimed to contextualize the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement within its interwar origins, drawing on a wide range of archival and printed sources to illuminate its cultural, political, and symbolic dimensions. Nevertheless, several limitations –

methodological, linguistic, geographic, and thematic – inevitably shaped the scope of the research and point to fertile directions for further inquiry.

One major limitation came from the nature of the source base itself. As with many studies of folk culture, the available materials tend to reflect the perspectives of institutional actors, cultural elites, and state-organized frameworks. The voices of rural performers – particularly peasants, whose lives and labor the movement sought to represent – are largely absent. This is due in part to the intangible and oral character of folk culture, and also to the historical fact that many participants did not record their views or experiences in writing. The scarcity of local collections, family archives, or private testimonies further reinforces this asymmetry. The research relies primarily on qualitative analysis, as the available data – though carefully collected – proved insufficient for quantitative approaches or statistics. While I attempted to compile tables on participating groups (including variables such as religion and population), as well as databases on film materials and the movement's appearance at national and international events, the significant time lapse and fragmentary sources meant that these datasets could remain incomplete.

Other limitations reflect thematic decisions and constraints of space. For example, although the relationship between the movement and tourism emerged as a relevant theme – particularly regarding how rurality was staged and consumed by urban audiences – it was not developed into a standalone chapter. Rather, it was integrated into the broader historical analysis in the first chapter. Similarly, the dissertation prioritizes the investigation of three central roles within the movement, which necessarily meant that other potentially rich lines of inquiry – such as generational memory, or comparative regional case studies – were not explored in depth.

The revival and continuity of Gyöngyösbokréta after 1945, especially in Vojvodina, Serbia, is another area that remains underexplored. Although briefly referenced in this study to underline the movement's enduring resonance, the contemporary festival – still held today by the Hungarian minority – deserves focused scholarly attention. It offers a compelling example of cultural persistence and recontextualization within a new political and ethnic framework. However, access to Serbian-language sources and archives, as well as linguistic and logistical barriers to conducting fieldwork, limited this project's engagement with that dimension. The absence of Serbian state or press perspectives also means that the broader societal reception of the (afterlife of the) movement within a multiethnic and socialist context remains unknown. Further research could examine how the Yugoslav and later Serbian state institutions perceived, supported, or regulated these cultural expressions and how Hungarian minority identity has been articulated through such performances.

A similar limitation applies to the movement's international presentations, particularly those in German-speaking regions. While the dissertation incorporates and analyzes French, English, and Italian sources – including the opinion of foreign press, material on performances in Cannes, London, and during the Italian royal visit – its coverage of the German and Austrian contexts is comparatively limited due to linguistic constraints. This gap is particularly significant given the potential political symbolism of performances in cities like Hamburg and Vienna, where cultural diplomacy is intersected with contested narratives of national belonging. Access to German-language press, diplomatic correspondence, and cultural commentary could yield important insights into how Gyöngyösbokréta was engaged with cultural politics of these countries during the years of the interwar period and the second world war.

Finally, while the study does mention the movement's reception or potential reappropriation in socialist Hungary, where folk culture was instrumentalized within state ideology and education, it does not explore the topic in depth, especially not the relations of Gyöngyösbokréta and the táncház-movement.

8.3 Outcomes

As I pointed out in the very beginning of this thesis, despite the fact that the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement is a significant milestone in Hungarian dance history, comprehensive studies on it have only emerged decades after its establishment. Few scientific works have been published on the movement's further aspects, such as its social impacts, role in tourism, and political involvement, despite the fact that several scholars have drawn attention to these topics. Therefore, in my doctoral research, I have undertaken the task of exploring the Gyöngyösbokréta's role in the formation of national identity, its involvement in cultural diplomacy, and its principles and activities in heritage preservation. To this end, I first provided a historical account of the movement, following a chronological approach from its precursors to its post-life. I then analyze its operation over a period of one and a half decades through the aforementioned three perspectives. Thus, the results of this research may contribute to multiple fields of study, as the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement still exerts influence in dance history, ethnology, sociology, rural studies, local history at the village, county, and regional levels, (rural) tourism, diplomatic history, Hungarian studies, minority history, literary studies, and heritage protection discourse.

A detailed presentation of the movement's history highlighted that Gyöngyösbokréta was not without precedents in terms of the use of folklore, as there had been continuous initiatives from the aristocracy or local intellectuals in the 19th century to showcase folk dances and traditions. The originality of Gyöngyösbokréta lies in the fact that it involved the very

custodians of traditions – the peasants – who themselves preserved and presented their own traditions. This growing movement also raised numerous important social issues, including the situation of the peasants and the movement's impact on peasant life, as well as the social debates raised by folk writers and rural researchers regarding the movement.

One of the most significant contributions of this research is the detailed analysis of the role played by the peasant participants in the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement in cultural diplomacy. The use of folklore in cultural diplomacy is not a new phenomenon, but how rural peasants were placed in the role of diplomats by the movement raises many questions about the image of Hungary that was sought to be presented abroad, particularly to Western Europe, regarding Hungarian society and culture. Foreign archival research has shed entirely new light on the movement. Among the most important of these is the research conducted in the archives in Paris and Cannes, which reveals the political and tourist connections established during the Gyöngyösbokréta performance in Cannes in 1937. The diverse nature of foreign performances strengthens the idea that the "use" of Gyöngyösbokréta was relevant in many different contexts (international dance competitions, political events, festivals). In contrast, the performances of the peasant groups at receptions for foreign politicians follow a similar pattern, with peasant dancers in folk costumes being presented as the custodians of an ancient and strong culture – serving as a representation of Hungarian national identity during important diplomatic talks.

The folk traditions, dances, and costumes explored by the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement were quickly integrated into national-building efforts. Although the primary criticisms of the movement (both during the movement's existence and, more significantly, in the post-1945 period) targeted its political involvement, the justification for these criticisms was often lacking in explaining in which situations and by what methods the movement participated in the formation of national identity. In this research, I aimed to address this gap. The movement's efforts to establish folk traditions as national holidays, the creation of national fashion inspired by folk motifs, and the symbolism employed by the movement all provide important contributions to the understanding of the national identity of the period.

The Gyöngyösbokréta-movement played a prominent role in the political efforts for the return of territories lost by the Treaty of Trianon, which shaped the entire political landscape of the period. One of the key findings in this section is the discovery of the history of the Gyöngyösbokréta groups beyond Hungary's borders, particularly in Vojvodina, where the Gyöngyösbokréta Festival still takes place today. This serves as an example of how the activities of Gyöngyösbokréta groups established in the annexed territories carried different significance than those in Hungary.

In terms of heritage preservation, it is important to highlight that debates surrounding Gyöngyösbokréta continue to be relevant today, especially in the context of authenticity in heritage protection and tradition preservation.

Overall, the goal of my dissertation was to present the Gyöngyösbokréta-movement from new perspectives and to examine through analysis the roles the movement played in strengthening national identity, its (representational) role in cultural diplomacy, and its involvement in heritage preservation. Since these are three distinct, often contradictory, yet sometimes mutually reinforcing roles, I also aimed to demonstrate how these roles interacted with each other.

Throughout the course of my research, I have presented my findings at several conferences and shared them in various articles. In my first article, I discussed the heritage preservation principles of the Gyöngyösbokréta and compared them to contemporary UNESCO principles. In my English-language article, I presented the general history of the movement. I published two articles on the movement's various roles: one focuses on the role of the Gyöngyösbokréta groups formed in (re-)annexed territories and their involvement in revisionist politics, while the other examines the social changes brought about by the movement, specifically the travel experiences of peasants both domestically and abroad and their impact. In a 2024 conference volume, I analyzed one of the most important source documents, Béla Paulini's 1940 album created by the Gyöngyösbokréta groups.

- Andor Anna Klára 2020: A Gyöngyösbokréta és az örökségvédelem. Egy két világháború közötti kulturális mozgalom örökségvédelmi elvei és hatása. In: Lászlófi Viola; Mravik Patrik Tamás; Oláh Gábor; Sidó Anna (szerk.): *Atelier 30 Műhelytanulmányok.* Atelier Interdiszciplináris Történeti Tanszék, Budapest, 209–230.

- Andor Anna Klára 2020: "Gyöngyösbokréta" (1931–1948): A folk-cultural movement that influenced identity construction and heritage preservation during the interwar period. *Pro&Contra* 2020. (4.) 2. 5–28.

- Andor Anna Klára 2022: „A mi gyöngyösbokrétánknak más a jelentősége". A gyöngyösbokréta mozgalom (1931–1948) határon túli története, szerepe és tovább élése. *Jászkunság* 2022. (9.) 1. 70–87.

- Andor Anna Klára 2022: Úton a vidék, vidéki utakon. *Közlekedés-és Technikatörténeti Szemle* 2022. (5.) 1. 93–124.
- Andor Anna Klára 2024: „Felvettek bennünket filmre is és távolbalátásra..." A Gyöngyösbokréta-album mint a bokrétás parasztok vizuális megnyilvánulása. In: Kunt Gergely – Tamás Ágnes (szerk.) 2024: *Történelem és vizualitás. A Hajnal István Kör – Társadalomtörténeti Egyesület 2022. évi, váci konferenciájának tanulmánykötete.* Hajnal István Kör Társadalomtörténeti Egyesület – Apor Vilmos Katolikus Főiskola – Líceum Kiadó, Szeged – Vác – Eger. 271–286.

What I consider to be one of the most significant outcomes of my research is its role in raising awareness among the Gyöngyösbokréta-affiliated municipalities regarding the cultural heritage they possess. In several of these communities, local stakeholders began to re-evaluate and reclaim the historical and cultural value of their long-standing folk dance and performance traditions. The most illustrative case is that of Őcsény, where – under the initiative and coordination of the local dance group leader – the community has begun preparing an application documenting the historical and cultural significance of the flag presented by the municipality of Cannes to the Őcsény Bokréta Group in 1937. The aim is to include this item in both the local-regional (települési és tájegységi) and county-level (megyei) repositories of cultural value (értéktár). This recognition may serve as a preliminary step toward their potential inclusion in the national (nemzeti) level, in the Hungarian repository of values.[1652]

8.4 Future goals

Taken together, the above-mentioned limitations and the outcomes of the dissertation suggest a multifaceted and still unfolding research agenda. Future investigations could include:

- An important direction for future research lies in integrating the history and legacy of the Gyöngyösbokréta movement into broader scholarship on the Hungarian folk dance movement. As one of the earliest efforts to institutionalize folk dance on stage and systematize its collection, Gyöngyösbokréta played a foundational role in shaping later developments. Tracing its influence on the emergence of the Táncház-movement and its resonance in today's cultural agenda would help situate the movement within a longer continuum of folk revivalism, performance, and national identity-making.
- Among the most compelling directions for future research is a comprehensive study of the Vojvodina Gyöngyösbokréta Festival, which represents both a revival and a remarkable continuity of the original movement within a Hungarian minority context. As a living, annually held event, it offers a unique opportunity to examine how folk traditions have been reinterpreted and sustained under shifting political regimes and in a multiethnic society. Capturing participant perspectives through oral history and ethnographic fieldwork, alongside sustained engagement with Serbian-language archival materials, would be essential for understanding the local meanings, institutional frameworks, and cultural negotiations that have shaped the festival's postwar evolution.
- Comparative studies with other Central and Eastern European folk movements to explore transnational similarities and divergences.
- Further research would also be warranted on the multifaceted figure of Béla Paulini, whose contributions to Hungarian cultural life extended far beyond his leadership in the Gyöngyösbokréta movement. As a prolific writer, journalist, pioneer of the Hungarian *műmese* (artificial fairy tale), theater contributor, and graphic artist, Paulini represents a cultural node through which literature, visual arts, and staged folk performance intersected – making him a key figure for understanding the broader intellectual and artistic networks surrounding the movement.

[1652] Hungarikum.hu. https://www.hungarikum.hu/hu/hungarikumok

- A key goal is to examine German-language press and diplomatic materials to deepen understanding of the movement's international and political role.

Overall, the future goal is to deepen and expand the understanding of Gyöngyösbokréta's cultural, political, and artistic significance – both within Hungary and beyond – by integrating new perspectives, source materials, and methodologies that illuminate its legacy across time, space, and communities.

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