The thesis of PhD–dissertation


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1. Choice of the topic and the aim of the research

The dissertation shows the evolution of wear of Kiskőrös, the changes of its system in the 20th century, its present situation and the possibilities of its conservation. The last one is the emphatic part of this essay, since this is the final period when traditional clothing can be observed live while being worn.

The examination of wear of Kiskőrös lying in the middle of Bács-Kiskun County does not belong to the emphatic area of Hungarian ethnography. The scientific interest rather focuses on the flamboyant wear of Sárköz or Kalocsa and their farmsteads. This neglect and the bare number of its description gave the idea to choose this topic.

Due to its advantageous features, the area had been almost continuously inhabited. In the 17th century it got under Turkish authority and owing to the extreme political situation it became 'puszta' and people were escaping to northern counties or the near country towns such as Halas, Kecskemét. The mainly uninhabited area was immigrated the Wattay family with Hungarian and Slovakian speaker families in 1718. Although they were not from the county, they formed a solid lifestyle. Following it their culture was being shaped by assimilation meanwhile staying separated. In the latter one their community building consciousness coming from lutheran religion was an important factor.

In absence of written resources and archive researches we can only deduce the settlers’ wear. It was simple, functional. Their linen clothes were made of hemp, their winter clothes were made of wool.
with little leather decoration. This still existing clothing was formed during the 19th century through the costume changing processes locally and alongside with the willages nearby. Its background was given by the geographical proximity, the social and economical connections. As a result our examined object is defined wear of Kiskörös not Slovakian wear. It is a wear type of plain which, shaping into the history of European clothing, went through similar stages as the other Hungarian wears.

The aim of the research was to give an exact view of the direction of costume change and its extent, specially focusing on the effect of civilization, urbanisation and modernisation; and to present the former and present form, material, preparation and rules of use from history point of view. I described the types, the wear of each age group, the rules of colours, the meaning of the wear and its aesthetic content, the dressing-up process and the relation between the body and the wear separately according to sex. A chapter deals with making, purchasing, value, storage and cleaning of the wear and the personal hygiene of peasants.

2. The methods and sources

The examined period takes from the 19th century to the 20th century mentioning the features of the 18th century, so it is not finished with the stripping wave of the 1960s. Although they get rid of the traditional costumes en masse in Kiskörös, at the beginning of the 21st we still can see elderly women wearing traditional costumes and attitudes.

The present situation and those which can be recalled are described with the help of recent data. The analysis is based on several-hour long guided and recorded interviews and videos with informants from Kiskörös and its surrounding-Erdötelek, Felsőcebe, Kaskantyú-Kalocsa and Kecel.

As a participant and observer of the events organised by the Slovakian Country House and the Slovakian Organization of Kiskörös and they provided information to the identity preserving and expressing role of the costumes.

The historical significance, changing direction and similarity or even difference of other costumes can be defined from specialized literature. This method was used to position the costume of Kiskörös among modern wears-of Kecel and Kalocsa. We paid special attention to the studies and description of clothing culture of Slovakian wear in Hungary.

Since the archives contain scattered and indirect data, we barely could lean on them.
The authentic photos taken on glass negatives in most of the cases are witnesses of the changes in festive wear.

The photos taken by the informants, amateur photographers and those which can be found in the Hungarian Ethnographic Museum, the Slovakian Country House and Petőfi House and Museum are important resources.

3. The result of the research
3.a The structure of the dissertation

The Introduction is followed by chapters dealing with the history of Kiskőrös and the implementation of Slovakians. I considered it necessary to briefly summarize the relation between settled Slovakians’ and removed Hungarians’ culture and its changes. During this process the mixed inhabitants tended to be Slovakians, and by 1880-90 they become bilingual, finally in 1950 Hungarian dominated. Nowadays the number of Slovakian speakers dramatically decreased. Mainly elderly woman in their 70s can speak it. Among children, young adults and middle-aged people rarely speak it.

The first part of the dissertation contains the descriptive analysis of top clothing, shoes and winter clothing, separated into male and female wear. Here we can read about some accessories like ruff, handkerchief, ‘farpárna’, jewelleries and bag.

Head wear and hairstyle have a separate chapter. The changes are described according to time, sex and age group.

A separate part represents the connection between the costume and the wearer. It covers the dressing-up process, the aesthetical content and to which extent can the wearer express his/her own taste within the traditional frames.

At the end of the dissertation I made comparison on wears of Kalocsa and Kecel with one of Kiskőrös in order to show that the clothing habits of the neighbouring villages developped with the ones of Kiskőrös. It is proved with similar or the same materials, shapes, decorations and names and it supports the hypothesis that the wear of Kiskőrös is rather considered as one of Alföld wears and not Slovakian.

The collection has revealed such sub-themes which I could not cover due to extension shortage. I consider necessary to do more research on this topic in order to expand it. E.g.: social background of the period when people started to wear fewer clothes.

The most highlighted sources of the dissertation are the photos. Those which can be seen in the study are the negligible part of the one and half thousand collected pieces. I am planning to create an extended, thematic photo collection and their digital processing and to generate a useful database.

To write this dissertation archive research did not take place. Its replacement is also a further task.
3.b The results

There have been a few studies on wear of Kiskőrös and they are mainly data recording and descriptive ones, rather than analyser. Although they consider it as Slovakian wear—except from a study of Flórián Mária (Kiskőrösi gúnya) which developed parallelly with the wear of the neighbouring villages with the same economical and social background and it happened all over Hungary and Europe. That is why we have to emphasise the immovability as opposed to the ethnical and religious background. According to it the name Kiskőrösi wear is more accurate than Slovakian wear of Kiskőrös.

The further results of the research analyses the topic from different approaches. Besides the historical changes, we can see deviations according to sex, age groups and events.

The changes of wear of Kiskőrösi are presented through six periods. Their reduction is resulted from appearance of new form and material and changes in wear. Meanwhile it is important to emphasise that the ceasuras are not sharp. Between them there was a transitive period since they were existence parallelly for a short while. This comes from the age, the financial background and the social situation of the wearer. According to the memories and photos we can see that the white linen wear which was used mainly during the World War I, with the financial growth and the appearance of cheap mass produced product became more decorated and by 1930 it reached its most worked out form and semiology. The 1950-60s is the period of the abandonment of wear meanwhile the keeping of it in a narrow layer of the population. This period was still able to absorb new clothing items. The last decades of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21th century is the last period of their appearance of Kiskőrösi wear. By that time the number of the wearers has dramatically fallen, yet due to the traditional groups the remaining items are highly estimated. However they are identified as stage wear or costume.

The wear as semiology is appropriate to differentiate age groups, and to present the social changes of the wearer and events with different garments to each. According to them the dissertation separately deals with the clothing habits of infants, young children, girls, boys, kimmers, middle-aged and elderly women and men, too. The description refers to the 1930-40s when clothing system reached its peak. It presents the special clothing features which were worn in case of confirmation, engagement, wedding or death. The glad rags, the half glad dress and those for homewear and to work were differentiated by their material, decoration and colour. What to wear and what not to was controlled by elderly people, influenced by unwritten rules and was obtained through socialisation. The changes of glad rags in churches are described in separate tables.

The colour and the decoration of the wear also have meanings. The essay tries to show the typical colour of the age group, the history of the European colours and the colours used in Kiskőrös and the extraordinary names of them.

The washing of the wear and the changes in the rural hygienic routine requires a chapter. At the beginning of the 20th century self hygienic habits were simple with the least water and fewest tools and
chemicals. It was important in the same extent to preserve the cleanliness of the wear. Between the two World Wars the range of the chemicals and tools became wider, and in the 1960-70s we can see civil self hygienic routine. Initially the wealthy artisan families and the intellectual families use the bathrooms daily and lotion and potion in wider range. The rural families still needed 10-15 years more and in the 1980s the number of the bathrooms rocketed and the toiletries become status symbols and instead of being decorations they started to be used.

The storing of the clothes and the colours of the wardrobe also changed a lot in the course of the 20th century. From the storage boxes through the hutches and chestdrawers with three drawers weget to the wardrobes. No matter the cost was, the storage, folding and placing of the glad rag had high priority. The items got into the garment in different way. There were ones which came with the setting-out, the wearer could make them, or could be ordered from craftsmen. They could purchase them in local shops and markets or could travel anywhere to buy them. The issue of the second-hand clothes became significant with the period when people started to wear fewer clothes, because the taken off dresses were for sale even for people out of the costume group.

The short quotations and interview extracts of informants present us human destenies. As we know shuch resources have not apeared so far. Examining the attitude behind the wear changes is also a novelty. The opinions from man gave interesting consequences and made us see the question of traditional clothing from a different angle.

4. Publications in the topic

2006 Slovakian weddings in Kiskörös in the 1930-40s. Booklets of museum and foundation I.


2011 Slovakian hairstyle in Kiskörös in the 1900-1960s. Publications of museums of Békés county 34. Békéscsaba, 123-144

2015a ’Azért még nem hagjuk magunkat eladni’-The opportunities to preserve the identity in a Slovakian community in Hungary. In: Szöke Anna (edit.): The manifestation of identity in the 21st century. cultural values in the Carpathians 1. Szabadka, 45-56.

2015b Connection between the families and the so called strip wave in Kiskörös. Said: Marriage and family. Views and pictures values and crisis of and int he family. 12th Religious and Ethnographical Conference. Szeged.