

Gábor Koloh

The Peasant's Spaces. Changing Perception of Space in 19th-20th Century Hungary

*Przestrzenie chłopskie.**Zmieniające się postrzeganie przestrzeni w XIX–XX w. na Węgrzech*

ABSTRACT

Peasant chronicles from the early 19th century are quite rare, and a corpus written over several generations is almost unique in Hungary. The records of the Gyüker family of Külsőbőcs (today Bőcs, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county), written over four generations with varying intensity, cover the period between 1787 and 1944, a century and a half. With the help of this source material, I am trying to answer the question of how the transformation of the world and the way of seeing the world began in the villages, especially among the peasants. How did they show signs of globalization? How did different generations, in their memories and then in their contemporary records, see their own immediate and wider environment? How did they see events and changes in the country and the world from this perspective? I will also compare the records with peasant, pastoral

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and educational sources from other regions to see how generalizable the main changes observed in the Gyöker family are.

Key words: peasant families, space perception, Hungary, globalization

STRESZCZENIE

Kroniki chłopskie z początku XIX w. są dość rzadkie, a zbiór zapisów sporządzonych przez kilka pokoleń jest niemal unikalny na Węgrzech. Zapisy rodzin Gyüker z Külsőbőcs (dzisiejszy Bócs, komitat Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén), sporządzane z różną intensywnością przez cztery pokolenia, obejmują okres od 1787 do 1944 r., czyli półtora wieku. Korzystając z tych materiałów źródłowych, próbuję odpowiedzieć na pytanie, w jaki sposób transformacja świata i sposób postrzegania świata rozpoczęły się na wsi, zwłaszcza wśród chłopów. Jak przejawiała się globalizacja? Jak różne pokolenia, w swoich wspomnieniach, a następnie we współczesnych zapisach, postrzegały swoje najbliższe i dalsze otoczenie? Jak postrzegali wydarzenia i zmiany w kraju i na świecie z tej perspektywy? Porównam również zapisy z źródłami chłopskimi, pasterskimi i edukacyjnymi z innych regionów, aby sprawdzić, na ile można uogólnić główne zmiany zaobserwowane w rodzinie Gyöker.

Słowa kluczowe: rodziny chłopskie, postrzeganie przestrzeni, Węgry, globalizacja

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates how 'space' was experienced, named, and redefined in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Hungarian peasant society: from the home (house, yard), through the *porta/plot* and the farm, to the village and its outfields, and further to the wider countryside, the county, the country, and the 'world'. We examine how this horizon expanded or contracted amid the rhythms of household production; under the influence of natural shocks and infrastructural interventions (floods, hail, river regulation, railways); with market integration and institutional change (fair rights, the Hangya consumer cooperative); and how these processes are reflected in peasant autobiographical writings alongside official documents.

Research aims and questions: (1) To reconstruct peasant spatial imaginaries and their transformations around a family-history core (the Gyüker family chronicle) across several settlements and generations. (2) To demonstrate how everyday space was reorganized by production and livelihood needs—such as the shifting balance of garden, arable, and meadow—by the division of labor (particularly in women's household and processing work), and by market integration (including prices, wages, retail, and trading points). (3) To examine the spatial extent of social ties (godparenthood, servant turnover, marriage endogamy/exogamy) and the mobility patterns that underpin them. (4) Methodologically, to show how ego-documents

(narrative, subjective sources) and normative-administrative records (property and plot registers, orders, civil-registry entries) can be cross-checked, tabulated, and analyzed via spatial categories.

The analysis is based on five comparable peasant ego-documents: the Gyüker Chronicle (entries by three generations) from Külsőbőcs/Bőcs; the notes of János Helle from Alsónyék; the autobiography of Lajos Arató from Szeghalom; the Vajszló chronicle; and the diary of József Farkas from Sárospatak. These are complemented by three types of documents: property and land-register entries; administrative orders and warrants; and civil-registry records. Narrative and administrative materials are divided by time and space and organized into thematic tables (such as event scales, economic units, mobility, and marriage patterns). Historical mapping (e.g., the Second Military Survey) aids the topographic analysis; place names, personal names, currencies, and date formats are standardized. We explicitly note the common biases in narrative sources (such as temporal compression, retrospective 'clean copies', lacunae) and the selectivity of official records.

The study spans 1787–1944, a period during which emancipation from serfdom, late nineteenth-century modernization, the First World War, and interwar changes all layered together to reshape peasant communities. The settlement sample was selected for its geographical and economic-historical diversity (Zemplén, Tolna, Békés, Baranya) so that local specificities and general trends could be observed simultaneously. A microhistorical 'close-up' on family and life histories is paired with a comparative approach: we do not claim statistical representativeness but aim to identify patterns and allow for analytical comparison across cases.

The novelty lies in treating peasant space not only as a land-use category but as a multi-layered, lived, named, and narrated experience, made visible by intentionally combining different source types. The analysis starts from the home and extends outward to the horizon of the world, then shifts focus to mobility and networks, followed by economic and institutional frameworks (market, cooperative, fair rights). The conclusion summarizes how peasant spaces were reorganized during the period studied and what methodological lessons the integrated reading of ego-documents and official records provides.

THE HOUSE

József Gyüker, a peasant man who lived in Külsőbőcs (now part of Bőcs) near Miskolc, recorded the story of his life and surroundings in the kitchen of his one-room peasant house. Since the autumn of 1863, the accuracy of the records has been persistent and precise from day to day:

'12–23 and on 29 September there were good rains, so that the ploughing and sowing were carried out in the best way [...]' But surely these lines were not written during the rest after the work was done, because 'weeks after the first sowing, the wireworm [meaning the pest larvae – KG] showed itself in such a big way that it ate the whole field. Where there were many, they destroyed them by every means to prevent them'¹. The remaining source is a corrected text, a chronicle written in clear handwriting, from which I will try to reconstruct the change in spatial perception. The fact that this has happened over three generations will become clear in the following pages. However, identifying the change is of no particular value unless it is possible to see how and why this might have happened.

The narrowest space, the home, is the center of the peasant world, and the outside world is its periphery. The home is the space of the immediate family, of housing and production. The home of József Gyüker is his house at 22 Faluvégi Street in Külsőbőcs. As it stood on 31 December 1869, it was a building with one room, two pantries and a kitchen 'for living and farming'. In the courtyard, there were two more chambers, a bin and a stable². It is not hard to imagine what the village might have looked like if you were walking around and observing the dilapidated old buildings. With its garden and land, this farmhouse, with its field strips and outskirts, is the family farm. In the core of this, inside the house, József Gyüker the Elder sat down to write his chronicle, or as he called his work, 'Stories Worthy of Remembrance'³. So, he did not write it for himself, but expressly for others, for his descendants. The fact that the source contains a lot of information beyond his own life story makes it evident that it is not only for his own descendants; the intention of passing on information is therefore clear⁴. His motivation was twofold: the need to write and the ability to do so. It could be motivated as much by his altruism (this form of memory preservation, no doubt, consumed no small amount of his time and energy) as by his vanity. Lajos Nádaskay, a well-known writer and newspaper editor of the period, was the son of the late notary

¹ Gyüker család felegyzései. Évszázadok történetei, prep. M. Igaz, in: Néprajzi Közlemények, vol. 22, ed. I. Forrai, Budapest 1979, p. 32

² Népszámlálás: Zemplén (megye), 1869, <https://www.familysearch.org/tl/search/film/008305504?cat=koha%3A385993&i=0> [access: 31.07.2023].

³ The definition of the genre as a chronicle comes from the pastor Géza Hegyaljai Kiss, in 1952, when he donated the long-preserved document to the Sárospatak College. The inscription on the cover, *Öreg Gyü-ker József's Diary 1787–1866*, compared with Kiss Hegyaljai's handwriting, suggests a different hand. – Sárospataki Református Kollégium Tudományos Gyűjteményei, Gyükér család feljegyzései, ref. no. 3635.

⁴ For an interpretation of the practice, see: M. Hoppál, *Folklór és hagyomány. Válogatott tanulmányok*, Budapest 2006, p. 153.

of the village of Külsőbőcs. So Nádaskay's rising star from the town may well have motivated him to ensure that not only the stories, but also his name, would be remembered⁵. The starting point of my investigation is his own communicative practice in his milieu – meaning not only Bőcs's peasant society, but Hungarian peasant society more broadly. His (kitchen-table) writing desk functioned as the household's communicative space. In the same space, his son, who inherited the house – indeed, his grandson, who continued to write the chronicle – lived. I believe that this fixed space inside the house was the space for eating, reading and writing. A place for writing the chronicle, the calendar and, in time, reading the newspaper. It is an experience of a space that has been passed down through generations, where the outside world (the periphery of the peasant core world) is gradually and subtly transformed into the wider world⁶. And this is a process that more or less affects all areas of peasant life, which I see as a gradual, weaker and stronger form of globalization⁷. The traditional peasant world is the last among the societies that have been affected by significant social and economic changes at the global level – I will directly support this with examples from the sources discussed in parallel. These sources are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Main data on the sources used

Title	Settlement (County)	Author	Occupation	Date of writing	Period under discussion
Gyüker Chronicle	Külsőbőcs (Zemplén)	József Gyüker I, József Gyüker III and descendants	peasant	1863–1866; 1889–1933; 1940–1944	1787–1944
Notes by János Helle	Alsónyék (Tolna)	Helle, János	Calvinist priest	1821–1870	1821–1870
Vajszló Chronicle	Vajszló (Baranya)	Kis Tóth, Dániel	peasant	1830	1700–1830
Kátai Gábor's Chronicle	Karcag (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok)	Kátai, Gábor	peasant	1838	1700–1838
Memoirs by Lajos Arató	Szeghalom (Békés)	Arató, Lajos	teacher	1928–1934	1863–1934

⁵ J. Szinnyei, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*, vol. 9, Budapest 1903, p. 510; idem, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*, vol. 10, Budapest 1905, p. 947.

⁶ For his comments on the experience of space, see: J. Bali, M. Szilágyi, *A személyes paraszti tudás érvényessége. Kisújszállás társadalma és gazdálkodása egy száz évet élt parasztgazda emlékezetében*, "Korall" 2007, 27, p. 220.

⁷ For an understanding of the process of globalisation, see: B. Tomka, *Globalizáció: jelentések és definíció*, "HistGlob Working Paper" 2023, 10, p. 7.

Given that the men of successive generations who have been involved in some degree in chronicle writing have all been Józsefs, I will clarify that the first chronicler was József Gyüker I (1799–1874) or József Gyüker the Elder. So far, it has been about him. His son József Gyüker II (1836–1897) did not continue the chronicle, but his son József Gyüker III (1862–1932) did. József Gyüker IV (1885–1914) was killed in action in the First World War during his father's lifetime, so he did not write. His son, József Gyüker V (1909–c 1993)⁸, made a few entries, then abandoned the chronicle, leaving it to his daughter, Erzsébet Gyüker. She completed the chronicle with the events until 1944⁹. My analysis is based on the collection of Mária Igaz and the chronicle written by József Gyüker I in the archives of the Sárospatak College¹⁰.

As the most intimate space in family life, the house was also the place of birth and death of family members, which was increasingly linked to time as a unit. For József Gyüker I, the clock was both a symbol of prestige and a tool to help his farming: 'For 5–6 pengős one could buy what the poor farmer in the East could buy [...]'¹¹. His grandson, on the other hand, already records the time of death of a family member along with the day: 'Our little daughter Zsófi died on the 19th of March at 10 p.m., [...]'¹². In the space of the home, however, not only the members of the family, but also the servant and maid who worked indoors could live: In 1869, 18-year-old Lajos Bontsér served with József Gyüker I and his son. József Gyüker III employs a servant in his widowhood and wrote: 'Mariska Udvári also moved in as housekeeper on 18 [November 1925]'. Mariska Udvári went to Miskolc the following year to serve, 'because she had already been eating at my place, although she had neither footwear nor proper clothes [...]'¹³ – Gyüker complained. Besides, the fact that József

⁸ Thank you for the information to Tamás Szőnyi, pastor of the Reformed Church of Borsod-Gömöri, dean of the Reformed Church of Bócs.

⁹ Source of birth and death years: *Gyüker*; Belsőbőcs Calvinist church registers, <https://www.familysearch.org/tl/search/film/004704131?cat=63694&i=0> [access: 31.07.2023]; Belsőbőcs civil registers, <https://www.familysearch.org/pl/search/film/004838079?cat=956569&i=0> [access: 31.07.2023]; Belsőbőcs civil registers, <https://www.familysearch.org/ms/search/film/004838080?cat=956628&i=0> [access: 31.07.2023]; Belsőbőcs civil registers, <https://www.familysearch.org/id/search/film/004838081?cat=956660&i=0> [access: 31.07.2023]; Census 1869, <https://www.familysearch.org/tl/search/film/008305504?cat=koha%3A385993&i=0> [access: 31.07.2023]. The chronicle by József Gyüker The Elder was first published by János Varga, see: *Öreg Gyüker József krónikája 1787–1866*, ed. J. Varga, "Agrártörténeti Szemle" 1964, 6, 3–4, pp. 453–472.

¹⁰ *Gyüker*; Sárospataki Református Kollégium Tudományos Gyűjteményei, ref. no. 3635, *Öreg Gyüker József Naplója 1787–1866*.

¹¹ *Gyüker*, p. 34.

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 46–47.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 105–106.

Gyüker III calls the servant a housekeeper is a reflection of a need for a way of life that is no longer the property of the poor but of the wealthier farmer¹⁴. The home was not only the most basic space for family life and self-preservation, but also a place of safety: 'The windows froze over in the cold; it was so cold that the temperature reached -32°C'¹⁵ – wrote the grandson of the chronicler from inside in 1902, which not only shows the opposition between the warm world inside and the cold world outside, but also reveals the shared experience of generations, the power of nature. In this case, it only got as far as the window. Still, before its regulation, the Hernád river did not spare even this most intimate of spaces – as attested not only by earlier entries in this chronicle, but also by two notes on the 1869 census enumeration forms for Nos 45 and 121 Vízaljasi Street, which 'were destroyed'.

Generations of farmers have preserved the memory of the ancestral plot of land. In 1830, Dániel Kis Tóth Kis considered it essential to record in his *Vajszló Chronicle* that his great-grandfather was born in Haraszti, which by then had become part of Vajszló, and that he moved there to sleep in the 'second house on Vajszló Street'. The relevance of this is that while in the Gyüker family the land remained in one hand, in Vajszló – although this is not true for Kis Tóth – the break-up of extended families often went hand in hand with the division of land¹⁶. However, it was not easy to find a home for the two most mobile groups, the lower and upper classes' members, in the villages. Written memories were left by the latter, such as Lajos Arató, who was born in Gyulavári in 1864 and was a teacher in Szeghalm for a long time: 'My classroom was in the town's center, the girls' class of primary III. But my apartment was further away, in the house Biszterczky left to the church'¹⁷. It was not the one-kilometer walking distance between the two that made the place remote, but the kind of instability that became apparent when the local pastoral teacher passed away and was able to move into his place at the center. The changing residence of his service, therefore, kept him on the move, so that he could not have put down such deep roots as the families of those whose children he taught.

¹⁴ The fact that his father died as a small farmer in 1897, and not only his small-scale farming, which replaced his smallholdings, is a testament to his wealth. Source: Belsőbőcs civil registers, death, 34/1897.

¹⁵ Gyüker, p. 59.

¹⁶ G. Koloh, „Szántani lehet, de vetni nem muszáj” Az ormánsági egykézés történetei 1790–1941, Budapest 2021.

¹⁷ Szeghalmi Könyvtár és Közérdekű Muzeális Gyűjtemény [hereinafter: SzKKMGy], ref. no. T.86.84.1 (Memoirs by Lajos Arató).

THE COURTYARD

Two geldings were tied up in the stables of József Gyüker I in 1869¹⁸. So he and his son, who helped him with the farming, ploughed with a horse. One cow gave milk, and six calves sold well in the surrounding fairs. If he wanted meat, there were 16 pigs in the sty, but they were kept for fattening, as in 1811, or in 1863, when the corn 'after [it] was broken, was piled up in the attic, with the husk on, and given to the cattle and pigs, the cobs being cut up with the ear of corn and fed to them'¹⁹. In fact, he sold rather than ate in times of hunger: 'In 1812, we milked no cows and killed no pigs; it was a miserable year for us'²⁰. The economy of peasant production, therefore, includes the chambers, the stables and the storage of tools and equipment. In his 1956 study on the development of local animal husbandry, but concentrating on cattle breeding, Péter K. Kovács, drawing to a large extent on the records of Öreg Gyüker, presents the livestock breeding and cattle trade, which had long been developed here, as an alternative to the search for a way out of poverty through emigration and birth control²¹. An essential precursor to the development of the peasant farm²² into a small business was local dairy production, so, understandably, the exploitation of meadows and the quality of hay are recurrent themes in the chronicles. The development was slowly but significantly facilitated by the 1836 urbarium and the 1874 separation of land and pasture, which also stimulated the sale of the cattle²³. The trade in semi-extensively reared cattle was thus not only a spatial organizing force in the family farm, but also a dual force in the production and marketing process. Family farming has even shown considerable change over time. In 1828, according to the national tax census, widow Zsuzsanna Makai (mother of József Gyüker the Elder) had two oxen and a cow without calf (vaccae steriles). To be precise, it was in her name, but Gyüker the Elder had already shared it with his brother in 1822, so what he really had in the way of livestock were the following: 'there

¹⁸ <https://www.familysearch.org/tl/search/film/008305504?cat=koha%3A385993&i=0> [access: 31.07.2023].

¹⁹ Gyüker, pp. 32–33.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

²¹ P. K. Kovács, *A falu tehene. Szerepe, jelentősége Bócs község szarvasmarhatartásának tü-krében* 1956, "Néprajzi értesítő" 1956, 38, p. 280. His arguments about the one and only and emigration are not sufficiently substantiated.

²² For a definition of this see: G. Koloh, *Nagybirtok és kisbirtoküzem. Uradalmi és családi gazdálkodás Baranya vármegyében a 19. században* (Pre-publication manuscript).

²³ P. K. Kovács, *op. cit.*, pp. 282–285.

were two oxen, a cow, a spring ox, a calf for me and my brother [...]’²⁴. There is no mention of sheep either here or in the 1869 data, but that he had one in the meantime is undoubted: ‘We bought sheep in 1850, but in 1853 everyone sold them. We had bought from Lúcs, where consolidation had already banned keeping them, [...]’²⁵.

In Gábor Kátai’s chronicle, the pen, as part of the farm, was also a private space of the home farm, where a natural disaster was considered a serious intrusion and was only intensified if it caused damage to the sacred space:

On 29 January 1816, the snow was so high that it was the same height as the buildings. The bulls and cattle of the town were all killed by the snow, the tower was pulled down, and Józsis Hegyeli was also killed, and was found on Monday or Wednesday. On the Feast of the Annunciation, a severe storm struck, killing all the sheep and lambs in the pens and causing a significant flood. Even between the farms in all the bends, there were vast waters²⁶.

For Arató, on the other hand, the house and the courtyard had little function until he married. At the beginning of his career, in Doboz, he went to his pupils’ parents’ homes for pig-feast dinners, just as he had travelled around the area during his tenure in Szeghalom. He also hired a coachman, whom he persuaded to ‘take me every Sunday to one village or another, even to the wilderness, to go to a girls’ gathering’²⁷. Apparently, Arató had great difficulty in creating a home space, which was clearly due to the difficulty of finding a partner suitable for his profession. It is not uncommon for the main question on pastors’ and teachers’ CVs to be whose daughter to marry, not who²⁸. What is new in Arató’s case is the presentation of this mating phase, with its challenges and disappointments. This phase of his life, however, undoubtedly broadened his sense of space considerably, until he married the daughter of a teacher in a village neighboring Szeghalom²⁹.

²⁴ Gyüker, pp. 16–17.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 24; I. Galuska, *Határhatalom Kesznyétenben a parasztbirtok kialakulásától az 1945-ös földosztásig*, in: *Borsodi történelmi évkönyv*, vol. 4, eds. G. Deák, J. Román, Miskolc 1973, p. 40.

²⁶ Kátai Gábor krónikás könyve, prep. and ed. A. S. Püski Anna, “Néprajzi tanulmányok. A Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei” 1982, 39, pp. 541–550.

²⁷ SzKKMGy, ref. no. T.86.84.1.

²⁸ G. Koloh, *Református lelkészek és tanítók társadalmi mobilitásának diverzitása a Felsőbaranyai Egyházmegyében a 19. század első felében*, “Korall” 2021, 86, pp. 166–184.

²⁹ The marriage of Lajos Arató and Maria Kis took place in the Reformed Church of Vésztő on 4 June 1890. The witnesses were the friends of the groom, the doctor from Seghalma and the cantor from Túrkeve. Pastor Béla Kun, also a close friend of Arató, did

THE SMALL FARM

The fundamental difference between the peasant smallholding and the small farm is that the latter is characterized by expansion beyond the landholding, openness to new processes, market penetration and maximizing labor organization. At the same time, the former lacked one or more of these elements³⁰. Integration plays a crucial role in the Wallersteinian system of the world economy, which thus becomes central to the theory of globalization and its exploration³¹. But what did József Gyüker of Külsőbőcs know about the world market, which had been integrating since the 16th century? But they sowed potatoes, grew tobacco and for József Gyüker III, the appearance of the cooperative 'Hangya' in the village was an important novelty³². The latter, as an organizer of peasant production and thus as a channel for the development of the peasant's business, has played a decisive role in his life, creating a more or less (or not fully proportional) interdependence for both parties: another element of the systems theory of globalization³³. The globalization of the peasant world has thus taken place in several phases, very slowly and, above all, unnoticed³⁴.

József I. Gyüker founded his own farm in 1822, after dividing it with his brother: 'we bought the house of János Kis in Vízaljasi Street for him and he went to live there, [...]' – and then, after the above-quoted information about the cattle, he continued: – 'the land remained with me, as I kept my mother; the meadow belonged to my brother, [...]'³⁵. The most important parts of the inherited land, the fields and the plough, therefore passed into his hands. In addition to their land, they also shared the vineyard at Vénehagy until József Gyüker bought it from his brother. In 1859, 'I bought the land from the great Mihály Nagy for 1190 forints'. The peasant farm has expanded. Several previous examples show that Gyüker's farming has been characterized not only by expansion beyond the own landholding

not fail to pronounce the couple's name so that they would stand out among the farmers and day labourers. – Vésztő Calvinist church records, marriage, 21/1890. (<https://www.familysearch.org/pl/search/film/008265450?cat=175056&i=0> [access: 31.07.2023]).

³⁰ G. Koloh, *Nagybirtok*.

³¹ B. Tomka, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–20.

³² G. Klein, R. Péchy-Horváth, *Közégi adattár. Borsod vármegye. Borsod, Gömör és Kishont k. e. vármegyék*, in: *Vármegyei Szociográfiai-sorozat*, vols 5–6, ed. A. Csíkvári, Budapest 1939, p. 81.

³³ B. Tomka, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

³⁴ I would like to express my gratitude to Károly Halmos, with whom I have had several long discussions on this subject. His useful comments and advice have influenced my conclusions in this text.

³⁵ Gyüker, pp. 16–17.

herd but also by market presence. It increased its livestock when it could, replacing its ploughing oxen with horses over time (an openness to new practices, like the spread of new crops, even if it was abandoned over time). Thus, Gyüker was on the path of smallholding development, and the development of his farm was also facilitated by the writing of his records, since what was still a record of memories for him, under the hands of his grandson, gradually took on the character of a farming diary. József Gyüker III also increased the size of the farm: 'On 1 March 1892, I bought the large meadow land from my sister Julcsa Gyüker, which she inherited, for 350 forints. In 1891, I bought it as the head farm of the priest of Berzék [...], and that's how I started farming, until then my parents wouldn't let me have anything'³⁶. – His parents were still alive in 1892, so the sister's inheritance was most likely her dowry (she married locally in 1876)³⁷. But there are several essential details about the family's farming in this entry. One is that he had to acquire the land himself to 'start' farming, which can be interpreted as a qualification condition on the part of his parents. The other point is that he mentioned obtaining his parents' joint permission, indicating that the direction and future of family farming were not solely dependent on his father's decision.

Table 2: Main spatial and demographic characteristics of the surveyed settlements

Settlement	Region	Population			Area 1865 (ca- dastral acres)	Population density 1869 (inhabitants/ km ²)
		1785	1869	1941		
Alsónyék	Southern Transdanubia	724	998	1.991	3.172	55
Karcag	Great Hungarian Plain	7.236	14.486	25.551	65.566	38
Külsőbőcs	Northern Hungary	464	641	915	6.548	17
Szeghalom	Great Hungarian Plain	2.675	7.255	10.712	36.100	35
Vajszló	Southern Transdanubia	779	1.187	1.732	2.916	71

Sources: Related volumes of the Historical Statistical Nomenclature of Localities of Hungary; *Magyarország művelési ágak szerinti területe és földjövedelme*, Buda 1865³⁸.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

³⁷ Reformed Church Archives in Bőcs, Belsőbőcs church registers, marriage, 5/1876.

³⁸ *Magyarország történeti statisztikai helységnévtára*, vol. 3, Békés megye, ed. F. Virágh, Budapest 1993; *Magyarország történeti statisztikai helységnévtára*, vol. 9, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén megye, ed. B. Turkovics, Budapest 1996; *Magyarország történeti statisztikai helységnévtára*, vol. 10, Tolna megye, eds. A. Jeney Andrásné, A. Tóth, Budapest 1996; *Magyarország történeti statisztikai helységnévtára*, vol. 14, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok megye, eds. A. Klinger et al., Budapest 1999; *Magyarország történeti statisztikai helységnévtára*, vol. 18, Baranya megye, eds. J. Kovacsics, I. Ódor Imre, Budapest 2001.

The farming profile of a smallholding is determined spatially by the landscape in which it operates (Table 2): as much by the structure of the landscape, the quality of the land, as by the natural forces that are most strongly at work. 'Space as landscape – the story of experiencing nature', wrote Jürgen Osterhammel, pointing out that the interpretation of landscape helps us to understand cultural specificities in a society that is not necessarily, or instead not at all, landscape-aware. 'For the peasant, nature is not a landscape: he does not look at it from the outside, he does not admire it, nor does he have the desire to conquer it [...] The peasant has only one landscape, into which he is born and to which he has grown so attached that he is not even aware of it'³⁹ – sociographer Ferenc Erdei expressed the symbiosis of nature and peasantry. The aesthetic value judgements of the Gyükers were related to the weather, to the crops: in 1813 'on 26 August it was a fine sunny day, we went out with my mother to lay the crosses in the wind, to dry them [...]', or in 1862: 'we sowed in dry dust, after three weeks it rained, it was wet as long as it had been ploughed. Some people were ploughing and sowing at that time, including Mihály Mészáros, next to me. His seed germinated and grew well, because a little rain fell on it'⁴⁰. And for József Gyüker III, the wheat was good, the sowing was good: 'May was also excellent until the ground dried out, because there was no rain in May. The autumn sowings had no rain, which was very good, because many parts would have rotted; the spring sowings suffered a little, but they were nice'⁴¹.

Nature has given and taken. 'For the peasant, nature is not an enemy: it is a force he respects and an element he lives in'⁴². Among the entries of József Gyüker I, the floods of the Hernád are recurrently mentioned, of which the years 1834, 1837 and 1855 were particularly worthy of remembrance (the latter was the year after the river began to be regulated). Comparing the entries of Gyüker the Elder and his grandson, it is striking that József Gyüker I indicates the extent of the disaster primarily by the destruction of houses. In 1834, the great flood 'tore' the garden of Pál Gyüker, who did not wait for the next disaster: he 'went to live in the Inner Village [Belsőbőcs]'. In 1837, 'the water, raging several times this year, tore away the house of István Kis, Milyán Gyüker, József Sándor, György Varga and a piece of the house of Pál Nagy, [...]'⁴³. The names indicate not only the damage and destruction of relatives and acquaintances,

³⁹ F. Erdei, *Parasztok. Erdei Ferenc összegyűjtött művei*, vol. 1, Budapest 1973, p. 19.

⁴⁰ *Gyüker*, pp. 14–15, 30.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

⁴² F. Erdei, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁴³ *Gyüker*, pp. 19–20.

but also of peasant farms. But of all those listed in the chronicle, the most significant devastation was caused by the flood of 1855. It was then that the house on Vízaljas Street, bought for his brother, was destroyed. Between 1850 and 1855, about a tenth of the plots in Külsőbőcs were destroyed or damaged. One after another, water destroyed houses in Kertekesi and Vízaljas streets, prompting the peasants to seek help from the landlord's kindness or to build their own houses in their gardens. In the Reformed church registers of Bőcs between 1852 and 1872, there are several entries where the house number was not indicated. Specifically, from number 116 upwards, this was the case, although the census records 138 places. This discrepancy is illustrated by the case of György Benedek, who lived at number 135 in 1869, while no number was given in the entry for his daughter, who died the previous year. True, his house was not a house but a hut. However, this natural force no longer appears in the case of József Gyüker III, thanks to river regulation. This technical development not only allowed him to farm more safely, but also to reverse the order once and for all: whereas the peasants had hitherto adapted to the forces of nature, they now sought to harness its power. It was away from a globalized world, almost unnoticed. The dominance of nature also changed their perception of the world: they no longer had to pray to God for protection from the ravages of the flood.

The flood, like other disasters, was not only sensitive because of the damage it caused to the farming space, but also because it intruded into their innermost spheres. The perception of his own farming space as an intimate personal space explains why Lukács Szabó, a peasant man from Kisújszállás, was surprised by the question of ethnographer Miklós Szilágyi, who interviewed him, namely that he would have 'wandered through the whole of Kisújszállás' out of sheer curiosity as a child or a boy⁴⁴. Szabó's answer that he did not need one because his childhood playmates lived in the area is not satisfactory. It is not only that there was no flaneur in the village, but that everyone who went anywhere went there with a purpose, and if a peasant went to another peasant's property, the question immediately arose: what purpose drove him there? And the interior of the village was by no means so large that it could not be explored at a glance, especially by someone born there.

⁴⁴ M. Szilágyi, *A személyes paraszti tudás érvényessége. Kisújszállás társadalma és gazdál-kodása egy száz évet élt parasztgazda emlékezetében*, Budapest 2006, p. 20.

VILLAGE AND REGION

The village

In Table 3, I have summarized and grouped the spatial locations mentioned by József Gyüker I and his grandson. The header of the table needs some comments. Local events mean the place indicated within Külsőbőcs (this is detailed in Table 4). The river primarily represents the Hernád; the settlement group comprises various localities, mainly in the surrounding area, while the region encompasses larger units (e.g., across the Tisza River). The county not only denotes Zemplén, but it also reflects the thinking about the county as a unit. Countries and continents were also mentioned. The table shows some changes between the two generations. Gyüker the Younger wrote less about places and more about prices: as I wrote, in his hands, the chronicle took on the character of a farming diary. The role of the river is crucial for both authors. In 1855, József Gyüker I mentioned the Sajó River several times,

Table 3: Distribution of the places mentioned in the Gyüker Chronicle

Decade	locally	river	settlement	region	county	country	continent	Total
József Gyüker I (1799–1874)								
1800–1809	3	0	2	0	0	2	0	7
1810–1819	19	1	6	0	0	2	1	29
1820–1829	7	0	3	0	0	1	0	11
1830–1839	23	2	11	0	1	0	0	37
1840–1849	9	5	49	3	3	0	0	69
1850–1859	46	10	20	3	0	0	0	79
1860–1866	23	6	29	4	1	0	0	63
Total	130	24	120	10	5	5	1	295
Rate	44.07	8.14	40.68	3.39	1.69	1.69	0.34	100.00
József Gyüker III (1862–1932)								
1880–1889	14	5	5	0	2	0	0	26
1890–1899	11	3	9	2	0	0	0	25
1900–1909	14	4	13	3	0	1	0	35
1910–1919	16	3	16	9	1	16	2	63
1920–1930	43	6	14	9	0	9	1	82
Total	98	21	57	23	3	26	3	231
Rate	42.42	9.09	24.68	9.96	1.30	11.26	1.30	100.00

Source: Gyüker család feljegyzései. Évszázadok történetei, prep. M. Igaz, in: *Néprajzi Közlemények*, vol. 22, ed. I. Forrai, Budapest 1979.

in addition to the Hernad and the Tisza, because, like the Hernad, there was so much fodder there that 'no one went from Bocs to the Tisza to make hay, but many of the people living along the Tisza, because of their shortage of fodder caused by the many floods, came to the Hernad to reap and buy hay [...]'⁴⁵. But he also mentioned the Saj river in connection with the retreat of the Hungarian defenders in 1849, and in 1859, when the railway bridge was built over it, as a local moment of the spread of the decisive innovation⁴⁶. In the case of Jzsef Gyker III, only the Hernad and the Tisza are mentioned: the latter mainly because of the purchase of hay for livestock farming, as discussed above. However, the increase in the region's role was not primarily due to the intensification of economic and commercial activity, but also to the recording of information about life and events in the more distant regions. This is particularly true



Figure 1: Belsbocs and Klsbocs at the time of the Second Military Survey

Source: Arcanum Maps (The project website: <https://maps.arcanum.com/hu/map/second-survey-hungary/> [access: 31.07.2023])

⁴⁵ Gyker, pp. 25–26.

⁴⁶ B. Tomka, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

of the war years, but also before and especially after. On 11 July 1900, he wrote that 'much good rain fell and there was such a heavy thunder-storm that it tore the tops off the spires near Pest and held back the fast trains nationwide [...]'⁴⁷. However, the proportion of mentions of larger regions (Carpathians, the island of Mureş, Transylvania, Bačka) increases as a result of the war, which underlines the infiltration of events from the outside world at No. 22, Külsőbőcs.

But this broadening of the horizon was preceded by a perception of the village itself. For the world, as for medieval man, is the community of his town⁴⁸. For József Gyüker I, like his grandson, Külsőbőcs was the nucleus of the world he saw. True, both of them were aware of the vastness of the world beyond, but only József Gyüker III managed to gain an indirect, but very personal experience of its contents (his son was killed in the First World War). The shape of the village is shown on the map of the second military survey (Figure 1), in the absence of cadastral maps from the 1860s and 1870s.

The village, as you can see, lived in the grip of the Hernád, its main street following it, its two streets running into the cemetery gravitating towards it. The village was revived after the Turks, in 1689, as a Rákóczi, then Aspremont, then the Erdődy estate. Its church was in Belsőbőcs, so the events of the popular movement in Külsőbőcs were recorded there, first, in Zemplén, then in Borsod county⁴⁹. József Gyüker III was angry about it: 'In 1884 they transferred Külsőbőcs to Borsod, until then it was in Zemplén, because six people sold the village on the priest's word secretly that our fate would be better, but we were disappointed'⁵⁰. The spatial differences of social stratification in Külsőbőcs – as Fernand Braudel wrote: 'the very organization of space creates inequalities and hierarchies'⁵¹ – otherwise they would have been seen. In 1869, the first house belonged to the noble Gábor Nagy, while Jews mostly lived at the end of a street, and at the edge of the village, under the last house numbers, but in huts, lived András Zsiga, the local Roma musician, János Böck, the shepherd, György Benedek, Mihályné Oláh, and Pál Csörgő.

⁴⁷ Gyüker, pp. 55–56. The major storm, recorded a few days late, is covered in more detail in the *Pesti Napló* of 8 July, see: "Pesti Napló" 1900, no. 185, p. 9.

⁴⁸ É. Pócs, *Néphit*, in: *Magyar Néprajz*, vol. 7, *Népszokás, néphit, népi vallásosság*, eds. T. Dömötör et al., Budapest 1990, p. 619.

⁴⁹ G. Klein, R. Péchy-Horváth, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81.

⁵⁰ Gyüker, p. 39.

⁵¹ F. Braudel, *Franciaország identitása*, 1st edition, Budapest 2003, p. 128.

The border was their life and work⁵²: from year to year, depending on the rhythm of farming and the weather. If they had to buy, they bought. However, their borders were still richly productive: 'Its borders are good for all kinds of crops, its meadows are rich in vegetation, its pasture is enough, [...]' – wrote András Vályi in his description of the country published in 1796, and this is how Elek Fényes described it⁵³. The economic and cultural life built on the border was deeply damaged when the Romanians invaded the village in 1919: 'the damage cannot be described, we were also behind with our work, it was impossible to go to the border, we had to flee on 24 May [...] We came home at the beginning of June to a vast wasteland, everything was so disgraceful [...] we were not even allowed to go to the border because the bullets often turned and then we didn't know what to do [...]'⁵⁴.

In Lajos Arató's memoir, the village border played little role. Upon his arrival in Szeghalom, he sought to enhance the local tradition of celebrating May Day, transforming it from a casual game on the riverbank into an active rest for teachers. 'The village of Szeghalom had a small forest near the Berettyó [...] called Királyerdő [...]. In May of the following year, we drove the schoolchildren there. We – two young teachers – entertained the parents and the ladies and gentlemen present with beautiful children's games and songs'⁵⁵. It is not surprising that his colleagues largely exempted themselves from this, but what is more important here is the use of the forest, this special place of farming, for recreation and relaxation in the late 1880s, while the joy of József Gyüker III in the autumn of 1911 was precisely that they could finally cut the forest of Ónod and thus get cheap twigs by the cartload. Arató, on the other hand, gave a new function to the local forest (inspired by his years in Debrecen), which in turn took on a new meaning for the community.

In Table 4, I detail the in-place column shown above. The mention of houses, as I have indicated, declined as a result of river regulation; ploughland replaced the garden and meadow. At the same time,

⁵² J. Bárt, *Település*, in: *Magyar Néprajz*, vol. 4, *Életmód*, ed. I. Balassa et al., Budapest 1997, p. 68. 'Being on the border does not mean isolation from the villagers or loneliness – but the opposite, more opportunities to meet them. In the village, the houses hide people's activities, but in the border, as far as the eye can see, you can see who is out on their land and what they are doing' – E. Fél, T. Hofer, „*Mi, korrekt parasztok...*” *Hagyományos élet Átányon*, Budapest 2010, p. 70.

⁵³ A. Vályi, *Magyar országnak leírása*, Buda 1796, p. 261; E. Fényes, *Magyar országnak, 's a' hozzá kapcsolt tartományoknak mostani állapotja statis-tikai és geographiai tekintetben*, Pest 1837, p. 407.

⁵⁴ Gyüker, p. 86.

⁵⁵ SzKKMGy, ref. no. T.86.84.1.

Table 4: Distribution of places within Kúlsőbőcs in the Gyüker Chronicle

Decade	house	court-yard	build-ing	plough-land	mead-ow	pas-ture	farm-stead	rail	other	Total
József Gyüker I (1799–1874)										
1800–1809	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
1810–1819	2	5	3	3	1	0	1	0	4	19
1820–1829	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	2	7
1830–1839	12	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	23
1840–1849	2	2	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	10
1850–1859	21	1	3	2	11	1	3	3	1	46
1860–1866	1	0	1	2	14	2	0	1	1	22
Total	38	19	13	9	30	3	5	4	9	130
Rate	29.23	14.62	10.00	6.92	23.08	2.31	3.85	3.08	6.92	100.00
József Gyüker III (1862–1932)										
1880–1889	0	2	5	2	0	0	0	3	2	14
1890–1899	0	1	1	3	3	0	0	2	1	11
1900–1909	2	1	0	7	2	0	0	1	1	14
1910–1919	2	0	3	6	1	1	0	0	3	16
1920–1930	1	0	5	30	0	3	0	1	3	43
Total	5	4	14	48	6	4	0	7	10	98
Rate	5.10	4.08	14.29	48.98	6.12	4.08	0.00	7.14	10.20	100.00

Source: *Gyüker család feljegyzései. Évszázadok történetei*, prep. M. Igaz, in: *Néprajzi Közlemények*, vol. 22, ed. I. Forrai, Budapest 1979.

the railway was a common interest of the generations from its appearance until the turn of the century. This change reflected a shift in the main profile of farming, which stimulated arable production requiring greater intensity. However, it was not this change in profile that brought about the essential change. Still, the cooperative that promoted the smallholding into a small business, as has been mentioned several times: ‘The consumer cooperative (Hangya) in Kúlsőbőcs was also started on 20 January 1921 with 50,000,000 koronas, with wheat at 1,300 forints per hundredweight’⁵⁶. Later, in 1924, ‘the cooperative was also consecrated on the 16th with great pomp; it was completed in the autumn of 1924, I also added five hundredweight of wheat for two million koronas, at 10 per cent – this cooperative was started in 1921’⁵⁷. ‘By 1925, I had 92 hundredweight of wheat

⁵⁶ *Gyüker*, p. 90.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

issued, again at 20 per cent interest; I gave five hundredweight at interest for the construction of the cooperative on 1 October 1924⁵⁸. The Hangya radically transformed and organized the production of József Gyüker III, thereby achieving economic and, notably, cultural diffusion through its diverse stock of goods. Concurrently, the significant state support for the cooperative fostered an interest in maintaining the system's viability.

In Külsőbőcs and the neighboring villages, which were Reformed, the number of sacral sites was limited. The cemetery and the Hernád governed Külsőbőcs' internal spatial order, but the church in Belsőbőcs was also considered theirs⁵⁹. In the records of the Gyükers, the church was not given much prominence; if it was mentioned, it was almost only as a localization: 'In Belsőbőcs it came into the village by the village garden, covered every flat hill and flowed down under the mill at the church'⁶⁰. (1813); 'The cannons were spiked, here at the end of the bridge, in front of the gate of János Zsámba, two cannons were spiked, right in front of the church door, [...]'⁶¹ (1849); In 1927, the church's spire was cleaned, and then he added that electricity was introduced from donations. Perhaps it is only when listing the consequences of the Romanian occupation that some emotion is felt. Still, it is not a tone of reverence, but instead of indignation: 'even the church was so damaged that it was impossible to enter it in reverence, and even some of the houses'⁶². However, I would attribute this more secular attitude not to religion, but to individual faith life. Gábor Kátai hypothesized a more profound connection in the fact that the church of the neighboring village caught fire: 'On the night of July 11, 1828, the church of Kisújszállás burned down together with the Priest's house, consumed by the vengeful wrath of the Lord' – whether the revenge was aimed at the preacher of the village or at the Reformed community is not known.

The region

In the context of Table 3, I discussed the background behind the differentiation of regions, in particular, the fact that this was driven more by an increase in awareness of the broader community than by an expansion of actual contacts. I can support this finding with two further

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 103–104.

⁵⁹ On the organising power of sacred spaces, see: P. Niedermüller, *Térformák és térhatalmi szabályok a falusi kultúrában*, "Kultúra és Közösség" 1981, 8, 5, p. 78; I. Silling, *Immaculata-emlékművek a Bácskában*, "Ethnographia" 2011, 122, p. 305.

⁶⁰ Gyüker, p. 15.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 86.

indicators. First, the distance of the settlements mentioned, and second, by examining exogamous marriages.

Table 5: Distance of the settlements mentioned in the Gyüker Chronicle from Külsőbőcs, by year and decade

Decade	Settlement	Average distance (km)
József Gyüker I (1799–1874)		
1800–1809	2	221.50
1810–1819	5	500.00
1820–1829	3	23.60
1830–1839	10	23.42
1840–1849	43	75.60
1850–1859	18	30.21
1860–1866	27	36.26
n/a	11	–
József Gyüker III (1862–1932)		
1880–1889	5	13.00
1890–1899	7	37.43
1900–1909	11	19.25
1910–1919	15	97.61
1920–1930	11	25.35
n/a	9	–

Sources: *Gyüker család feljegyzései. Évszázadok történetei*, prep. M. Igaz, in: *Néprajzi Közlemények*, vol. 22, ed. I. Forrai, Budapest 1979.

An examination of the settlements mentioned by the Gyükers reveals that the mention of more distant locations is primarily confined to the decades of war, notably during the French wars (József Gyüker the Elder mentions Leipzig and Paris in this context, as well as in the 1848–1849 wars). However, outside of these, a circle of 20–30 kilometers is the personal world outside the Gyükers experienced. In fact, by the time of József Gyüker III, the region had even narrowed, which is explained by the fact that the emphasis of his farming shifted from livestock to arable farming.

This 20–30-kilometre circuit actually meant the places that were visited at fairs: Miskolc, Ónod, Sajókeresztúr, Sziksó and Szerencs. A fair was therefore a necessary opportunity to see the surrounding area; leaving the village allowed for the gathering of new information. Additionally, fairs served as a place of cultural diffusion. Fair contacts ensured deepening integration, but still within very narrow limits. From this point of view, the cooperative in the village represents a step forward, albeit

one that was previously seen as a step backwards. However, it would be wrong to interpret this direction as such, since the limits of this form of trade in goods at fairs have been reached, and it is safe to say that it would have been a cost-effective decision to go beyond them. Miskolc was therefore the town of Bócs, both in Vályi's description of the country and in the Gyüker family's description of the village from generation to generation⁶³. The railways did not bring them a breakthrough either, even though they went as far as Pest⁶⁴, as they were able to develop locally, and the world came to them by other routes. The fairs were also festivals: 'On Joseph's Day, it was safe to go on the ice to the fair in Ónod'⁶⁵ (1831), but here too the forces of nature could override the careful peasant calculation: 'the cruel cold wind from the north arose, and carried the snow that had fallen before into the flatlands. It is difficult to go to the fair in Sziksó, [...]'⁶⁶ (1865); 'the fair in Miskolc was postponed for 2 weeks due to snow'⁶⁷. There was, however, another significant change in the situation of the two Gyükers: the younger one's records now often include what was growing well and what was not, both in the area and in the neighboring villages⁶⁸.

In Alsónyék in Tolna, however, the local pastor, János Helle, had his eyes on Pest from 1821: the 'flood flooded so much that, as the travelers from Pest said, the whole Pest market, the part towards Pest, Óbuda, the lower part of Buda, the city on the water was completely submerged; consequently, the embankment was also carried away in Nyék, and it entered the Délő and the schoolyard'⁶⁹. This entry will explain why the situation in Pest was relevant to the preacher from the lower reaches of the valley. In fact, in 1838, 'Because of the remaining snow, ice, and water in our region, the merchants could not go to Pest, they came back [...] – but moreover, Helle not only learned from the merchants, but he read in the April issue of Jelenkor that recorded these things, that the number of houses in Pest was 4,581 and that of these 1,146 remained intact, 1,154 needed repair, and 2,281 homes had collapsed [...]'⁷⁰. And what he read was precisely that: 'According to the official census, a total of 4,581 houses were found in Pest, 'and the flood'

⁶³ A. Vályi, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

⁶⁴ P. K. Kovács, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

⁶⁵ Gyüker, p. 18.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 35–36.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 64.

⁶⁹ Magyar Mezőgazdasági Múzeum és Könyvtár [hereinafter: MMgMK], ref. no. IV. 456 (Notes by János Helle (1821–1870)).

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

of the enormous number of houses only left 1,146 intact, 2,281 houses collapsed completely 'and 827 will only be able to stand after a remarkable repair'⁷¹. But what is most interesting in Helle's records is how much of his knowledge was put to good use by the merchants and farmers of the lower reaches of the valley. Would his efforts have been exhausted in defending against the price, which could have been faster than the flow of news itself? Or was he seeking to manage his own economy better? At the same time, as an informer, he could have been a valuable informational asset to the village economy, directly or indirectly (i.e., by telling or asking)? Besides, one did not have to be the first intellectual in the village to think in a broader region: Dániel Kis Tóth, in describing the fate of his family, explains how his father had taken the pigs from Ormánság next to the Dráva river to Veszprém and Győr, but also to the south of the Dráva, as was the practice for farming families in Ormánság. This was made possible by the coexistence of large families, but their disintegration also set back efficient farm organization⁷². In any case, the fact that Kis Tóth's region was so much more extensive had made it possible decades earlier for his father to have not only a watch for a poor farmer, but two pocket watches and a wall clock!⁷³ In contrast, Kátai's world was again much more limited: the other side of the Tisza, but even more so,

Table 6: The number of marriages of Reformed people in Bőcs by the place of birth of the bride and groom

Decade	Endogamy		Exogamy		Total
	Inside Bőcs	Inside Bőcs – or Külsőbőcs	Outside Bőcs	Outside Bőcs – or Külsőbőcs	
1790–1791	17	–	13	–	30
1810–1811	20	18	17	2	37
1830–1831	26	17	17	9	43
1853–1854	9	8	6	1	15
1870–1871	27	20	12	7	39
1890–1891	16	13	9	3	25
1900–1901	28	20	11	8	39

Sources: Belsőbőcs Calvinist church registers (Family Search DGS 4704131) and Belsőbőcs public registers (Family Search DGS 4838080)

⁷¹ "Jelenkor" 1838, no. 25, p. 96.

⁷² G. Koloh, *Szántani*.

⁷³ *A vajszlói krónika 1830*, in: L. Mándoki, *Ormánság népeletéből. A Kiss Géza Ormánsági Múzeum állandó kiállításának és szabadtéri bemutatóinak vezetője*, Sellye 1979, pp. 52–70.

the surrounding villages were the outside world for him: the burning church in Kisújszállás, or the frozen people in Kunmadaras⁷⁴.

It is not possible to draw general regional conclusions from the few sources. Still, it is certain that in the peasant world there were also channels that allowed cultural diffusion to take place, such as the fairs mentioned above, but even more so in the case of powerful spatial experiences such as the struggle for freedom or the world war. Although neither József Gyüker I nor József Gyüker III participated in the War of Independence or the First World War, they were deeply personally involved: the former's son, Samu, fought in the battles, and József Gyüker III's son was killed in Warsaw. The regional extent of the people of Külsőbőcs is confirmed by the study of the marriage district from the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 20th century.

Half to two-thirds of marriages were between parties from Bőcs, and the proportion of marriages within municipalities was very high (Table 6). In addition, the proportion of marriages within Bőcs increased, based on the decennial sample. At the end of the 18th century, the rate was 56.67%, then 69.23% by 1870–1871 and 71.79% by 1900–1901! Almost without exception, the radius of marriages to a groom or bride outside Bőcs always remained within 30 kilometers (the exception being a couple born far away but living locally for an extended period). The average is therefore misleading, since most grooms and brides actually came from Berzék, Hernádnémeti and Alsózsolca (only to take some of them home). The closure may be explained by the fact that as arable farming became more valuable, it became more important to marry good land. However, if the former conclusion is correct, the increasing strategy of local marriage did not mean enclosure, but peasant farm development, which instead increased contact with the outside world.

THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Beyond the county

The third level is the world which is no longer or to a lesser extent accessible to the peasant, but with which he has developed a personal relationship over time. The more distant a place was, the more symbolic meaning it had. And this meaning made the space malleable and thus, as in the case of nearby areas, it became endowed with feelings. For whom, for example, would it not be clear why the image of Napoleon,

⁷⁴ Kátai, pp. 541–550.

the fallen head of state exiled to the island of St. Helena, might have reminded József Gyüker I in 1863? The outside world, on the periphery of the peasant world, became increasingly meaningful, so much so that by his old age the grandson, with a newspaper in hand, had already understood, if only in relation to the war, the global context: he had written it down, he had made it conscious. This marks a significant turning point where globalization, which had been evident in ever-increasing signs since the 17th to the 18th century (though it still lacked a name), would mature into a system.

Obviously not chronologically in that order, but more vividly, more undulatingly, the Elder Gyüker's attention also increasingly crossed the borders of the region when he became aware of life in distant lands, saw the destiny of the country, and his early memories of the French Emperor's war in Europe were indelible. The drought of 1862 in Karcag was felt in Külsőbőcs, where the loss of cattle due to a shortage of hay threatened their livestock. The drought is also mentioned in the chronicle of József Gyüker I in 1863, but in 1891, the connection with Karcag was still alive in his uncle's house, where 'the countryside was suffering from a great drought'⁷⁵. Despite their immediacy, links beyond the narrow radius (20–30 kilometers) remain important threads across generations, which were less or not at all experiential, but still personally relevant. While here it was commerce, for the son of a Gyulavári farmer, it was education that opened the door to the outside world: 'When I finished the four elementary classes, I asked my good father to take me to Gyula in the autumn, to a civil school. I want to study. [...]', Arató recalled his departure, and then, when he graduated and his brothers and sisters were already shocked by his education, he rebelled: 'I will not be a peasant, I will go to Debrecen, [...]'⁷⁶. It can be seen that one world opened a window on the other: the son of the Gyulavári peasant, Gyula, was the place of escape, but by the time Gyula was finished, the county had become a small one. As is often the case with the careers of teachers⁷⁷, his unfolding was stunted, but the little he had was far more than most of his contemporaries could have expected. The preceding pages contain a series of examples to show how much more he took in from the world as a village teacher and how much more he carried and transmitted his values. His horizons have widened geographically⁷⁸, but in comparison with József Gyüker III, it is not this that becomes the surplus, but that

⁷⁵ *Gyüker*, p. 45.

⁷⁶ SzKKMGy, ref. no. T.86.84.1.

⁷⁷ G. Koloh, *Református*.

⁷⁸ B. Tomka, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

he visited more places and had direct experience of more places than Gyüker. At the same time, the Külsőbőcs farmer also had an increasingly precise idea of what the world beyond his immediate field was.

The country

Such was the increasingly meaningful 'home'. The country's significance could only be understood in relation to other countries, and its role and importance could only be seen in its relationship with them. Thinking about the country first appeared in the recollections of the farmer from Külsőbőcs in 1804, as a memory of the French war: 'In 1804 the Russian (Muska) passed through Hungary, whom we were waiting for with fear, for the people were frightened that a dog-headed Tatar was coming'⁷⁹. The next memory is that of the Battle of Győr, where 'the French passed through most of Hungary under Győr, [...]'⁸⁰. The country did not feature a non-political mention of the proper noun in the chronicle, but instead used expressions like 'the grain was growing well throughout the country'⁸¹. In 1909, his grandson had the same experience: 'the price of wheat was 16 forints 50 krajcars, because there was a bad harvest everywhere in the country'⁸², but from 1914 he no longer lists nations and peoples (German, Russian, French, etc.) like his grandfather, but mentions the Monarchy and Russia, and in 1918 Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Italy and Romania. I think it is important to emphasize this because, on the one hand, the influence of the source of the information, namely the newspaper⁸³ available from the cooperative, is visible: the country names were written practically without error. On the other hand, it helped to create an awareness that he could build on later. Compared with other sources, Helle's description of the events of the revolution is more strongly country-specific and broader in perspective: 'On 15 March in Hungary, the Revolution in Budapest, following the example of France, Italy and Austria, was followed by other countries, except the Russian Empire [...]'⁸⁴, but when it came to the crop, he used the *countrywide, country* designations and so did Kátai. Moreover, the primary representative of the country, the person of the ruler, who appears in the third Gyüker,

⁷⁹ Gyüker, p. 13.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 70.

⁸³ You could also get a newspaper at the Hangya, see: *A "Hangya" termelő-értékesítő és fogyasztási szövetkezet, a Magyar Gazdaszövetség Szövetkezeti Központja első 25 éve. 1898–1923*, Budapest 1923. Thanks to Zoltán Kaposi for the information!

⁸⁴ MMG M, ref. no. IV. 456.

as well as in Helle and Kátai, contributed to the development of the conception of the country. The Reformed preacher Helle recorded his visit to Szekszárd on 27 June 1852 with objectivity: 'On his journey to Hungary, the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph I visited the market town of Szekszárd and accepted the homage of people of all classes [...] from a high tribune he showed himself to all the crowds gathered there'⁸⁵. Farmer Kátai is more biased: regarding the person of the emperor, 'The Emperor of Austria, Emperor Franz Joseph, came down from Vienna to Pest on the 5th of June, I was there, he visited everything here, from there he went to Cegléd on the 11th, from there to Kecskemét, Mezőhegyes, and from there to travel around the country'⁸⁶. It is not known whether this was the reason he went to Pest, but the enthusiasm of the Calvinist Kátai is not even remotely similar to Helle's attitude. A few decades later, patriotism took on a much stronger meaning in the mind of the teacher Arató, who said that 6 October 'deserves, and indeed is even their duty, to instill true patriotism in the hearts of our children and to make them and the people familiar with this day of mourning'⁸⁷. That he was not satisfied with this is proved by the fact that he managed, with difficulty, to get Ferenc Kossuth (son of Lajos Kossuth) to be present in person at the unveiling of the statue of Lajos Kossuth in Szeghalom in 1907. But Arató also showed a new form of experiencing the country in his own environment when he went on a tour of Transylvania with his brother-in-law to see its sights. Its importance lies in the fact that in this way he was able to strengthen the national idea of the people of Szeghalom through their children during the two more emotionally impulsive periods, i.e. between the War of Independence and the World War, which could be paralleled with the other, the definition of the other (i.e.: who is Hungarian and who is not?).

The Globe

'[1914] On 20 November, he was already 100 days old; we were anxiously awaiting his fate, which caused the Family great pain, because on 18 November, he was shot in the head in Major Zsebrén near Warsaw, which killed him instantly', writes József Gyüker III of his son's death. Galicia, Isonzo, the valley of the Po River, were thus indelibly etched in the memory of generations, for, as Gyüker writes: '1914 was an unfortunate year, it left the country with many sorrows, it left many

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁶ Kátai, pp. 541–550.

⁸⁷ SzKKMGy, ref. no. T.86.84.1.

families bitter, [...]’⁸⁸, so the experience was collective. But this is also how he learned the name of Przemyśl⁸⁹. Following the war, the occupation of the country and the shrinking of its territory coincided with a widening of the horizon, which intensified the existing wartime frustration and traumatization:

The peace treaty was signed on the 4th of June, because again foreign soldiers would have invaded the country, even though the Hungarians beat the Russians, Romanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Albanians, the Italians and the Germans, they were still the ones who were defeated with the help of America, because America came with 5 million men against us and the Germans; even then they were not beaten, but the people had to lay down their arms.

America appears here for the second time, but in the same narrative: not as a land of opportunity, not as a continent fulfilling the aspirations of millions of emigrants, but as the cause of Hungary's defeat and loss of country. Presumably, this image of America was much more dominant in these years, reinforced by the disappointment in Wilsonian principles⁹⁰. Yet, in the period between the two wars, the outside world increasingly becomes the outside world in Külsőbőcs, too, that is, a foreign space, hitherto beyond the peasant center, on the periphery, already carries meaning in the mind of József Gyüker III. America is now a concrete place that is the mutilation of the homeland – ‘we were in great trouble both for lack of salt and wood, [...]’⁹¹ – and thus the lack of its raw materials was a loss that could be experienced first-hand. However, over the next ten years, the now journalistically literate and cultured farmer Gyüker became increasingly aware that the world in which he had grown up and lived his best life had irrevocably changed. Ten years on, he links the beginning of the change to a collectively traumatic war that involved enormous personal loss and pain. Still, his thoughts, which have presumably been maturing for some time, are the sum of a series of introspections:

These war years brought the significant change to the countries, flying in the air; in 1928 they started to fly by sea from Europe to America or from one country to another, also under the sea and the motor car and motor ploughs, which did not need horses, bicycles were also used, it was no longer a special thing; but there were even telegraphs without

⁸⁸ Gyüker, pp. 78–79.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 79.

⁹⁰ Iván Boldizsár drew attention to the negative impact of Wilsonian principles here: I. Boldizsár, *Megtalálni Amerikát? Amerika-képünk egy évszázada*, “Nagyvilág” 1986, 31, 8, pp. 1229–1230.

⁹¹ Gyüker, p. 85.

wires, from one country to another they spoke as if they were opposed to each other; the countries were also without kings, [...].

I think that after writing down these lines, József Gyüker III looked at the world differently: with the writing down, the realization was fixed in him, the awareness was established. He recognized transnational, even transcontinental connections and interrelationships, and that this became part of his thinking from then on is also evidenced by the following year's entry, according to which 'even wolves appeared in the wooded, mountainous regions, and in particular in other countries they attacked people [...]'⁹². He also looked at local events from a continental perspective, when he wrote that 'In Poland the newspaper reported 45 degrees of cold, cows and small fowls froze to death in the stables; wolves invaded Greece by the hundreds, 16 children and six soldiers were mauled to death, wolves came from the Bükk mountains in droves and attacked the people; [...]'⁹³. In the next few years, he wrote more about weather changes, prices and domestic political conditions. However, it is still a mystery whether in 1930, the year of the Great Depression, he meant the peasantry or the people of the land: 'there was no money, goods and clothing were expensive, and their prices could not be broken down; the people of the land were in great need [...]'⁹⁴.

CONCLUSIONS

'My grandfather died on the 9th of July 1932; my father was killed in action in 1914; I keep the diary, I was born on the 19th of August 1909'. – These are the lines of József Gyüker V, who has only a few entries left. Then his daughter Erzsébet Gyüker concludes the chronicle with the events of 1944. As she wrote: 'My father is busy, he has no time to write'⁹⁵. Early 19th-century peasant chronicles are pretty rare, but a corpus written over several generations is almost unique in Hungary. With its help, I have tried to find answers to the question: how did the transformation of the world and the perception of the world of the villages, and especially of the peasants, begin? How did the signs of globalization appear in them? Their space was at once home, town and region, and the outside world. The house was the most directly perceptible space, the center, the core of the world for those who were born, farmed

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 111.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 111–112.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 114–115.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 119.

and entertained locally, and who died locally. Such a home was neither for the pastor nor for the teacher, only for him. József Gyüker the Elder and his grandson were outliers of the peasant world, because it was out of the norm for a peasant to write a chronicle and even more so for his descendants to continue it. The home is the space of their writing. Through this writing, I believe they moved step by step closer to preserving their own memory, improving their farming, and becoming aware of the changes in the world around them, of the big picture. From this point of view, we can see that they were to a greater or a lesser degree helped in this by countless factors: their literacy, the trade fair, the railways, their marriage strategy, the cooperative and the wars, the tragedies and losses that they had to face. By marrying locally and rarely travelling more than thirty kilometers, the world opened up in three generations in House 22, Külsőbőcs: from childhood memories of the French wars, through the difficult decades of a flood-ravaged village, to the increasingly efficient smallholding, to the telegraph, the importance of transcontinental flight and the fall of kings. But all these changes have come at a price. How much? Some did not, but the rest can be calculated from the economic records of the Gyüker family.

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