

Finland through kin eyes

Portrayals of Finland in the travelogues of János Kodolányi

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<p>Tiivistelmä:</p> <p>Tämän maisterintutkielman tavoitteena on tutkia minkälaisia kuvauksia ja stereotyyppisiä suomalaisista esiintyi maailmansotien välisten vuosikymmenten aikana unkarilaisessa matkakirjallisuudessa ja mitä nämä kuvaukset kertovat Unkarin ja Suomen välisistä yhteiskunnallisista eroista ja samanlaisuuksista. Tutkimusaihe on mielenkiintoinen, koska monet silloin tehdyistä havainnoista ovat nykypäivinäkin relevantteja. Esimerkiksi hiljaisuuden ja luonnon tärkeys suomalaisille. Sen lisäksi kyseiset kuvaukset ja stereotyypit käytettiin jo sotien välisinä vuosina motivaationa yhteistyössä ja isänmaallisen propagandan levittämisessä. Tutkielma perustuu unkarilaiskirjailijan, János Kodolányin kahteen matkakirjaan <i>Suomi, A csend országá</i> (Suomi, hiljaisuuden maa) ja <i>Suomi titka</i> (Suomen salaisuus) joissa hän tekee yhteenvetoa 1936-1938 tehdyistä matkoistaan. Näiden matkojen tarkoitus oli havainnoida suomalaisten elämäntapoja ja kertoa kokemuksista laajemmalle unkarilaiselle lukijakunnalle. Kokemuksiensa kautta Kodolányi halusi parantaa erityisesti maalaisköyhälistön elintasoja ja vaikuttaa yleisesti Unkarin yhteiskunnan kehitykseen. Tärkeimmät sekundäärilähteet ovat Jyväskylän yliopistossa julkaistu aikakauskirja <i>Hungarologische Beiträge</i> (1993-2006) ja Ildikó Váradin väitöskirja (2010) <i>A parasztpolgárosodás finn útja</i>. Pääkysymykset joihin tämä työ yrittää vastata ovat: minkälaisia viestejä mainitut matkakirjat halusivat jakaa lukijoille ja minkälaisia yhteiskunnallisia, taloudellisia ja tieteellisiä muutoksia ne propagoivat Unkarin eri yhteiskuntaluokille.</p>	
Asiasanat: Suomi, Finland, Unkari, Hungary, sukulaisuus, kinship, ideologia, ideology, travelogue, travel literature, interwar, Fenno-Ugric, stereotypes, culture, literature, education, world war, Kodolányi János	
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1. Introduction

1.1. General introduction and research questions

In this master's thesis I will examine how Finland was portrayed in Hungarian travel narratives, written by János Kodolányi in the late 1930s.

In certain aspects Hungary fell behind Finland in post-war development and rebuilding. Two of the most often presented problems are the following: Writers familiar with Finland often criticized the land reform of Hungary, which did not bring essential changes in land-owning, and the state of education. Most often mentioned is the inequality in higher education and the lack of intelligentsia from peasant background. One of the leading ideologies of the interwar times was the kinship theory, i.e. of Finns and Hungarians being related. Members of the literary as well as scientific life supported this in both countries, such as the writer János Kodolányi in Hungary. This overarching background idea should be taken into account this idea as well since it has been an inspiration behind many literary works and main idea behind establishing diplomatic relations.

Between 1936 and 1938 János Kodolányi (1899-1969) visited Finland five times. About these travels he shared experiences in two books, *Suomi, a csend ország* and *Suomi titka*, as well as in numerous periodicals. Kodolányi was part of a group of writers called *Népi írók*.¹

During his first trip to Finland (or *Suomi*, as he called the country even in his Hungarian-language writings) in August-September 1936, he managed to build connection with famous personalities of the Finnish scientific and cultural life. He could count among his friends the writer Maila Talvio², her husband, the slavist Jooseppi Julius Mikkola³, the poet

¹ see Chapter 2. 3.

² Maila Talvio (1871-1951) Finnish writer and philanthropist. Their (with her husband J. J. Mikkola) house in Laaksola was a meeting place for scientists and writers. Kodolányi writes about this with admiration. Probably her most influential work is „*Ne 45000*”, which has also been made into a movie. She donated the incomes from her book and the movie to fight tuberculosis. In: Huhtala, Liisi: ”Talvio, Maila” Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu, <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/4706> (Accessed: 26. 09. 2020.)

³ J. J. Mikkola (1866-1946) Philologist professor at the University of Helsinki. He was an important personality in establishing and improving cultural and scientific relations of Finland abroad. His main area of expertise were Slavic languages but was also interested in German, Turkish and Fenno-Ugric languages.

Martti Haavio⁴ and the writer Arvi Kivimaa⁵. His most prominent friend were however the professor of Finno-Ugric linguistics Artturi Kannisto⁶ and the professor of Finnish linguistics, Lauri Hakulinen⁷. He also managed to establish a lasting friendship with the poet and pastor Arvi Järventaus⁸. All of these personalities visited Hungary multiple times in the 1920-30s and thus were active in cultivating relations and the kinship ideology. These relationships were later on of great importance since with the help of his friends Kodolányi got to learn in detail about the scientific methods of Finnish linguists and anthropologists, Finnish cultural life and education.

In: Kemiläinen, Aira "Mikkola, Jooseppi Julius" Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/6260> (Accessed: 26. 09. 2020.)

⁴ Martti Haavio (1899-1973) multifaceted scholar, whose importance is still high especially in Finnish folkloristics. As a strongly patriotic speaker and cultural influencer, he changed social norms and supported the conservation of Finnish cultural legacy.

In: Majamaa, Raija: "Haavio, Matti" Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/703> (Accessed: 26. 09. 2020.)

⁵ Arvi Kivimaa (1904-1984) writer, poet and theatre director. From 1937 he served as the director of the Tampere Theatre, from later on (1940) the director of the National Theatre and Helsinki City Theatre (kansanteatteri). Due to his initiative is the World Theatre Day celebrated since 1961 annually on 27th of March.

In: Koski, Pirkko "Kivimaa, Arvi" Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/1134> (Accessed: 26. 09. 2020.)

⁶ Lauri Hakulinen (1899-1985) professor of Finnish language at the University of Helsinki. His focus of research were Finnish dialects and their recording. Also considered important the research of the semantics and vocabulary of Finnish and its language relatives.

In: Pentti, Leino "Hakulinen, Lauri" Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/6986> (Accessed: 26. 09. 2020.)

Artturi Kannisto (1874-1943) Professor of Fenno-Ugric languages. He spent 5 years in Siberia (1901-1906) to record the spiritual heritage of one of the smallest Fenno-Ugric nations, the voguls (mansi). Also a researcher of Finnish dialects, especially that of Häme-region. Active in science policy and different scientific societies.

In: Kulonen, Ulla-Maija "Kannisto, Artturi" Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/5408> (Accessed: 26. 09. 2020.)

⁷ Váradi 2010, 88-89.

⁸ Arvi Järventaus (1883-1939) pastor and writer. As a pastor he served in Pielävesi, Tervola and Enontekiö. During the Finnish Civil War he served as a military pastor. From 1923. he served as chaplain in Tuusula, where he later become friends with Kodolányi. 1923-1925 he acted also as teacher of religion in the co-ed school of Kerava.

In: Lehtola, Veli-Pekka "Järventaus, Arvi" Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/2693> (Accessed: 26. 09. 2020.)

The questions this thesis is aiming to answer are what kind of messages these travelogues were trying to deliver for the contemporary audiences and what kind of changes were they propagating on the different levels of the society. For example, János Kodolányi often criticized the agrarian reform in Hungary and compared its failure⁹ to the success of the one done in Finland. Kodolányi and the group of writers (*népi írók*), who were raising awareness of the social and cultural problems in order to improve the welfare of the nation as a whole, were striving to give answers how Hungary could achieve greater equality in access to education and high culture.

The research of travel literature is an interdisciplinary field. This is because the genre is not exclusive for historians or writers. Anthropologists and geographers also produced travel literature. It is enough if we think only of the study trips of nobility or travel undertaken by the middle class in the 18th century. Historians researching these trips have tried to find out what kind of effects followed the travels¹⁰.

Because the “golden age” of Finnish-Hungarian interactions was the interwar period, after discussing the sources and methods, I am going to describe also the history of said relations. While Hungary was a significant power as part of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy in pre-war Europe, being on the losing side greatly reduced its influence. Therefore, Hungarians wanted to see Finland as an example of a small country that could achieve such successful improvement after the World War. As Kodolányi writes in *Suomi titka*: „... what is the reason, that this handful, barely four million people have reached such a high level of culture, humanity and social security, which could be an example for any nation, especially for the Hungarian. If we solve these secrets, maybe we can learn lessons that could benefit Hungary.”¹¹

⁹ The agrarian reform in Hungary was attempted in 1920 by István Nagyatádi Szabó (minister of agriculture). The reform did not ordain mandatory distribution of land but made it possible for the big landowners to sell land on the outskirts of their estates, where the soil usually was inferior quality. This was because the ultimate goal of the reform was not the equal distribution of land but to conserve the position of big landowners while improving the viability of smaller estates.

Romsics 2000, 160.

¹⁰ Kulcsár 2006, 99-106 and Váradi 2010, 16.

¹¹ „... mi az oka annak, hogy ez a maroknyi, alig négy milliónyi nép a kultúra, az emberiség és társadalmi biztonság olyan magas színvonalúra emelkedett, hogy példaképpül szolgálhat bármely nemzetnek, elsősorban pedig a magyarnak. Ha azután a titkok nyitjára rálelünk, talán olyan tanulságokat is vonhatunk le, amelyek Magyarország javára válnak.” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 104

1.2. Sources

As it was written in the introduction, this thesis is going to examine Hungarian views of Finland during the interwar period through Kodolányi's books. In addition to this, since Kodolányi often wrote about the topics of cultural life and educational differences in his travelogues. I am also going to discuss the education system of Finland and cultural and scientific life according to Kodolányi. Another question worth examining is the relationship of Finland with Russia. More closely this means how the threat of war right before 1939 and the first months of World War II. were perceived by Kodolányi.

The primary sources this work is based on are two books of the Hungarian writer János Kodolányi. I have used the first edition copies of both *Suomi, a csend országa* (1937) and *Suomi titka* (1939).¹²

His works of, in spite of providing useful insights, met criticism both in Hungary and Finland. As part of the writer's work the aims of Kodolányi were to find solutions for the problems of the (Hungarian) nation and to inspire changes. He was criticised in both countries for painting a biased picture favouring Finland. It is worth to note, these critics came also from his most prominent friends, the earlier mentioned Lauri Hakulinen and Artturi Kannisto. Both Hakulinen and Kannisto criticized him for excessively idealizing Finns and Finland¹³. In *Suomi titka* Kodolányi admits this: „*Later the infatuation and continuous admiration have decreased and within the great shining whole I have started to see greyer details.*”¹⁴ However, the “*Suomi, a csend országa*” is still considered even today the most significant positive propaganda work about Finland.¹⁵ Contemporary critic to Kodolányi, Gábor Szij even called the work the “catechism of a generation.”¹⁶ In contrast to this, as the previous quotation suggests, “*Suomi titka*” takes a much more objective and realistic approach. Common to both books is they are setting examples by contrasting Finland and Hungary. Common topics in both books are Finnish education, social equality, cultural life and history. When Kodolányi talks about Finnish culture in his books, the difference between *Suomi, a*

¹² *Suomi, the country of silence / Suomi, hiljaisuuden maa, The secret of Suomi / Suomen salaisuus*

¹³ Váradi 2010, 74-76

¹⁴ „Később a rajongás és állandó csodálat csökkent s a nagy csillogó egységben belül látni kezdtem szürkébb részleteket is.” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 104

¹⁵ Abonyi-Karhunen 2005, 20

¹⁶ Szij 1943, 53-54

csend országa and *Suomi titka* is that in his first book he describes Finnish literature by presenting specific individuals (e.g. Koskenniemi, Järventaus, Larin-Kyösti) before talking about it at large. *Suomi titka* has a much more personal tone due to the few months he had spent in Padasjoki with a peasant family. As a result, Hungarians could learn a lot more about the ways of life of the everyday Finns compared to his first book.

My secondary sources include the works of Anssi Halmesvirta, most notably the *Rakkaat heimoveljet: Suomi ja Unkari 1920-1945* and its Hungarian translation by Emese Mátyás *Kedves rokonok: Magyarország és Finnország 1920-1945*.¹⁷ I also have used periodicals, such as *Hungarologische Beiträge* and *Korall* (Hungarian).

Similar research has already been done by Ildikó Váradi (2010), who examined the same travelogues as this thesis. I decided to do a similar research because I believe it is possible to achieve new results if I approach the same primary sources from a different perspective. The main difference between this research and the one done before is that I am not focusing on the person of Kodolányi, but rather on his observations and efforts to inspire changes in Hungary through his travelogues. By this I mean, e.g. I put less emphasis on his personal connections with important political and cultural actors. Also, when it comes to the matter of education, I look at other questions (e.g. student exchange and culture) in addition to the plan of establishing a Finnish-type folk college in Hungary. While social and cultural topics are present in this thesis as well, I also decided to look at the remarks Kodolányi made about Finnish nature and Finns relationship with it, thus justifying the title.

The *Hungarologische Beiträge* is periodical published at the University of Jyväskylä between 1993-2006 and had 18 numbers. Despite having a German title, the vast majority of the articles written in there are in Finnish or Hungarian. *Korall* is an ongoing quarterly periodical, which was first published in 1999 in Hungary. It focuses on topics primarily on social and economic history. In addition to these, I have used some online databases, for example the Hungarian National Library, *Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár* (OSZK in short), *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon* and *Kansallisbiografia*.

¹⁷ The original work has been published in 2010, in Jyväskylä and contains notes on different chapters from Heikki Roiko-Jokela. The translation has been published in 2014, in Budapest, but unfortunately the notes from Roiko-Jokela have been left out from it.

1.3. On travel literature

Travelogues are not the subject only of history and social sciences, but also literature¹⁸. Travel history usually focuses on the journeys undertaken by the nobility in the early modern ages and bourgeoisie in the 18th century. The aim of travel history is to find answers to the questions how the experiences the travellers faced during journeys affected their culture of origin and how they could benefit from them. It is also important to note, travel history provides possibility for interdisciplinary discussion, thereby diversifying research¹⁹.

The heyday of travel literature was in the 15-18th centuries, due to the geographical discoveries, colonization and the invention of printing. On the turn of the 18-19th centuries the genre of travel literature split into two. This was because romanticism put emphasis on being personal and being more objective when learning about countries and people. This led to the professionalization of the genre. Narratives giving a more detailed, organized and wider description about the alien cultures have gained more popularity over reports about the unknown²⁰.

Besides the increasing opportunities (which is a consequence of the economic and cultural changes) to undertake voyages in the 18th century another significant boost to travel was the improvement in the means of travel. Due to this, at the beginning of the 1800s the world has “shrunk” and covering the same distance in a shorter time was a powerful motivator. According to Yrjö Varpio, what interesting is not the actual content of this literature but how did the traveller see the new environment and what did they experience (“...*millä tavalla he näkivät ja kokivat.*”).²¹

The 18th century did not only bring an increase in the will to travel but also a romantic turn. The purpose of travelling was not anymore to get to the destination, but being on a journey itself and an inner value. In this romantic turn the relations to nature became a central question²². This closeness to nature can also be spotted in the works of Kodolányi very well. He always describes the nature when he is on his way from one place to another in vivid

¹⁸ Váradi 2010, 16

¹⁹ Kulcsár 2006, 99-106

²⁰ Vári 2006, 153-154

²¹ Varpio 1997, 9

²² Varpio 1997, 26-27

detail and at length. What is interesting in this regard, he also described the place where he was living during his time in Padasjoki as it was very close to the nature. Here we have to keep in mind that Kodolányi resorted to methods of anthropology (even though he himself was not an anthropologist) in order to achieve his goals. He “had to” pay attention also to his hosts’ habits and the conditions of living in order to describe Finnish peasantry. As written in the *Sources* section, he was criticised for often not painting a realistic picture to his readers.

In this new type of scientific (travel) literature the unfamiliar received intrinsic value and observations were placed into perspective of the “local”. This of course required a longer stay at the respective destination²³. The intention of Kodolányi was not to produce an anthropological book (nor was he a scientist), but rather to contrast the Finnish reality to the Hungarian, thus offering solution to Hungarian problems and lessons to the people.

Another major change concerning changes in travel literature that is reflected in Kodolányi’s books can be traced to the end of the 1700s. This time thanks to the technical and economic requirements of undertaking voyages becoming better, the amount of travellers grew significantly²⁴, we could even talk about the beginning of bourgeoisie travels. This has brought along the change in the primary task of travel literature. It was not considered anymore solely the conveyor of knowledge, but more aesthetic criteria emerged through it²⁵. What this means is the genre lost its strict guidelines how it should be written and had to follow only aesthetic requirements, which resulted in travel books becoming more and more poetic. This poetic style is very prevalent in both *Suomi, a csend országa* and *Suomi titka*. This is hardly surprising since Kodolányi himself first and foremost was, as mentioned earlier, a writer and not a scientist.

The more well-known authors in travel literature earned name as writers, poets. Such authors were for example Goethe (*Italienische Reise*) and Carl August Ehrensvärd (*Resa til Italien*). Samuel Johnson in his work *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* tried to abandon pedantic scientificity and adopt a more subjective way of expression. During these decades especially useful ways of producing travel literature were so called “hybrids”, such as letters and travel diaries, which were aiming at a better-than-ever readability. The rise of travellers and their experiences to the foreground added to the entertaining element of the

²³ Varpio 1997, 28

²⁴ However, limitations still applied. Not everyone could of course embark on a travel. The financial burdens were still heavy. This simply meant travelling not being exclusive anymore to the political and scientific elite, but wealthier citizens could also afford an occasional journey.

²⁵ Varpio 1997, 35

genre. Thanks to these, travel literature became a way of learning about the world and understanding people better.²⁶

Kodolányi not necessarily fulfills all these all these criteria and features that were part of travel literature. But, he is a writer and by his style he nevertheless represented this continuum. His main aim was anyhow to offer solutions for the social problems of his time, thus in his travelogues he often compared Finland and Hungary and gave Hungarians lessons with Finnish help.

²⁶ Varpio 1997, 36-37

2. Interwar years in Hungary and Finland

2.1. The history of interwar Finnish-Hungarian relations

While the beginnings of the idea of Finnish-Hungarian kinship (*heimoaate*) and kinship work can be dated back as early as the 19th century, it really became important during the decades following the First World War. The Fenno-Ugric cultural congresses were important forums for kinship work and spreading positive propaganda. Spreading positive propaganda was especially important for Hungary because during the interwar years there were high hopes of both partial and complete restoration of the pre-Trianon borders. While there were altogether five of these congresses (Helsinki – 1921, 1931; Tallinn – 1924, 1936; Budapest – 1928) for this thesis we are only going to look at three congresses and the cultural agreement signed in 1937, after the fifth congress.²⁷ We only need to look at the third congress and onwards, because those are the relevant for the timeframe of this work and those may provide useful background information for topics discussed later on.

It was during the third congress, held in 1928 (Budapest), when a promise to support student and researcher exchanges by the Hungarian state had been made for the first time. Kuno von Klebelsberg also promised support for the Fenno-Ugric Institutions.²⁸ After the congress, a permanent committee was established from the representatives of the kindred nations to organize the next congress (Helsinki, 1931). Some members of this committee took part in editing the publication of the congress, *Fenno-Ugria*. For the congress, the memoir (or account) of Teleki about his trip to Finland was published under the title ‘Finns, Estonians. Our Northern relatives’²⁹. A decision was made about organizing annual kinship events in addition to the kinship day celebrated at the end of every October.^{[30][31]}

²⁷ The sixth congress, planned for 1941, Budapest was cancelled because of World War II.

Halmesvirta 2014, 31

²⁸ Kuno von Klebelsberg, count (1875-1932): jurist, member of the parliament. One of the most important public personalities of the interwar period. Minister of internal affairs from 1921 to 1922, then minister of religious affairs and public education 1922-1931. He is mostly known for his extensive school building program to fight illiteracy in the countryside. During the first 3 years in office around 5000 countryside classrooms were built. He also initiated expansions at three countryside universities, Debrecen, Szeged and Pécs. These started with university clinics in order to fight the high child mortality rates.

In: Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon

²⁹ Halmesvirta 2014, 100

³⁰ heimopäivä

Prior to the fourth congress, in May 1930, Klebelsberg made a visit to Finland, which was a significant event in the consolidation of Finnish-Hungarian relations on the official level. The long-term result of the process was the Hungarian-Finnish cultural agreement in 1937, which will be detailed later on. In a speech given at Helsinki University (May 3, 1930) he argued that the goal of the Hungarians initiative was cultural work, not policy making. The short term results were promising. The „small [regarding its’ population]” Finland turned to the more populous Hungary in the hope of cooperation. Contracts were made for cooperation between the universities of Turku, Helsinki, Szeged, Debrecen and Tartu.³²

During the ten years which passed between the first and fourth congress, a significant amount of cultural and intellectual capital was accumulated. All participants took part more actively in the kinship work, and the content was modernised. Compared to the atmosphere of the first congress, a greater optimism can be noticed about the future. The situation of Hungary had also changed since the chances for revision of borders were growing. These meetings were no longer only ‘get-togethers’ of nations, but they were about a well-functioning cooperation. The significance of turanism had also decreased greatly in favour of the idea of a shared Fenno-Ugric origin.³³

Before the last congress, a significant change in the Hungarian political life. Klebelsberg left his office in 1931. August and Bálint Hóman became his successor .³⁴ The fifth and last Fenno-Ugric congress was held in June 1936. The central topic was the research of smaller Fenno-Ugric nations.

The general message of the congress was that „Fenno-Ugric nations via their ‘racial’ qualities can survive the competition between nations and resolve the problems of the modern world”³⁵. Of all of the congresses this one was the most politicized due to the fact that the political climate had shifted more and more towards the radical Right in Hungary, which was

³¹ Halmesvirta 2014, 100

³² Halmesvirta 2014, 113

³³ Halmesvirta 2010, 77

³⁴ Bálint Hóman (1885-1951): Professor, historiographer, academic. Minister of religious affairs and public education in five different governments from 1932 until 1942 (Gyula Gömbös, Kálmán Darányi, Pál Teleki II, László Bárdossy, Miklós Kállay). He shared the commitment and ideals of Klebelsberg to education, however he represented a more Germanophile line.

³⁵ Halmesvirta 2010, 99

further encouraged by the simultaneous, ongoing negotiations about a cultural agreement between the three nations.³⁶

Negotiations about this cultural agreement started simultaneously with the second Tallin congress, although such an agreement was suggested by Klebelsberg already at the end of the 1920s. Signing was delayed because originally plan was a trilateral agreement, but in the end it came to effect only between Hungary and Finland. The agreement was supposed to make the coordination of exchange programs and cooperation easier. With the signing of the agreement³⁷, earlier connections became official for the Finnish kinship associations, which also created a basis for high-level dialogue in culture-politics³⁸. The signing took place in Budapest, in 1937 (23. October). The signers were Uuno Hannula³⁹ and Bálint Hóman. In order to bring the accepted terms into effect, the parties established a joint committee. There was one subcommittee in both countries, which was presided by the actual minister of education.

From the same year Hungarians also started to celebrate Finnish Independence, which was the result of Báns' and Talas' collaboration.^{[40][41]} A year later the Hungarian-Finnish Society was founded (*Magyar-Finn Társaság*) by Bán and Emil Nagy.⁴² The first president was Elemér Virányi. From 1938, doctors, pharmacists and the female national defence organizations had their own department within the Society. Its Finnish counterpart, the Finnish-Hungarian Society (*Finn-Magyar Társaság*) was also founded in 1937.

According to the agreement, experts from different fields were asked to engage in cooperation. In the beginning, the emphasis was on language learning, but the Hungarians lodged complaints early. The agreement's realisation did not proceed according to their hopes, because during the first exchange the ideas of turanism and revision were missing.

³⁶ Halmesvirta 2010, 99

³⁷ Hungary was not allowed to establish alliance relations/treaties in the same way as Finland; therefore this way was the only one for establishing international relations.

³⁸ Halmesvirta 2014, 174

³⁹ Uuno Hannula (1891-1963): Journalist and politician. Member of the Finnish parliament from 1927-1944 as a member of Maalaisliitto (today's Keskusta). Minister of education in 1937-1940.

⁴⁰ Onni Talas (1877-1958): Professor of law, diplomat, member of the independence senate (itsenäisyysenaatti). Member of the parliament 1909-1919 and 1927-1930. Ambassador to Hungary 1931-1940.

In: Vares, Vesa "Talas, Onni" Kansallisbiografia-verkkójulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/800> (Accessed: 29. 09. 2020.)

⁴¹ Halmesvirta 2010, 99

⁴² Politician, lawyer, Minister of Justice; 1871. November 16 – 1956. August 20

According to their view, the agreement was to support their foreign policy.⁴³ From the Finnish viewpoint, the core of the agreement was the kinship work. They believed it could increase participation in exchanges and make the kinship work more convincing. The agreement was also to distract attention from the so far dominant Swedish-Germanic orientation in Finland. Finns hoped also that if the kinship work became more organized, it could reach wider 'layers' of the population and would not favour only academics and highly educated people. Altogether, the Finns had practical expectations and Hungarians more 'power-political' ones.

The agreement provided the possibility to organize events sponsored by official bodies, for example the exhibition in the Helsinki Art Gallery in March-April 1938 of Hungarian painters' works. Both parties expected to spread kinship work and to move towards economic and social questions, which was already signalled during the second Tallinn congress.⁴⁴ Changes appeared in publications slower than they were expected. The first more serious attempt was the merit of Sándor Kulai (the cultural attaché of the Hungarian embassy in Helsinki), who was researching the connection between culture and wellbeing in Finland, Estonia and Hungary. His findings were that the Finnish culture was more democratic than the Hungarian, but the Estonian and Hungarian elites were more educated. On the other hand, Finns were the pioneers in the education of common people. He had a wish – in accordance with the agreement – that specialists of the countries should collect and send up-to-date information to the kindred/kinship nations in order to help solve communal problems. Unfortunately, this did not reach even the preparation stage before the war⁴⁵, but thanks to active medical science, exchanges were launched as planned. The most active 'exchange centres' were Helsinki, Debrecen, Pécs, Szeged, Tartu and Budapest. Although the agreement helped the advancement of kinship work and was significant in the intensification of scientific relations too, it became invalid in 1944 because the front-line of the war has reached Hungary.

⁴³ Halmesvirta 2010, 101-102

⁴⁴ Halmesvirta 2010, 108

⁴⁵ Ibid.

2.2. Social and political background of the interwar Hungary and Finland

Before we would get into the topic itself, we should have a quick look at the state of both Hungary and Finland in the interwar period. This is useful, so we may have a better understanding of the reasons behind certain actions and ideas.

Towards the end of WWI, in October 1918, an internal conflict took place in Hungary. The reason of ‘Aster Revolution’⁴⁶ (*őszirózsás forradalom*) was dissatisfaction among civilians and soldiers due to the World War. This revolution ended with the last king of Hungary, Charles IV., abdicating the throne and the recession of Hungary from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. After these events, the First Hungarian Republic was proclaimed. The name remained in use until March 21, 1919, when the Hungarian Soviet Republic was established by Béla Kun and Sándor Garbai. However, this was short lived (133 days). The excessive terror (*‘red terror’*) practiced by the government of Kun led to a counterrevolution, which ultimately resulted in Kun fleeing Hungary. This was also the time when the Hungarian kingdom was restored, with Miklós Horthy appointed as a regent until the end of the war. This turned out to be a more permanent state than initially thought, because due to the lack of a suitable person to occupy the throne (and also because Horthy’s ambitions), Horthy remained in power until 1944.⁴⁷

The First World War (or the Great War, as it was called during the times) ended catastrophically for Hungary. The Trianon peace treaty, often called as “peace dictate”, was signed on 4 June 1920. In this treaty Hungary lost more than two thirds of her previous territory (72%), many significant cities and universities and a great amount of its population. The most interesting part is probably the case of the population. While Hungary was ready to accept certain territorial losses, they pleaded to the conference to decide the new borders on an ethnic basis. Pál Teleki⁴⁸ presented his so-called “Red Map”⁴⁹ (*Vörös Térkép*) which showed ethnic Hungarian density in the territories to be detached. This effort unfortunately

⁴⁶ Soldiers returning from the fronts, to express their dissatisfaction, tore off the cap button (with the coat of arms of the Monarchy) from their caps and replaced it with white aster flowers.

⁴⁷ Romsics 2000, 121-130

⁴⁸ Pál Teleki (1879-1941): count, geographer, professor, corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Science (*‘a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia levelező tagja’*) and Prime Minister of Hungary: 19. 07. 1920 – 14. 04. 1921; 16. 02. 1939 – 03. 04. 1941.

⁴⁹ Based on the 1910 census.

failed and the territories were detached nonetheless. The concept Great-Hungary (Finnish: *Suur-Unkari*; Hungarian: *Nagy-Magyarország*) and Truncated Hungary (Finnish: *Tynkä-Unkari*; Hungarian: *Csonka-Magyarország*) were created as consequence.

After WWI Hungary became isolated internationally and with the exception of Austria, continuously had differences with its neighbours.⁵⁰ Consolidation started when the first government of Teleki took office. It was during this time, when the earlier mentioned land reform of István Nagyatádi Szabó took place (1920). By 1920 more than one third of the students at the most prestigious university faculties (such as medical, legal and economics) were from Jewish background⁵¹, which led to the ratification of the *Numerus clausus* (Lat.: *Closed numbers*). The aim of this law was to limit the number of Jewish students who can be admitted to the previously mentioned faculties. By the academic year of 1927-1928, the amount of Jews at universities decreased to 8% from the 36,1% of 1918-1919⁵².

The post-war consolidation of Hungary was complete under the government of István Bethlen.⁵³ By 1925 the production of the Hungarian economy has surpassed the level of the last pre-war year (1913)⁵⁴ and in 1922 (18th September) Hungary was accepted into the League of Nations, the predecessor of the United Nations today.

Due to the Great Depression, the stability Bethlen and his government had built, collapsed. As a consequence, Bethlen resigned in 1931. He was followed, although for a very brief time, Gyula Károlyi (1931-1932). The 1930s provided ground for the spreading of radical right political ideologies. In 1932, Gyula Gömbös was appointed prime minister by Horthy. Gömbös sought better relations with Italy (Mussolini) and Germany (Hitler), which essentially led to Hungary joining the Axis powers in the Second World War.

⁵⁰ However, certain Austrian political circles had territorial demands towards Hungary. This has led to the famous referendum (1921. December 14-16.) when the city of Sopron chose to remain to be a part of Hungary and thus earning the moniker “a hűség városa” or “a leghűségesebb város” (“the city of loyalty” or “the most loyal city”). See: Gecsényi Lajos: Osztrák területrevízió Magyarországgal szemben? In: *História* 34 (2012) 5–6, p 19

⁵¹ Sebők 2012

⁵² Varannai 1997.

⁵³ István Bethlen, count (1874-1946): Jurist, agronomist, politician. Member of the Hungarian Academy of Science and prime minister of Hungary from 1921 to 1931.

In: *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon*

⁵⁴ Bethlen 2018, 149

Finnish independence was achieved in the midst of the World War. The declaration of independence was approved by the parliament on the December 6, 1917, but becoming independent cannot be counted strictly from this date. The position of “regent” (*valtiohoitaja*) was established in 1918, but only two people filled this office, P. E. Svinhufvud and C. G. E. Mannerheim and the office of president was established in 1919. The Finnish Defence Forces (*Puolustusvoimat*) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were formed in 1918 and the borders of the independent Finland were verified in 1920 in the peace treaty with Russia.⁵⁵

The 1920s in Finland were preceded by a civil war (1918) which divided the country into “Reds” (“*Punaiset*” or “*Punakaarti*”) and “Whites” (“*Valkoiset*”). In spite of the peace, the relations with the Russians were not easy. Until 1935, Finland has cooperated with the Baltic states and Poland to neutralize the Soviet threat.

For most of its history Finland was a part of bigger powers. Even Kodolányi mentions this fact: „*The blessed Finland, who in 1918 after six hundred years of Swedish and one hundred and ten years of Russian rule finally gained complete independence, has her own national grief. The Finnish-Russian peace treaty signed in 1919 has sealed the destiny of Karelia, incorporating this ancient Finnish land into the Soviet Union.*”⁵⁶ Here it has to be mentioned that Kodolányi is wrong on some counts. First, the Treaty of Tartu was signed in 1920 and he is also wrong about the case of Karelia. Eastern-Karelia was not part of Finland during neither the Swedish, nor the Russian era. During the Tartu negotiations Finns only demanded self-determination for Eastern-Karelians, not ceding it to Finland. This is not surprising, since Kodolányi was keen to repeat Finnish propaganda in his works.

The general disappointment caused by the Treaty of Tartu led to the foundation of the Academic Karelian Society (*Akateeminen Karjala Seura*), which had great influence on the academic world and student unions. The society consisted of academics and university student and considered helping refugees fleeing from Eastern-Karelia to Finland as its primary task, but was also active propagating kinship relations, patriotism and national defense. We could say its Hungarian “counterpart” was the Turul Association. Like Hungary, Finland also

⁵⁵ Häikiö 2017

⁵⁶ „A boldog Finnországnak, mely 1918-ben hatszázéves svéd és százötzéves orosz uralom után végre kivívta teljes függetlenségét, megvan azért a maga nemzeti fájdalma. Az 1919-ben kötött finn-orosz béke ugyanis megpecsételte Karjala sorsát, bekebelezvén ezt az ősi finn területet a Szovjetunio kereteibe” – Own translation; in: Kodolányi 1939, 58

developed its own idea reflecting the territorial losses, *Suur-Suomi aate* (Great-Finland ideology).

The Greater (or Historical) Hungary ideal was focusing on the restoration of the pre-Trianon borders. While Finland did not suffer significant territorial losses, restoration played a part also in the Greater Finland ideal. The key difference was the Greater Finland ideal did not only mean restoration of old borders, but also actively annexing new territories that were seen to be “rightfully” Finnish, especially Eastern Karelia and Västerbotten.

In both cases, the immediate post-war events led to the victory of the “white side”, which explains the profound anti-communism of the era. The difference(s) in the outcome of these events is however the following political structures. While the white victory in the Finnish civil war was followed by a multi-party parliamentary democracy, in Hungary it was a de facto one party system.

2.3. János Kodolányi and the 'Népi' movement

On the previous pages the background of the Finnish – Hungarian relations has been discussed. Said pages however did not go into details why Kodolányi decided to visit Finland, what was the ideological background he was coming from and what kind of influences these experiences had on his works.

Kodolányi was born on March 13, 1899 in Telki to a Roman catholic gentry family. His father, Gyula Kodolányi was a forester and his mother Ilona Martinovics. About his relationship with his mother we do not know much and what we know about with his father is not entirely peaceful. They ceased to maintain connections from about the time of Kodolányi's marriage (1921).

Kodolányi's career as a writer started in the early years of the 1920s when he joined the *Nyugat*⁵⁷. In the late 1920s Kodolányi became a significant member, alongside with Dezső Szabó⁵⁸ and Endre Ady⁵⁹, of the movement called *Népi írók* ('népiek'⁶⁰ in short). The movement was critical of both the elite and the radical opposition during the interwar years. Even though they had matching thoughts about the common problems of Hungarians (Trianon, poverty of the peasantry, etc.) and the criticism of the ruling system, they were a divided movement and they wanted to find different solutions to the same problems. The *népi* movement cannot be defined solely neither as political nor cultural because they incorporated elements from both fields. They were striving for the mobilization of the whole Hungarian

⁵⁷ The *Nyugat* was one of the most significant Hungarian literary journals in the first half of the 20th century, published from 1908 until 1941.

⁵⁸ Szabó, Dezső (1879-1945) writer, critic, publicist. Graduated from the University of Budapest (Eötvös Loránd University – Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem) with a degree in Hungarian and French languages. During his university years, he was also dealing with fenno-ugric linguistics. Member of the *Nyugat* and *Husadik század* (another literary journal, published 1900-1919) journals. Until the early 1920s also worked as a teacher, but from this time onwards acted as a full-time writer.

In: Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon

⁵⁹ Ady, Endre (1877-1919) poet, patriot and revolutionist. One of the most influential poets of the 20th century Hungarian literal life, a reiterator of the revolutionary literature. A leading figure of the *Nyugat* journal from its launch until his death.

In: Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon

⁶⁰ In Hungarian literature, the movement *Népi írók* is often mentioned or referred to shortly just as '*népiek*', '*népi mozgalom*'.

society, not only lifting up the peasantry. To achieve these goals, they emphasized reforms. A few members of the *Népiek* (János Kodolányi, László Németh, Imre Kovács, Zoltán Szabó) were looking for solutions to the crucial social problems of Hungary where social justice and political freedoms would equally actualize. In their opinion neither liberal capitalism, nor despotic socialism can bring renewal. They argued that while in liberalism civil freedoms prevail, social equality suffers. In socialism the social equality is detrimental to freedoms. This is why they suggested a new, so called, third way (*'harmadik út'*) – avoiding both socialism and western type capitalism – which could be applied to the Hungarian characteristics the best possible way, leaving out the negative effects of the previous two⁶¹. While this sounds idealistic, we should be critical. As it has been mentioned earlier, the movement of *népi írók* was not a unified one. It was politically heavily divided and some of their members even supported far right ideologies in the 1930s.

An important feature of the *harmadik út* was to look at problems as a whole, in their contexts. According to their views separate parts of the problems were strongly connected to each other, but were not looked at separately.

In the 1930s and '40s Kodolányi often admitted, he supported socialist ideals to a certain degree. This was not however rare among the *népiek*. It can be said this level of support was very mild. The *népi írók* declined the dictatorship of the proletariat (*'proletárdiktatúra'*) and most of them had not established closer connections with the workers movement, nor were their relations with the civic left harmonious. According to Gábor Richly it is enough to look at it as a folk-urbane debate (*népi-urbánus vita*). The criticism of inhumanities of the capitalism in Kodolányi's works is vast. He is especially vocal of its exploitative nature. So, when writing about Finland it could be expected of him to have some reproving comments on capitalism, but in his words Finns have reined in their capitalists. However, he puts in great effort to convince his readers that there is a country where the folk-based elite and culture have prevailed, therefore Hungarians can set off on the same path. For Kodolányi, the unity of the society is inseparable from the unity of the national culture.⁶²

As it has been mentioned earlier, Kodolányi visited Finland five times between 1936 and 1938. Arguably one of the more important differences between his books is that the *Suomi titka* (1939) has a more realistic tone compared to *Suomi, a csend országáa*, which had a

⁶¹ Váradi 2010, 37-39.

⁶² Richly 2008, 84-86.

lot more idyllic way of expression. Kodolányi returned from Finland with mixed feelings. On one hand it was the optimism that everything he is hoping for Hungarians to achieve is possible because there is one nation who already achieved them. On the other hand, it was a growing bitterness why these desired achievements would come so late. We can see this in the *Suomi titka*, where he compares the Finnish conditions to the Hungarians, using the latter one as a kind of counterbalancing his Nordic experience.⁶³

Here we have to ask, what was his goal with these travels and books? Fortunately, it is easy to answer this question. Kodolányi used his works, as other members of the movement have, to spread his national policy agenda and was offering solutions to social problems. According to contemporary reviews⁶⁴ and himself, he wanted to teach the nation and to set an example to follow. Contrasting the Finnish “exemplary state” to Hungary is his way to reach his readers⁶⁵. According to Gábor Richly the more recent research of Kodolányi has not dealt with the parallels between the endeavours of the *népi írók* and the values represented in the *Suomi* books, however they see the authorial intention the same way.⁶⁶ A fine example of this is the review of Gyula Jávorszky (1991) of the 1989 reprint of *Suomi* (for *Suomi* see footnote 9). He admits the quality and importance of the book, but in a more critical way. “It is obvious, that Kodolányi put his dreams and ideals into this book. This however does not mean at all his description of Finland would not have been realistic. It was realistic, but cosmeticized. Jávorszky rightfully felt he found the ideal society, for he fought and looked for so long.”⁶⁷ It is beyond doubt these books were meant to facilitate the realization of healthier ownership of the land, social justice and better higher education and appreciation of folk culture.⁶⁸

Hardly surprising is the fact that towards the end of the war he hit a more resigned tone when in 1944 summarized the Finnish-Hungarian relations. After 1944 Kodolányi did not touch the Finnish-theme in his writings.⁶⁹

After the war, as many of his fellow writers, he was silenced by the dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi due to his involvement with the *népi írók*, who were considered by the

⁶³ Richly 2008, 90-91.

⁶⁴ For example the short review of Gábor Szij in the periodical *Sorsunk* (Our Destiny), from 1943.

⁶⁵ Richly 2008, 92.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Jávorszky 1991, 55.

⁶⁸ Richly 2008, 92

⁶⁹ Richly 2008, 93

Communists to have been on the right wing of the political spectrum. Possibility to return to the literary and cultural life came after the détente from 1953, when Rákosi was relieved from his office by Moscow and was replaced with Imre Nagy. The writers Péter Veres and Gyula Illyés started convincing him to return to the cultural life as early as 1952, but he did not do so until 1955, when he also joined the Writers Union (*Írószövetség*). Publishing his oeuvre started in 1957, with his novel titled Burning Bush (*Égő csipkebokor*). In 1967 he was awarded the Knight's cross of the Order of the Lion of Finland.

Kodolányi passed away in 1969, due to complications of his diabetes. In 1990 he was posthumously awarded the Kossuth-prize, which is the highest state award given to prominent personalities of cultural life.

Concluding with János Kodolányi we have now seen all the necessary background for later chapters. Having a general overview of Finnish-Hungarian relations, social backgrounds of the respective countries and some information on the author of the primary sources used in this thesis may help us to better understand the influences behind descriptions written by Kodolányi. For example, how the social differences between Finland and Hungary appear in the travelogues, when Kodolányi writes about education. As we are going to see, in Finland the access to at least basic education was “much more equal” compared to Hungary, as a result, social mobility was also noticeably better in Finland (at least according to primary sources). The differences concerning the relation to nature are another good example. Later on we are going to see how Kodolányi becomes uncertain at one point about the simplicity of Finns. Coming from a different background, he sees opportunities for improvement in Finnish agriculture and contemplates how Hungarians could help Finns to better utilize their lakes and lands. Last but not least the general discussion of the ideology of kinship was necessary because it is often mentioned in both of the sources, however, mostly in connection with other topics. The best example for this is the case of the plan to establish a Finnish-type folk school for agriculture in Hungary. It was the idea of kinship that was behind the initiative to start fundraising for the project. Interestingly enough, as we are going to see, it was the Finns who took the initiative.

By the end of the 1930s peaceful times were coming to an end. The growing threat of war was noticed also by Kodolányi. The topic of war is essentially the frame of his second book. In the introduction of *Suomi titka* we are going to see a scene depicting the threat of war

and also how it was perceived by Kodolányi and Finns. The last chapter [of *Suomi titka*] is a brief summary of the first weeks of the first weeks of Finland in World War II.

The structure of this thesis is not going to follow that of the books, instead it is going to discuss one topic at a time. In the pages below, first we are going to examine portrayals of nature, then moving on to matters of culture and science. The only similarity is going to be the final chapter. As the threat of war and World War II. essentially meant the end of trips to Finland for Kodolányi it is only fitting it is the last chapter of this thesis as well.

3. The Finnish nature and nature stereotypes

One of the most popular, if not the most popular topic when Kodolányi writes about Finland it is the nature. This not only has great importance in the works of Kodolányi, as he writes about it often, but also relevant today. Materials for tourism almost always put heavy emphasis on the Finnish nature, its beauty and vastness. While Kodolányi adored the Finnish nature, he does not have a chapter dedicated specifically on the topic in either of his books. It is always discussed in connection with something else.

Finnish nature is mentioned already in the introduction of his first book, *A csend országága*, however in the introduction he is not yet really “in” the nature, but he is on his way to Finland for the first time (1936). This mention of nature is more of a transition from the known environment to the unknown. Already while travelling through Latvia he was surprised by the differences of Hungary and the unknown, however at this point the differences were more on the mental sphere than the actual “physical” nature.

*„People already in Latvia can feel that from the world of Central-Europe got to some widely different world. Not really the extraordinariness, or beauty of the landscapes – the whole thing is like the park of Gödöllő -, but peoples relationships to one another is the indicative of this difference.”*⁷⁰ It is interesting to see how Kodolányi made comparisons to his Hungarian experiences already before arriving to Finland. A possible explanation for this can be his general excitement of first travel.

As mentioned earlier, Kodolányi belonged to the *népi* movement and focused in many of his work on the lives of the peasantry. In the light of this it may not come as a surprise something related to this comes up already in the introduction. While travelling through Latvia and Estonia he compared the Baltics and Finland to the homestead system (of Hungary).⁷¹ Homesteads (hun.: *tanya*) in Hungary are a characteristic of the *Alföld*, usually found on the outskirts of cities and villages. A homestead consisted of one building where the peasants lived and a few attached buildings serving different economical purposes, e.g. stables, storage spaces. Until the 1950s, when agriculture was reorganized by the

⁷⁰ „Az ember már Lettországból érzi, hogy a közép-európai világból merőben más világba került. Nem a táj különlegessége, szépsége – olyan az egész, mint a gödöllői park –, hanem az emberek egymáshoz való viszonya jelzi ezt a különbséget” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1937, 7

⁷¹ „Nemcsak Lettország, hanem Észtország, sőt Suomi is úgyszólván egy hatalmas tanya-rendszer.” – „Not only Latvia, but Estonia and Suomi as well are basically a huge system of homesteads.” Own translation, Kodolányi 1937, 9

Communists, homesteads were usually on the location most suitable for living on the peasants lands. After the reorganization many of them became so called market gardens (hun.: *háztáji tanya* or *háztáji gazdaság*). These market gardens were in private hands, but were surrounded by lands of the socialist agricultural system. The urban peasantry did not spend much time on these rudimentary homesteads, only the time required for certain agricultural works. Many families had a house in the city or village nearby, making homesteads essentially a seasonal (summer) residence. In the second half of the 19th century, especially towards the end, a growing number of peasants sold their city properties and moved to the homesteads permanently. It is interesting to note that the sense of belonging to the city lived on in the language for some time as when some went to the city, they said „we are going home.”^{[72][73]} While this may not be a mention of nature in the “classical” way, I found it worth mentioning as it offers a preview of the writing style of Kodolányi for his readers.

We stumble upon the first stereotypes right after the moment of arrival in Finland. He was surprised that the first perceptions of this land of “childhood dreams” was not as cold and dark as the stereotypes suggested it would. However, he was sceptic if the reality may prove him wrong.⁷⁴ We are quickly assured that this may not be the case as we learn the importance of nature for Finns, when Kodolányi briefly mentioned the case of (capital) city versus countryside.

*„Anyone who is able to do so, does not spend the summer in the capital, but somewhere in the forest, on a lakeshore, in splendidly built, dear cottage. (Writers included.)”*⁷⁵ This does not only prove the initial stereotypes incorrect, but also has relevance today as “mökkeily” (*kesä/mökki*: summer/ cottage) is even more widespread than at the time. However, consequently the practice is not as “Finnish” anymore as it used to be since rentable cottages are also advertised for tourists.

Possibly the most important or most popular stereotype about Finland and its nature is silence. Even today Finland and Finns are said to be silent. This stereotype is highly likely the

⁷² “Tanya” in the Hungarian Ethnographical Lexicon: <http://mek.niif.hu/02100/02115/html/5-395.html> (Accessed: 21. 05. 2021.)

⁷³ Alföld: The biggest geographical area of Sout-East Hungary encompassing several smaller regions. The words steppe or plain can be equivalents, in Finnish ‘pusta’ can be used. It is also called ‘The Great Hungarian Plain’.

⁷⁴ Kodolányi 1937, 16

⁷⁵ „Aki csak teheti, nyáron nem a fővárosban él, hanem valahol az erdők között, egy-egy tó partján, pompásan épített, kedves faházban. (Az írók is.)” – Own translation: Kodolányi 1937, 19-20

reason behind the subtitle of the first book – The Country of Silence. Here are two short citations to prove his claims about the importance of silence and proximity to nature:

„The silence! With its wooly fingers fondles and caress you already upon your arrival until you leave the last piece of land of Finland: the ship floor.”⁷⁶

„Finns are very close to nature. They can admire a tree, a flower, a green field and silence for hours. They are silent people, rather smiling instead of laughing loud. They can really appreciate silence.”⁷⁷

The main difference between these two citations is the point of view how we look at ‘silence’. The first one is a general point of view where the reader faces the vastness of silence. Silence is perceived by Kodolányi so pervasive that it basically surrounds people from the moment of arrival until the moment of departure. The second citation is technically on a personal level. It tells about how the connection of Finns to silence influence their personalities and connection to nature. Here the ‘person’ is the Finn, while in the first citation it is silence that is personified.

Another interesting view on nature, though not surprising, is its relation to heritage. During his visit at the “peasant college” in Hartola the city and countryside are contrasted once again. Here we learn that nature is not only a place of respite and peace but also a place of our origins. *„Writers barely live in the capital, what is more, for a longer time every year they return to their village of birth, or some lake region. In the heavenly silence of Suomi, among trees, on the waterfront, in a small wooden cottage is where they spend the summer months, all their entertainment is walking, bathing, and a little conversation. And when, just like now, the school which taught them to write, celebrates, the writer also participates.”^{[78][79]}*

⁷⁶ „A csend! Vattás ujjjaival már megérkezésedkor megsimogat és dédelget, amíg csak el nem hagyod Finnország utolsó talpalattnyi földjét: a hajópadlót.” – Own translation: Kodolányi 1937, 24

⁷⁷ „A finnek nagyon közel vannak a természethez. Órákig el tudnak gyönyörködni egy fában, egy virágban. egy zöldelő rétben, az erdők csendjében. Csendes, inkább mosolygó, mint hangosan nevető emberek. A csendet nagyon meg tudják becsülni.” – Own translation: Kodolányi 1937, 25

⁷⁸ Said writer in our case is Arvi Kivimaa, friend of Kodolányi.

⁷⁹ „Az írók alig élnek a fővárosban, sőt évenként hosszabb időre visszatérnek a szülőfalujukba, vagy valamelyik tóvidékre. *Suomi* égi csendjében, fák között, vízparton, egy kis faházban töltik a nyári hónapokat, minden szórakozásuk a séta, a fürdés, egy kis beszélgetés. Ha pedig mint most is, a régi iskola, amely betűvetésre tanította őket, ünnepel, elmegy az író is ünnepelni.” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1937, 62

Though the citation is not primarily about the nature itself, its importance in the lives of people is made quite clear. It is unfortunate when Kodolányi compared the countryside to life in “the” city in both cases mentioned here (this last one and the one in footnote nr. 4) he refers to Helsinki only. On the other hand this is hardly surprising as even today Finns use Helsinki to a great extent as a reference. Most likely we would have got a better comparison if the trip they planned to the Eastern part of Finland with Järventausta would not have been foiled by a heart attack of the latter.⁸⁰

Nature is however not only a place where humans could retreat to. We also get a brief glance at its importance in the Finnish economy. Forests are said to be the national treasure of Finland.⁸¹ During the first stay of Kodolányi in Finland the paper and Sunila factory in Kotka was just under construction. The same factory is still operating today.⁸²

There is an interesting comparison made by Kodolányi which is one of the few cases when he actually favours Hungary over Finland. He confesses of often thinking why Hungary does not send “highly gifted experts, who would drain all of the sixty thousand lakes of these poor Finns?” and to prove how they could produce so much barley (*hordeum vulgare*) and oats (*avena sativa*) on the lakebeds. Then he concludes the Finns would laugh at this idea just as they would at many other things Hungarian are crying at and says Finns have “no sense for such epochal plans.”⁸³

Kodolányi was even surprised how little Finns were content with and how they did not think big. One of the reasons behind this could be the difference between the population and the size of the countries. By the time of the first trip, the world was almost two decades after the First World War. For Hungary this meant significantly smaller territory while its population and population density were much higher compared to Finland. Consequently, Hungary had to utilize every piece of possible land it could to feed its population. Finland had five times bigger the territory and a lot less people. This did not require such ‘radical’ agricultural solutions.

In connection with nature Kodolányi formulated another criticism. The lack of touristic propaganda. He then explains in length this was not because Finns would completely lack the sense for business or would not be welcoming towards tourists, but they merely shape

⁸⁰ Kodolányi 1937, p 44

⁸¹ Kodolányi 1937, p 81

⁸² http://momoneco.kotka.fi/sunila_fi.html (Accessed: 1.3.2021.)

⁸³ Kodolányi 1937, 83-84

the nature around them for their own pleasure.⁸⁴ What Kodolányi meant here is that the existing touristic infrastructure was not established with international tourism in mind, but because Finns want to enjoy the beauties of nature primarily themselves and tourism comes only after that. However, the truth may be much simpler than this. The Finnish tourist industry was just not yet very well developed, even though there was much progress already in the interwar years.

The second book of Kodolányi is different from the first one in a few ways. The tone of *Suomi titka* in general is more objective, slightly more critical. This is because contemporary reception of *A csend országa* questioned the empirical reliability of Kodolányi when talking about Finland, though considered his statements on matters of Hungary correct.⁸⁵ Towards the end of the book he even openly admits to this, when saying „*I will always remember my first visit to Finland with the radiant glow of infatuation, fascination, fulfilment of the honeymoon of the youthful dream. ... Later the infatuation and continuous admiration decreased and within the great shining whole I started to see greyer details as well.*”⁸⁶

There is another kind of difference in the tone at the beginning. *Suomi titka* was written during his fifth (and last) stay in Finland. When he describes his journey to Finland it is not like in *A csend országa*, where the journey is essentially a transition from the known into the unknown, Kodolányi now returns to his “second homeland”. This last trip had a completely different atmosphere compared to the first one. There is worrying about luggage and also a different tone when mentioning the ship he was travelling with. We get a much grimmer picture about the sea compared to the first book, however this is not something we should interpret as something bad. Kodolányi used this fact to explain the hardness, gloominess and other characteristics of seafaring people.

„... *This is a majestic and woeful sight [to behold]. From this we can understand the taciturnity, consequent hardness and gloominess of seafaring people. Only those could travel around the globe, could get fate on its knees and trample other nations, only those could fly on the wings of imagination like seagulls, only those could mutely resist every power, who have witnessed and lived through the might of the sea from their childhood and whose father,*

⁸⁴ Kodolányi 1937, 129-132

⁸⁵ Váradi 2010, 157

⁸⁶ „Első finnországi látogatásom a rajongás és elragadtatás, a beteljesült ifjúkori álom mézesheteinek ragyogó sugárzásában marad meg bennem mindig. ... Később a rajongás és állandó csodálat csökkent s a nagy csillogó egységen belül látni kezdtem a szürkébb részleteket is.” Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 104

*brother often was abducted by the waves, winds and the ruthless power of the cliffs... And those, who have born on a sea-like wasteland.”*⁸⁷

It is unclear whom or what did Kodolányi mean by trampling other nations because it was Finland who for a long time of its history was a conquered part of greater powers, especially when in the very same sentence he gave nod to this fact. It is also possible that the words chosen did not mean to refer specifically to Finland, they also could be a general reference to British imperialism and past decades, centuries. If this is the case then it is even more confusing why this part of the text was written as he always depicts Finns a silent and peace loving people.

Next, we are on our way to Padasjoki, in February 1937. Padasjoki is a small town in the Southern part of Finland, the Päijät-Häme region. The winter and nature are harsh, but the people are helpful, when Kodolányi has difficulties in getting to his ultimate destination. Due to the harsh weather conditions his supposed driver did not dare to undertake the ride (which Kodolányi accepts understandingly) to the little homestead Kodolányi was supposed to get to, so he had to rely on the helpfulness of the personnel of the small café/waiting hall.

Said homestead was in a short distance of 5 kilometres from Padasjoki. He always refers to this place only as “H.”. Unfortunately, we never learn what does this “H.” stand for. Here he spent several months of studying the life of Finnish peasants through living with his host family and also worked on his historical novel *Boldog Margit*.

His attention was not only directed to the nature or peoples lives here, but also briefly described the administrative structure of the area. This is not necessarily a description of the nature per se but offers the reader a point of view on “nature” other than woods, darkness, snow and cold.

An interesting feature in the style of Kodolányi when writing about nature is difference between when he was on the way somewhere or already at his destination. By this I mean, when he was travelling whether to Finland in general or to specific places within Finland, e.g. Padasjoki, nature appears to be something wild, untameable and harsh, but when he was at a certain place, in spite of the cold and harsh conditions he depicts nature as

⁸⁷ „... Felséges, lesújtó látvány ez. Meg lehet belőle érteni a tengerjáró népek szótlanságát, következetes keménységét és mélabúját is. Csak azok tudták bejárni a földgömböt, csak azok tudták térdrekenyszeríteni a sorsot s letiporni az idegen népeket, csak azok tudtak a képzelet szárnyain repülni, mint a sirályok, csak azok tudtak némán ellenállni minden hatalomnak, akik a tenger hatalmát látták és átérték gyermekkoruktól fogva s akinek atyját, testvérét nem egyszer elrabolták a hullámok, a szelek és sziklák könyörtelen erői ... És azok, akik a tengerhez hasonló végtelen pusztaságokon termettek.” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 23

something beautiful, something being worth being in. To put this into more general words, Kodolányi presents a positive progress of acclimatization - the foreign becomes benign.

We have now seen how nature and the relations of Finns to it were portrayed. The above could be summarized in the importance of being close to ones roots, ones ancestry. According to Kodolányi at least. Nature is not just something humans are coming from, but also a place where they can retreat to from the rush of day-to-day life. These are best proven by the citation quoted in footnote 80. At least one of the stereotypes is also relevant today as Finns might be seen as more silent than others with the eyes of an outsider.

Next we are going to take a look at the cultural life of Finland. First we are taking a general look and the different levels of culture, the folk culture and high culture. Then we are going to a more personal and attempt to discuss the most important connection Kodolányi had, Arvi Järventaus and their friendship. After that the chapter ends with remarks of Kodolányi on Finnish filmmaking.

4. Kodolányi on Finnish culture

4.1. Finnish literature

Chapters in both books about the experiences of Kodolányi with Finnish culture and scientific life were possibly the most important ones for him, though this was never explicitly written down. Being a member of the *népi* movement, as written earlier, he sought to improve the social circumstances of lower social classes of Hungary and propagated greater social equality. This is why observing how Finns engaged in cultural and scientific work was important to him and he wanted to provide his readers the most meaningful insights. Unfortunately the structure of the books is confusing in the sense of chapters of different topics follow each other in a confusing order. It does nevertheless make sense the chapters are in chronological order due to the diary-style of travelogues. This is why I am approaching this part in a different manner. First writing about the observations and experiences of Kodolányi related to cultural life, then about science.

We pick up the thread of cultural life in the first ‘actual chapter’ of *Suomi titka*. I am calling it ‘actual’ because the first two pieces serve only as introduction (travelling and arriving to Finland). We are on our way to Seurasaari to visit J. J. Mikkola and his wife, Maila Talvio for the first time.⁸⁸ The ‘Mikkola-house’ served as a place for so called *torstai-iltoja*, Thursday evenings, when literary and aesthetic seminars were held for students. This will be an important connection between cultural and scientific life later on and we shall refer back to them. Kodolányi used a performance given by Musa Silver⁸⁹ at the Mikkola-house to illustrate the closeness of folk and high culture. „*How intertwined folk and the so called high culture are, the folk spirit with the spirit of higher classes.*”⁹⁰ This performance consisted of Finnish folk songs. Kodolányi even made a remark concerning how one should get to know Finnish folk songs: „here where they were born”.⁹¹ Here we are once again left in the dark as no topic or lyric of any of these songs are presented neither here nor later on.

⁸⁸ Seurasaari (Swe.: Fölisön) today is a museum island on the Western edge of Helsinki, where an open-air museum has operated since 1909.

⁸⁹ Musa Silver: Elli Elisabeth „Musa” Silver (1907-2000) was a Finnish opera singer and diplomat.

⁹⁰ „Hogy egybefonódik itt a népkultúra az úgynevezett ’felsőbb kultúrával’, a népi lélek a ’felsőbb osztályok’ lelkével.” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1937, 37

⁹¹ Kodolányi 1937, 36

This level of admiration can be explained with the archaic structure of the Hungarian society (compared to the Finnish one at least), where higher social classes barely interacted with lower classes on every field of life. Amazed by the performance Kodolányi further went on to compliment on her naturality. „*Where did she learn this? In the North, among the Lapps? Maybe she did not even learn it. She was born like this and it [naturality] was not suppressed in her by anything, no external circumstances, no education, no untrue style, no inner, spiritual deviation.*”⁹²

This is also a critique of the Hungarian culture where someone can change accordingly based on e.g. present political environment (‘external circumstance’), the educational background. Here however we should stop for a moment to discuss another (quite possible) misunderstanding. While it is possible that these songs were indeed folk songs, they were not the main profile of Silver. Silver started studying music and singing in her city of birth, Pori, and finished these studies in Milano. She indeed won an international contest in Vienna, in 1936, but it was not explicitly said what kind of songs were involved in the contest, which is why Kodolányi may be incorrect in his claim about Silver: „*The folk-songs of Musa Silver won first prize in an international contest in Vienna.*”⁹³ Likely the intent here is Kodolányi wanted to prove to his readers that internationally successful and famous figures can also come from lower social classes and not only the elite.

As Kodolányi himself was a writer and poet the state of literature understandably has an important place in his works. Luckily, when writing about literature, Kodolányi does not only tell us about significant figures in Finnish literature, but also touches on a quite useful aspect: the translation of literary works.

By the late 1930s roughly eighty Hungarian works have been translated to Finnish from writers like Mór Jókai, Kálmán Mikszáth, Géza Gárdonyi and even Sándor Petőfi. Luckily this is not all. He makes suggestions, and also critiques about Finnish works translated into Hungarian. According to Kodolányi, a lot more Aleksis Kivi, Sillanpää (Frans Eemil), Järventaus should and could be translated. While there are some Eino Leino translated already, it was done “sparsely and weakly.”⁹⁴

⁹² „Hol tanulta ezt? Talán nem is tanulta. Vele született s mindössze nem nyomta el benne semmi, sem külső körülmények, sem nevelés, sem hazug stílus, sem belső, lelki elferdülés.”

Own translation; Kodolányi 1937, 38

⁹³ „Musa Silver népdalai Bécsben nyertek első díjat nemzetközi vetélkedésben.”

Own translation; Kodolányi 1937, 61

⁹⁴ Kodolányi 1937, 53

Hungarian cultural life was mainly inspired by the losses of Trianon. In his first book Kodolányi strongly criticized the “Trianon-obsession” of Hungarians and how it is actually an obstacle instead of a facilitator.

*„One thing, however, we have to reckon with. The continuous reference to Trianon does not everywhere – and so neither in Suomi (sic!) – make a good impression.“*⁹⁵

Admittedly Kodolányi got into a difficult situation, when – according to himself – „several excellent writers” in a conversation started asking him Trianon-related questions.⁹⁶ These questions included how exactly Trianon prohibited Hungary to eliminate the system of latifundia, the formation of a more democratic system (instead of the heavily aristocracy controlled), various cultural and scientific problems, but most importantly why Hungarians only talk about Trianon and not work toward strengthening the nation.⁹⁷ The mention of this conversation we have to handle with some suspicion. We should keep in mind Kodolányi is writer by profession, therefore it is possible this conversation might not have happened and this just a way how he is expressing his own critiques. Whether these are indeed the views of some Finnish writers or own thoughts of Kodolányi, they are interesting because in the introduction it was extensively discussed how Trianon inspired Hungarian cultural life, then “all of a sudden” there is this one different opinion according to which this Trianon-fixation

Kodolányi had some positive comments on Finnish literature. According to him there is a connection between the unified literature and unified society and even the existing social differences are easily overcome.⁹⁸ Finnish society is once again described as an ideal democracy where the surplus intellectual capacity finds its use in “practical life”⁹⁹ (industry, commerce, education, public administration, etc), whereas Hungary is once again put into a negative light: *„It is never healthy, if in a country all kinds of writers, poets, artists thrive by the thousands. Real artists are few anyways in every nation, others merely want to pour their piled up desires, ... into the sea of letters.”*¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ „Eggyel azonban le kell számolnunk. Nem mindenütt kelt jó benyomást, - így Suomiban sem – a Trianonra való állandó hivatkozás.” Own translation; Kodolányi 1937, 49

⁹⁶ Kodolányi 1937, 49

⁹⁷ Kodolányi 1937, 49-50

⁹⁸ Kodolányi 1937, 121-122

⁹⁹ Kodolányi 1937, 122

¹⁰⁰ „Sohasem egészséges az, ha egy országban ezrével tenyésznek a mindenféle írók, költők, művészek. Igazi művész amúgyis csak kevés akad minden népnél, a többi csak feltorlódott vágyait, ... zúdítja bele a betűtengerbe.” Own translation; Kodolányi 1937, 122

We have to remember, Kodolányi has a tendency to heavily idealize Finland and Finnish people.

The way we learn about the situation of “current” Finnish literature (of the 1930s that is) is unusual. Instead of directly giving us information, Kodolányi summarized his conversations with Larin Kyösti and V. A. Koskenniemi. Finnish literature “seriously and deeply” addresses the life of peasantry, however there are new, emerging writers among the working class as well. According to Larin Kyösti this was not necessarily a bad thing, however it is too much and there are considerably less works addressing upper classes in comparison.¹⁰¹ The same cannot be said about the Hungarian literature of the times. Originating from the archaic (compared to Finland) social structure of Hungary, there was a prominent *folk vs. urbane* opposition. As it has been written before, the main objective of the *népi* movement was to improve the living standards of the “poor peasantry” (hun.: *szegényparasztság*), ergo a radical land reform. To achieve this they showed willingness to ally themselves with both the radical left and right. On the other hand, the politicking of civil democrat and social democrat artists is characterized by consistent resistance against fascism, racial thinking, and the anti-liberal right in general.¹⁰²

According to Koskenniemi there were many young lyricists, but literary critique is not lively and sharp enough.¹⁰³ The lack of criticism is also voiced by Kodolányi, which he told to his friends as well. He expected more resolve and consistency. Then it is admitted the situation in Hungary is not healthy either. There is flattery or harshness, the golden mean seemed to be lost.¹⁰⁴ Kodolányi then praises the fact that Finnish artists are not idle people, but often have other profession too, thus finding use in “practical life.”

¹⁰¹ Kodolányi 1937, 123

¹⁰² Romsics 2000, 209

¹⁰³ Kodolányi 1937, 123

¹⁰⁴ Kodolányi 1937, 124-125

4.2. Arvi Järventaus

During his five visits to Finland, Kodolányi established and maintained friendly relations to many of the significant figures in the Finnish scientific and cultural life. Among these, there is one person who is worth to mention separately. Today Järventaus is not as well-known as he was during the interwar era, but it is clear, especially in *Suomi titka*, that from all the connections and friendships Kodolányi established during his visits, Järventaus was the most important one.

Heikki Arvi Ockenström was born in 1883, in Oulu. He changed his name in 1908 to Järventaus, when he became a pastor. In addition to being a pastor, Järventaus was also a writer, who mainly focused on folk-related topics.¹⁰⁵ This kind of common ground is a good explanation why he became such an important friend to Kodolányi. In the 1930s he published several works about Hungary. *Maahantulo* (Honfoglalás, 1931) is a historical novel telling about the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin at the turn of the VIII – IX. centuries. *Savuava Maa* (eng.: *Smoking Land*, hun.: *Lángoló föld*, 1932) tells about the fall of Hungary to the Ottoman Empire in the battle of Mohács, 1526. In the early stages of their friendship, Järventaus was working on a romantic novel taking place in the early 1700s, *Sydenpolttajat* (Eng.: *Coal-burners*, Hun.: *Szénégetők*). According to a study published by Károly Horányi and Viljo Tervonen, the interest of Järventaus in Hungarian culture and people was piqued by history and literature, however he did not have deep knowledge about the linguistic affinity of Finnish and Hungarian¹⁰⁶. From the same study we actually learn that Järventaus first came into contact with Hungary and its culture during the third Fenno-Ugric Congress in 1928, held in Budapest. During the congress he met several people who later were important in writing his historical novels. One of them was János Kisfaludy, who helped Järventaus to acquire historical sources. During this congress he made friends also with Gyula Weöres, who was the lector of Hungarian language at the University of Helsinki and the head of the Hungarian Institution.

Though Järventaus was a friend of Hungary and Hungarians, it is interesting to notice a slight critique from Kodolányi about the lack of deepness (or accuracy) of his knowledge about Hungary. In *Suomi titka* Kodolányi writes the following: „*He brought with himself many such reminiscences, when he first visited us, that were spread by German propaganda. I*

¹⁰⁵ Kodolányi 1937, 114-115

¹⁰⁶ Horányi 2002

*do not think he ever got acquainted accurately with the nature of our true folk art. He saw the country of wine, temperament and of course weeping willows.”*¹⁰⁷

Similar could be said about Kodolányi as well. When they first met during the summer of 1936, Kodolányi's first trip to Finland (with the mediation of Lauri Hakulinen), at first Kodolányi assumed Järventaus of being Lappish origin and described him as childishly curious, fluctuating between “burning optimism and dark pessimism.”¹⁰⁸ Such stereotypes still exist today about Sámi people in Finland. However, there are no indications in either of the books where these stereotypes about Lapps are coming from. In my opinion, the same criticism – that he voiced about Järventaus – can be said about Kodolányi as well, when talking about his portrayal of Finnish culture. He spent some time with a peasant family in Padasjoki, but spent most of his time in the Helsinki area. They were planning a trip with Järventaus in 1936 to the Eastern part of Finland, but due to a sudden heart attack of Järventaus the trip did not happen.¹⁰⁹ The little experience Kodolányi had were hardly enough to give an accurate picture about Finnish folk culture and peasantry in general. The difference here is that Järventaus does not “criticize“ Kodolányi in the same manner, instead goes on to say he (Kodolányi) is a friend of Finland, at the peak of his creative power and literary history will yet talk about him a lot.¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, we cannot deny the fact the major benefit of knowing Järventaus was for Kodolányi the relationship of the former with the Finnish cultural life. He was the one who helped Kodolányi “fit in” during his first visit to Finland, helped in his negotiations, acted as a contact between Kodolányi and editors and introduced him to the “chief executive of the biggest publisher”.¹¹¹ Sadly, neither books specify the name of this publisher or the CEO, but

¹⁰⁷ „Sok olyan reminiscenciát hozott magával már, amikor legelőször jött hozzánk, ami főképpen a német propaganda jóvoltából terjedt el rólunk. Nem hiszem például, hogy igazi népművészetünk természetével valaha is pontosan megismerkedett volna. A bor, a temperamentum, a csikós és betyár, no meg a szomorúfüzek országát látta bennünk.” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 133

¹⁰⁸ Kodolányi 1939, 133

¹⁰⁹ Kodolányi 1937, 119

¹¹⁰ „Kodolányi on suuri Suomen ystävä ... Hän on luomisvoimansa huipulla, ja Unkarin kirjallisuuden historia tulee vielä hänestä paljon puhumaan.” Järventaus 1939, 162

¹¹¹ „Együtt jártunk a városban, segített tárgyalásaimban, rátelefonált a szerkesztőkre, leszidta őket, ha késedelmeskedtek, elvitt a legnagyobb könyvkiadóvállalat (sic!) vezérigazgatójához és fejtegette céljaimat, terveimet.” – „We walked around in the city together, helped me with my negotiations, called the editors, scolded them if there were delays, took me to the chief executive of the biggest book publisher and explicated my goal, my plans.” Own translation – Kodolányi 1937, 119

we can make a quite educated guess. As the publisher of Järventaus was WSOY (Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö), the CEO in question is Jalmari Jäntti, who was in the leadership of WSOY for almost 50 years.¹¹² Ildikó Váradi, who earlier in her dissertation has studied also the correspondence of Kodolányi and Järventaus, raises an important point. While their friendship was important it was not easy as it was made difficult by insufficient skills in a common language, German. Järventaus did not speak Hungarian for more than a couple of phrases and the Finnish skills of Kodolányi also have left much to be desired.¹¹³ This of course does not mean their friendship was not real, but it certainly had challenges.

Some interesting comparisons can be made between *Suomi titka* and *Itkevien pajujen maa*.¹¹⁴ Here I would like to talk about one specific part of both books before delving into the observations of Järventaus. Both Kodolányi and Järventaus focused on folk-related topics and a description about the area where they have resided during their stay comes quite early on. In fact, it could be claimed these chapters are the first actual ones after the introductory pages about their travels to their destinations. Kodolányi starts his second book by assessing pre-war conditions in Finland as he was already in the country at the time of writing. His first chapter is however about his trip to the country in his usual romanticizing style. Järventaus, after explaining his reasons for writing his book in the opening words¹¹⁵, is already on the Hungarian border. We know nothing about the methods and circumstances of his travel.

¹¹² From 1904 as a literary director and from 1914 as CEO. In: Häggman, Kai ”Jäntti, Jalmari” Kansallisbiografia-verkkójulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/8016> (Accessed: 18. 05. 2021.)

¹¹³ Váradi 2010, 98-99

¹¹⁴ *Itkevien pajujen maa* (hun.: *Szomorúfüzek országa*; eng.: *Country of Weeping Willows*) is a travelogue written by Arvi Järventaus and published in 1939. In 1937-1938 Järventaus spent a couple of months in Hungary due to medical reasons and wrote this book based on his experiences. The style and explored topics are similar to Kodolányi, but the main difference is Järventaus did not want to inspire any changes in Finland. His aim was merely to ”entertain” and not educate.

¹¹⁵ „Tämä matkakirja on syntynyt allekirjoittaneen oleskellessa Unkarissa terveytensä vuoksi syksystä 1937 seuraavan vuoden kevääseen ja sitten kesällä 1938. Potilaalle, jolle lääkäri on määrännyt »täydellisen levon», tulee kaikesta huolimatta aika pitkäksi yhtämittaisessa toimeettomuudessa, ja niinpä tämänkin kirjoittaja rupesi varkain merkitsemään muistiin vaikutelmiaan.” – „This travelogue was written for the reason yours truly being in Hungary due to his health, from autumn 1937 until spring of next year, then summer 1938. For the patient, for whom the doctor prescribed »complete rest», in spite of everything, comes a quite long continuous idleness, and so this writer began to secretly write down his impressions.” Own translation – Järventaus 1939, 7

Both Kodolányi and Järventaus engage in conversations with their hosts (Kodolányi) or the man of the street (Järventaus), that is to say, the “common folk”. While both discuss working and financial conditions, the difference between them is that Järventaus engages in a discussion with local intelligentsia in the form of a young pharmacy assistant (*apteekkiapulainen*). This, in my opinion, gives a better perspective on the hosting society than a one-sided approach, represented by Kodolányi.

An interesting difference between their styles of writing is while they both tell about the language of the environment they were residing in, Järventaus explains peculiarities of Hungarian through phrases and short poems, while Kodolányi provides only words, often out of context. It is of no surprise that the Hungarian language is important for Järventaus. As we saw in the chapter about the Fenno-Ugric congresses, language in general had great importance as a means of cultural identification.

Järventaus opens his observation about Hungarian with a statement that is still relevant today. According to the position of science (of the time) Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian are related languages and have developed from the same protolanguage.

Järventaus criticized the fact that there was no academic position in Finland, which would have researched the history of Hungarian language. „*There is a certain academic chair in Hungary, which we are yet missing: professorship of the history of Hungarian language. Holder of said position as a task explains the phases of the language and its history.*”¹¹⁶

In *Itkevien pajujen maa* there is surprisingly little about Kodolányi. Järventaus merely mentions his talent and productivity as a writer. As a friend and fellow writer, he mentions only two of his earlier works, *A vas fiai* (Sons of iron, 1936) and *Boldog Margit* (Happy Margaret, 1937). In case of the latter one he does not even mention the Finnish relation of the work. Kodolányi worked on *Boldog Margit* actually in Padasjoki, Finland as well¹¹⁷.

All in all, we can say while *Itkevien pajujen maa* is an interesting read for any who is interested in Finnish-Hungarian relations, but it unfortunately offers little relevance to this thesis. The goals and style of Järventaus in this book are different from Kodolányi. Kodolányi wants to make an influence within the Hungarian society and wants to improve the standards of living for the lower social classes. This he wishes to achieve through teaching about the

¹¹⁶ „Unkarissa on eräs yliopistollinen oppituoli, jollaista meiltä vielä puuttuu: unkarinkielen historian professuuri. Sen oppituolin haltijan tehtävänä on selittää kielen vaiheita, sen historia.”

Own translation – Järventaus 1939, 132

¹¹⁷ Kodolányi 1939, 76

lifestyle of Finns in his travelogue. *Itkevien pajujen maa* is technically a similar memoir to *Muistojeni Unkari* from Aarne Wuorimaa.¹¹⁸ Järventaus merely wants to be informative about his experiences in Hungary, he does not strive for any social changes.

4.3. Theatre and filmmaking in Finland

In his second book the way Kodolányi approached Finnish culture is different compared to the first one. While *Csend országa* focuses on literature and significant figures (we could possibly even say, high culture in general), *Suomi titka* takes the real folk approach. *Suomi titka* focuses on peasant culture and consumption of culture of peasants and we also learn about Finnish theatre. Other differences between his book are the tone and approach.

Suomi titka is in general much more observant than *Csend országa*. The criticism Kodolányi received after his first book surely have been taken into consideration. We also have to remember that *Suomi titka* was written after his fifth and last visit to Finland. Previous visits and the familiarity with Finnish culture and people he acquired during these trips surely have honed his observing skills.

We pick up the topic of culture in Padasjoki, where Kodolányi spent a couple of months in 1937. His methods were just like of an anthropologist. Lived among the peasants and in the meanwhile pays attention to how do they spend their days.

„My days are spent with work and studying. In the meanwhile, I am watching how my hosts live.”¹¹⁹

With praising the literacy of his hosts, the goal of Kodolányi was undoubtedly to give a picture to his readers what could be achieved in Hungary with a thorough reform of education. Then all of a sudden, readers were presented a picture where an ordinary peasant possesses a library worthy of a Hungarian middle-class citizen. The amount of books (160-170) Kodolányi found on the shelves of his hosts sound very surprising to a Hungarian reader of the times as illiteracy was very widespread in interwar Hungary. An interesting detail is

¹¹⁸ Aarne Wuorimaa (1892-1975): Finnish ambassador to Hungary from 1940 to 1944. In: Uola, Mikko ”Wuorimaa, Aarne” Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/1751> (Accessed: 14. 04. 2021.)

¹¹⁹ „Napjaim munkával és tanulással telnek. Közben figyelem házigazdámék életét.” Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 40

that said library also contains works of Hungarian writers and poets.¹²⁰ This was also the first point, where printed press was mentioned for the first time. The hosts of Kodolányi were subscribers to the *Uusi Suomi* newspaper, *Eeva*, *Suomen kuvalehti* and the *Pellervo* periodicals. This is not only a cultural thing but also has a social addition to it. As everyone may get different papers, exchanging them and gathering to discuss who has read what is a vivid social activity.¹²¹

After discussing written culture, we are now taking a shift towards film production. While the aim of this thesis is not to evaluate if Kodolányi is right or wrong in his observations, it should be pointed out he is incorrect on two counts concerning Finnish film production. He attributed the start of Finnish filmmaking to his friends Maila Talvio and J. J. Mikkola.

Finnish filmmaking started as early as 1919, with the foundation of Suomi-Filmi (Suomen Filmikuvaamo until 1921.). The first film, *Ylioppilas Pöllövaaran kihlaus*, was directed by Erkki Karu and released in 1920.

However, Maila Talvio was indeed important in the Finnish movie scenery as well. In Finland during the 1920s and 1930s approximately 45000 cases of tuberculosis were confirmed annually. To raise awareness of disease and help raising funds for fighting it, in 1932 she wrote a narrative, *Ne 45000* (Them 45000), which was made into a movie by Suomi-Filmi in 1933.¹²² The income from the screenings was put forward to build a sanatorium for treating tuberculosis. Here is the second count, where Kodolányi was partially incorrect. He attributed the direction of *Ne 45000* to Risto Orko, but in fact it was only finished by him. Work on the film was started by the head of Suomi-Filmi, Erkki Karu, but he had to leave the company in 1933 due to its financial difficulties. Until this point Risto Orko was an assistant director for the movie, but from 1933, he became the main director as well as the head of Suomi-Filmi. From the biography of Risto Orko we learn that he was actually recommended for the role of assistant director by Maila Talvio, whom he met while being a member of the Satakuntalaisen Osakunta (Satakunta student nation).¹²³

¹²⁰ Kodolányi 1939, 44-45

¹²¹ Kodolányi 1939, 45

¹²² The title refers to the amount of announced cases of tuberculosis in Finland as of 1937, the time when Kodolányi was in Finland for the fifth time.

¹²³ Risto Orko In: Uusitalo, Kari ”Orko, Risto” Kansallisbiografia-verkkójulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/4951> (Accessed: 22. 03. 2021.)

On another note Kodolányi has drawn an interesting comparison between Finnish and Hungarian filmmaking. The self-esteem of Finnish peasants makes it impossible to produce such movies, where the peasant or lower social classes are represented in a humiliating way. If that would be the case, the writer would be boycotted in such a harsh way that „no lines would be published from him or her ever again.”¹²⁴ This statement originates from the tradition in Hungarian filmmaking where peasants and handmaids are often represented in a way which causes audiences to laugh at them. This is what Kodolányi understands under humiliating way.

On another note, we have to mention such movies were produced in Finland, where peasant were represented in a condescending way, however the scale was different compared to Hungary. Also, what a Finnish viewer would consider as humiliating surely was different than a Hungarian. I am not saying here Kodolányi is wrong in his observations, but most likely he did not spend enough time among Finns to be able to accurately map such standards.

About Finnish theatre Kodolányi observed there are hundreds of amateur acting troupes across Finland and their repertoire consists of civic-themed (domestic, as well as from internationally known writers) plays. Due to the civic mentality of theatre, the level of plays were not unified. Among first class plays there were also “some of the most criticisable” quality plays in the repertoire.¹²⁵ This was however not meant to be a criticism for the quality of acting in general, but the quality of the plays themselves. The topic of Finnish theatre provided a possibility for Kodolányi to express his views on the culture Hungary export(s). This is why his criticism was aimed at the quality of presented plays and not the actors.

Already the first direct mention of the Hungarian cultural export had a negative tone, however, formulated a very important goal.

„Concerning the opuses originating from Budapest, Finns are driven by a pure intent besides the main point of entertaining: doing propaganda for ‘Hungarians.’”¹²⁶

The quotation marks in the original text meant to symbolize, Kodolányi did not consider many thing authentic Hungarian that was part of the Hungarian cultural export. He accuses the “incoherent, soulless and cynic advertisements” released by Budapest, which pained him

¹²⁴ Kodolányi 1939, 50

¹²⁵ Kodolányi 1939, 83

¹²⁶ „Ami a Budapestről származó műveket illeti, itt a finneket tiszta szándék vezeti a mulattatás főszempontja mellett: propagandát csinálni a ’magyarságnak.’ ” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 83

because in Finland “they actually love Hungarians”.¹²⁷ This concern was understandable since throughout all of the Fenno-Ugric congresses regaining reputation and making positive propaganda for Hungary were very important objectives for Budapest. His opinions about cultural export and propaganda are summarized the best in the following:

*„Every nation of the world presents abroad what is truly and characteristically coming from their souls. What actually is and not what they lie to the world. Only the Hungarian propaganda floods the abroad with things that are parodies of beauties of the authentic Hungarian life ... that Hungarians are a kind of gypsy people, who lack real culture and their folk treasures are only good for foreigners to laugh at.”*¹²⁸ Such stereotypes had indeed penetrated the Finnish conceptions about Hungary.

The case of Finnish theatre seems to be an unfortunately missed opportunity. Instead of trying to explore the means how Hungarians could learn – as often done before – from Finns on another field, the possibility was lost to negative criticism. The only time when a comparison was drawn between Finnish and Hungarian theatre was when Kodolányi formulated the tasks of the latter for the future. According to him, Hungary and Hungarians had to learn how to do amateur acting and how to equally include „peasant and worker, officials and professional artists” in cultural unity.¹²⁹

It is not surprising that under the topic of culture Kodolányi focused on literature, theatre and filmmaking since he was a writer himself, thus he had some professional insight to said fields in Hungary. This professionalism ensured a more competent criticism when he compared Finland and Hungary.

To connect this chapter to the next one and the 1930s to today literature offers a good possibility. It is worth mentioning while many Finnish authors are translated into Hungarian, there is hardly any who is part of the Hungarian curricula. On the level of compulsory education (primary and secondary) only Kalevala is part of the Hungarian curricula. Also, while there are annual events called Finnish Literature Days and Finnish Film Days, these events focus on more contemporary works.

¹²⁷ Kodolányi 1939, 86

¹²⁸ „A világ minden nációja azt mutatja be külföldön, ami valóban s jellegzetesen az ő lelkéből lelkezett. Ami *van* s nem azt, amit világrahazudnak. Csak a magyar propaganda ársztja el a külföldet olyasmivel, amia valódi magyar élet szépségeinek paródiája ... hogy a magyar afféle cigánynép, minden igazi kultúra híján szűkölködik, s népi kincsei csak arra jók, hogy az idegen röhögjön rajtuk.” Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, pp. 87-88.

¹²⁹ Kodolányi 1939, 91

5. Kodolányi on Finnish science and education

5.1. Education system

Education in general was considered as a tool of national reconstruction after the First World War. In the cases of both Finland and Hungary, education was heavily influenced by patriotic ideals. The importance of said ideals permeated all levels of education, which was the most visible, unsurprisingly, on the level of higher education. A good representation of this are two student associations of the interwar era. In Finland, at the University of Helsinki the Academic Karelia Society was founded in 1922, and in Hungary, a year earlier the Turul Association (*Turul Szövetség*) at the Budapest University¹³⁰ (*Budapesti Tudományegyetem*). Both associations represented radical ideals and their members were not only students but also other academics. This was possible because students retained their membership after graduation. This chapter is attempting to give an overview of the aspects of Finnish education system that were considered noteworthy in the books of Kodolányi.

The history of Finnish education can be divided into two major parts. First, when Finland was under the rule of foreign powers (Sweden and Russia), from the 14th century until 1917 and the time of Independence (from 1917 onwards). According to Jussi Välimaa two periods of the independence were central to the development of (higher) education. The time of White Finland (1920-30s) and the decades after the Second World War, when the welfare state was built (from the 1950s onwards)¹³¹.

The first and most important consequence of independence was that it cut the administrative links to Russia. The immediate months after declaring independence, as written earlier, resulted in a civil war (*Sisällissota*) due to ideological and political disputes, which affected also the coming decades.¹³²

The Act on Compulsory Education (*Oppivelvollisuuslaki*) came into effect on April 15, 1921. This act made schooling mandatory for every Finnish child between the ages 7 and 13 (in some cases 14), plus increased the number of primary schools in rural areas.¹³³ The Act applied equally to all children as all Finnish children now had to attend school. However, it

¹³⁰ From 1950, the institution is called Eötvös Loránd University (*Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem*).

¹³¹ Välimaa 2019, 185

¹³² Kuikka 1997, 89

¹³³ Act on Compulsory Education (*Oppivelvollisuuslaki*)

did not essentially mean equal status. There was significant difference between rural and urban areas in attendance. The long-term result of schools becoming more common in rural areas was a new generation of Finnish-speaking upper class.¹³⁴ Kodolányi himself often lauded this when writing about his observations regarding Finnish education.¹³⁵ In fact, this is a possible reason why he focused so much on education in agriculture. At the end of the day, we have to say that the primary level of education did not function properly until the late 1930s, just until the outbreak of the Second World War.¹³⁶

The situation was similar in Hungary. In Hungary matters of education belonged to the minister of religious and public education affairs (*vallási és közoktatási miniszter*). One of the painful consequences of the Trianon treaty was that only 33% of the schools remained within the new borders.¹³⁷ Just as in the case of Finland, in the schooling of Hungarian youth, the true problem was in the rural areas. An interesting comparison with Finland is the Hungarian law accepted in 1921, which reinforced the obligation for children between the ages of 6 and 15 to participate in folk school education (6+3 years). The law was announced on 8th of July, which puts it mere months after the *Oppivelvollisuuslaki* of Finland.

After the legal and administrative circumstances, we should also look at the social background of higher education and its participants. According to Jussi Välimaa, there are three processes in the first decades of the Finnish independence. First of them was the industrialization of the country. Compared to other Nordic countries, industrialization was a slow process in Finland at the beginning of the 20th century.¹³⁸ By 1940 the share of the population living from agriculture and forestry dropped by approximately 20 % while those working in industry and the service sector almost doubled¹³⁹. This challenged the education system and ultimately resulted in the establishment of the University of Technology (*Suomen teknillinen korkeakoulu*).¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Ahonen 2003, 70-71

¹³⁵ „A középosztály túlnyomórészen paraszti eredetű és szoros kapcsolatot tart fenn a földdel, ahonnét származik” – “The middle class is mostly of peasant background and maintains a connection to the land where it is from” ; Own translation, Kodolányi 1937, 34

¹³⁶ Kuikka 1997, 91

¹³⁷ Romsics 2000, 172-174

¹³⁸ Ahonen 2003, 69

¹³⁹ Välimaa 2019, 190

¹⁴⁰ The institution was called 'Suomen teknillinen korkeakoulu' from 1908-1942, today it is the Aalto University.

This transformation „from an estate society into a democratic and industrial society”¹⁴¹ required changes in the education system, essentially resulting in the above mentioned Act on Compulsory Education. Kodolányi himself also had some “personal” experience about Finnish folk education. In *Suomi titka* he shares the story with his readers about a Hungarian peasant boy who was spending a one year of exchange in Oulu, in March 1938. The boy got to Finland with a delegation of Finnish pastors after their visit to Hungary, which also resulted in the conception of the idea to support the foundation of a Hungarian folk college (*népfőiskola*).¹⁴² Kodolányi met with the boy in Helsinki and was amazed by the changes the young boy had gone through. Kodolányi makes several remarks: „*I have not found any signs of the [among us] so common humility, shyness*” ... „*I admired this young boy from Alföld, from whom almost everything was already missing that is common among the youngs of Alföld. I admired his extensive knowledge, healthy opinions.*”¹⁴³ There is no doubt the changes made to the education system were successful, but we have to take descriptions of Kodolányi with a pinch of salt. This is not the first time in either of his books, when he tends to do overstatements. As we saw earlier, the situation on the level of basic education was not too rosy in Hungary. Nor there is more exact indication of the background of this peasant boy. What I mean here is the situation was similar to Finland in Hungary as well, where wealthier peasants had a bigger likelihood to educate their children, but here we know nothing else than the boy being from peasant background.

The third social process was the Finnish-Swedish language conflict. It was especially fierce in higher education, where Swedish was still the main language of instruction in the 1920s. The conflict itself was long-lasting being settled only in 1937 by the 3rd government of Aimo Kaarlo Cajander¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴¹ Välimaa 2019, 190

¹⁴² Kodolányi 1939, 98-99

¹⁴³ „Nyomat sem találtam benne a nálunk oly megszokott alázatosságnak, félénkségnek.” ... „Elgyönyörködtem ebben az alföldi fiúban, akiből szinte minden hiányzott már, ami az alföldi legénykéket jellemzi. Csodálkoztam széleskörű tudásán, egészséges véleményein.” – Own translation, Kodolányi 1939, 99

¹⁴⁴ Aimo Kaarlo Cajander (1879-1943): Botanist, professor of forestry and three times Prime Minister of Finland (1st time in office: 2.6.1922–14.11.1922; 2nd time in office: 18.1.1924–31.5.1924; 3rd time in office: 12.3.1937–1.12.1939)

In: Uola, Mikko & Liekola, Matti “Cajander, Aimo Kaarlo” Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/727> (Accessed: 19.11.2020.)

Universities in capital cities tend to occupy a more important place in their respective countries educational and political system as well. This was no different in the case of Helsinki, where the university was the most significant institution in the interwar period. It had the biggest number of professors and the most diverse palette of faculties, which included agriculture and forestry besides the traditional ones (that is law, medicine, theology and humanities). It was not only the main battleground of the language strife, but also “provided” important political actors to the country. For example, the first president of Finland, K. J. Ståhlberg, was a professor of administrative law (1908-1918) or Edwin Linkomies, professor of Roman literature (1923-1963), was prime minister of Finland at the end of the Continuation War (*Jatkosota*) from March 1943 until August 1944.¹⁴⁵ Linkomies even visited Hungary during the war, in January 1943, where he met also Miklós Horthy.¹⁴⁶ Students were also important political players. The most notable organisation was the earlier mentioned Academic Karjala Society. They were the most vocal in promoting the Fennicization of the University of Helsinki. This resulted, among other things, in the resignation of the Swedish-speaking students from the association and the foundation of the *Helsingfors Svenska Studentkår* (Helsinki Swedish Student Association).¹⁴⁷ Just as Turul promoted the idea of expanding Hungary, AKD promoted the idea of the Greater Finland.

The problem with the question of education in the primary sources is, however, the fact that Kodolányi provides short and narrowed down description. By this, I mean in his first book *A csend országáa*, there is only one short bit about the agricultural school and museum in Hartola. In *Suomi titka* there is a bit more on the topic. We have a short, general view on agricultural education, the story (as it was mentioned earlier) of a Hungarian peasant boy on his one-year exchange, and a “diary-like entry” about a festive evening, where Kodolányi was invited to. This sole focus on agriculture and education related to it matches the agenda of the *népi írók* (that is, to educate and to give advices on how the peasantry could be elevated), but it does not provide sufficient information to his readers. He does not describe how the actual educating work goes in these institutions. He merely provides brief history how the museum and school in Hartola came to be (*A csend országáa*), how many and what kind of such

¹⁴⁵ Välimaa 2019, 197-199

¹⁴⁶ Edwin Linkomies (1894-1963) in Tommila, Päiviö ”Linkomies, Edwin” Kansallisbiografia-verkkojulkaisu <https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilo/636> (Accessed: 20.11.2020.)

¹⁴⁷ Välimaa 2019, 200

institutions are in Finland and what kind of courses these schools offer (*Suomi titka*). The closest view we get on the actual work is when Kodolányi describes a ceremony where the best theses were being recognised rewarded. In my opinion, he (Kodolányi) fails to educate here. A more detailed look into the actual work done in these schools would have helped more to improve agricultural education in Hungary and improve the situation of the peasantry. This, however, might have drawn some criticism and opposition from the Hungarian nobility, who were jealously guarding their social positions as a more thoroughly educated peasantry might have challenged them.

Even though I wrote that Kodolányi failed to provide useful information about actual education work, I have to admit, his “diary-like entry” about the festive evening brings up an interesting topic: an organization of students. This is interesting not only because comparisons with present days could be drawn, but also because being educated did not consist only of schoolwork.

Kodolányi was invited to a festive evening at the University of Helsinki in September 1938. He does not explicitly mention the university by name, but mentioning both his “patrons and friends”¹⁴⁸ at the beginning of the entry, professor J. J. Mikkola and Maila Talvio as previous leaders of a student organization, we can be sure the evening took place at the university.¹⁴⁹ We learn that university students belong to organizations based on their region of origin. I used the word ‘belong’ (Hungarian: *tartozni valahová*) because Kodolányi used it as well and it does not become apparent if membership was compulsory at the times, but if they were members, they could retain their membership.¹⁵⁰ These are called ‘*osakunta*’ (student nation) in Finnish. Their main difference to the majority of present-day student organizations is that these student nations were interdisciplinary. According to my knowledge, such organizations today in Finland only exist at the universities of Helsinki and Turku.

¹⁴⁸ Kodolányi 1939, 111

¹⁴⁹ J. J. Mikkola was a professor of slavic philology at the University of Helsinki and participated in the same event along with his wife.

¹⁵⁰ „Finnország egyetemi hallgatói egy-egy vidék szövetségében tömörülnek, s odatartoznak akkor is, ha már az egyetemi tanulmányokat elvégezték. Aszerint, hogy mely vidékről származnak, tartoznak ebbe vagy abba a szövetségbe.” – University students in Finland are parts of nations of different regions (*of Finland*) and they remain members even after finishing their university studies. Based on which region they hail from, they belong to this or that nation.

Own translation – Kodolányi 1939, 111

Today majority of similar organizations are subject based. The Finnish word *ainejärjestö* literally translates into subject organization.

The very first one of these nations was founded already in 1643, only three years after the foundation of the Turku Academy and was called Nylands Nation. Still operating today makes it not only the oldest Swedish speaking, but also the oldest student organization of Finland in general¹⁵¹. The leaders of these nations are the inspector (fin.: inspehtori, swe.: inspektor) and curator (fin.: kuraattori, swe.: indendent). The inspector was a professor of the university and the curator who was familiar with the activities of the nation and completed their masters level studies (*ylempi korkeakoulututkinto*). These reflect well the Swedish tradition, which served as the example.

The event I mentioned earlier was organized by the Satakuntalainen Osakunta, the nation of students coming from the region of Satakunta and they invited Kodolányi as a guest of honour. The program consisted of an “official” and an “unofficial” part. The first, official part was a formal dinner where between meals musical performances and scientific presentations were given. There is a small linguistic challenge here that should be mentioned because of differences in the vocabulary of Hungarian and English languages. In *Suomi titka*, Kodolányi uses the word “*előadás*” when talking about this evening. The word primarily means “*lecture*” in English, which indicates a longer, scientific “presentation”. This could be confusing because Kodolányi writes there were “lectures, musical performances, welcome speeches, recitations” on the program handed to him by his inviters.¹⁵² The schedule of the evening we know from Kodolányi himself. If we take into consideration that the formal dinner started at 9 pm. and lasted “only” until 2 am. (when Kodolányi gave his speech) and was interrupted multiple times by other things, it is unlikely those were lectures in the classical meaning of the word, but rather just presentations. After the official part concluded, a dance-party started, which lasted the whole night. „*The next day I learned from my Hungarian friends, the dance-party lasted until bright morning. As conclusion everyone stood on tables and chairs and sang folk-songs.*”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Pykälistö in Osakuntien akateemisen järjestyksen historia (verkkojulkaisu), <https://osakunta.fi/akateeminen-jarjestys/> (Accessed: 12. 1. 2021)

¹⁵² „A kedves követség át is nyújtotta az ízlésesen kinyomtatott programot, melyen előadások, énekszámok, üdvözlő beszédek, szavaltok szerepeltek.” – Kodolányi 1939, 112

¹⁵³ „Másnap megtudtam magyar barátaimtól, hogy a táncmulatság fényes reggelig folyt. Befejezésül asztalokra, székekre állottak valamennyien és népdalokat énekeltek. ...” – Kodolányi 1939, 116

Scientific presentations and musical performances were also a part of it, it was presided by a university professor and was attended also by other teaching staff, not only students. For a reader of the 21st century this might look familiar. This is because elements of this tradition, as practiced in the 1930s, have survived until this day.

The goals of Kodolányi with telling his readers about the education in Finland is to inspire changes in order to improve the conditions and possibilities of the peasantry, thus make it possible for a better future and improving social equality. His most obvious proclamation of his goals (with the trips to Finland) is strictly speaking cannot be found in these books. About his goals and intentions Kodolányi writes in an open letter to Pál Teleki, when he learned about a planned visit on 26th September 1938. This open letter is also published as a “chapter” of *Suomi titka*.¹⁵⁴ Among other science-related topics Kodolányi voices the desire and need to implement the Finnish system and discard the Hungarian. „*Is there no way to swap the current system of folk education with the Finnish system?*”¹⁵⁵

Kodolányi summarizes his expectations related to the Hungarian education system as follows:

*„What do we expect from our studies and experiences in Finland? We expect that public education is finally put on a new, stronger folk basis. That the one-sided German mentality is being eliminated from it. ... We expect the disappearance of class differences. We expect the reform of the Hungarian common language, through the reform of language teaching in schools. We expect stronger protection and saving of our folk treasures, encasing them into common knowledge. We expect the dominance of Hungarian folk culture!”*¹⁵⁶

At the end of the chapter we could say this was probably the most problematic of the whole thesis, but not without a reason. This is because Kodolányi was a man of literature and culture thus did not have sufficient expertise on matters of science and education. The matter of education was especially important during the interwar decades as Hungary has lost a

¹⁵⁴ Kodolányi 1939, 117-131

¹⁵⁵ „Nem volna rá mód, hogy a népoktatás mai rendszerét kicseréljük a Finn rendszerrel?” – Own translation Letter of Kodolányi to Pál Teleki, in Kodolányi 1939, 119

¹⁵⁶ „Mit várunk mi finnországi tanulmányainktól és tapasztalatainktól? Várjuk, hogy új erősebben népi alapra helyezkedjék végre végre a közoktatás. Hogy az egyoldalú német szellem kiküszöböltessék belőle. ... Várjuk az osztályellentétek elsorvadását. Várjuk a magyar köznyelv reformját, az iskolai nyelvtanítás reformját keresztül. Várjuk népi kincseink erőteljesebb védelmét és megmentését, a köztudatba való szerves beépítését. Várjuk a magyar népi kultúra uralomrajutását.”

Own translation; Open letter of János Kodolányi to Pál Teleki, in Kodolányi 1939, 121

major part of its educational infrastructure due to the Trianon borders. This is why it would have been useful to also learn about the lower levels of Finnish education (with the eyes of the contemporary reader) or at least visits to other institutions than the agricultural school in Hartola. The inclusion of the lower levels of education in the travelogues would also have matched well with the ideology and goals of the *népi* movement who – as many times stated before – sought to improve the living conditions of the peasantry and were striving for greater social equality. The access to higher education was only available for the richer members of the peasantry. This lack of information on lower levels of education is the reason behind the more extensive use of secondary literature in this chapter.

On the topic of science sure, there were mentions of matters of linguistics, ethnology and the idea of kinship, but none of them were enough to earn their own respective chapter even in the travelogues themselves. It could be asked if matters of science could be just called “higher education” here as it also involves a description of the process how young scientists get a doctoral degree in Finland. The difficulty of answering this question can be summarized in the Hungarian phrase “*Once piece is too little, two pieces are too much.*”¹⁵⁷ By this I mean, while there is not enough in either of the books on Finnish scientific life to dedicate a separate chapter to it is already enough to this chapter not being exclusively about education.

However, all of the previously discussed soon lost from their importance for the contemporaries as not long after the last visit of Kodolányi, Germany attacked Poland and started WWII.

¹⁵⁷ „Egy szem kevés, két szem sok.”

5.2. Finnish science

The earlier mentioned *Thursday evening* seminars were important in bringing up generations of artists and scientists. As we learn from Kodolányi, the Mikkola-house was the place for these seminars for thirty years.¹⁵⁸ Also lectures and debates were held involving famous figures of the Finnish literary scene: V. A. Koskenniemi, Juhani Aho, F. E. Sillanpää and others.

Through a lengthy description of the process how young scientists get doctoral degree, we get an insight into the independence of Finnish scientific work. This was in strong contrast to Hungary where the conditions of doing science depended heavily on the political environment. In fact, even today there is a certain (and growing) level of political influence on the scientific scenery in Hungary. Independence does not only mean being free from political and ideological influence, but also being able to do one's *own* research. This was yet another criticism towards Hungary, where, at the time, young scientists based their dissertations mostly on the works of their mentors and later on continued in their steps.¹⁵⁹ In Finland, achieving a doctoral degree indeed meant independence, at least according to Kodolányi:

*„The student for a long time now has not been a student anymore, he has walked a different path than his master, challenges old views with newer and newer results ...“*¹⁶⁰

What possibly could have been the most important science-related topic in either of the books, gets unfortunately the least amount of coverage. The idea of Finnish-Hungarian kinship was mentioned explicitly only in *A csend országá* and even there only very briefly. We do not get any insights into the background of the idea, like origins, prominent representatives in either countries or any cultural and scientific project inspired by it. We only get to read about the personal experiences of Kodolányi related to manifestations of kinship, which can be summarized in *„I was not surrounded by the eerie and hopeless atmosphere of the foreign land. A Hungarian and good man is home in Finland!“*¹⁶¹

This is unfortunate, because the idea itself was important not only for doing propaganda, but also an inspiration for cooperation. Especially during the Cold War kinship ideology was a very important driver and reason for cooperation when Finland and Hungary were on different

¹⁵⁸ Kodolányi 1937, 31

¹⁵⁹ Kodolányi 1937, 32-36

¹⁶⁰ Kodolányi 1937, 34

¹⁶¹ „Nem vett körül egy pillanatra sem az idegen világ gyakran borzongató, reménytelen légköre. Magyar ember és tisztességes ember otthon van Finnországban!“ – Own translation; Kodolányi 1937, 44-45

sides of the Iron Curtain. However another possibility could be that the idea permeated Hungarian society so deeply by the late 30s there was simply no reason to tell the readers about it in detail.

In *Suomi titka* Finnish science is discussed in the open letter of Kodolányi to Pál Teleki. The letter technically is a summary of the two books that have been discussed in this thesis, where Kodolányi summarizes his observations and suggestions. It can be divided into three topics: education, science and culture, but here only the first two are going to be discussed. I am not going to go into too much details concerning education and culture since these topics have their respective chapters. However a couple of things are going to be worth mentioning because they were not mentioned on earlier.

On education, he summarized the ways of Finnish education then complained about the matter of Hungarian folk college (hun.: *népfőiskola*). The subject of his complaints was that Hungary would need Finnish help to establish a Finnish-type folk college (*kansanopisto*) and why they are establishing only one. To successfully reform Hungarian education at least a hundred such schools would be needed.¹⁶² He even goes as far as to say “*Would there be no way to swap the system of today folk education with the Finnish system?*”¹⁶³ This would have required two things: sending enough teachers on scholarship to Finland, to learn the methods of Finnish education and sufficient funds for establishing enough Finnish-type colleges. Here though Kodolányi admitted he is not an expert on monetary issues.

When he got to matters of science, Kodolányi urged the collection and processing of Hungarian cultural treasures. According to him ethnology was on the correct route in doing so, but linguistics has heavily fallen behind. As an example he mentioned the case of the Hungarian idioticon (hun.: *tájszótár*; fin.: *murresanakirja*), which was already forty years old in 1938 and the Finnish thesaurus, which was still being worked on. Kodolányi pondered the possibility if Teleki would be taken to the editorial office of the Finnish thesaurus (*Sanakirjasäätiö*) where he would have a chance to meet Lauri Hakulinen and maybe implement some Finnish methods upon returning home. He then scoffed at the Hungarian Academy (*MTA*) for not providing funds for the necessary work:

¹⁶² Kodolányi 1939, 119

¹⁶³ „Nem volna rá mód, hogy a népoktatás mai rendszerét kicseréljük a finn rendszerrel?” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 119

„ ... and the Academy which has a wealth in millions but never has funds finally would begin its primary duty, publishing the complete Hungarian thesaurus. The benefits would be immeasurable.”¹⁶⁴

Before switching to matter of culture, Kodolányi propagates scientific exchange one final time even bringing up a personal connection of Teleki (his former student, a certain László Kovács).

„I would brand the products of the Hungarian home industry and I would not let bunglers even near them.”¹⁶⁵

Before finishing the open letter, Kodolányi reprimands exporters of culture to Teleki. According to him, there is no need for the amount of profit these exporters get through exploiting Hungarian women.

„There is no need for those heavy profits the irresponsible exporters acquire through having the Hungarian women work for coppers and according to ordered soulless patterns.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ „ ... az Akadémia pedig, melynek milliós vagyona van, de pénze soha sincs, végre hozzáfogjon elsőrangú kötelességének, a teljes magyar szótárnak a kiadásához. Mérhetetlen haszon származnék ebből.”

Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 120

¹⁶⁵ „Márkálnám a magyar háziipar termékeit, s nem engedném, hogy kontár még csak a közelébe is férközzék.”

Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 122

¹⁶⁶ „Semmi szükség azokra a súlyos nyereségekre, amelyeket a felelőtlen exportőrök zsebre tesznek, fillérékért dolgoztatva a magyar asszonyokat előirt lelketlen minták szerint.” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 122

6. The threat of war in Finland and World War II.

While the timeframe of this thesis is the interwar era, it may be useful to include the threat of war itself and the beginning of the Second World War in Finland. The introduction and the background chapters picked up the line in the immediate years after the First World War and the beginning of the Second World War is a natural end point of the time frame.

Even though war is the least discussed topic in the second book (it is not mentioned in the first book at all) the interesting thing is that it gives a frame to *Suomi titka*. In the introduction Kodolányi is still in Finland and contemplates the “what ifs” of the approaching conflict. The final chapter he already wrote back in Hungary and discussed the war situation in Finland. This is the structure I am also going to follow, first going to go over his thoughts on the threat of war and then summarize war-related remarks.

The intro of *Suomi titka* starts with the realization of a certain risk: if he leaves Finland, he may never return, which in the end turned out to be true. Kodolányi did not return to Finland after the war. Kodolányi admits, he tended to escape the menace of war into intensive work: „*My life has nearly split into two: I was so lost in the work of Madách that I completely forgot about the threatening outside world or Madách was lost to me behind the growing storm clouds so that I did not see, did not feel, did not think about anything else than the looming catastrophes.*”^{[167][168]} From these thoughts he was torn out by a street scene when children were shouting „*War! War! War!*” (Sotaa! Sotaa! Sotaa!). As it turned out this was merely a result of childish confusion when soldiers on leave were marching on Heikinkatu (the present-day Mannerheimintie in Helsinki). Nevertheless, this symbolizes well the imminence of war already Autumn 1938.¹⁶⁹

While still strongly contemplating the what ifs in case Finland “would drift into war”, there is but one case when he openly discusses the matter. This has happened in Laaksola,

¹⁶⁷ „Életem szinte kettéhasadt: vagy úgy elmerültem Madách művében, hogy teljesen megfeledkeztem a fenyegető külvilágról, vagy Madách süllyedt el számomra a tornyosuló viherfelhők között s nem láttam, nem éreztem, nem gondoltam másra, csak a bekövetkező katasztrófákra.” – Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 5

¹⁶⁸ Imre Madách (1823-1864): Hungarian poet, writer, lawyer and politician. In the quotation Kodolányi refers to the most famous work of Madách, “*Az ember tragédiája*”, “The tragedy of Man” which he was translating at the time.

¹⁶⁹ Kodolányi 1939, 6

with his friends J. J. Mikkola and Maila Talvio at one undefined point in the past and not around the time of writing his book.

We also get to learn a new side of Maila Talvio. As it turns out, she was a keen follower of Hitler and his ideology. This is interesting given the critical voices in Finnish press about Hitler and Nazi Germany at the end of Winter War. Even for those who sympathized with Germany in the beginning, the Winter War was such a shock that many have not returned to their ways of pre-Winter War thinking when peace was made.¹⁷⁰ Talvio was one of those few whose correspondence to Germany continued during the Winter War. She received letters from her friends in Germany expressing sympathy with Finns, however also criticising the Finnish leadership for adopting the Scandinavian neutrality. Heinrich Jessen, head of the cultural department of the Nordic Society (*Nordische Gessellschaft*), wrote Talvio hoping that the end of Winter War would see a revitalization of the Finnish-German connections. Talvio gained official recognition by Germany already before the Winter War. In Autumn 1939 Talvio was presented the Heinrich Steffens Award.¹⁷¹ This was hardly surprising as she did not criticize Nazi Germany nearly as much as her husband J. J. Mikkola or friend V. A. Koskenniemi even during the worst months of the Winter War.¹⁷² Also, the Finnish special forces, the Jaegers (*Jääkärit*) have fought in the German army during the First World War against Russia which fights later were cinematized by Talvio.¹⁷³

The fears of Kodolányi are the most perceivable when he makes the final decision of returning to Hungary. He stopped translating *The tragedy of Man* and finished his historical novel, *Julianus*. We leave Finland behind us through a series of nostalgia and a summary of memories and experiences (pp. 10-11) as Kodolányi describes his way to the airport.¹⁷⁴

If we want to appropriately picture how suddenly the threat of war escalated we are offered an excellent quote: „*There was no Finnish-Soviet Russian question for twenty years, now from one day to the other it was born and has grown to threatening proportions.*”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ Jokisipilä & Könönen 2013, 258

¹⁷¹ The award was named after the German-Norwegian philosopher, Heinrich (Henrik) Steffens (1773-1845) and was part of official Nazi politics since its foundation in 1936.

¹⁷² Jokisipilä & Könönen 2013, 258-261

¹⁷³ Kodolányi 1939, 8

¹⁷⁴ The airport in question is the Helsinki-Malmi Airport, which served as the main airport of Finland until 1952, the opening of Helsinki-Vanta.

¹⁷⁵ „Húsz éven át nem volt finn-szovjet orosz kérdés, most egyik napról a másikra megszületett és fenyegető arányúra nőtt.” Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 15

These twenty years are an obvious reference to the relatively peaceful interwar years. However, just as in the case of history of Karelia, Kodolányi made a mistake regarding the Soviet Russia question in Finland. Being part of the Russian Empire for more than a hundred years (1809-1917 as Grand Duchy of Finland) and a neighbour to Soviet Union, the Russian question was present all the time. The possible reasons why according to Kodolányi there was no such a question could be he simply did not meet the problem or he did not take the Soviet Union into consideration before the direct threat of war. Another possible explanation is his usual habit of talking about Finland in an overly idealistic way.

When Kodolányi wrote the last chapter of *Suomi titka*, October 1939, it was already during the first weeks of war in Europe. This may very well explain its chaotic structure. While being relatively short, compared to other chapters at least, the last chapter touches the greatest number of different topics. Another way of interpreting could be that the aim of this chapter is to summarize to book and underline the most important thoughts of Kodolányi.

There is a strong longing to return to Finland and do something for it, even if it is just a little.¹⁷⁶ This is a strange contradiction if we think about how he wanted to improve social equality and standards of living of the Hungarian peasantry (through the improvement of education). At the end of the day this was his goal with all his trips and his two travelogues, especially if we read how and what he wrote to Pál Teleki in his open letter. Here Kodolányi also expresses his disappointment, while accusing the Hungarian elite and decision-makers being “archaic”, how his efforts fell on deaf ears all those years.¹⁷⁷

Suomi titka and thus my primary sources for this thesis conclude with an interesting thought. Whether it is intended or not, some of the last lines sound very much like a reference to the very beginning of the first book, *Suomi – A csend országa*, where Kodolányi states he has longed to see Finland ever since his childhood.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Kodolányi 1939, 141

¹⁷⁷ Kodolányi 1939, 141-142

¹⁷⁸ „Ever since my childhood I felt attached to Finland by some miraculous and inexplicable emotional connection. ... No other countries on Earth interested me as much as Finland.” – „Gyermekkorom óta valami csodálatos, érthetetlen érzelmi kapcsolat fűzött Finnországhoz. ... A föld (sic!) egyetlen országa sem érdekelt annyira, mint Finnország.” Own translation; Kodolányi 1937, 5

„ ... *Of Suomi (sic!), whose land and people gifted me with the deepest experiences since my childhood and [who] stays with me with the radiance of such brilliant memories, that now the tragedy of my second homeland is squeezing my throat?*”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ „ ... Suomiét, amelynek földje és népe gyermekkorom után a legmélyebb élményekkel ajándékozott meg s oly ragyogó emlékek sugárzásában maradt meg bennem, hogy most második hazám tragédiája szorongatja a torkomat?” Own translation; Kodolányi 1939, 146

7. Conclusion

As it was stated in the introduction this thesis attempted to answer the questions how portrayals of Finland and Finnish people in interwar travel literature tried to achieve, or at least propagate social changes and greater equality in Hungary.

In chapter two we have seen useful information about the social background of both Hungary and Finland, along with a general overview of Finnish-Hungarian idea of kinship and how the bilateral relations developed in the interwar years. The aim of this chapter was to help understanding the subsequent chapters for future readers not familiar with the topic. The social backgrounds certainly show similarities, when both Finland and Hungary had their own internal clash of ideologies right after the First World War. In Finland it was called a Civil War, in Hungary, Aster Revolution, Communist Revolution and Counterrevolution. While the political right (White Army) came out victorious in both Finland and Hungary, each country saw different paths of development. During the coming decades Finland achieved significant changes, whereas Hungary has preserved its rather archaic social and political structure. In Finland meaningful changes happened to the ownership of the land, in Hungary, the system of latifundia remained basically unchanged. In the years following the Civil War, Finland developed a multi-party parliamentary democracy. Though there were multiple parties in Hungary as well, it was a de facto one-party system. These differences were often brought up in the travelogues of Kodolányi.

What is interesting here is that despite the similarities, the post-war (and interwar as well) development of Finland and Hungary took very different paths. The use of the term “development” could actually be questioned in the case of Hungary. After everything that has been discussed, I would argue it may have been better to use the word “restoration” wherever the context permitted. In Finland changes in land ownership and educational reforms have put the country on a path of progressive development, while Hungary technically tried to restore pre-war conditions within the new borders. The Hungarian land reform did not bring significant changes, which ultimately affected the attempts to reform the education as after a certain age also children were required to join their parents in the fields. The lack of effective reforms and archaic mentality regarding social differentiation essentially prevented effective social mobility. This lack of social mobility, in my opinion, is what prevented Hungary from following a path of actual development.

Chapter three offers possibly the most interesting view on Finns and Finland. The starting point was to explore Finns and their relationship to nature, but it also touched topics of agriculture and tourism. Matters of agriculture are important because a proper utilization of natural resources (non-exploitative measures in agriculture) ensures survival. This is also the only topic where, according to Kodolányi, it is actually Finns who could learn from Hungary. But then he quickly becomes uncertain if Finns are in need of any Hungarian agricultural innovations at all. This he explains with the simplicity of Finns, which is often praised in both books. Sadly, not much is written about tourism as the interwar period was for both countries mostly about rebuilding, however, as said in the actual chapter, Finnish tourist industry was showing progress. Unfortunately, there is no mention of the state of tourism in Hungary, which is unfortunate, because it may have helped to understand what Kodolányi was trying to deliver.

It could be claimed that stereotypes about nature and tourism by the 21st century became closely related. After the Iron Curtain fell, travelling became more available and frequent worldwide. Now Finnish nature gained another way of utilization. It was not a subject of mainly agriculture anymore, but became an essential part of tourism as well. Present day guidebooks and itineraries all have dedicated chapters that offer information about “authentic Finnish nature”. These often play on stereotypes, such as endless forests, lake cruises, Northern Lights, endless night/daylight, reindeers, bears and saunas. We can say that since the end of WWII some observations of Kodolányi were “acted upon” as tourism now kept developing with attracting more and more tourists from abroad.

Chapters four and five essentially share the same motivation. Both in matters of culture and science Kodolányi wanted to set examples and make an influence. The most important of his intents was to bring some change to rather one-sided “German monopoly”. In literature the mostly consumed authors were either of German or Austrian origin and the ruling ideology (or mentality) followed in education was the strict Prussian line. Even today Finland is reputed to have one of the best education systems of the world. This part of the thesis was the most challenging to work with as I had little familiarity with topics of education, history of science before reading Kodolányi. Cultural cooperation today is however much more active thanks to the growing number of friendship societies, science and cultural institutes.

Compared to Hungary, events precluding World War II. in Finland were rather small-scale. There were those who sympathized with Nazi Germany in both countries, but the only one mentioned in the primary sources is Maila Talvio. Finland did not see any events to the volume Hungary did. A couple of significant Finnish cultural figures paid visits to Germany before the war and even in its first few of months, while Hungary saw partial territorial restoration in the First Vienna Award (Első Bécsi Döntés; November 2, 1938). What happened after, falls out of the timeframe of this thesis.

The main takeaway based on the primary sources is that meaningful social changes cannot be achieved without a sufficient level of social flexibility and consensus. The Hungarian elite is a good example here. While the improvements suggested by Kodolányi were indeed progressive, the higher social classes of Hungary were against anything meaningful as they felt their positions threatened by a possibly more equal peasantry.

There are two ways this research could be improved in the future. Better results require either a wider scope of analysis and not just one author or the analysis should be done in a wider timeframe, including for example Cold War.

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