

“Díszmagyar” (Hungarian Ceremonial) Attire as a Constitutional Symbol¹

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The paper works with a hypothesis that the Hungarian ceremonial (decorative or “gala”) attire of the 19th and early 20th century was a special expression of the national, political, legal and constitutional ideology of the Hungarian noble elite of these centuries. It served as a symbol of the legitimacy of Hungary’s quest for independence within the Habsburg Empire, as well as of the nationalist idea of the dominance of Magyars in the Kingdom of Hungary itself. In order to emphasise the specificity of Magyars and of the Hungarian Kingdom, the designers of both the clothing as well as of its jewellery accessories drew on historical sources, but also on oriental sources. In the 19th century, this symbolic meaning, together with economic goals – especially the achievement of self-sufficiency in textile production and the clothing industry – cumulatively contributed to the heyday of the “díszmagyar” fashion.

Keywords: díszmagyar, Hungarian magnate dress, Magnatentracht, hussar dress, gala dress, nobility, constitutional symbol

Extra Hungariam non est vita; si est vita, non est ita.
There is no life outside of Hungary, and if there is, it is not like this.

Introduction

In this paper, we will address the specific expression of material culture of the 19th century and of the first half of the 20th century when the efforts to express the national distinctiveness of Magyars, but also the independence of Hungary in relation to the other nations and countries of the Habsburg Empire (from 1867 onwards known as Austria-Hungary) culminated.

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Already in the 18th century, Herder's romantic ideas about the historical role of the Slavic peoples,³ but also the germanisation efforts of Emperor Joseph II, became a significant impulse for revived strive at political and constitutional independence of Hungary, as well as an impulse for codification of the Hungarian (magyar) language and searching for "typical" Hungarian features – costumes, songs, dances, traditions and values.⁴ This all was to strengthen the distinctiveness of Hungary and to establish the modern nation of Hungarians (magyars). At the same time, however, the newly emerging modern concept of the Hungarian nation was supposed to become exclusively ethnically Magyar. Until then, in contrast, only noble elites were perceived as the main representatives of the *natio Hungarica* – a state-forming nobility nation without clear ethnical borders, as a specific concept of nation which was only extended in the 19th century to include also other social strata and to be based on ethnical principles.⁵

The way to demonstrate this evolution in the 19th century was (among other features) also the wearing of specific Hungarian festive, decorative or "gala" fashion, emerging especially in the 1820s, which later experienced several waves of consolidation (in 1848, in 1860, in 1867, and possibly also in 1896 and 1916). In fact, its popularity persisted in the territory of Hungary even after the demise of the historical Hungarian Kingdom in 1918, being in official use until the end of the Second World War.

The so-called *díszmagyar* Hungarian clothing was hence supposed to be a recognisable sign of the independence and national self awareness of the Hungarians, and specifically of the Hungarian noble elites as traditional pillars of the Hungarian statehood and nation, whereby this clothing, together with its jewellery accessories, actually became a kind of "uniform" of the Hungarian nobility.⁶ The *díszmagyar* clothing in connection with the *díszmagyar* jewellery thus clearly represented a certain sign, symbol,⁷ or a whole special symbolic system, which we decode in this paper as an expression of not only the national specificity and constitutional independence of Hungary, but also as a sign of the surviving idea of Hungarian nobility as the traditional *natio Hungarica*, denoting also its special social status as well as its internal stratification.⁸ This special semiotics namely reliably identified its wearer as a representative of Hungary's social elite,⁹ a true

³ The idea of the historical role of nations as collective organisms was voiced by Herder in his work *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1774), which was published in Hungarian translation in 1811 (*Eszmék az emberiség történetének filozófiájához*). In contrast to the great and glorious future of the Slavs, Herder predicted the demise of the Hungarians (Magyars). This immediately contributed to efforts to consolidate the Magyar nation and to strengthen any and all Hungarian elements and Hungarian culture, even at the cost of emphasising the "oriental heritage" of Hungary. The personalities who started this revival were in particular Ferenc Kazinczy (1759–1831), the codifier of the Hungarian language, and Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784–1842), who sought for the origin and kinship of Hungarians in Central Asia. See KÖVES 2013: 166–168.

⁴ KONTLER 2001.

⁵ See HROCH 1993; TRENCSENYI–KOPEČEK 2006; TRENCSENYI–KOPEČEK 2007.

⁶ Cf. MAXWELL 2014: 199–200.

⁷ TURNAU 1991. For the history of the Hungarian dress, see also HÖLLRIGL 1938.

⁸ MAXWELL 2014: 215. Also SÍDÓ 2014: 212.

⁹ TOMAŠOVIČOVÁ–ULIČNÝ 2020: 89. Also cf. LENGYELOVÁ 2007: 441–447.

representative of the Hungarian state and nation, but at the same time, due to the diverse quality and variable financial demands of the jewellery and clothing, it also enabled their positioning in various stratigraphic contexts of the Hungarian elite.

This semiotic system thereby shows some common features in comparison with the material culture and lifestyle of similarly elitist Polish nobility, which we will pay attention to in this paper as well. Albeit certain similarities can be observed between Hungary and Poland with respect to nobility fashion, one can still identify significant specificities and differences of the Hungarian tradition. In order to analyse these differences and the specificities of the díszmagyar fashion, we will first present the origins of the Hungarian díszmagyar fashion related to both clothing as well as to special jewellery. Then, we will explain the specific feature and roots of orientalism of the díszmagyar fashion. Finally, we shall attempt a summary explanation of the semiotic meaning of díszmagyar fashion as a constitutional symbol.

Hungarian noblemen's clothing – the birth of the díszmagyar fashion

The period from the first quarter of the 19th century until 1945 was a period of approximately 120 years, when a special Hungarian fashion, pointing to the national identity and independence of Hungary, as well as to surviving special status of Hungarian nobility was born.

What happens to be called today as díszmagyar clothes and díszmagyar jewellery sets was thereby initially in the first half of the 19th century referred to only as "gala" clothing and "gala" jewellery sets. Alternatively, especially among the foreigners – with certain simplification and distortion – one also spoke of "hussar" clothing.¹⁰ Even later, besides the label of díszmagyar, there was also the label of "Hungarian magnate clothing" in use – for example, when Otto von Habsburg was photographed in such a clothing in 1937, journalists described it as "the uniform of a Hungarian hereditary magnate, equivalent to court dress".¹¹

In its essence, this specific type of fashion represented in fact an out-of-date, or even anachronistic return to medieval and early modern style of clothing and to the idea of specific textile based stratification of the population. The effort for a special material expression of the specificity of the Hungarian nation, respectively of its aristocratic elites, was thereby closely connected to the constitutional goals of the same elite – it was namely primarily intended to contribute to the struggle for constitutional self-determination of the Hungarian Kingdom and of Hungarians, but also the struggle for national homogenisation of Hungary. Hungarian elites namely at first started to use the fashion to express their opposition to the Habsburgs' attempts at unification of the monarchy.

¹⁰ MAXWELL 2014: 189–190. Refers to the work FLÓRIÁN 1993: 79, 81–82.

¹¹ MAXWELL 2014: 189–190.

After the failure of the revolution of 1848–49, the desired transformation of the empire into the dual state of Austria-Hungary finally took place only in 1867, which at least partially fulfilled the centuries long historical efforts of the Hungarian elites for independence. This victory, reflected in the constitutional dualism of the empire since 1867, was the culmination of the political and constitutional efforts of Hungary. Hungarian fashion and jewellery in the form of *díszmagyar* clothing and jewellery thus began to live their heyday and gained general acceptance in this period. It became a symbol and a confirmation of the political and constitutional victory, but also of the ever-increasing national chauvinism and elitism of the Hungarian nobility, especially of its aristocratic layer. Namely, after 1867 this clothing and jewellery also became a symbol of the Magyarisation efforts of the Hungarian noble elites¹² in the eyes of the other (non-Magyar) nations of Hungary.

The roots of the *díszmagyar* fashion

Until the 18th century, the political and constitutional efforts for independence of Hungary were mostly manifested in an armed form, namely in the Hungarian nobility uprisings, the last of which was the uprising of Ferenc Rákóczi II. These uprisings had their source mostly in Transylvania, and were usually led by Transylvanian princes, supported by the Ottoman Empire.

The inspiration from the Ottoman Empire can thereby be seen also in the actual fashion and look of the rebels. Probably due to the immediate neighbourhood of the Ottoman Empire, already since the 16th century Hungarian hussars namely dressed in leopard furs as a part of their uniforms. This trend of exotic fashion then gradually even strengthened, which can be particularly seen in the example of the flamboyant rebel troops of Ferenc Rákóczi II.¹³ They widely used orientalising and historicising elements of clothing and exotic jewellery components, such as more decorative clasps for outer coats (*mente*), or buttons on the undercoats (*dolmán*), in addition to the already previously used jewellery clips on hats and caps. They also began to use various pendants, as well as brooches and medallions, distinctive belts and decorated sabres.¹⁴ Apart from the distinctive jewellery accessories, even the clothes of the rebellious Protestant nobility were quite extravagant, albeit traditionally it was rather the Catholic nobility who tended towards bright colours.¹⁵

¹² See also KOVÁCS et al. 2010. For the clothing itself, see especially TOMPOS 2005; TOMPOS 2004; TOMPOS 2022.

¹³ His stepfather was the leader of the previous uprising and the Prince of Transylvania, Emeric Thököly. See SZTANCSNÉ KARDOS 2016: 8–10.

¹⁴ Decorated mace (*buzogány*) was also used by the Transylvanian insurgent troops as a sign of power in Transylvania from the 16th century. TOMPOS 2022: 100.

¹⁵ TOMPOS 2022: 85.

This "cultural" tradition thereby apparently remained alive even after the demise of the uprisings era and influenced also later searching for the national fashion trends, symbolising the specificity of the nation and of its constitutional goals. Since the end of the 18th century, a return to traditional clothing was namely popular in Central Europe as a part of the incipient national revival, the protagonists of which were Poles, Czechs and Hungarians alike.¹⁶ In the nationalist era within the Habsburg Empire, especially since the 1830s, the extravagant¹⁷ jewellery sets and colourful clothing based on historical models could thereby become in addition to a national symbol, also a symbol of the "glorious defiance" of Hungarians against the Habsburgs again – being in direct contrast to the ideals of the fashion accepted at the Viennese court.¹⁸

The roots of the fashion were thus both rebellious as well as nationalistic. Besides drawing from the tradition of extravagant uprising troops, another source of inspiration for the new fashion was also at hand – the revolutionary dresses showed continuity with the way of dressing of the so-called Old Hungarians, or possibly other nomadic ethnic groups of Hungary, such as the Szeklers of Transylvania. Considering the "exotic" origin of the Old Hungarians and related ethnic groups, it was understandable that the respective material culture of newly shaped Hungarian fashion therefore acquired more "exotic feel" compared to the fashion of Western Europe and Austria.

Certainly, in addition to the Old Magyar and other nomadic traditions, the Ottomans must have also been of great influence who also brought many oriental elements to Hungary. These could have been another historical source of inspiration for the "new" Hungarian fashion of the revived nationalist movement around 1800.

Interestingly, similar roots served also as a source of inspiration for Poland too.¹⁹ Both the Hungarian, as well as the Polish nobility namely wanted to distinguish themselves from the Western European nobility, whereby some similar features of their fashion can be identified, possibly drawing from the Ottoman models.²⁰ For example, a long dressing gown, which was worn as an outer garment in the 16th century, was always traditional for Polish nobles, but from the middle of the 17th century, another layer of clothing was added to it – a long overcoat, the *kontusz*, which usually had a length of up to knees and was decorated with buttons. This is sometimes considered to be of an Ottoman influence. The mantle was usually girded with a distinctive massive belt, which was richly decorated and was supposed to indicate the wealth of the nobleman. *Shavars* were worn on the legs, which were a type of trousers with a wide cut, being especially comfortable when riding a horse. The clothes of a Polish nobleman were traditionally complemented by a weapon – a caravel – a type of a sabre with a decorated handle and

¹⁶ Compare the poetic work of GVADÁNYI 1790 with reproaches addressed to Hungarians who dress according to Western, German fashion. Similarly, Maxwell points to the work of ÁNYOS 1798: 1:49–51: "large silver buttons and leopard furs, are more pleasing to the eyes of Hungarians."

¹⁷ Similarly, LUKÁCS 2017: 12.

¹⁸ TOMAŠOVIČOVÁ–ULIČNÝ 2020: 83–84.

¹⁹ GRUSIECKI 2018; GUILÉ 2018.

²⁰ PALÁTOVÁ 2020: 14–16.

scabbard. Finally, Polish nobles also wore a fur cap decorated with feathers on their heads, which was called the same as in Hungary – *kalpak*.²¹

In case of Hungarian nobles, a fur made headpiece known as *kalpak* was also traditionally worn on the head, or a textile cap (*süveg*) lined with fur was used instead. The headpiece was usually adorned with a metal clip (*süvegdísz, tollforgó*) – a gold or silver pin for holding bird feathers. The cap was basically of the same colour as the topcoat, *mente*. Under the *mente*, the nobleman wore a *dolmán* (a term attested since 1486; in Slovak language, the term *kabatec* was used²²) on an embroidered shirt, either short or long cut. Dolmáns usually had 12 decorated buttons. The dolmán could reach below the knees, or the back could be longer than the front. The sleeves of the dolmán were usually long, but exceptionally, sleeveless dolmáns were also used. The dolmán itself was decorated mainly with embroidery and stitching with golden threads.²³ It used to be girded with a belt, which in earlier times was made of cord (often reaching up to 4 meters in length) or cloth; only in more recent times a metal belt was used, matching the buttons and *tollforgó* (pin on the hat) in style and material.

Mente (a term attested since 1476, possibly derived from the French *manteau* – coat²⁴), which was worn on the dolmán, and was rather a sign of status than having a specific clothing function. The *mente* used to have 20-25 buttons sewn on, and on the chest, it used to be connected with a cord or chain, replaced later by chains²⁵ and even later a with a decorated chain-clasp (*mentekötő*).²⁶

In comparison with the Polish style of dressing, in addition to the use of a *mente* of a shorter cut than the Polish kontusz, the clothing of the Hungarian noblemen also differed in a different cut of trousers – Hungarians used narrow, tight trousers, often decorated with embroidery.

Hungarian noble clothing was finally complemented by yellow or red boots²⁷ with spurs (*sarkantyúk*). Lower shoes were also popular, the inner part of which was laced at the ankle, and the shoes were additionally slipped into “slippers”.²⁸

A common Ottoman influence on Polish and Hungarian aristocratic fashion is thereby assumed particularly in that dolmán and *mente*, just like Polish kontusz, may have been inspired by Turkish caftans, which were also sewn in a T shape, with straight shoulders. *Mente* could have been either sleeveless, or with sleeves only up to the elbow, which were often called as “Turkish sleeves”.²⁹ However, whether dolmáns and mentes are really an Ottoman influence, is still not clear. Already in the inventory of Hippolit d’Este’s wardrobe (1479–1520) from the period when he served as the archbishop of

²¹ TAZBIR 1978: 41.

²² TURNAU 1991: 57.

²³ TURNAU 1991: 7.

²⁴ TURNAU 1991: 17–19.

²⁵ KISS 2003: 8–9. For the older period of the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, see also NAGY 1912.

²⁶ KÓVÁRI 1860: 26–28.

²⁷ TURNAU 1991: 23. Refers to the memories of Baron Apor – *Metamorphosis Transylvaniae*.

²⁸ TOMAŠOVIČOVÁ–ULIČNÝ 2020: 83–84.

²⁹ TOMPOS 2004: 15.

Esztergom in Hungary, "Hungarian *dolmány*s" and "Hungarian vests" were mentioned already at the end of the 15th century, i.e. before the Ottoman influence could have become more pronounced. A guild of "Hungarian tailors" was active in Buda as early as 1492, which could once again indicate a special Hungarian fashion and clothing culture, following from older traditions.³⁰ Unfortunately this cannot be verified, since we only have portraits and preserved pieces of clothing from the 16th and 17th centuries (especially in the Eszterházy collection at Forchtenstein Castle in Austria) – and for this reason it is not possible to assess the continuity of clothing from before the 15th century with the situation in the 16th and 17th centuries.

However, it seems that a certain continuity could have been present, since the subsequent development also shows elements of continuity in patterns and cuts, which are only gradually enriched with new elements. For example wide and long forked sleeves, which were preserved as part of Hungarian noblemen's outfit until the 20th century, were said to be a manifestation of older traditions from before the time of Ottoman influence. In contrast to Western Europe, tradition was namely playing a major role in Hungarian aristocratic fashion, where clothing represented not only material, but also a symbolic value. Parts of clothing or entire sets were the subject of testamentary inheritance over the centuries in individual families. It was not uncommon for a young aristocrat to have his portrait made in the clothes of his distinguished ancestor, thereby declaring respect for the family, as well as its ancient lineage.³¹

To sum up, if we accept the idea of tradition and conservatism in Hungarian fashion, we can state that several sources were evident in the Hungarian noble fashion³² – original old Magyar patterns combined with subsequent Ottoman influences, mediated on one hand directly by the Ottomans, and on the other hand imported via the rebellious traditions of the Transylvanian troops. These features were then only strengthened in the period of national revival at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, when these older elements were replicated and hyperbolised.

At the end of the 18th century, this style of dressing became popular also due to the good reputation of Hungarian hussars, famous mainly thanks to the heroism demonstrated in the war for Silesia in the years 1740–1748. Subsequently, a special Hungarian court guard was created at the imperial court in Vienna under Maria Theresa, which was characterised by a similar style of dress. It was then further copied by the Hungarian nobility living at the imperial court, who adopted this style of dress as a "national" noble costume. From there it was only a step to reinventing the dress in 1820s to serve as a national symbol.³³

³⁰ TOMPOS 2004: 15.

³¹ TOMAŠOVIČOVÁ–ULIČNÝ 2020: 88.

³² TURNAU 1991: 7–8.

³³ This style was thereby adopted even by the Habsburg monarchs themselves at the time of their coronation as Hungarian kings, in order to symbolically identify themselves with Hungarian values and ideals. The older model for the ceremonial dress of the monarchs at the coronation can be seen in the dress of Mathias II Habsburg in the portrait by Hans von Aachen from 1612, and the portrait of Ferdinand III from 1625 from the brush of Justus Sustermans. See BUZÁSI 2018.

The jewellery accessories of the díszmagyar clothing

The detailed presentation of the díszmagyar fashion cannot omit the jewellery sets, which complemented the clothing. These were produced as sets especially from the mid-19th century, predominantly from 1860, to be used as accessories to the díszmagyar clothing. The design of these sets was thereby again based on older jewellery traditions. Men's aristocratic clothing in Hungary was namely characterised by jewellery long before the díszmagyar fashion trend emerged.³⁴

Our source of information on the older phases of jewellery making in Hungary are again mainly portraits, but also some older museum objects. The Hungarian National Museum administers a rich collection of costume jewellery, from the period when the use of older types of jewellery ended and the use of newer díszmagyar jewellery began. This ensemble has its basis in Jankovich's collection³⁵ of over 1000 pieces, which was bought by the Hungarian state from the collector Jankovich (1773–1846) in 1836, exactly at the time when the new díszmagyar sets of jewellery accessories began to gain popularity.³⁶

Drawing from the older pieces of jewellery, but also from the portraits, it follows that until the 18th century, decorative hat clips prevailed in men's jewellery. The pin on the cap, or kalpak, thus appears to be the oldest element of jewellery in male clothing, appearing in portraits as early as at the end of the 15th century. This type of jewellery became particularly popular in Transylvania from the third of the 17th century onwards, which, according to some opinions, may again be related to Ottoman influences – since the Ottomans widely used jewellery decorations on their turbans, especially in the shape of flowers.³⁷ In Hungary, however, the fact that the clip has the shape of a bird's feather is a specific feature.

From among the other traditional jewellery, one can mention buttons, used for both practical and decorative purposes,³⁸ having their origin linked to the Middle Ages.

Another traditional piece of jewellery were the mantle clasps. However, at first, instead of metal or chain mantle clasps, in the older period we rather come across using simple cords,³⁹ as we can see it in the portrait of Ferdinand III from Justus Sustermans. It wasn't until the 18th century that a metal chain began to be used instead of a cord. We can find this type on the well-known depiction of Ferenc Rákóczi II by Ádám Mányoki.

The mentioned basic three types of jewellery – hat pin, buttons and mantle clasps – thus represented, in addition to the decorative sabre, the original, traditional jewellery elements of the Hungarian noble clothing.

³⁴ The history of jewellery in Hungary is generally represented by HÉJNYÉ DÉTÁRI 1965 and ALCSUTI 1940.

³⁵ MIKÓ 2002.

³⁶ The jewellery often combined older and newer elements. For example in the set that belonged to Gábor Prónay, the middle rosette of the belt is made of Byzantine goldsmith work from the 7th century AD. See KISS–TOMPOS 2003: 65.

³⁷ TOMPOS 2004: 41–43.

³⁸ HALÁSZOVÁ 2017: 58.

³⁹ The so-called *mente* belts. TOMPOS 2005: 79–81.

In the 19th century, as a part of the díszmagyar fashion, the mente clasp began to take on an even more ornate form, when it basically consisted of three or five rosettes connected by chains.⁴⁰ The central rosette usually contained the buckle.⁴¹ Such clasps were mostly produced in a set with similarly designed metal belts with the same type of rosettes (replacing the 1830s belts previously made of cords or fabric). The same decoration could have been used even on the scabbard and hilts of the sabre, on buttons, on hat-pin, and even on the spurs.⁴² Spurs thereby often took zoomorphic and floral shapes – e.g. eagle, dragon, flower, etc.⁴³

The metal elements of díszmagyar jewellery were thereby often decorated with enamel, which was especially characteristic of Transylvanian jewellery. Since the 16th century, Transylvanian jewellery and enamelling namely represented the pinnacle of Hungarian jewellery making, thereby using mainly eastern patterns, especially floral ones (flowers and leaves), possibly under the Ottoman influence again. Turquoise was the predominant colour used at first, but subsequently other types of colours were also used, especially for floral motifs.⁴⁴ Thus, turquoise is most often combined with almadine or garnet also on later díszmagyar jewellery, often in combination with floral motifs.

Another affinity with Transylvanian jewellery can also be seen in connection between rosettes on díszmagyar belts and mantle clasps, and the Transylvanian *heftels*, large brooches that were worn by Transylvanian townspeople and wealthy peasant women on their chests. These, in their shape and decoration, really resemble later prototypical rosettes on díszmagyar jewellery.⁴⁵ Hence, this again points to the fact that Transylvania could have been the ideological and visual image model for the díszmagyar jewellery fashion, possibly under the Ottoman and other oriental influences.

Díszmagyar as a specific manifestation of orientalism?

The fact that díszmagyar fashion contains eastern, be it Transylvanian or even more exotic and orientalist symbolism, should not surprise us at all. Hungary, as a centuries-long "buffer" zone of Ottoman attacks on Europe, perceived itself as a defender of the Christian faith, but at the same time partly as an "oriental" entity itself, being established originally by nomadic warriors – the Old Magyars. For this reason alone, certain "exoticism" was naturally encoded and embraced in Hungarian national tradition. It only became more and more pronounced with the time – especially, since the marginal position on the periphery of Western Latin civilisation, on the border with Islam, but also with Orthodox

⁴⁰ KISS 2003: 7–8.

⁴¹ TOMPOS 2005: 95.

⁴² F. DÓZSA et al. 2012: 113.

⁴³ TOMPOS 2005: 94.

⁴⁴ TEMESVÁRY 1989: 113.

⁴⁵ See the catalogue of KISS–TOMPOS 2003: 50 – it contains samples from the collection of Miklós Jankovich.

Christianity, gave rise to a combination of Hungary's inferiority complex due to its backward economy and culture on the one hand,⁴⁶ with a compensatory psychological mechanism of searching for specificity of its elites on the other. Thus, already in the high Middle Ages and the early modern age, the idea of the specificity of Hungary was born, which subsequently began to be transformed into national and political idea during the period of Baroque culture.

It is thereby no coincidence that in the same period, in Poland, the idea of the so-called Sarmatism was born, as an expression of Baroque Slavism, looking for the roots of Poles in ancient Sarmatia and in the Sarmatians.⁴⁷ Similarly, Hungary looked for its national origin not only in the exotic Old Magyars, but also in the oriental Huns and Avars, whose activity in the Carpathian basin was supposed to legitimise the rule of Hungary and its dominance over this territory.

A mutual competition for historical primacy between the Poles and the Hungarians could naturally arise from this, but this imaginary competition did not actually divide the two historical formations and their elites; on the contrary, it united them – in the search for exotic and oriental ancestors of their elites, which fully embraced historicising (and at the same time orientalising and exoticising) material culture, including clothing and jewellery.

However, still, Poland showed some specificities compared to Hungary in this respect – a strong Catholic and western tradition became a solid part of the “Sarmatian identity” of the Polish nobility. In Hungary, which, on the other hand, had a strong Protestant tradition of fighting against the Catholic Habsburgs, the Catholic element was not emphasised so much. Instead, Hungary proudly claimed its status of a bridge between East and West,⁴⁸ which was supposed to be a specific feature of Hungary. Hungary namely did not quite belong, nor did it explicitly wish to belong, to the exclusively Occidental tradition.⁴⁹ Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913), a Hungarian orientalist, thus openly considered the research into the origin and earliest history of Hungarians as a part of Oriental Studies.⁵⁰ This is also why the attitude of Hungary and

⁴⁶ Thus, the first codifier of Hungarian law, Stephen Werbőczy, states in the work *Opus tripartitum* from 1514 that Hungary could not develop evenly with the rest of Europe, as it was occupied with constant struggles for the defence of Europe. ŠTENPIEN 2008.

⁴⁷ At the same time, it was a completely normal search for the biblical or ancient origin of an ethnic group, albeit with slightly more “scientific” methods than the medieval chronicler’s work. The idea of the origin of the Slavs from the ancient Sarmatians became the source of the idea of Polish Sarmatism. This idea appeared in Poland already in the 15th century. Jan Długosz (1415–1480), a Polish chronicler, speaks of the so-called Sarmatian Mountains, Sarmatian Sea, etc. This consciously follows on from ancient references to the battles between the Romans and the Sarmatians, which served to build the national consciousness of the Poles, as a source of their historicity and ancient glory. In the 16th century, a synthesis of views on the Sarmatian origin of the Poles was drafted by Maciej from Miechow in his work *Traktat o dwóch Sarmacjach, azjatyckiej i europejskiej* (Kraków 1517). See MAZURKIEWICZ [s. a.].

⁴⁸ KÁLLAY 1883.

⁴⁹ SAID 1977.

⁵⁰ The culmination of this type of thinking could have been the millennial celebrations of the thousandth anniversary of the arrival of the Old Hungarians into the Carpathian Basin, which took

Hungarians towards the Orient was more positive than negative. After all, even after the defeat of the revolution of 1848–49, the representatives of the liberal revolutionaries fled primarily to the Ottoman Empire, just as the noble rebels against the Habsburgs traditionally did previously.

Still, the Hungarian nobleman was in spite of some differences very close to the Polish one in his customs, temperament and clothing.⁵¹ The values of the Polish and Hungarian nobility remained very similar as well⁵² – grandeur, contempt for work and for the “working classes”, as well as the belief in the special status of heroic nobility. However, such character traits were subsequently an object of criticism from the representatives of the modern bourgeois and liberal classes.⁵³ Still, precisely against such criticism, Sarmatism, as well as Hungarian díszmagyar historicism, did serve well as a specific legitimising tool of the special social status of the noble elites of Poles and Hungarians.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, with the time, Polish Sarmatism became more salon-like, merging with the style and taste of the middle classes, which merged with the lower Polish nobility, probably also thanks to the national homogeneity of Poland.⁵⁵ On the contrary, in Hungary, where the nobility was ethnically almost exclusively Magyarised, the style and taste of the nobility remained different from the fashion of the bourgeois and popular classes of various ethnic and national backgrounds, making the díszmagyar fashion to be used almost exclusively by Magyarised noble classes. This, in fact, made the díszmagyar fashion a stronger political, social and constitutional symbol than the Sarmatism was in Poland.

The díszmagyar as a constitutional symbol

In contrast to Polish Sarmatism, the díszmagyar clothing served besides the role of the symbol of oriental roots of historical nobility also another special role in Hungary – as a symbol of independence and of resistance traditions.

place in 1896. Subsequently, however, the idea of the oriental roots of the Hungarians was gradually abandoned, especially when the kinship of the Hungarians with the Finns was scientifically proven and accepted, within the Finno-Ugric language group.

⁵¹ GRZYBOWSKI 1996: 52.

⁵² However, Poland and Hungary differed in the artistic expression and depiction of their elites, as well as their self-presentation, including fashion and jewellery. The Polish elite, just like the Hungarian one, was proud of their heroism, bravery, and the inevitably associated barbarism (let's just mention the popular severed “Turkish” heads on the Hungarian noble coats of arms), but the Hungarian nobility insisted on the pomp of their portrayals, even at the cost of idealising portraits. See HALÁSZOVÁ 2020. The Polish pictorial tradition was noticeably more realistic and naturalistic, leading to the depiction of Polish nobility in significantly more unflattering guises, including physical imperfections. On the contrary, the Polish nobles were proud of their origin, official functions and titles, which they enumerated on their portraits, which, on the other hand, is not so characteristic of Hungary. KŁODA–SZELĄG 2016: 10.

⁵³ For example in the novel of CHALUPKA 1959.

⁵⁴ ZARYCKI 2014: 141.

⁵⁵ WĘGRZYN 2021.

The Hungarian elites proudly presented these rebellious traditions even directly in front of the Habsburg rulers, especially at the moments when the monarch was striving for police absolutism in the first half of the 19th century. It was namely the coronation of Queen Carolina Augusta in Pressburg in 1825 and then the coronation of Ferdinand V in Pressburg in 1830 that gave the opportunity to widely use and present the new type of “gala” clothing, which was later to become known as *díszmagyar*.

The fashion was thus also a medium of political message of specificity of Hungary. And this message was supposed to be transmitted not only to the Habsburgs, but also to the wider European politics. An international recognition of this newly redesigned national fashion and its legacy was thus ensured already in 1829 at a ball in Paris, where Count Rudolph Apponyi was dressed in clothes made by the tailor Adam Kostyál (Košťál). Subsequently, in 1830, Apponyi again repeatedly presented the “new” Hungarian fashion at Paris balls, being extensively covered by Paris fashion magazines. Seven years later, these cuts became so popular even among the domestic audience – the Hungarian nobility – that in 1837 Kostyál’s creations were referred to as “national gala clothing”.⁵⁶

Every success naturally encourages competition. Kostyál thus had to face competition first represented by the tailor Venczel Klasszy,⁵⁷ who migrated to Pest in 1828 and who gained popularity in 1836 by donating 10 costumes to the National Theatre.⁵⁸ The third comparable tailor, familiar with the new *díszmagyar* fashion and its cuts, was Gáspár Tóth, who also sewed for Sándor Petőfi.⁵⁹ However, even regional tailors began to adapt quickly to this fashion – e.g. Anton Zók, working in the city of Szigetvár, published a bilingual book of cuts of Hungarian men’s gala clothes – in Hungarian and German language.⁶⁰

It is thereby no coincidence that the pursuit of this renewed Hungarian fashion is connected precisely with the reform period of 1825–1848, when the liberal middle nobility was striving for reforms, but with an emphasis on the preservation of national elements. These efforts combined with an independence fight for Hungary culminated in the revolution of 1848–49, when the Hungarian elites rose up against the emperor once again. However, after the defeat of the revolution, it was precisely for this reason that “Hungarian clothing” was banned during the coming period of so-called Bach’s neo-absolutism, although local politicians still wore it in protest, for example upon

⁵⁶ Kostyál himself came from a minor nobility family from Dolné Mošovce, where he was born on 2 February 1792. In Pest he opened a tailor shop on Kígyó Street in 1827, while at the height of his fame he employed up to 50 tailors. After the revolution of 1848–49 he closed his workshop and after a long break only in the 1860s did he start teaching a new generation of young tailors again. He died in 1863. See F. DÓZSA et al. 2012: 82–83.

⁵⁷ He had a workshop on Ferenciek Square in the building of the Eggenbergers. For his dispute with Kostyál, see LUKÁCS 2017: 99–101.

⁵⁸ MAXWELL 2014: 202.

⁵⁹ He had a workshop near Kostyál in the Jankovich building on the corner of Kígyó and Uri Streets (today’s Petőfi Street).

⁶⁰ ZÓK 1835.

visit by the imperial couple. In 1857, even the imperial couple themselves dressed up in díszmagyar – as a kind of (unsuccessful) attempt to reconcile with the Hungarians.⁶¹

Still, after the fall of Bach's absolutism and the Austro-Hungarian compromise in 1867, the use of this clothing fashion together with respective jewellery accessories became yet more widespread – apparently also as a symbol of victory. At the coronation of Francis Joseph I as the Hungarian King in 1867, members of the Hungarian parliament wore exactly this style of clothing. The growing nationalism thereby only further contributed to the development of the díszmagyar clothing fashion, where individual cuts were given "national" names after eminent historical figures of Hungarian politics and culture – the laced dolmán became known as "attila", and the shorter version was called "árpádka". "Kazinczy" was the name for a dolmán with the fronts of the sleeves only reaching to the elbow and the backs of the sleeves being longer. "Zrínyi" was a cut with a stand-up collar. A fur-lined dolmán was called "csokonai". The long and wide topcoat, in turn, bore the name "deák" since the second half of the 19th century.⁶² Other cuts were called "kölcsey" or "hunyadi".⁶³

The millennial celebrations of 1896 (thousandth anniversary of the arrival of Old Magyars into the Carpathian basin) also contributed to further development of this style of clothing and jewellery accessories.⁶⁴ It is this period that represents the peak of díszmagyar fashion and jewellery.

However, around the same time, at least since 1867, German fashion began to penetrate Hungary as well. The new Austrian (western) fashion has gradually led to the abandonment of the díszmagyar style of dress⁶⁵ among the lower nobility and middle class, preferring cheaper, factory-made clothing. Still, in contrast, the elites preserved the older tradition of hand-sewn díszmagyar clothing with jewellery sets further, distinguishing themselves thus even more from the other classes, the díszmagyar fashion symbolising their role in the society, within the Hungarian nation, and in the fight for independence of Hungary.

Especially after 1918, however, this clothing acquired also another, additional political meaning – it served namely to symbolise Hungary's continuity with the great Hungary, which disintegrated in 1918.⁶⁶ The díszmagyar fashion thus also served as an important reactionary symbol in Hungary way until 1945, changing thus partially the contents of its constitutional symbolic meaning, while not detracting anything from its clearly symbolic nature.

⁶¹ MAXWELL 2014: 201.

⁶² TOMPOS 2004: 17.

⁶³ MAXWELL 2014.

⁶⁴ KISS 2003: 9.

⁶⁵ MAXWELL 2014: 204.

⁶⁶ MAXWELL 2014: 212.

Conclusions

The “díszmagyar” fashion was a symbol and expression of the Magyarised Hungarian aristocracy. On the one hand, the díszmagyar clothing and jewellery could highlight the specific personality of its wearer, as for example in case of Count Andrassy, who wore díszmagyar clothing on special occasions with a belt made of gold, pearls, emeralds and other precious stones, while his cap was decorated with a pin that matched the belt.⁶⁷ On the other hand, in a group or crowd of magnates dressed and decorated in this way, for example at the coronation of a monarch, this group also presented the collective power of the traditional Hungarian political nation (nobility), while being clearly based on traditions distinct from western traditions, as perceptively described by foreign witnesses at the coronation of Francis Joseph I.⁶⁸ Ludwig Ritter von Przibram, for example, spoke of “Eastern pomp” in this context,⁶⁹ although it is also true that the Swiss ambassador spoke less elegantly about the “carnival-like” form of the procession, which seemed anachronistic to him.⁷⁰ However, this was the actual intention of the Hungarian aristocracy for whom the exoticism and orientalism combined with a luxurious effect were a conscious choice by which they expressed the independence of Hungary and specificity of its traditional noble elites.

Ceremonial clothing and its jewellery components thus represented an important political and constitutional symbol – not only a symbol of individual status, but also of the collective status of the Hungarian aristocracy in the Hungarian society, as well as of the status of Hungary within the Empire. *Díszmagyar* thus eventually became so symbolically laden that even after 1918 it remained in use as a material relic of Hungary’s glorious past – in the era where only the díszmagyar clothing and díszmagyar jewellery reminded the society of the peak of the national emancipation efforts, hoping to preserve the idea of Hungary’s continuous existence and potential re-emergence in full glory again.

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⁶⁷ SIDÓ 2014: 213.

⁶⁸ SIDÓ 2014: 214–215: “The magnates, with more sense than I should have given them credit for, ranged and marshalled themselves just under our balcony, [...] There was scarcely one who had not something distinguished in the shape of jewels, furs, etc. The Baron Wenckheim has a magnificent ornament shaped like a plume from which hung several immense emeralds; the trappings and saddle-cloth of the Prince Esterhazy were one mass of precious stones; and then their costumes! There was cloth of gold and of silver, velvet of every shade and colour.”

⁶⁹ SIDÓ 2014: 215.

⁷⁰ SIDÓ 2014: 216.

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