



ENIKŐ SZŐCSNÉ GAZDA

## The Trend Changes of the Cottage Industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Example of Lace from the Székely Land<sup>1</sup>

In a study published in 1969, Hermann Bausinger compares the situation of ethnography to a parallelogram: “the hypostatized object is always smaller in reality, and the compensatory construction is always larger” (Bausinger 1982: 9). The narrowing of the parallelogram’s base is increasingly perceptible if we focus our attention on the study of folk art: we have to consider not only the increasingly debatable framework of the concept of *folk*, but also the ever more intensive blurring of the categories of *art* and *material world*, *handicrafts*, and *cottage industry*, or even the impossibility to draw clear boundaries between them.

The objects of our analysis waver even more in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: we have to extend the concept of *folk art* not only in the direction of the *popular*, but we also have to apply some narrowing of the concept as a *niche art*. In fact, from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we can no longer talk of a motivated folk art, but rather about *handicrafts*, and we also have to introduce the concept of *hobby activity* into the terminology of our investigations.

This study attempts to survey the 20<sup>th</sup> century forms of the lace-making cottage industry of the Székely Land proceeding precisely within this delicate border area.

The research on lace-making has hitherto been quite neglected by the ethnographic literature. In the portions concerned with lace of his monographic work entitled *A magyarság néprajza* [The Ethnography of the Hungarians], Károly Viski dedicated little space to the filet lace-making (*rece*) from Magyargyerőmonostor (Mănăstireni) (Viski 1923: 335). After the brief summary of Antal Szmik from 1925, which only mentioned Transylvanian lace-making in passing (Szmik 1925: 57), it was only Kornélia Ferencz who discussed the sewn laces from the Lugos (Lugoj) and Kalotaszeg (Călata) region (Ferencz 1937). Hajnal F. Halay offered an interpretation of the famous bobbin lace-making from Torockó (Rimetea) (Halay 2010) and, more recently, Lilla Erdei T. discussed in a separate ethnographic study the popular use of laces and primarily the role of the lace from Torockó (Rimetea) in popular clothing (Erdei T. 2005, 2010). Recently, renewed attempts were made to present the most important technologies and centres within the framework of

1 The Hungarian version of this study was published in the 1/2015 issue of the journal *Ethnographia*. See Szőcsné Gazda 2015. The English version is a translation of this text without any changes.

an exhibition organised in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe) and its exhibition catalogue (Szócsné Gazda 2013).

The silence surrounding this topic could partly be due to the fact that lace escapes the net of the more rigid interpretations of tradition, since its large-scale naturalisation was the result of the fashion associated with the process of embourgeoisement. However, the relationship between fashion and tradition is in need of being reconsidered. Even Edward Shils' three-generation model for the interpretation of tradition is permeated by continuously changing elements, and revival phenomena are interwoven with the texture of tradition as their fashion trends continue to flare up occasionally. Bourgeois fashion phenomena sometimes extend beyond their original medium, and their prolonged variation process of more than three generations makes it legitimate to ask whether we should consider this phenomenon as one of the same tradition, or is this time frame in fact filled by a series of mutually related fashions.

Lace has evidently been a traditional element in Transylvania: the bobbin-lace from Torockó and the filet lace (*rece*) from Kalotaszeg looks back up on a history of several centuries, and the popular use of the sewn lace (needle-lace) applied for joining fabric edges can also be found at almost every ethnographic group. The effect of school education can clearly be observed in the spread of some techniques within the Székely Land: for instance, crocheting and the making of filet lace was already taught in 1862 at the Reformed elementary girls' school from Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) (Száva 1879: 80–81), and the pupils of the Karolina Pintye private school learned to crochet "fashionable laces" at the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc) (Tivai Nagy 1996: 220–221). Bobbin-lace-making was also taught in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe) between 1880 and 1882, in the industrial school for women operated by the *Háziipari Egylet* [Domestic Industry Association]: the sample collection kept by the Ethnographic Museum from Budapest indicates that the basics of making Torchon lace<sup>2</sup> were taught at this institute.<sup>3</sup>

Many topics from the history of the introduction of lace can be outlined, which are quite interesting from an ethnographic point of view. Created traditions always appear beside the tradition, as outside direction does beside autonomous development and external social support beside internal inspiration. The cross-talking relationship between industrialisation and the handicrafts sometimes manifests itself in unexpected ways, since lately it is the industrial centres where lace-making clusters unexpectedly appear.

2 The Torchon lace is one of the most easily teachable subgenres of bobbin-lace. The school methodology of preparing these narrow lace-strips decorated with geometric patterns was already elaborated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See Weldon s. a., *The American...* 1904, Sime 1904.

3 On the school teaching of lace-making, see in more detail Szócsné Gazda 2013: 21–26.



## Lace and Social Care

Lace-making was among the first types of handicrafts whose history is strongly related to that of social care. Already in 1560, in the Annaberg area of the Czech-Saxon Ore Mountains, bobbin-lace-making was disseminated in order to offer to women a secure source of income after the potential depletion of the ore of the mines and thus to achieve security for the miners' families (Keller 1998: 189).

The teaching of handicrafts appeared as a socio-political strategy also within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Lace-making was introduced artificially in the Gömör-Szepes Ore Mountains (Slovak Ore Mountains) as well, in order to provide sources of livelihood for the miners' families (Vydra 1930: 6–7). Maria Theresa also introduced the teaching of lace-making in the orphanages founded by her so that the orphan girls would have a source of income (Csiszér 2001: 155).

Women's education in the domain of domestic industry was an important objective throughout the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in those areas where the income sources of the male population have been reduced. It was in this period that the lack of secure sources of livelihood has become an acute problem in several regions of Hungary: ore started to become scarce in the previously well-functioning mines (Csetnek, Torockó), and the population boom led to a property fragmentation of such extent that it could no longer serve as a basis of sustenance even for the agricultural population (in the case of the Székely Land). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, craftspeople from the Hungarian border areas received another *coup de grâce* from the "tariff war": the sizable tariffs imposed upon industrial products determined the craftsmen from the Székely Land to move towards Moldavia and Wallachia. The Székely exodus at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is also confirmed by many statistics. According to Ferenc Kozma's survey from 1875, many people from the Székely counties of Csík and Háromszék migrated to Moldavia and Wallachia. According to Kozma, they were primarily women in the case of Csík County and craftsmen in the case of Háromszék (Kozma 2008: 129). In 1891, a survey of Háromszék County indicated that 3,620 people have left with one-year passports, "two thirds of them men and one third women, half of this last one third being girls between the ages 13 and 15" (Nagy 1893: 7). Surveys among craftsmen seemed even more discouraging. For instance, at the 1888 general assembly of the *Erdélyi Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület* [Hungarian Cultural Society of Transylvania] determined that "during a two and a half month period, 7 master boot makers with 50 apprentices, 6 tanners, 5 milliners, 7 carpenters, 5 cobblers, and 3 coppers have left Kézdivásárhely and settled down definitively in Romania, eagerly waiting all year for the end of the tariff war or hoping to find jobs at home". (EMKE 1888: 80)

Thus, the home employment of women was a political objective for which economic specialists, politicians, and intellectuals alike sought possible solutions. This goal was all the more pressing since some of the young immigrant girls have become victims of human trafficking, while others remained definitively abroad,

or returned to their home village morally corrupted, with illegitimate children in their laps.

Lace-making as a possible guideline for industrial development was especially recommended in the 1860s by dr. Sándor Konek, who illustrated how quick it can be made into a popular industry with statistical data: “The example of Helvetia show us how suitable bobbin-lace-making and, more specifically, embroidery is to become a popular industry: 50000 women practice here embroidery in white, especially in the cantons St. Gallen and Appenzell, and 8,000 women prepare laces in the cantons Neuenburg, Bern, Schvyz, Genf, and Waadt [...]. In 1855, in Silesia, special schools dedicated to lace-sewing (needle-lace) were established through government subsidies, and Czech women were invited as instructors. Since then, this branch of industry has also rapidly spread in this region. The examples of England and France show us how lace-making, trimmings, and embroidery can become an industrial branch of national economic importance.” (Konek 1865: 364)

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, attempts were made in many places to implement in practice the recommendations concerning the national economy through introducing the lace-making industry. In 1907, the *Nők Világa* [Women’s World], the supplement of the *Unitárius Közlöny* [The Unitarian Gazette] reported that “several patriotic Hungarian women started to think about how all that money leaking abroad could be kept home, providing a source of income through lace-making to the daughters of the poor, thus saving them from the ever-spreading virus of the fever of emigration” (Fanghné Gyűjtő 1907: 67). Although at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the movement alluded to by the *Nők Világa* was much more widespread in other regions of historical Hungary than in Transylvania, the gazette had considerable effect on the women “elites” of the Székely Land: several of its editors were from the Székely Land, and its Székely readership – due precisely to the strong presence of the Unitarian faith in this region – was also quite numerous.

This was indeed the period when the movement invoked by the *Nők Világa* developed, as the Szontágh sisters attempted to help the residents of Csetnek from Upper Hungary (Štítňik, today Slovakia), who were in a crisis due to the termination of the mining operations and the banning of tobacco productions, through implementing the technique of Irish guipure<sup>4</sup> upon Hungarian models and disseminating it among women (Erdei 2005: 13). In order to provide a work opportunity for local women in Balatonendre, Reformed pastor Endre Kájel first organised the teaching of bobbin-lace-making (Gervai–Hábel 1995: 51), and later, in order to help, for instance, the residents of Szentes, damaged by hail, proposed the launch of a bobbin-lace-making course (Gervai–Hábel 1995: 69). In the Háromszék region, Bálint Benedek Szentkatolnai attempted, in the same period, to introduce tulle embroidery in Kézdivásárhely (Târgu Secuiesc) (Szöcsné Gazda 2013: 63–70).

4 “Irish guipure” is the characteristic designation for Irish crochet lace. This type of lace was developed in the 1840s. The characteristics of this orientation in lace-making originated in Dublin are floral motifs, changing surfaces due to the looser or tighter crocheting of the threads, and the impressive juxtaposition of the surfaces imitating the play of petals.



One of the most important localities specialising on bobbin-lace-making from the Székely Land, Székelyszentkirály has also become the lace-making centre of the region as a result of this social care.

## Székelyszentkirály and Bobbin-Lace-Making<sup>5</sup>

Székelyszentkirály (Sâncrai) is a small settlement in the vicinity of Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc), administratively belonging today to Oroszhegy (Dealu).

The 1820 urbarial conscription of Cziráky stated about Székelyszentkirály that, “our mountains being destroyed, we lease pinewood from the neighbouring mountain villages either with money or with grains reimbursed from the profits, and produce harrows, dishes, vineyard stakes, and other products which we then try to sell. It is from these profits that we help the barrenness of our lands” (Takács 2001: 197).

Consequently, due to the limey soil and the lack of wood, the inhabitants of Székelyszentkirály tried to orient themselves toward a money-making lifestyle already at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only the processing of softwood, tile- and brick making is mentioned with reference to this village (Barabás 1904: 39). However, due to the large number of children, this income was not sufficient, and thus it has become fashionable among girls to earn money as handmaids.

János Szabó, the parish priest of this small village, already attempted to stem the dominant migration tendency soon after the Treaty of Trianon, in 1924. In order to build the reputation of the school and to save “our young girls streaming to the cities and exposed there to certain danger”, the parish priest turned to the *Szociális Testvérek Társaság* [Social Service Brotherhood Association] meeting in 1924 in Székelyudvarhely. The Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) centre of the Social Mission Society’s [*Szociális Misszió Társulat*] Economy Department sent out a teacher in the person of Lajosné Árkosy in order to teach bobbin-lace-making in the village (F. A. 1924: 598).

Lace-making lacked any kind of local tradition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Székelyszentkirály. According to the newspaper reports, the teacher built upon models borrowed from Paris and Berlin (Szőcsné Gazda 2013: 38) and, in fact, taught Western European variants of Torchon lace-making. On the 1924 training course, 35 girls had learned the basics of bobbin-lace-making. The teachers knew that such a short training will not produce sufficient results, so they organised new courses in 1925, providing their students with models and orders for the products. In order to ensure the group cohesion of the lace-makers, photographs were also shot of the participants. On these pictures, the girls appear in lace-maker uniforms, and one of the photographs presents them in front of their work equipment.<sup>6</sup> The uniform

5 In this part of my study, I used some of the data of the exhibition held in Sepsiszentgyörgy, but I also added to them substantially (Szőcsné Gazda 2013: 37–41).

6 These photographs are in the possession of the traditional lace-making families.

was not only important because it showed to the outside world their identification with the tasks laid upon them, but also in order to present an organised image as participants on exhibitions and presentations.

In December 1924, the ecclesiastical journal entitled *A Hírnök* [The Messenger] published an article illustrated with photographs of the bobbin-lace-making activity in Székelyszentkirály. These pictures show that the production of this period included narrow lace-strips with diamond-shaped patterns and nicely arched tulips. The press account emphasised the production of handkerchiefs, lace mats, and patterns for window curtains, while also launching an appeal to Transylvanian women: “We will thank these brave girls if the lace from Székelyszentkirály someday will enjoy such fame and prevalence as, for example, the embroidery from Kalotaszeg. But in order for this to happen, it is also necessary for the society to constantly follow them as well as their activity with interest and to provide them with ample orders.” (F. A. 1924: 599.)

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, cottage industry exhibitions were the most important locations for advertisement in this sector. The inhabitants of Székelyszentkirály also presented their products at the 1925 Budapest fair of applied arts, followed in 1926 by the industrial and agricultural exhibition from Székelyudvarhely (Derzsy 1999).

From the 1930s onwards, the strengthening of national movements can also be observed in the region of the Székely Land. In this period, numerous teachers dedicating themselves to raising the awareness of ancient motifs, Hungarian specificities, and Székely folk traditions also started their activity. Processions in folk costumes and folk dance presentations have become massive power demonstrations dedicated to promote “our ancient culture brought from the East” and “the values of our specificity” (Pataky 1933: 1). No wonder, that “more ancient” patterns were expected from the Hungarian cottage industry centres during this fever, and lace strips were sought after in order to decorate the more ambitious, mass-produced folk costume pieces. The handicrafts magazines and the tattered pictures passed from hand to hand allude to the fact that there was a permanent transfer of information between the written press and the creators. Perhaps due to these communication channels or to the pattern-transmitting activity of the *Csipke-készítő és Háziipari Vállalat* [Lace-making and Cottage Industry Company] between 1940 and 1944, often mentioned in this locality,<sup>7</sup> the characteristic patterns of the bobbin-lace-making workshop from Balatonendréd, e.g. covers with lace strips, tulip motifs, etc., started to appear within the repertoire of the lace-makers of Székelyszentkirály (Gervai-Hábel 1995: 62–63). In 1941, a new training course was initiated, and the teachers involved in it could also have taught these motifs. Dr. Károly Kós saved a collection of these laces through depositing them in the *Erdélyi Néprajzi Múzeum* [Transylvanian Ethnographic Museum].<sup>8</sup> The objects included

7 The activity of this company was mentioned by Derzsy 1999. It was probably a centrally organised institution functioning under a different name, since it is unknown in the scholarly bibliography under this designation.

8 Lace strips with inventory number A. 3332 glued on cardboards.



in this collection deposited at the museum in 1961 also show the influence of the bobbin-lace-making school of Körnöcbánya (today Kremnica, Slovakia).<sup>9</sup>

In 1960, a momentous change took place within the repertoire of the lace-makers. One of the reasons for this was that an industrial artist from Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş), Dezső Bandi<sup>10</sup> initiated a lace-designing course in the village.

The *Teleki Oktatási Központ* [Teleki Education Centre] from Szováta (Sovata) digitalised Dezső Bandi's legacy in 2010. Thanks to this collection his teaching activity in Székelyszentkirály can be very conveniently studied.<sup>11</sup> He popularised the productions of round, oval, triangular, and rectangular lace covers of small dimensions instead of hitherto popular, narrow lace strips. In the 1950s and 1960s, handicrafts magazines also devoted considerable space to promote the production of lace covers in small sizes,<sup>12</sup> primarily since these could be used very nicely with the standard lacquered furniture typical for the period. Lace covers, however, could not be produced anymore on the traditional cylinders used for lace-making, and the women of Székelyszentkirály turned to the production of home-made pillows.

Dezső Bandi taught the dynamic, wave-lined composition characteristic for the Rozsnyó (today Rožňava) region of Upper Hungary in Székelyszentkirály and moving beyond the traditional, symmetric flower ornaments, popularised the backward-looking deer, certain types of birds, and human representations. He also recommended the somewhat rectangular patterns of the Richelieu embroidery, increasingly popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for joining larger ribbon-patterned motifs. Contemporary ornamental motifs inspired by communism were also included in the education process. One of the lace covers from the collection of the museum in Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş)<sup>13</sup> and a lace cover from the catalogue of the 1959 folk art exhibition of the Province<sup>14</sup> (Expoziția... 1959) has doves of peace and five-pointed stars decorated with the sickle-and-hammer emblem.

In spite of the many-faceted effects of education, the media, and the influence of industrial art, the lace of Székelyszentkirály took the path of internal development. Several bobbin-lace-makers of this village are mentioned who designed lace motifs

9 The lace-making school of Körnöcbánya was founded in 1883, and it held lace-making courses in numerous localities from Upper Hungary until 1889. Artist Béla Angyal employed as a teacher at the local deaf-mute institute, played an important role in elaborating the motif corpus of this school. See Vydra 1930: 17. (Vydra mistakenly highlights the role of Géza Angyal, who at the time was a mere child.) One can find near variants of the lace from Körnöcbánya with inventory number 121102 in the collection of the Budapest Museum of Ethnography in the sample collection from Szentkirály of the Transylvanian Museum of Ethnography from Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca).

10 Dezső Bandi (1919–2005) applied artist, specialist author, specialist consultant for folk arts of the *Népi Alkotások Háza* [House of Folk Creations] from Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş).

11 *Szováta Teleki Oktatási Központ* [Teleki Education Centre] from Szováta (Sovata), legacy of Dezső Bandi, Crocheting folder.

12 Patterns for small lace covers were published in almost every issue of the women's magazines *Fürge Ujjak* [Nimble Fingers] and *Dolgozó Nő* [The Working Woman].

13 Ethnography Department of the Maros (Mureş) County Museum, inventory number 2059.

14 Ethnography Department of the Maros (Mureş) County Museum, inventory number 2059.

as folk industrial artists for the entire village. Berta Bodó, for instance, was one of the most talented lace-makers, who in the 1930s designed a narrow black lace stripe for the bonnet of the Csángós from Gyimes (Ghimeş), thus providing a reliable source of income for the villagers. In 1950s and 1960s, at the encouragement of Dezső Bandi, she also designed and produced lace covers decorated with human representations. Villagers nowadays also emphasise the role of Margit Bálint, who designed diverse variants of larger lace covers with tulip, mushroom, rose, and leaf motifs. Her fellow-villagers today attribute to her almost 150 motif variants. She also designed lace collars, which played an important role in the fashion of the 1960s and 1970.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, the sales channels for these products were represented by folk art shops, as the women involved in lace-making tried to sell their work to buyers from Székelykeresztúr (Cristuru Secuiesc) and Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş).

Although the lace-making activity of Székelyszentkirály significantly decreased, it did not disappear completely. Almost everyone in the village is familiar with the technique – due to handicrafts courses and school education –, but only eight women still practice it currently as a source of income.

## Lace-Making and Industrialisation: The Example of Zágón

On the basis of our current, quite unilateral tropes of thought, lace-making is associated today with the extinction, or at least marginalisation, of handicrafts and cottage industry. However, this practice was born and spread across Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in parallel with the industrialisation process. The people of the Ore Mountains at the border between Czechia and Saxony, the inhabitants of the Bavarian lace-making centres, the Slovaks from Upper Hungary, and the lace-makers of German and Hungarian origins from the Transylvanian Torockó started to practice this trade besides their non-agricultural, industrial and mining lifestyle, primarily as a means of supplementing their incomes. We know from the example of Kiskunhalas that the reason for which lace-making could not spread in the context of the agricultural lifestyle relied not only in the fact that the intensity of agricultural work did not leave sufficient time for its practice. This was also because the hands of these people, coarsened from agricultural work, were not able to prepare lace from the fine white thread, since the material would have been soiled, and the fine thread would have become entangled in the cracks of their hands.

Lace-making was introduced and spread also in some areas of the Székely Land as a side-effect of industrialisation, precisely in the areas where agriculture could not provide sufficient profitability.

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15 Data collected by me from Marcella Bálinth, Székelyszentkirály (Sâncrai), 2014.





At the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, large-scale deforestation became widespread in Zágón (Zagon), as an alternative to the less profitable agricultural lifestyle at the forest edge. At the end of the 1880s, a landholder from the Erdővidék area, Gyula Zathureczky sold his extensive forest plots from the vicinity of the village of Zágón to the Horn and Morpurgó Company, thus opening the way for deforestation. In 1888, the industrial plants of the villages of Gyulafalva (Giulești) and Kommandó (Comandău) were established in the middle of the forest, and a steam industrial railway was built in their vicinity, providing the opportunity for timber extraction for the entire region. (Kócsi 1899: 207.)

The genre of the filet lace appeared in Zágón at the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, simultaneously with the establishment of the industrial plants.

Filet lace can be viewed as a transitional genre, representing the combination of embroidery and lace-making. The net used as its basis was a close relative of fishing nets, and its uniform preparation used for the lace presumed considerable expertise. The so-called *táblásterítő* (illustrated table cloths) with squares showing the symbols of the evangelists, prepared in Kata Árva Bethlen's workshop from Olthévíz (Hoghiz) at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, reached several churches from the Székely Land.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the genre as such was known in the Háromszék region, and its production technique was also taught in several schools of this area. As a result of school education, filet lace-making sporadically appeared as a practice in Háromszék, primarily in aristocratic and bourgeois circles, in Páva (Pava), Kovászna (Covasna), and Bitá (Bitá) (Szőcsné Gazda 2013: 55–60), but we only have data for its dissemination in association with the cottage industry from Zágón.

According to recollections, the wives of the lumberers were the ones to bring with themselves to Zágón the first patterns and the technique, teaching them to local women. Márrika Andok Pistáné, one of the filet lace-makers known by name, had learned the patterns later employed by her from the wives of the railwaymen involved in logging and transportation, while Béláné Bálint introduced the so-called *folyórózsás* (flowing rose) pattern employed in the filet lace-making of the Romanian population from the Nehoiu region.<sup>17</sup> The industrial sites were cancelled at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the members of the population involved in forest work moved back to their original homes. The wives of the forest workers who returned to Zágón carried on the practice and disseminated the genre of the filet lace, so Zágón soon became one of the recognised centres of filet lace-making.

Several renowned lace-makers worked in this village throughout the decades. Some of the best known of them, who supplied their products to large categories of clients, were Antal Árpádné Rozália Andok, Rozália Zsidó, Bíró Imréné Ágnes Antal, and Eszter Bíró.

16 The filet lace-making activity of Kata Árva Bethlen was analysed by Gertrud Palotay (see Palotay 1940). Today, the tablecloths of the Reformed churches from Zabola (Zăbala) and Aldoboly (Dobolii de Jos) can be mentioned from her works.

17 Romanian ethnographic literature does not mention the traditions of filet lace-making from the Nehoiu region. Its research is planned for the future.

From the beginning of the 1900s, it was the local Szentkereszty baronial family who primarily contributed to the popularisation of laces. One of the most renowned women members of the family, Stefánia Szentkereszty established a women's association in Zágón and an educational institution for orphan girls in Kézdivásárhely, providing her fellow-villagers with orders up to her death in 1906. The family of count Mikes from Zabola (Zăbala) was also among their early clients.<sup>18</sup>

As a result of bourgeois tastes, increasingly widespread from the 1920s onwards, this type of lace has become generally present in the villages around Zágón. Besides the lace covers, table cloths, and lace inserts used for decorative cushions, the filet lace-makers of Zágón have become known and sought after due to the production of large, fashionable curtains with filet lace inserts.

The filet lace-makers of Zágón maintained their reputation up until the 1980s, when – with the death of the most renowned artisans of this field – a slow decline process started. Their clients were from today's Kovászna (Covasna) County, but their best products were transported even to the city of Brassó (Braşov).

## Summary

The example of Székelyszentkirály and Zágón illustrates the formation circumstances and the directions of evolution characteristic for the 20<sup>th</sup> century branches of domestic industry; i.e. the way in which some of these gain momentum under the influence of training courses as well as foreign models and play an important role in the life of certain regions.

The inhabitants of Székelyszentkirály, Zágón, and the village of Gyulakuta (Fântânele)<sup>19</sup> from Maros (Mureş) County established a branch of domestic industry without any former traditions in their respective regions. In the case of Székelyszentkirály, the periodically repeated training courses and the influence of applied arts prevented the industrial branch from disappearing, while in Zágón this fashion flamed up and lasted for almost a century without the conditions having been formed for a long-term of transmission of the tradition.

A further characteristic of the branches of 20<sup>th</sup> century cottage industry is that they are constantly subject to intense external influences. These influences are, on the one hand, sought after by the lace-makers themselves (through the use of patterns published in handicraft magazines and ornamental motifs collected from other sources), while, on the other hand recurring influences of the applied arts also constantly exert their effect – either in organised form or else randomly – on the handicraft centres.

18 Results of fieldwork in Zágón, 2014. Informants: Veronka Antal, Eszter Bíró, and Ágnes Szalló.

19 The crocheted lace from Gyulakuta (Fântânele) was introduced by the workers' wives who were settled down at the thermal power plant established in this locality, and it is viewed today as one of the most important branches of cottage industry from the Székely Land, besides the ceramics of Korond (Corund). Due to the lack of necessary research, this study does not deal with the laces from Gyulakuta.



As a result of these ongoing influences, a so-called *created/invented tradition* is formed and interpreted as authentic popular tradition by the inhabitants of the region. This newly formed tradition is sometimes integrated into the village's self-representation and strongly influences local identity. It is exactly this function which contributes to the continuous re-production of tradition (as in the case of Székelyszentkirály). However, if the cottage industry branch does not manage to be integrated into the local image of the municipality and, thus, to find legitimacy, then it withdraws and loses ground (the case of Zágón).

Yet another feature of these branches of cottage industry is that they are formed in regions where the population is endangered by the drastic disappearance of income sources: in the case of Székelyszentkirály the development of handicrafts was motivated by emigration, and for Zágón by the closure of the forest harvesting company.

This line of development does not apply only to lace-making: the transformation of the ceramics of Korond (Corund), the development of the wicker weaving centres from Udvarhelyszék (Odorhei Region), and the carpet weaving and the renewal of folk dresses of Felcsík (Upper Ciuc Region) can also be traced back to the influence of training courses and revival movements dedicated to cottage industry. The research on this externally guided type of cottage industry is an increasingly important task of ethnography.

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