

# OUR COUSINS IN THE NORTH

## THE IMAGES OF FINLAND AMONG SOME MEMBERS OF THE FINNISH CLUB OF SZEGED

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### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Background and material

I have had a chance to study in the Department of Ethnology at József Attila University in Szeged for half a year. During this interesting period I became acquainted with different communities and individuals both at the university and outside of it. I came across a number of different beliefs and images of Finland, some of which were stereotypic, some simply surprising. This gave me an opportunity to discuss and reflect upon ideas of my home country and nationality. I met the most enthusiastic interest towards Finland among members of the Finnish Club of Szeged. During our meetings at the Club, its members told me stories of Finland. These stories already seemed to be familiar to most members of the Club. I was planning to write a seminar paper to the Department of Ethnology and this kind of community felt very suitable for the purpose. With the help of some members of the Club and the staff of the Department of Ethnology, I managed to agree about interviews with five of the members. I wanted to take a look at the images of Finland among some of the members of the Finnish Club of Szeged. I also wanted to find out those issues they considered most significant when speaking about Finland and Finns. This article is based on my seminar paper.

The material consists of three interviews conducted with five members of the Finnish Club of Szeged (Szegedi Finn Klub). The informants were selected because they had visited Finland at least once and had thus been able to form a certain mental image of the country. Also their knowledge of the Finnish language affected the choice. The most significant matter, however, is that all the informants belonged to the same generation. They were born before the Second World War between years 1931 and 1935, and thus shared some ideas and views common to the older generation. Two of the informants (1 and 2) were interviewed together as they so wished.<sup>1</sup> One (3) was interviewed in the presence of her husband and son, who also participated in the interview in a lesser amount. Informants 4 and 5, a married couple, were interviewed together. Informant 4 was exceptional in comparison to other informants as she had visited Finland not simply because of her interest towards the country, but also, more specifically, to hold a handicraft exhibition there. For this reason the nature of her interview was slightly different from the rest. The interview with informant 3 was conducted almost totally in Finnish; the rest of the two mainly in Hungarian. As I am not able to speak or understand Hungarian fluently, the interviews were made possible by the valuable help of Edit Felföldi, a student in Ethnology and Finno-Ugric Studies, who

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<sup>1</sup>The numbers in parantheses refer to the respective interviews. See the unprinted sources.

acted as a translator in all interviews. I am conscious that the translation process made interview situations less spontaneous and sometimes interrupted informants' narration. Nevertheless, I believe that the necessary information was obtained.

### 1.2. Research Question

My hypothesis was that it would be possible to find a certain kind of narration concerning Finland. I assumed that there might exist stories that are somehow connected to informants' interest in Finland and in the formation of their image of the country. These stories could have been heard already in childhood from parents or other people. I assumed that such stories would form a collective narration that is commonly shared among the members of the Finnish Club of Szeged. I also assumed that this early image of Finland had been maintained at some level. I wanted to discuss with the informants how that image had been affected by their actual visits to Finland. In the interview material I found different types of narratives. Some of them had a very established form, whereas some were more simply answers to my questions. It looked as if the more established stories were more significant to the informants. Verbalising an experience requires three types of processes in speakers. First they have to arrange the content of their experiences into a form demanded by the narrative. Second they must decide how to present their point, so that the listener can best understand it. Third they must also assess the syntactic possibilities presented by their language. Learned schemes and cultural frames guide the formation of a narrative. The narrative situation itself is an interpretation, because language is unable to convey all special features of an individual experience.<sup>2</sup>

The interviews were conducted with the help of a consistent list of questions and themes for discussion. As I hoped that the informants would take up the themes they felt to be most important by themselves, the list of questions was relatively open. Central questions included for instance following: How and by whom did you first get involved with Finland? What kind of experiences did you have in Finland? What is typical for Finland? Because all informants had either had contacts with Finland or they had been otherwise interested in the country for a longer period of time, they had already a certain mental image of Finland and its inhabitants. Also attitudes towards and images of Finland and the Finno-Ugric relationships among the generation born before the Second World War proved to be an interesting issue.

### 1.3. The Finnish Club of Szeged

The Finnish Club of Szeged was founded in 1992 with a purpose to help its members to practise the Finnish language so as "to be able to know better our Northern relatives". Another aim was to carry forward a mutual cultural exchange between Finns and Hungarians.<sup>3</sup> Both this Club and another Finnish-Hungarian friendship society in Szeged, Magyar-Finn Baráti Kör,<sup>4</sup> both belong to the Magyar-Finn Baráti Társaság which acts as an umbrella organisation for all Finnish friendship societies in Hungary. The Finnish Club of Szeged holds its meetings in the rooms of the Lutheran Church in Szeged. Religion is one base of the activities of the Finnish Club of Szeged, even if all members do not confess to Lutheranism. The Finnish Club of Szeged has official rela-

<sup>2</sup>Siiikala 1984: 25-26.

<sup>3</sup>Hevesi 1997.

<sup>4</sup>The Finnish Club of Szeged has originally separated from Magyar-Finn Baráti Kör.

tionships to the Finnish–Hungarian Society (Suomi-Unkari-seura) of Turku and Vaasa and the societies have also visited each other regularly (3). The founding members, approximately twenty people, had all some interest in Finland, had visited the country and had also Finnish friends.<sup>5</sup> Nowadays the Club has ca. fifty members, of whom ca. twenty attend the activities regularly. The members, especially those I interviewed, correspond in my opinion to the concept of a “Finn-fan”.<sup>6</sup> In this paper this concept refers to a person who has an emotional relationship to Finland and who seeks and maintains contacts with Finns. Belonging to an association like the Finnish Club of Szeged is essential for “Finn-Fans” in the sense of the sharing their experiences and gaining support from other people with similar interests.

## 2. Brother Nations

### 2.1. Finnish – Hungarian Cultural Relations

The relationship between the Hungarian and Finnish languages was discovered already at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, even if Finno-Ugricistics as an independent branch of linguistics was born only in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> First expeditions to Finno-Ugric peoples in the 1840’s were of interest both among Finns and Hungarians. These expeditions were made by linguists such as M.A. Castrén and A. Reguly, and they established the position of Finno-Ugric linguistics.<sup>8</sup> By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the feeling of kinship gradually expanded to concern also other cultural areas – for example arts, literature and music.<sup>9</sup> The feeling of kinship was especially remarkable for Finland that was searching for its national identity at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finns gladly accepted a kinship relation to Hungary which had been a nation already for thousand years. After Finland’s separation from Russia and the disintegration of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the cooperation between the two nations increased.<sup>10</sup> Another reason for this rapprochement was that Hungarians felt as if their country had been left alone by the surrounding nations after the First World War Peace Treaty of Paris 1920. Brotherhood and kinship relations to “relatives” further away – Finns, Estonians and Turks among others – felt better than close relations to the neighbouring countries.<sup>11</sup> An important means for rapprochement proved to be the Finno-Ugric Cultural Congresses. The first was arranged in Helsinki in 1921; the next in Tallinn and the third in Budapest. The first official agreement of cultural and scientific exchange between Hungary and Finland was made in 1929. Also the Lutheran churches of Finland and Hungary carried out a religious exchange.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.2. Finnish-Hungarian relationships during the 1930’s

All of my interviewees were born between the years 1930–35. Thus I consider it necessary to have a closer look at the relationship between Finland and Hungary in the 1930’s. This can best be seen by following the development of the relationships of

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<sup>5</sup>Hevesi 1997.

<sup>6</sup>The concept does not occur more largely. It is my version of the Hungarian word *Finn-Barát* (the friend of Finland) which is used among the Finnish Club of Szeged.

<sup>7</sup>Korhonen 1984: 25, 27.

<sup>8</sup>Korhonen 1984: 34, 35.

<sup>9</sup>Numminen 1984: 17.

<sup>10</sup>Varpio – Szopori 1990: 19.

<sup>11</sup>Varpio – Szopori 1990: 94.

<sup>12</sup>Varpio – Szopori 1990: 20.

literature between Finland and Hungary. Studying Finnish literature published in Hungary during the 1930's and 1940's gives an idea of sources which for their part have been influencing and forming general attitudes of Hungarians towards Finland. By the 1930's the most enthusiastic period of the "kinship work" was already over. Terms like "relatives," "kinfolk" and "brotherhood" were still occurring in literature, but their use was only a basis for publishing books from these two countries. *The Kalevala*, National Epic of Finland, and some folk tales and -poems had been translated into Hungarian already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13</sup> as well as some works by authors like Aleksis Kivi, Minna Canth and Juhani Aho.<sup>14</sup> The 100th anniversary of *the Kalevala* in 1935, amounted to a large number of articles written on the subject. It is remarkable that some of the articles were published in non-scientific newspapers and magazines, which gave rise to an interest for Finnish literature and Finland in general also among a wider audience. Other literary works available for the Hungarians were for example *Nummisuutarit* (A pusztai vargáék) by Kivi and *Silja* by F.E. Sillanpää.

Translating literature from both countries was seen as a means of "strengthening the relationships to relatives living far away" and of gaining information about "the soul and the life of the kinfolk". Literary criticism was mostly positive in tone and adjectives like "honesty, profundity and simplicity" together with the notion of "healthy world view," were associated with Finnish literature in general.<sup>15</sup> János Kodolányi was the most important Hungarian author writing about Finland. He had a remarkable role in forming the image of Finland in Hungary. His books *Suomi, a csend országa* (Suomi, the Country of Silence), published in 1937, and *Suomi titka* (The Secret of Finland) published in 1939, deepened the knowledge about Finland. Kodolányi created a very positive image of a country which in his opinion was socially and educationally better organised than Hungary at the time and also more democratic. Finns lived close to nature and were economically wealthy, but still attached to their simple lifestyle. Kodolányi's books were in great demand, and by 1944 three new editions were printed.<sup>16</sup> These books were known also by all my interviewees. In the beginning of *Suomi, a csend országa* the author tells enthusiastically how his interest in Finland awakened. It is worth quoting as an example about his attitude towards Finland

...Afterwards I read everything written of Finland. *The Kalevala* I read for five times. I got to know history, a lot of literature – not so much was translated into Hungarian – the life of the people, arts, geography. No other country was as interesting as Finland. All my young dreams I directed to this desirable country. I loved it like I love my homeland. There was a land where I actually lived and there was another one, better, more beautiful. In my dreams I escaped there. "In Suomi it is not like this" – I told to myself when I was troubled or down. "I should go to Finland" – I told to myself when I met misfortune...<sup>17</sup>

Apart from literature, my interviewees had gained information of Finland from school. Even if the cultural agreement between Hungary and Finland established in 1938, it

<sup>13</sup>Voigt 1984: 124.

<sup>14</sup>Domokos 1984: 134.

<sup>15</sup>Varpio – Szopori 1990: 97–99.

<sup>16</sup>Varpio – Szopori 1990: 103.

<sup>17</sup>Kodolányi 1937: 7.

was not fully carried out because of the outbreak the of Second World War. Knowledge of the culture and the nation of the kinfolk was also available media.<sup>18</sup> The concern about Finland's situation in the Winter War was great among Hungarians. During the Winter War over 300 Hungarian volunteers joined the Finnish forces to fight against the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Collective Mental Image

I see the role of being a "Finn-Fan" as a part of my informants' identity. Lauri Honko defines identity as a part of a collective tradition which in its own right represents a group in cultural communication (e.g. language, music, dance, clothing, architecture, history, habits, rituals, geographical location; emblems such as flags, colours, names). The symbols as such do not create an identity group, but the meanings and feelings people attach to them bring about cohesion among the group and an illusion of belonging together.<sup>20</sup> Belonging to the Finnish Club of Szeged gives an individual a status of being connected to Finland; it makes her/his interest a part of a larger interest. The symbols of belonging to the Finnish Club of Szeged such as attending the meetings, having Finnish acquaintances, telling and listening stories about Finland, do not mean, however, that the Club should be viewed as an uniform entity with a uniform outward appearance. Instead, the Club acts as a frame which the members can fill with the individual nuances.

Anthony Cohen discusses communities as aggregating mechanisms instead of integrating ones. For this he uses the concept of commonalty, which does not stand for the cloning of behaviour or ideas, but rather indicates shared ways of behaving. The content of those ways may vary considerably among the members of a community. The point is that a community exists only as long as its members feel that they have more in common with each other than with the members of some other communities. Cohen reminds us also that this relative similarity or difference in ways of behaving is a matter of feeling that resides in the minds of the members themselves. Members of a community have a feeling of togetherness because of their common ownership of the symbols. Symbols are effective because they are imprecise by nature. This makes it possible for people to combine individuality and commonality in their behaviour. The symbolic repertoire of a community aggregates the individualities and other differences found within a community, and provides means for expressing, interpreting and sustaining of them.<sup>21</sup> To my informants the narratives of Finland can be seen as the main symbol of their belonging to the Finnish Club of Szeged. To have an opportunity for and means of performing stories seems to justify their membership in the Club.

#### 3.1. The Finnish Club of Szeged as a stage of performance

The narrative frame of the Finnish Club of Szeged is a part of a collective tradition. Collective tradition is a part of the culture of a group. On the basis of her/his cultural competence the individual can identify with the tradition of the group and its values without actually having experienced the events.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Varpio – Szopori 1990: 20.

<sup>19</sup>De Anna 1996: 50.

<sup>20</sup>Honko cited in Suojanen 1998: 117.

<sup>21</sup>Cohen 1985: 20–21.

<sup>22</sup>Eriksen 1997: 72.

The Finnish Club of Szeged acts as a scene for performing and telling stories connected to Finland. Its members have known each other for a long time and are familiar with each others' experiences of Finland and narration about it. These stories are not necessarily constantly told but they form a collective narration to which one can refer when need arises. In addition to the permanent members of the Club there are guests – exchange students or staff from the Szeged university, friends of the Finn Club members or other interested people – who for one reason or another attend the events organised by the Club. These people are with reason considered to be a potentially interested audience for the stories about Finland, and they have an opportunity to hear them to be told in a favourable environment.

It is possible to select certain types of stories from the interview material which are different from the rest. They can be divided into two main groups – stories about childhood, which explain a person's interest in Finland, and stories about their personal experiences when in Finland. Both groups of narration are strongly based on the feeling and acknowledgement of the Finnish-Hungarian relation. These stories have received a fixed form, they are structurally compact and easy to perform in a concise format.

### 3.2. Narratives about Childhood

Some of the most essential stories handle events that took place in the informants' childhood or events about which they were told then. There are various memory theories which approach the problem of recalling such past events. According to the reconstruction theory, memories usually change, become distorted or are forgotten totally. A person selects and reorganises the recalled material. She/he creates an intact, self-satisfying entity out of these recollections. Simultaneously, she/he also interprets the past and reshapes it to suit the present. Her/his aim is to create logical entities from individual memories, which ultimately do not correspond to "real" past events. These entities are created in the moment of recalling. The reconstruction theory of memory emphasises the forming of conscious logical entities.<sup>23</sup> The childhood memories of my interviewees form the basis for their later interest in Finnish – a "Finnish hobby". They act as an explanation and the original reason for activity. It even seems that the earlier a person has become interested in Finland, the higher is the value of the hobby. Being able to tell that already one's parents or grandparents had an interest in Finland, is considered very valuable. This kind of status is expressed and established with the help of childhood stories. During the performance i.e. the process of telling the stories, recollections have become a logical entity, suitable for the establishing and strengthening of the status of "Finn-Fan".

In her article *Home as Verbal and Visual Discourse* Päivikki Suojanen studies memories of the childhood home among Finnish-Americans. She examines the concept "home" as an entity formed by visual images within language in the symbolic and cognitive universe of its inhabitant. Home discourse as visual image, writing and narrative of home is structured by memories which the mind filters. It is also structured by the idea of the continuance of a life story: the home represents a place where memories of the past are chosen and where they meet. Home is an organised place (spatiality), a social network (people, order) and a time continuum extending from the past into the

<sup>23</sup>Brewer 1986: 41 f; Saarenheimo cited by Suojanen 1998: 123.

future (temporality).<sup>24</sup> Home is primarily an entity of mythical emotions and associations; it is more emotional than a physical state. In her study it appeared that attitudes towards the childhood home were almost without exception positive, and even in the case of a negative narration, the story always ended with a positive final evaluation.<sup>25</sup>

### **3.3. Narratives about the Visits to Finland**

Another main group of narratives comprises stories about the interviewees' visits to Finland. They are stories about the events interviewees have experienced and the persons they have met. Characteristic of these narratives, and thus the criteria for recognising them, is their common structure. They are always connected with the establishment of kinship relations. The participants of the stories always consist of the informants themselves and a person they are interacting with – a counterpart. Also the thematic structure follows a permanent scheme: the informant unconsciously reveals, generally without any purpose, that she/he is a Hungarian. The counterpart notices this, after which the counterpart expresses her/his acknowledgement of the kinship relation, usually by showing respect to the informant in one way or another.

Stories about childhood act as a means for establishing the status of the "Finn-Fan". They are personal histories of becoming a "Finn-Fan", and they are of confessional nature. Stories about visiting Finland in their part strengthen the feeling of belonging to a "Finn-Fan" community, the Finnish Club of Szeged. All of the stories are based on positive experiences about Finland, and most of them have either a humorous or a surprising culmination. No unpleasant experiences were mentioned by interviewees unless the interviewer especially asked for them, and even then only one such experience was mentioned. Interestingly enough, this only really negative memory did not have an established form but was told in an uncertain manner and not in the usual fluent way (3). Judging by this negative stories do not belong to the collective narration of the members of the Finnish Club of Szeged. The lack of negative narratives might also have been accentuated by the fact that the listener aimed to write an academic study about their experiences and images of Finland.

## **4. Central Themes**

### **4.1. Kinship**

The theme that comes up most often in the interviewee's narration is the kinship between Hungarians and Finns. It includes both informants' personal feelings and the reactions of Finns. The Finno-Ugric kinship is mainly considered as an emotional and nostalgic relationship – not as a fact based on linguistic kinship. Stories about the childhood of the interviewees form another of the two main narrative groups. Most of my informants mentioned that they had heard about Finland already as children, and wanted to go there. For this reason this can be understood in light of the emphasis placed on the Finno-Ugric kinship in Hungary before the Second World War. Some of the interviewee's first experiences of Finland had to do with the Finnish Winter War 1939–40, when their parents were listening to news about it on radio (1). Newspapers both passed on the information and created the images

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<sup>24</sup>Suojanen 1996: 107–108.

<sup>25</sup>Suojanen 1996: 110, 114.

When I was a kid during the Second World War they told in Magyar Futár, sort of nationalistic newspaper, that the Finnish soldiers were fighting on the ice of the lake Ladoga... we were thinking of that with friendship... That's when I decided I want to go to see that lake (5).

For a child it was natural to feel the kinship in her heart. Also as an adult, feeling the kinship is as important a knowing about its existence (2).

I was a small child when my father told me about the Finns – relatives far in the North. I wanted to go and see these relatives, but my father said it's too far away. I thought that they were like my father's relatives in the nearby village. I thought that when I am big I'll surely go to visit the relatives (3).

Visiting Finland has become possible for most of the informants only at the end of the socialist era and thereafter. The earliest visit took place in 1979 (3). The importance of the experience that the feeling of kinship with Finns is mutual, comes up on several occasions. The feeling is based both on common historical and personal experiences, and meetings with Finns. Common cultural traits such as Lutheranism or the reciprocal help during and after the Second World War have had a remarkable role in strengthening the feeling of belonging together at an emotional level.

First when the Finns had a hard time because of the war, the Hungarian Lutherans collected money and helped them. And when the Hungarians had bad times, they got help from the Finns. We are not only brothers but also brothers in Christ (1).

Hungarian and Finnish nations are also connected because they had to give away large territories after the war. It makes the feeling of kinship stronger (5).

On the level of personal experience, mutual acknowledgement of the kinship is given a great significance. Positive reactions which followed after an unknown person could identify an informant as an Hungarian were in focus in most of the interviews. These stories form another main group of narratives.

We asked the way from a man on the street in Helsinki, who noticed that we are Hungarians. He was an opera singer and sang us an aria there on the street. Then he said "it's fine that Hungarian friends are here" (1).

On the market place a man found out that I am a Hungarian; then he took my hand and said "cousin" (1).

We went home with my hostess when her neighbour was in the garden. When he noticed us Hungarians, he sang our national anthem with his hand on his heart. Then I also sang Maamme-laulu with my hand on my heart and then we shook hands (1).

In the market place they tried to speak Finnish to me but I couldn't understand and said "I am Hungarian, I don't understand much Finnish". Then I got the most beautiful articles (3).



## 4.2. Nature and Environment

Nature is generally experienced as an intrinsic part of Finland and Finnish culture. In the interviews nature appears as a structure; something which forms the frame for travelling and being in Finland. Nature is present from the very first moment onwards. One could see the archipelago of Turku when arriving Finland by air (2). All informants had visited Finland in the summertime. Their first experience of the midnight sun was thus given a remarkable significance. Arrival to a host family in Vaasa late at night is described in the following way

... I went upstairs to sleep pretty soon. The window of my room faced the sea, and even if I was very tired I didn't want to go to sleep before I had seen the sun go down a bit and then raise again (1).

Finns' relationship with nature appears most clearly when visiting the summer cottages of hosts. A direct and close connection to nature is noticed. A new and surprising dimension is, for example, provided of the use of waterways:

It was interesting to go to a summer cottage by a lake. The sister of the host lived on the other shore and in the evening we could see from the lights if they were at home. We could go and visit them by the waterway. It was really interesting, this kind of "water life" (2).

Architecture is also mentioned in every interview. It is often connected to nature, mainly because of the wooden Finnish rural architecture. The modernity of Finland and its architecture, surprised some of the informants (1 and 2). The functionalistic building style, which could as well seem unhumane and non-aesthetic, is experienced positively, for example when talking about the main library of the University of Turku:

Finns build their houses in a practical way, so that houses fit their purpose. In Hungary it seems to be more important to build big and beautiful, and not so practical (3).

## 4.3. Characteristics of the Finnish People

The informants' general attitude towards Finns is very positive. That is partly explained by the nature of the interviews; the interviewee's role as "Finn-Fan" and the interviewer's role as an interested Finn. The stereotypic image that the interviewees have of Finns was strengthened by their personal experiences. Characteristics like friendliness, honesty and punctuality are mentioned.

The mythical reputation of Finns as a slightly peculiar nation has to do with their connection with nature. The irrationality of swimming in cold water is mentioned twice. While a Finnish group was visiting Szeged the hosts were surprised because the guests wanted to swim in river Tisza even if it was only May and the water was still considered to be cold (1). Another informant finds that

The water in lake Näsijärvi was so cold that one who swims there must be crazy (5).

The myth of Finns and their use of alcohol is mentioned twice indirectly. A usual notion circulating around Finns themselves is, that they drink often and a lot. I assume that also my informants are familiar with this myth. Because they, however, tend to

maintain a very positive image of Finns, they could even find evidence against it. Two informants attended festivals of religious societies they were visiting in Finland. Unlike in Hungary, also the children could take part in the celebration together with adults (1 and 2). It is significant that there was no alcohol served in the celebration, a fact disclosing the negative attitude against alcohol and the tendency to avoid it. Even if a religious society represents a rather limited selection of the Finnish population, it was enough to generate an idea of "a big fight against alcohol in Finland" (1).

Honesty of Finns comes up in one way or another in every interview. Informants regarded Finns to be more honest than Hungarians also when they based their opinion to observation or hearsay

I heard that earlier doors of summer cottages could be left unlocked without any problems (2).

... And then we saw that there were no fences around the houses. The bicycle was left in front of the house and I don't know if it was locked or not, but in Hungary it would have been stolen already (5).

Although negative experiences do not generally appear in the interviews, one unpleasant event was connected with honesty. While changing money with an unauthorised person the family lost a certain amount. Unlike the positive characteristics of Finns, this event has not expanded to a generalisation (3).

Two characteristics given to Finns which can be linked together are solidarity and adaptation to changing circumstances. The first appears in a story of a Finnish hostess, who, when shopping, always paid attention to selecting domestic products. The same informant also believes that Finns could adapt to live also in harder conditions, even if the welfare in today's Finland is good (1).

The phenomenon here described as positive distance, appeared in one of the interviews. Finnish hosts gave their guest space and time to be by herself; that is they did not constantly arrange activities for her. The informant experienced this positively and noted that Hungarians "think they have to arrange something to do for their guests all the time" (3).

## 5. Conclusions

There are two clearly distinguishable groups of narratives in the interview material. The first one comprises stories of the informants' childhood. The second one consists of the stories connected with visits to Finland later in life.

The positive character of the interviews conducted for this paper can be interpreted in light of home discourse mentioned earlier. The mental image of the childhood home of the Finnish-Americans is often based on childhood really spent in Finland, whereas the images which the members of the Finnish Club of Szeged have from their childhood are based on second-hand information. The connection between the two is yet obvious. The actual reliability of the memories and the stories is not significant, but the background which they form the for the further formation and development of the image of Finland and the personal identity connected to that. The childhood stories give the rationalise, justify and explain why an interviewee became interested in Finland. The childhood stories can be considered as narratives of personal confession, and they have an intimate nature. They establish person's status and position in the society.

Another main group, the narratives about informants' experiences in Finland, have a slightly different significance. They belong more essentially to the collective tradition of the Finnish Club of Szeged than the childhood stories, and are thus under closer social control of the Club. These stories take an established form. It is typical of the stories that they betray a positive attitude and good will towards Finland and Finns. There is also a strong tendency to connect these feelings to Finno-Ugric relationships. The positive image of Finland and the absence of unpleasant experiences were also noticed by the interviewees themselves. All of them had visited Finland in the summertime, which they supposed must have influenced the formation of positive view (1 and 3). Another reason was presumed to be the shortness of the visits and the will of the host to show only beautiful and pleasant things of the country (1, 2 and 3).

As all the informants were born before the Second World War, they belong to the generation which in its childhood experienced the general positive emphasis on the kinship relations between Finno-Ugric peoples. Even if the kinship movement largely faded away with the socialist era, the interviewees maintained their positive attitude. The mental image based on the childhood narratives remained, although there was no opportunity or need for it to develop. After the change of the political circumstances in Hungary in 1989, contacts abroad became actualised again. The image of Finland was already largely constructed, and the visits to Finland had without exception a consolidating effect on it. In my opinion it is also a characteristic of that generation to need to share the experiences and and being a "Finn-fan" collectively with each other. The Finnish Club of Szeged offers an opportunity for this. It would be interesting to make a comparison with the younger generation of those Hungarians interested in Finland and the way they express their interest.

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## ÉSZAKI ROKONAINK FINNORSZÁG KÉPE A SZEGEDI FINN KLUBBAN

ULLA HAKUNI

A szerző a József Attila Tudományegyetem Néprajzi Tanszékén volt Socrates ösztöndíjas az 1998/99-es tanév tavaszi félévében. Írásában a Szegedi Finn Klub tagjai között végzett terepkutatásának eredményeit elemzi. A finn kultúra után érdeklődőket tömörítő társaság tagjai közül az 1931–35 között születettekkel készített hosszabb interjút. Vizsgálata középpontjában az állt, hogy milyen Finnország-kép létezik a tagok között. Írásában először bemutatja a terepkutatás körülményeit illetve ismerteti a témákat, melyeket vizsgálni szándékozott. Ezek után vázlatosan áttekinti a magyar-finn kulturális kapcsolatok történetét. Részletesebben foglalkozik azzal, vajon milyen hatások alakíthatták az 1930–40-es években a Finnországról alkotott képek Magyarországon. Ezek után a vizsgált csoporttal készített interjúkat elemzi, kiemelve az állandóan felbukkanó témákat.

*Pusztai Bertalan fordítása*