

SZÚCS, NORBERT PHD

szucs.norbert@jgyfk.szte.hu

Associate Professor

(Institute of Cultural Studies, Gyula Juhász Faculty of Education, University of Szeged)

We can only say, “Oh, for Dudar”

The Memory of the Hungarian Village Research
of the Institute of Sociology



Lencsés, Gyula (2019):

Angolok a Bakonyban. Az Institute of Sociology

1937-es dudari falukutatásának története és dokumentumai.

[English Researchers in the Bakony Wald. The History and Documentation
of the Field Work of the Institute of Sociology in Dudar, Hungary]

Gondolat Kiadó – A Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Veszprém Megyei Levéltára,
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“... [it] will always remain as an almost unreal experience”¹ wrote Gwendolyn Shand in a letter to her mother. “...it was a whole experience for us, that includes everything, unforgettable, nice moments, hateful things, lessons in a positive and negative way, amusements and excitements, pleasant and unpleasant people, stupid and clever things /.../ it had some kind of European atmosphere and those Hungarian excitements that we know well were missing.”² Béla Reitzer summarized his experience to Ferenc Erdei. “We can never thank you enough for providing such a wonderful experience for us /.../ If I had known how good it was going to be, I might have been ill with excitement before coming out, but now we can only say, »Oh, for Dudar.«”³ wrote Dorothea Farquharson enthusiastically. These quotes from 1937 are all about the same series of events.

What kind of experience connects the Canadian social worker, the Hungarian expert of social policy and the English sociologist?

They all participated in a common scientific enterprise of the Institute of Sociology and the College of Arts of Szeged Youth in the international village research project that was carried out in Dudar, Hungary in 1937. Gyula Lencsés’ book published in 2019 titled *English Researchers in the Bakony Wald. The History and Documentation of the Field Work of the Institute of Sociology in Dudar, Hungary* is a well-documented introduction to this cooperation.

At first sight his cooperation seems surprising but actually fits well in the practice of the Institute of Sociology and its win organisation Le Play House. They organised about 90 field researches in almost 20 countries between 1921 and 1951. In the Eastern European region, besides Hungary, they conducted research in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland as well. The efficiency of these usually two-week long field works that involved about 20-30 people changed according to the person in lead and the (often random) composition of the participants. Some of them had significant scientific results, while others were rather educational trips where the members of the research group could gain insight to the methodology used by Le Play House.

Holistic approach was the basis of the research activity of the Regional Survey Movement, as it is presented in details by Lencsés. Thus, according to the theory of Patrick Geddes and Victor Branford the results in concerning the observed community should be should be interpreted in their mutual interconnections. The research was divided into three main fields: the place (for example geological endowments, climate, botany and zoology), the work (meaning economical life, for example: share of goods, consumption and finances), and the folk (meaning the life of people, for example: demographic data, human relations, organisations, psychological factors, traditions and history), and it implies a development of a further detailed system of criteria.

In the 1920’s and 30’s besides the Francis Galton’s eugenic and the Leonard T. Hobhouse’ ethical school, the regional and civic approach by Patrick Geddes was significant in British sociology. In the 1930’s the Institute of Sociology was closely cooperated with the Sociological Review and one of whose editors, Alexander Farquharson was also the general secretary of the Institute.

The idea of the Hungarian field work can be linked to the 3rd International Conference on Social Work held in 1936 in London organised by the Institute of Sociology. Farquharson

¹ LENCSÉS 2019. 592.

² Translated by Norbert Szűcs.

³ LENCSÉS 2019. 600.

and his colleagues travelled to Budapest in 1935 to discuss the details of the conference with the authorities of the Hungarian social work. The Hungarians took seriously the possibility of an international exchange of knowledge. They created a committee for the preparations with the leadership of Sarolta Lukács, the vice president of the Hungarian Red Cross, organised a five-day pre-conference and delegated about twenty experts to London. Many members of the College of Arts of Szeged Youth were already involved in this preparatory work. They became key figures of the Hungarian field work.

The College of Arts of Szeged was founded in 1932. Its members with different specialization were connected by their mutual theme, the intention to get to know the peasantry and by their village survey activity. Many of them became later definitive scientific or political figures of this field which indicates their significance. (They also reached significant cultural achievements. For example the poet Miklós Radnóti, the stage director Ferenc Hont, who was one of the founders of the Szeged Open-air Festival or György Buday the graphic artist and woodcutter.) Taking part in the Dudar field work was at the same time the last significant achievements of the College of Arts. Besides the dynamics of their operation, the different route of the members' carriers, the political situation and later the 2nd World War effected the breakup of the group.

The researchers of the Institute of Sociology and the members of the College of Arts participating in the research as well, would have demanded the presence and greater involvement of György Buday, the leader of the Szeged group. But he did not interrupt his scholarship in Rome, thus it was Viola Tomori who was responsible for the welcoming of the English researchers. She was the one who chose the settlement, organised the travel and accommodation for the researchers, and provided the interpreters. She coordinated the involvement of the Hungarian participants, some of them also participated in the field work, while others only sent studies related to different parts of the research. As the member of the College of Arts of Szeged Youth Béla Reitzer and Zoltán Gáspár deserve to be highlighted as participants, but the Dudar collection of the ethnomusicologist Sándor Veress is also a significant result of the field work. Among the members of the College of Arts Gyula Ortutay and György Buday wrote lectures related to the research. Their English translations were read out in the absence of their authors. It tells us a lot about Tomori's organisational skills that via Sándor Veress even Béla Bartók sent a text to the participants, as well as Károly Viski, one of the most significant ethnographers of that time, sent a study.

Although the field works of the Institute of Sociology were often organised for the enthusiastic but at the same time amateur social researchers, or university students without deep theoretical and methodological knowledge, the group of the Dudar survey – may be due to its small number (7) – was more qualified than usual. Alexander Farquharson, the leader of the Institution of Sociology took part in the field work. His wife, Dorothea Farquharson played an important role in the communication with Viola Tomori. She was the organiser of the trip on the English side. Gwendolyn Shand, a Canadian social worker closed her studies at the London School of Economics with this field trip. Willy Gierlichs was a sociologist at the University of Köln. For the invitation of Tomori, Richard Thurnwald ethnologist professor from Berlin and his wife and colleague, Hilde Thurnwald also joined the group. The field work took place between the 7th and 17th of September in 1937.

Historians of Hungarian social science did not forget this research project,⁴ moreover for its 60th anniversary lectures by the Hungarian experts were published in Hungarian and English as well.⁵ Gyula Lencsés, assistant professor of the Department of Sociology at the University of Szeged put this topic to a new dimension by discovering that among the documents of the Le Play House and the Institute of Sociology at Keele University's Special Collections and Archives, there are almost one and a half thousand pages long forgotten records kept about the Dudar survey. The book titled *English Researchers in the Bakony Wald* was written in order to share this discovery.

Part I of the book, in 100 pages, shows the process of the Dudar village survey, its scientific context and actors. It places Le Play House and the Institute of Sociology as well as their theoreticians in the history of British sociology, introduces the methodical drafts of the regional surveys, their practices in connection with foreign field work. Among the members of College of Arts of Szeged Youth it focuses on the introduction of Viola Tomori, then outlines the process of the research implementation starting from the preparation till the afterlife of the research. In these chapters he introduces the participants, reveals their relations, and their schedule of work. Lencsés commemorates not only the further life of the research material but also of the researchers and in some cases their close, tragic death caused by the war. He also reports on the elaboration of the Dudar survey in social history.

At the end of Part I he tells us the logic along which he reconstructs the volume from the manuscripts that he found at the Keele University's Archives into a possible volume in Part II. He used the table of contents of Dorothea Farquharson's manuscripts as a main guideline. According to her logic the material of the English researchers, mixed with the lectures and collections of the Hungarian colleagues, form a whole in a planned but not finalized volume. Some remaining texts that do not occur in Farquharson's table of contents were fit into the studies by Lencsés along this logic.

In Part II on almost 400 pages the reader gets acquainted with the reconstructed Dudar-volume through 40 texts. The book in a book effect was reduced only by a short introduction at the beginning of each writings, in which Lencsés shares information with the reader about the theme of the writing, its actors, authors, its previous publications as well as his editing and formatting decisions. These additions increase the value of the text and help its interpretation. He supplemented the writings with layouts of buildings and households, photos, maps and music sheets.

Most of the writings belong to Béla Reitzer and Theodora Bremner. This is partly due to the fact that Miss Bremner stayed in Budapest in order to work together with Reitzer on finalizing the writings even after her fellow researchers travelled home. Some of their texts were interviews. The original editor of the manuscript, Dorothea Farquharson also has several texts in the book. Besides her five writings, Lencsés included her reminiscences and lectures about the Dudar survey in the Appendix.

In Lencsés' opinion – with which we agree – Gwendolyn Shand's research results are the most valuable amongst the guests. The talented young Canadian lady made exciting family studies. Her study on emigration is especially valuable as well as her other notes on emigration. Their uniqueness derives from the fact that she was engaged with the theme in the United States as well.

⁴ CSAPLÁR 1971, LENGYEL 1985, LENGYEL–SIMON 1986, BOROSS–MÁRKUSNÉ 2000, LENCSEŚ –FELEKY 2013.

⁵ TRENCSENYI 1997.

It was as important reference point for her that she had a common knowledge of Pittsburgh with a man from Dudar. The photos she took during the field work remained in her legacy in the Canadian Nova Scotia Museum, thus Lencsés could use them when he compiled this volume.

In Part III we find the participants' correspondence related to the field work in chronological order. The letters from the Keele University Special Collections and Archives are presented in their full length. In case of the other letters only parts are published as they contain private information as well.

The first letter was written by Viola Tomori and György Buday to Alexander Farquharson on the 3rd of September 1936 as a contact letter. Out of the 128 letters 61 were written before the field work. From 1940 onwards the letters resulted from the communication between the Farquharsons and Buday. They consulted not only about professional matters but as it was war at the time they discussed the fate of the research participants as well. Within this topic the letters between the Farquharsons and their hosts, the Jakab family are particularly interesting. These letters were translated by György Buday. After 1947 there is one letter from 1956 and three letters from 1970 in the collection.

Most of the letters – almost half of them – remained from the exchange of letters between Dorothea Farquharson, György Buday and Viola Tomori. The examination of this fact is that prior to the research Tomori was intensively communicating about the preparatory work both with Buday and Farquharson. The two ladies stopped their exchange of letters after 1937. But between Buday and Farquharson the communication became more intensive from that time. Buday soon after the Dudar survey still in 1937 moved to the United Kingdom. Dorothea Farquharson asked his help several times in professional control and translation.

The book includes a digital supplement organised in three folders. Folder I contains the manuscripts of the texts of the reconstructed volume on the Dudar field work. In Folder II we find the collection of the participants' correspondence related to the research. Folder III contains the documentation of the folk music collected by Sándor Veress in Dudar.

Gyula Lencsés, the author of the book made his job with outstanding thoroughness and humility. His 1109 notes provide the reader with tremendous amount of information. The notes also make it obvious that he fully understands and knows the one and a half thousand pages long manuscript rediscovered by him, the literature belonging to the theme, the private and professional career of the research participants, the dynamics of their relationships and their broader network. Lencsés works with a critical approach, he reveals several mistakes and imprecisions. We have the feeling that he knows the research material better than the researchers themselves. But the huge number of notes are useful not only for refinement but they unfold interesting life stories between the lines.

Lencsés illustrated the book with 160 photos, drawings and reproductions of manuscripts. These help the reader get closer not only to the results of the field work but to the research method and the personalities of the researchers as well. The book could definitely be a valuable reading for those who are interested in ethnography, sociology, history, history of arts and history of social science. Especially for those who study the work of the Institute of Sociology, Le Play House and the College of Arts of Szeged Youth, as well as the village research movements.

The high standard of the book manifests in its typographic appearance as well. On the first flyleaves of the book there is coloured version of György Buday's woodcut that he made as the design of the researchers' folder. The drawing represents Dudar with a hand marked with a stigma

of Christ above the village as the glittering sun. Such presentation of Buday's woodcut is also the symbol of the book. This is an aesthetical solution that remembers the participants of the Dudar survey with respect, evokes one of the attributes of the research (the folder) and represents one of the participants' artwork. Besides it informs the reader about the structure of the village. For the initiated it refers to the correspondence between Viola Tomori and György Buday about their preparatory work, about the organisational difficulties and about their dreams and doubts about the research and their lives. In one of the last peaceful years before World War II that changed everything drastically, they did not know that not only their scientific plans, but their whole lives would change radically.

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