
BULGARIAN GARDENING ROAD AS A CULTURAL DESTINATION IN HUNGARY - CASE STUDY

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Abstract. The concept of Bulgarian gardening became widespread in Hungary from the 1870s-1880s, including the complex vegetable production method used by Bulgarian horticultural farms, which meant special small-scale methods, greenhouse forcing and irrigation. Bulgarian gardening made field growing vegetable production into intensive farming which was also a revolutionary change in the production methods of the period. The first and second generations of Bulgarian gardeners in Hungary were working in a special organization of workforce imported from home, which was a kind of co-operative or association called *druzhestvo* or *tayfa* until the 1930s. The social-economic and cultural significance of Bulgarian gardening is connecting to implementation of new technologies in vegetable gardening, new management of activity and very new approaches for development of the basic economic section in Hungary. The cultural impact of Bulgarian's gardening road is evaluated by different cultural signs in recent Hungarian history. The Bulgarian National Council announced „The road of Bulgarian gardening” project in 2015 with the aim to create such an international thematic road that shows the influence of Bulgarian gardening on the European agriculture, especially focusing on Hungary, also, to depict how the Hungarian vegetable growing landscapes were created.

Keywords: gardening's road, cultural destination, management, mediation

INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of historic research into the traditional Bulgarian-Hungarian friendship the aim of the international project is to unfold the impact of Bulgarian gardening on the local horticulture, what novel vegetable growing methods were spread all over the territory of the historic Hungary, how they facilitated intensive farming within Hungarian peasant families, what merits they had in transforming the society in Hungary in the 19th and 20th centuries. The owner of the project is the Bulgarian Research Institute and they develop the international cultural route with the association of the following Bulgarian and Hungarian partner institutions:

Regional Museum - VelikoTarnovo,
Horticultural Museum - Lyaskovets,
Sveti Konstantin Preslavszi University - Shumen,
Kosztá József Museum - Szentes,
University of Szeged - Slavic Department
University of Pécs - Balkan Institute

The concept of Bulgarian gardening became widespread in Hungary from the 1870s-1880s, including the complex vegetable production method used by Bulgarian horticultural farms, which meant special small-scale methods, greenhouse forcing and irrigation. [3,4].

By the first half of the 19th century a high-level of horticultural gardening had been created in the areas of VelikoTarnovo and the neighbourhood of Plovdiv, but due to the limited capacity of domestic markets they were forced to expand abroad. The first gardening teams started off from Lyaskovets near Tarnovo, not long later the biggest areas to release teams were Polikraishte and Draganovo. First, they expanded in the direction of Serbia, Romania and Russia, and afterhaving exploited their opportunities there, they appeared in the historic Hungary: in the neighbourhoods of Brassó, Nagyszeben, Temesvár, Arad, Baja, Szentes, Szegvár, Esztergom, Győr. By the end of the 19th century there were gardeners next to any significant city of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and they played a decisive role in the Hungarian vegetable production for over a century. [3,4].

Naturally, we have to put the question: What caused the success of the Bulgarian gardening technology? Especially that in Hungary gardening guilds had been operating since the 17th century, having mainly gardeners of German nationality who were guaranteed special privileges by several rulers. The German gardeners appearing in the vicinity of bigger cities following the big settlement projects of the 18th century primarily dealt with fruit and flower horticulture, they knew and applied hotbeds heated with manure, they also irrigated the outdoor vegetable plantations but as for efficiency they were unable to compete with the Bulgarian gardening, they were not capable of providing the residents of industrial cities with vegetables, consequently they were squeezed out from the domestic

vegetable production. Due to lack of irrigation the majority of Hungarian peasant farmers had a competitive disadvantage compared with the Bulgarian system. Based on contemporary evaluations, the Bulgarian gardeners were able to have a yield ten times bigger than similar gardens on the same surface area. (Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon) To answer the question posed above, the secret of Bulgarian gardening lay in complexity, in a systematic approach. The success of the Bulgarian gardening was thanked to three factors in line with crises impact on development of special agricultural tourism destinations: the revolutionary new technology (in Hungary), the work organisation and the trade mediation [6, 8].

NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN VEGETABLE GARDENING

Bulgarian gardeners rented areas to be cultivated always outside cities but within the sight of factory chimneys. Another important aspect was to have soil rich in humus, which was level and flat (because of irrigation) and to have a natural watercourse nearby (fig/ 1). The so-called Bulgarian wheel was used to lift water that was advanced to the farms through the irrigation canals. The seeds were imported from Bulgaria or bought from the local Bulgarian seed trader. [3,4].

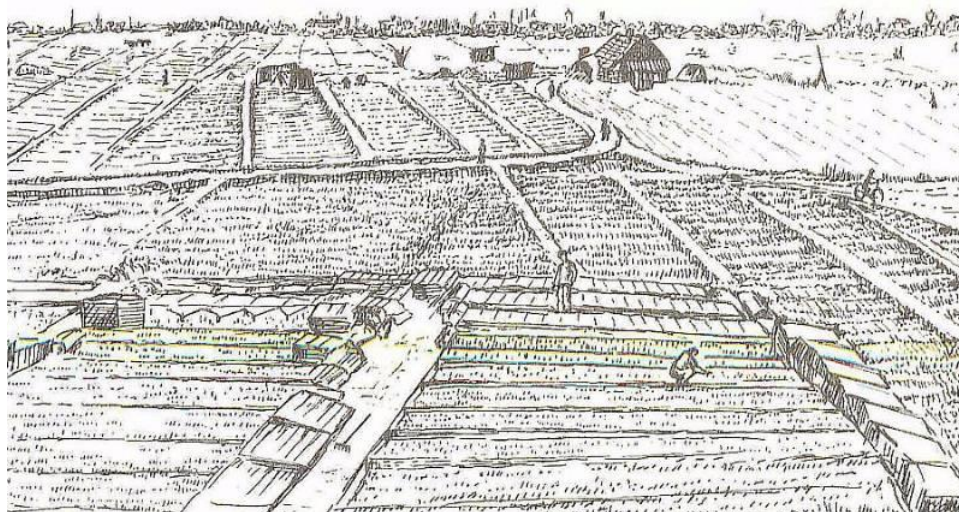


Fig. 1 The arrangement of a Bulgarian gardening plantation with the irrigation canals (Czibulya, 1987.)

They prepared the hotbeds heated with manure in winter months, in some hotbeds they raised the seedlings to be planted under glass, in the rest of the hotbeds they sowed the first early-season vegetables, the small radish that could be sold in the market as early as in March along with spring onions grown outdoors. Their selection of goods in markets were root-crops stored in a pit, carrot, kohlrabi, cabbage and parsley grown in hotbeds. In early spring after selling small radish lettuce was planted, then spring kohlrabi, later tomato, paprika and cucumber. Since the 1960s seedlings were raised and early-season vegetables were grown in greenhouses and polytunnels instead of hotbeds heated with manure, but this made production standardized.

Bulgarian gardening made field growing vegetable production into intensive farming which was also a revolutionary change in the production methods of the period. In early spring, without measuring, using only the unaided eye and with the help of the Bulgarian irrigation hoe they created the small- and big beds with mathematical accuracy and the irrigation canals as straight as an arrow. On the ridge they sowed carrot and parsley seeds, on the sides of the ridge they planted the seedlings of lettuce, between two lettuces they planted seed onion and garlic. By the time lettuce was fully grown, both became strong. At the beginning of March-April they planted blue kohlrabi, after Ice Saints (mid-May) the outdoor tomato, paprika, celery and savoy cabbage were planted. As kohlrabi was picked, winter kohlrabi or cauliflower was planted instead. [4]. During the summer gardeners were doing tasks of care of plants in the morning hours and at noon, from the early afternoon they started to pick the goods for the following market day, after tying and washing they transported the goods to the markets by carriage. In case it was needed they irrigated in the evening or at dawn. The mixed culture of plants provided the wide range of vegetables in the markets, on the other hand just a minimal level of pest control was needed. Pests and conifer aphids were prevented mechanically. Only in case of fungal infection was chemical treatment used.

Looking back on Bulgarian gardening it can be said that this kind of vegetable growing was an intensive production as production was based on species of vegetables which were brought from home or improved by themselves having strong potential; nutrient replacement was provided by using manure; it created the delicate balance soils prerequisites, irrigation and care of plants [7]. Present day organic farmers are following the production practices in vegetable cultivation of mixed plant cultures of Bulgarian horticulture traditions.

MANAGEMENT OF WORKPLACE (WORK ORGANIZATION)

The first and second generations of Bulgarian gardeners in Hungary were working in a special organization of workforce imported from home, which was a kind of co-operative or association called *druzhestvo* or *tayfa* until the 1930s. The works of the market garden were managed by the leader, the foreman. The foreman collected the workers for his team from Bulgarian villages during December and January whom he wanted to work with on rented soil abroad. He told the size and location of the plot to be rented, how much capital was demanded from the members in the form of money and workforce. He guaranteed no pay to anybody – this was the case until the 1920s, as every member was offered a fixed rate of profit (Kovács, 1998). The members had common meals, lived together on the rented area but the work was directed by the foreman. Finances were also managed by the foreman, who could also give advance money to the members. After the day of Saint Demetrius they paid the rental fee or estate fee, the net profit was divided among the members based on the work done, the signed contract and the capital paid in advance. Every member of the team knew their tasks in advance and also their share from the mutual profit. Consequently it was in every worker's interest to make maximum effort to reach success. Along with financial incentives and share another important driving force was the fact that the people knew each other well, they were sometimes also related, this also contributed to the efficiency of their work. (Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon) If necessary, the Bulgarian gardeners hired Hungarian day-labourers, who gained knowledge which they passed onto Hungarian farmers.

A part of the members of the Bulgarian teams returned to their homeland after the gardening season was over, where they bought a piece of land or a house in Bulgaria from the money they had collected. Others returned to Hungary so that they could rent a piece of land on their own and started farming independently. Some of the Bulgarian gardeners survived the World War in Hungary, later they were joined by the new wave of gardeners fleeing from Bulgaria due to the political regime. Most of them settled down in the then democratic Hungary, they represent the second or third generation. As a result of settling down, significant changes occurred in the ownership, teams were replaced by family farms, the period of large farmers was over, everybody started to cultivate their own land or rented plot.

During the era of socialism the violent collectivisation was a doom for Bulgarian gardeners as well: In Pesterzsébet the Dimiter Blagoev Agricultural co-operative was founded in 1957, the Magyar-Bolgár Barátság Agricultural co-operative in 1959, the Pákozdi Antal Agricultural co-operative in Zugló in 1959. At first the members were exclusively Bulgarian gardeners; later Hungarian employees were used to increase the number of members. On Csepel Island on the area of Marin Mutafov gardener the Duna Agricultural co-operative was founded, that merged with the Zugló-based Pákozdi Antal Agricultural co-operative in 1961, the merger was joined by the small cooperatives in Halásztelek and as a result Duna MGTSZ became one of the most prestigious co-operatives (Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon). Members of several Bulgarian gardener families retired from this co-operative. There were some gardeners who were not influenced by collectivisation and there were others who did not give in the blackmail of the Bulgarian Consulate in Budapest (they were blackmailed by not having their passports extended and they would be forced to travel home if they did not join the co-operatives) and they continued to do farming individually. Later Bulgarian gardeners having been disappointed by working in the co-operatives joined them, they quit from the co-operatives and started their family farms again, and a part of them became vegetable traders. The new-old businesspeople did farming in Rákosszentmihály, more distant parts of Csepel Island (Halásztelek, Szigetszentmiklós, Királyerdő), but the classic Bulgarian vegetable gardening was already behind the times by then: household farming, greenhouses, polytunnels and industrial-scale farming became dominant (Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon). From the 1980s, the Hungarian farms dominated the vegetable markets.

Cani Ginchev Bulgarian writer who himself had worked as a migrant Bulgarian gardener wrote about the Bulgarian gardeners at the beginning of the 20th century: „they were not descendants of industrialists or wholesalers, just ordinary people who could take nothing else but the strength of their own hands, their nerve systems to make gold from their decent job, salty sweat and busy savings. Do not assume that they are rich

capitalists. No, they are our hard-working gardeners, who find gold on foreign land, on the riverbanks, in swamps and valleys."

TRADE MEDIATION

The Bulgarian gardens were practically market gardens. They also dealt with the sales as well, from the end of April till the first snow they were familiar figures in the city markets. Picking was continuous, depending on market days. The vegetables were mainly picked by women, men carried them in baskets worn on their backs or in crates. The appearance of Bulgarian gardeners in the markets of bigger towns in Hungary profoundly altered the supply and demand of vegetable gardening. They received first-hand information about demand, what and what amount to be grown and if the business was going well, they delivered goods more times a day. There were some gardeners who sold not on markets but delivered their goods to the greengrocers run by co-operatives, based on their contracts.

Bulgarian gardeners had a close connection with the Hungarian markets and market halls and with the Bulgarian vegetable traders. The big Bulgarian vegetable producers always followed the wholesale market's movements that operated some time in Haller Square, in Lehel Square, in Bosnyák square, until it moved to its present place.

The most popular with vegetable retail trade was the Central Market Hall where Bulgarian gardeners and Bulgarian vegetable traders also sold their goods. Anyone who had an own stall was really respected. Until the turn of the millennium the elite of Budapest, embassies, restaurant owners went to the Central Market Hall to do their shopping. By the turn of the millennium the number of Bulgarian vegetable traders had plunged, those who remained prefer to rent their stalls and shops, due to their age they do not get involved in trading by person. The Central Market Hall has become a tourist attraction. In 2013 it was awarded as the most beautiful market hall of Europe by the American CNN Travel channel.

Haller Market operated as a wholesale market until 1962. As the town markets acted not only as a selling point but also as the place for social life, these played a significant role in the development of the local Bulgarian communities. It is no surprise that the Bulgarian congregation was founded in 1916 in Lónyay Street from the donations of Bulgarian vegetable producers and traders operating in Hungary, in 1918 the first Bulgarian school was opened, in 1931 the Bulgarian orthodox church was built, thanks to the donations of Bulgarian gardeners the Bulgarian Culture House was built (*Ki mittud?* Talent show was directed here by the Hungarian Television in the 1960s.). It can be said that the cradle of the Bulgarian social life was the Haller Market, the Old Market and the Central Market Hall.

Lehel Market, dubbed as the „market of markets”, was extremely popular having a wide range of products and a special atmosphere. The market located in Angyalföld provided the elite of Pest and the people living and working in the district with vegetables. In the farmers' market some Bulgarian families are still selling their produce. Lehel was especially important for the Bulgarians as it was open until noon on Sundays and gardeners who were unable to sell their goods in other markets could come here to sell what was left.

The Bulgarian gardeners sold their produce next to the church in the first half of the previous century in the Bosnyák Square Market. Later the market moved to the present-day hall in 1962 where they rented stalls. The wholesale market moved from Haller Square to the big area behind the Bosnyák Square Hall and consequently the two types of sales lived side by side: in the hall the retail, in the open area the wholesale until 1991. During the 16 years of the operation of the Bosnyák Square Wholesale Market it was the main hub of distribution of privately grown fruit and vegetables in Hungary. There were hardly any Bulgarian vegetable producers who did not sell here and there were hardly any Bulgarian vegetable traders who did not buy and sell in the Bosnyák Square Wholesale Market.

As for the countryside, the two most significant markets were the Búza Square Market Hall in Miskolc and the Búza Square Farmers' Market in Pécs, but in almost all of the small towns in Hungary the Bulgarian gardeners and vegetable traders were at present.

THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BULGARIAN GARDENING

According to certain sources there were about 100.000 Bulgarian gardeners in the historic Hungary until the years before World War I. What else could prove their economic significance that Bulgarian workers took 22 million gold korona and in 1912 (many of them travelled home due to the Balkan wars) 8 million as net profit from Hungary[1]. The profit taken or sent home by the Bulgarian gardeners helped the domestic businesses and this capital injection also contributed to the development of the Bulgarian economy, by the year 1939 the GDP had

reached, even overtaken the economies of the neighbouring Balkan countries. The migrant gardeners also played an important role in the Bulgarian society, as they imported the European mentality from almost all over Europe to their home country that had just been liberated from Ottoman rule (fig. 2).

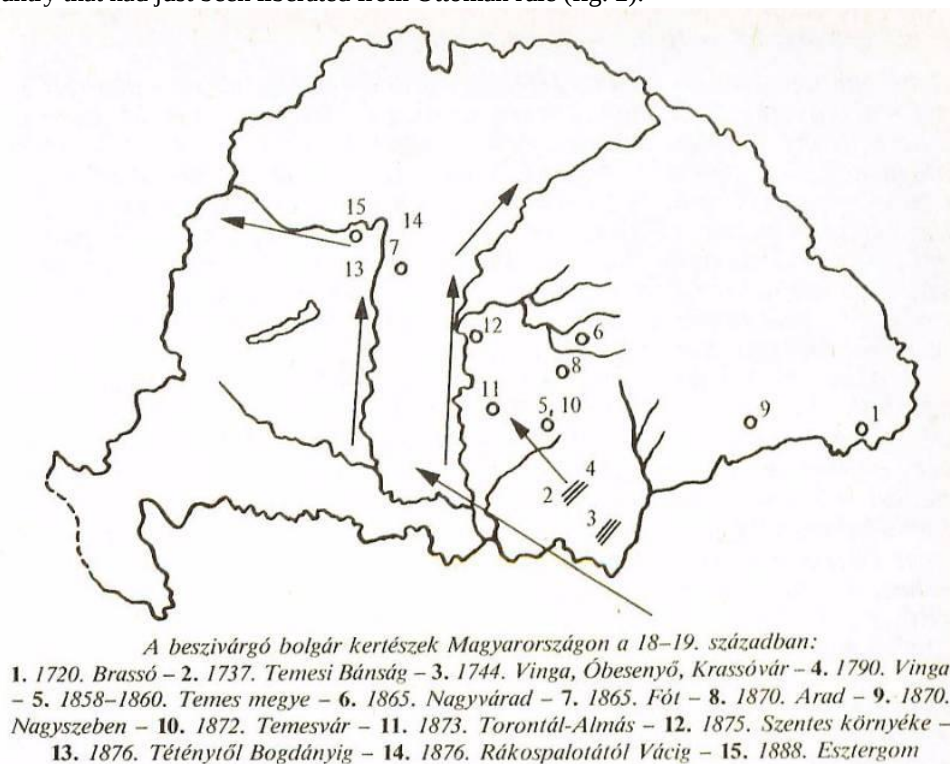


Fig. 2 Cultural destination "Bulgarian gardening road in Hungary"

Source: <http://www.gyoriszalon.hu/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=4843>

In Hungary Bulgarian gardeners had the credit for providing the Hungarian residents with basic vegetables and food between the two wars, during the hard period of lack of food and rationing and during the limited supply of goods in the Rákosi-era and after the revolution of 1956.

The migrant Bulgarian gardeners introduced paprika and bonnet pepper at the end of the 19th century in Szentes, at the beginning of the 20th century in Cece, Gyula, Boldog, Bogyiszló sweet paprika production became typical. The paprika species imported by them were mixed with the Hungarian species. Production started to increase in the 1930s. From 1960s polytunnels and greenhouse forcing became widespread. Tomato became common at the end of the 19th century in gardens, mainly grown for processing. Farm cultivation became significant first in the area of Fót and Dunakeszi and production was significant in the area of Kecskemét and Hatvan (Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon). Establishing the methods of Bulgarian gardeners in Hungary facilitated intensive farming among Hungarian peasant families. In the areas of Gyula, Békés, Szentes, Hódmezővásárhely intensive early-season vegetable growing appeared. (Révész, 1915 and Hungarian Ethnographic Lexicon).

CONCLUSION

The Bulgarian farmers living in Hungary realised as early as in the 1910s that their national identity can only be retained as Lazar Ivanov Bulgarian farmer in Hungary claimed: „The future has to be built not only by the hoe but also by faith in God and open eyes. The eye is opened by science”. Therefore the above-mentioned Bulgarian congregation was born, the Bulgarians in Hungary Association, the Bulgarian elementary school, the Saints Cyril and Methodius Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian Culture House which needed a significant financial contribution from the Bulgarians living in Hungary at the time. Their Christian faith was proved that Bulgarian gardeners born in Polikraishte donated the highest amount of money to build Saint Marina Church in 1885 in their home village in Polikraishte following the liberation from the Ottoman Empire. After the opening, the gardeners from Polikraishte raised money for 8 more years to obtain a bell for the church. The bell was cast in

Budapest then shipped on the Danube to Svishtov and from there it was carried by a carriage pulled by oxen to the church.

Nowadays there are hardly any Bulgarian gardeners in Hungary as from the 1980 they turned to the more profitable flower production, based on Bulgarian's trace in agricultural destination development [7]. Still there are some dozens of Bulgarian vegetable traders in the markets but their number is on the decrease. The descendants of the former gardeners and traders are second or third generation intellectuals who are proud of their ancestors. The Bulgarians living in Hungary at present have a vivid cultural life, they commemorate their national holidays and celebrations and maintain their cultural heritage of their parents and grandparents.

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