



**CULTURE AND NATURE: THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE OF  
SHEEP FARMING AND PASTORAL LIFE**

**Theme 1: Traditional handicrafts related to the sheep and its use;  
Use of sheepskin and wool in Hungary**

**Report of Hungary**

**Hungarian Open Air Museum  
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## 1. HISTORY

Archaeological evidence from the time of the Hungarian conquest testifies that certain branches of handicrafts were pursued at a high level. Among them were the treatment of sheep's wool and skin. In the early period of the Árpád dynasty subjects with special professional knowledge were settled around the estates of the king and of the heads of clans. Several place-names suggesting the name of a trade refer to this development.

The earliest mentioning of the word *gyapjú* (wool) as the word *szövés* (weaving) have been found in the *Beszterce Vocabulary* from 1395. The word *szűr* (mantle) of Slavic origin meant originally grey broad-cloth and from the 16<sup>th</sup> century the same word refers to the *szűr* too. Similarly, both words, *daróc* and *guba* (coat) refer to the fabric and the clothing, and the words *szürcsuha*, *szürköntös*, *szürköpenyeg*, *szürmelles*, *szürnadrág* és *szürdölmány* all mean different cloaks made of broad-cloth.<sup>1</sup> The word *nemez* (felt) is of Iranian origin, meaning compressed wool. The word *szűcs* is of Bulgarian Turkish origin from before the Hungarian conquest, its original meaning is to stitch and the word means the master processing and curing pelt and furry sheepskin.<sup>2</sup>

The word *suba* is of Slavic origin but the long cloak made of furry sheepskin without sleeves was probably used before the Hungarian conquest in the time of nomadic animal husbandry.<sup>3</sup>

The word *tobak* (*tabán*) came from Turkish and the word *timár* came from the Byzantine New-Greek through trade relations.<sup>4</sup> As feudalism extended, and towns developed, craftsmen working with leather and wool were mainly among town dwellers.

Written sources from 1255 refer to trade with sheep and leather, and Hungary joint the international trading network by commercializing broad-cloth. Every industry branch engaged in leather treatment is present in the market towns in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century, supplying their products to their own region. Guilds in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century used their monopolistic position to prevent merchants from selling finished goods. Sales took place beside weekly markets on fairs at national scale from the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century. The right of holding fairs largely helped the development of the towns. The increasing number of annual fairs in royal free boroughs increased mainly the opportunities of merchants. The wealthy craftsmen protected their interests against the merchants through the decisions, prescriptions and prohibitions made by the town's magistrates. The number of craftsmen who joint the guilds in market towns and villages were increasing in the second half of the Middle Ages beside the guild members working in free royal boroughs. Artisans in the regions under Turkish occupation gathered mainly in the privileged administrative units called "khász"

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<sup>1</sup> Hungarian Ethnography Lexicon. Woollen clothing. <http://mek.niif.hu/02100/02115/html/2-774.html>

<sup>2</sup> Hungarian Ethnography III. 318.p.

<sup>3</sup> Hungarian Ethnography Lexicon. Suba, fur. <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/html/4-1339.html>

<sup>4</sup> Hungarian Ethnography III. 13.p. Meaning of the word *tímár*: fine prepared leather. TESz III. 919.

towns, enjoying Turkish protection. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century Hungary had a shortage of superior local goods; following customs documents in 1542 93 % of exports to Western Europe were livestock, and 70 % of imported goods were fabrics.<sup>5</sup>

In the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century the estate centres of big landlords grew stronger with the result that craftsmen settled down here and their activities were concentrated here. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century more and more masters outside a guild organisation, “the botchers” appear on the scene; sources testify to the determined actions of guilds against them. Beside the guild members working in free royal boroughs the number of craftsmen who joined the guilds in market towns and villages was further increasing. This development accelerates from the last third of the 18<sup>th</sup> century following the resettlement of the regions after the expulsion of the Turks. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, king Francis I issued a number of privileges in favour of different mixed guilds, joining mainly related professions.

Separation of industrial activities, carried out with permit and following the required qualifications and those of cottage industry takes place formally only from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While in earlier times information about the cottage industry is due to the actions and prohibitions against the botchers, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century more attention is paid to them – especially thanks to the organisation of world exhibitions and their growing popularity. At the beginning of the 1880s some economists encouraged the development of cottage industry and the exportation of their products judging them as suitable measures to deal with overpopulation. Following the summary made by Gyula Kovács in 1898, the processing of fur and wool (carpets, Halina cloth) as well as the preparation and decoration of skin (mainly the production of shoes, strapping and whips) were enumerated among these activities.<sup>6</sup>

The loss of importance, and the total decline of fur trade began at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the process came to an end by the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. About 10000 furriers used to work in 1897 in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, their number was reduced to 7000 in 1930, and in 1961 there were no more than 1273 furriers active in the private and state industry<sup>7</sup>.

Clothing made by traditional technology is no more worn by peasants, neither for daily, nor for festive occasions and for town people it represents rather luxury goods. The proportion of sheepskin in leather articles has considerably been reduced also because the fell of wild animals has become fashionable. According to the division into main groups in the statistics, the trade and crafts linked to leather and to textile industry belong all to the trade of furriers, and processes of their changes in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be followed up when studying the statistics.

Sheep – the animal providing the raw material, and its exploitation

Archaeological and linguistic researches testify that the racka sheep has been present in the Carpathian basin since the period of migrations, before the Hungarian conquest. Its typical breed as known today with V-shaped corkscrew-like horns is known from the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century. Before the introducing of the Merino sheep in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, their main profits were the skin with fleece and the sheared wool beside its meat.

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<sup>5</sup> Hungarian Ethnography III. 18.p.

<sup>6</sup> Kovács Gyula, 1898.,

<sup>7</sup> Bogdán István

Demand for fine wool, impact of the changeover to another breed on the exploitation  
While in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century the special importance of sheep as commercial good was due to its meat, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century demand for fine wool in Europe contributed to the spread of the Merino sheep in Hungary. When the wool boom declined, the number of sheep decreased from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century even the exploitation of the skin and wool in the cottage and handicraft industry was driven into the background.

World production of fibrous material were 74,7 million tons in 2006, including only 1,3 million tons of wool, 26,3 million tons of cotton and 27,7 million tons of polyester.<sup>8</sup>

Following parts of sheep serve as raw material in handicrafts: processed skin, shorn wool. The bones supply children's toys after being boiled out. Bows can be made of intestines. The stomach of the lamb fed only with milk contains rennet to be used in milk processing as fermenting stuff. Below we are going to discuss the two first-mentioned areas of exploitation in detail.

## **2. RAW MATERIAL, ARTIFACTS AND MANUFACTURING METHODS**

### **A/ The wool and the products made of wool**

The fleece covering the sheep's body is the wool, being one of the most important raw materials obtained from an animal in the textile industry. In Hungarian the term gyapjú (wool) is restricted to describe sheep wool, wool of other animals are always completed by the animal's denomination. "The long and thick upper layer of fleece protects the sheep from rain and snow; the thin, soft fluffs underneath protect the animal from cold. The textile industry differentiates the breeds of sheep on the basis of the kind of their wool: a) merino sheep – having fine wool, b) breeds (cheviot, Lincoln) with long-staple wool, c) crossbred and d) sheep producing coarse wool (karakul, racka, cigája)".<sup>9</sup>

The wool's most important traditional use was in clothing, secondly in the production of home textiles. Home-made clothing was hard-wearing, pleasant to the touch and easy to produce. Peasants' daily and festive outfit was made of wool combined with leather made of sheepskin, the other important sheep product. Completed with ornaments, the mentioned outfit indicated social rank and position.

The textile made of wool without weaving is called felt. The very ancient producing technology precedes in time the knowledge of spinning and weaving. The technology

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[http://hu.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=F%C3%A1jl:Sz%C3%A1llanyag\\_termel%C3%A9s.gif&filetimestamp=20080312065630](http://hu.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=F%C3%A1jl:Sz%C3%A1llanyag_termel%C3%A9s.gif&filetimestamp=20080312065630)

<sup>9</sup> Vocabulary of the textile industry [http://hu.texsite.info/Birkagyapj%C3%BA,\\_juhgyapj%C3%BA](http://hu.texsite.info/Birkagyapj%C3%BA,_juhgyapj%C3%BA)

makes use of the wool's characteristic that mixed with warm water and soap flakes, and by kneading and rolling, the fibres interlock and felt and create a homogenous, flat, untearable surface. The best material for felt is the merino wool: this versatile felt is suitable for use in several branches of industry, like in the clothing and shoe industry, in the furniture industry, for sound, heat and dust insulation.

#### Use of wool in the household

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century woollen clothing was made by housewives in Hungary, especially in the region of Csík: „...Women are able to weave, to cut and to stitch underwear, coats and cloaks made of wool, linen and cambric for the needs of men and for themselves”.<sup>10</sup>

It is less known nowadays that wool was used also by the saddle-maker. The base frame, the tree of the saddle was padded with wool. Shredded wool was laid on the surface of the tree and after having covered the layer of wool with a piece of strong linen, it was fixed by cross-stitching.<sup>11</sup>

The wool of the cikta breed provided material for thick socks, jerkins and gloves made by women of German origin in Tolna and Baranya counties. Furthermore, the craftsmen of German origin used to wear characteristic footwear called “pacsker”, made of cikta wool as well.

#### Wool as home textile

Peasant women used to weave textile from home-spun yarn, obtained from long-staple wool. The fabric was widely used in the whole area where Hungarian is spoken; however, it was the most popular among Hungarians in Transylvania. In Southern Transdanubia the woollen textile was preferred mainly by Croats, Bunyevacs and Sokacs in Bácska. Very few pieces have been preserved on the Great Hungarian Plain due to its loss of importance from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The textile's original colour was grey and black, used alternately as decoration, but yarn was dyed also with vegetable, later with chemical dyestuff. The warp thread was hemp, but for smaller pieces wool thread was used.

In Szék in the region Mezőség woollen woven blankets were decorated with alternating grey and black stripes. Red dyed thread was introduced later and pieces made in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are decorated with red-green and black stripes.

#### Woollen blanket (cserge)

The word of Turkish origin means a blanket made mainly of sheep wool in Transylvania and Moldova. It was made of two-four lengths, and woven of thick, long hair. Normally a cserge was grey, not dyed, later there were red, striped and chequered blankets too. It was home-made and in the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century sources mention cserge as canvas suitable for tents. We have a reference from the 15<sup>th</sup> century referring to cserge as blanket and it was mentioned as belonging to a household in Kolozsvár in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays cserge is sold in handicraft fairs.

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<sup>10</sup> Register of 1820. MOL. EKL. F.52. Quoted by Farkas Irén 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Hungarian Ethnography III. 317.

## Woollen clothing

### Szűr (mantle)

The word of Slavic origin means textile woven of wool, furthermore, outer wear made of this textile. It was first mentioned in 1385 in the Vocabulary of Beszterce, meaning “grey broad-cloth”. The tailors of the Great Hungarian Plain worked with both the finer broad-cloth made by Saxons and with the coarse broad-cloth made in Upper Hungary. The mantle’s rectangular cut is known from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mantle belongs to the oriental elements of Hungarian civilization. The tailor cut the material so that he used every inch of it, without any waste.

The mantle was worn slung over the shoulder, even if it had sleeves. Shepherds in Transdanubia did not use the sleeves as such but as often the sleeves were sewn up one end, they kept small utensils in them. A szűr had no buttons; it was held together by a decorative buckle. It was first of all an outfit of shepherds but regional versions evolved in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when well-to-do peasants started to wear the mantle on festive days, and its rich decoration became characteristic.

In Alice Gáborján’s opinion the huge collar has its origin in the Renaissance, and it survived later as part of the outfit of Reformed priests.

### The embroidered mantle (cifraszűr)

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the festive garment embellished with embroidery and appliqué evolved from efforts in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in spite of decrees prohibiting application of too much ornaments among peasants. Prohibiting lists at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century comprise even mantles with broad-cloth sleeves and collars: the term refers not only to the effort to make the mantle stronger but to the decoration as well. The fashion of mantles decorated first with colourful hem, later with broad-cloth lace and finally with embroidery started in Transdanubia around 1825. It spread fast in spite of the prohibition, and by the end of the century regional versions developed: on the Great Hungarian Plain (Debrecen, Bihar, Kunság), in Transdanubia – with further regional differences in Bakony and Somogy – and in Upper Hungary. The mantle was less fashionable in Transylvania, a characteristic variety is known in Partium, made mainly by masters in Nagyvárad. The spread of sewing machines in Hungary had an impact on the embroidery: tailors quickly purchased sewing machines, which enabled them to embroider faster and simpler. The new and faster production technique had an impact on the use of appliqué.

### Embroidery with woollen yarn

Embroideries made with yarn obtained from the wool of racka sheep and applied on hemp or flax linen were probably wide-spread in Hungary, testified by archive sources in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, very few examples are kept in museum collection. The abandonment of their use from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is presumable the change from racka breed to merino breed. It is remarkable that the examples in the collection have little varieties: they are largely cushion cases and often they are already transformed into small cushions. This fact refers to the change in bed-making, dealt with by Lajos Kiss (Hódmezővásárhely), Bálint Kiss (Szentes), and Bálint Major (Nagyrev). István Györffy published in the magazine *Muskátli* the reconstruction of a high-bed from Karcag (Györffy István, 1932).

### Embroidered pillow-cases from the region Nagy-kunság –Cuman-embroidery

During WW II many pillow-cases from the 18<sup>th</sup> century were destroyed in the old collection of Karcag Museum. A list was made in 1921 about objects taken for

restoration to the Ethnography Museum and we learn from this list that there four woollen embroideries among them, and textiles with date of year (1721 and 1706) were only in this collection (Iván Balassa, 1973.)

It is very regrettable that much less examples of Cuman-embroidery have been preserved, compared with the known embroideries made in the Southern Great Plain. There are about 20 of them in the Ethnographic Museum, 2 in both the Déri Museum in Debrecen, and in the István Győrffy Nagykun Museum, and I know about 2 pieces in a private collection. The preserved – and not renewed – embroideries come from Karcag, Kisújszállás, Kunmadaras, and as a different variety as for its region of origin and its kind, from Tiszafüred. We have to note that very few depictions and drawings are preserved.

It is an important point of similarity between Cuman-embroidery and other embroideries on the Great Plain that only the visible surface of pillows is decorated due to the way of bed-making. This is the survival of a measure of economy implemented in Middle Ages and practiced even in other forms of art, for example in woodcarving. Embroidery was applied on hemp, seldom on flax linen and this part was preserved after removing it from the complete pillow-case. Compared with embroideries from Hódmezővásárhely and Arad, a characteristic of Cuman-embroideries follows from the way of bed-making and the practice to fill the pillows softer. Therefore the decoration is only on the border, like a stripe, and it never covers the whole surface. Similarly to the varieties on the Southern Great Plain, embroidery is typical for the market towns and big villages. It flourished typically in the market towns, which experienced a fast development during the period of redemption, and after, in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this region there is not much difference between the lifestyle and outfit of well-to-do peasantry in the market towns and of the local gentry. We refer to the assets of estate of the nobleman Gergely Gál from Tiszavárkony, and the assets of estate of the redemptus peasant in Túrkeve from 1872, published by Lajos Győrffy.<sup>12</sup>

We know two types of embroidery with woollen yarn in the region Kunság. More examples remained of the more widespread type, the free embroidery. The other type is known from Kunmadaras and Kunhegyes: the counted-thread embroidery. Other examples are known in the Southern Great Plain. Its most important characteristics are: the pattern's structure is in cassettes, the ornaments in the middle and on the borders have nearly the same width. Colouring is quite restricted, one or two (black, brownish-blue) colours are used without transition between colours.

Two very distinguished types of free embroidery are identified in the region beyond the river Tisza in Hódmezővásárhely (Makó) and the embroidery of the region Kunság. This last type is embroidered mostly on hemp linen, seldom on flax linen. Some not fragmented examples kept in the Ethnography Museum consist of both: the part made of hemp is without decoration, the end of the pillow is flax linen, embroidered with dark woollen thread. The most popular stitch was the flat-stitch.

The earliest pieces had a design in cassette structure. Most of the embroidered textiles show stripe-like ornaments, with a more emphasised middle pattern separated by two strong running lines of black or brown thread from the thin upper and lower stripes of pattern. Julia

Bartha has discovered similarities between these embroideries and those of the Tartars in Kazan.<sup>13</sup> The pillow-cases in the region Kunság were designed symmetrically

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<sup>12</sup> Győrffy Lajos

<sup>13</sup> Bartha Júlia 2002.



around a strongly highlighted middle pattern. The flower pattern in the middle – a rosette composed of 12-18 petals, a half rose or a pair of flowers turning into two directions – is flanked by tulips or rosettes turning outside. The tripartite pattern is closed normally by a spray. It carries a tulip or a forget-me-not, a flat four-lobed flower. In other versions, the tulip and the half-rose are placed on a motif of wave but we know also varieties with lily-of-the-valley.

There are some examples of transition in the Déri Museum: they show fewer similarities with the embroideries of Hódmezővásárhely and they are presumably older pieces, may-be from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They fill up more space, their design is in cassette structure and the ornaments on the borders are more emphasized compared to the classic Cuman-embroideries. Furthermore, they show manifold but small ornaments on the borders, placed quite far away from each other.

The unique colours of Cuman-embroideries are due to the vegetable dyes. Normally, no more than 2-3 colours are used but their different shades are turning into the next colour or shade. The woollen thread's original colour was also popular, mainly to separate pronouncedly the patterns in the middle from the line of patterns on its sides. The colours are not mixed to obtain shades: the thread is kept in the dyestuff for a shorter or longer time to achieve lighter or darker shades. Five-six shades of the same colour can be present in the highlighted central motif.

Sprays, flowers, tulips are embroidered generally with three differing colours, while the twigs of plant-motifs are made of two colours (green-brown, green-pink, green-dark red). The colours of the border line are always strong: blue, brown, black, like the thread used to fix the embroidered part of the pillow-case to its plain part. Those pieces are probably older, where the line separating the middle pattern from its border was embroidered with several, alternate colours.

The practice of this embroidery disappeared at the end of Reform Age – but after having been discovered again, a fast revival followed, largely due to István Győrffy's write up about the embroidery in 1932. His intention was to make known by the public this type of embroidery and to promote the embroidery in courses. Its first result was the communion-table cover made by women of Kunhegyes in 1935 and given to the congregation in Feketics.<sup>14</sup> In spite of the interest in the efforts, the revival was not easy: it was difficult to purchase the special thread and dying had further difficulties.<sup>15</sup> Researching the history of the few but valuable Cuman-embroideries preserved in drawers, in museum collections or in albums, further interpretation of its motifs, and their re-creation is the common task of the museum profession and of the masters of embroidery.

## **The sheepskin**

Handicraft industry produces mainly two kinds of sheepskin products: leather goods and furs.

Tanners removed hair from the hides with knives and prepared them following the "Hungarian method" with alum and salt. There was a high demand in Europe for the harnesses, straps and trousers made of leather.

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<sup>14</sup> (Vígh Márta: About the Cuman-embroidery.

<http://www.kunhegyes.hu/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=41>)

<sup>15</sup> (Flórián Mária, é.n.).

Furriers worked with furry skins to make coats. They were organised in guilds from the Middle Ages till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Quality differences between kinds of leathers

According to László Nagy the hide of racka sheep – among the sheep and lamb skins suitable to produce thinner and softer than cordovan leather, called szattyán - was considered as more valuable than the hide of the merino sheep. Experience might have taught that the skin of racka with its coarser hair was stronger than the skin of the merino breed with its silky fleece. Thus, the shafts of the stronger footwear for men was made of racka skin, while the softer skin of the younger sheep, especially of the merino breed, suited more for women's boots and slippers. The skin of lamb and of young goat was used as lining and as appliqué. The skin of shorn sheep was preferred: after shearing, the animal's skin takes over the protective function of fleece and gets stronger.<sup>16</sup>

#### Wide-spread use of leather

Dorogi Márton, the famous researcher of the subject is quoted: „The knowledge about processing leather was mainly handed down and preserved among shepherds. Living on the pastures, they had to know about it because sheepskin was an obviously available material for their garments, furthermore, it was better than anything as for its strength, hardwearing quality and weather-resistance. Shepherds supplied leather outfit to other shepherds but also to many village dwellers”.<sup>17</sup>

#### Preparing of leather

Raw hides are preserved by adding salt and by drying. Treatment begins with soaking and washing in order to remove dirt. A sharp knife cuts off remaining flesh. The next step is the tanning, followed by drying, breaking and softening. At the end, leather is cut, decorated and stitched. Skins for appliqué are processed the same way, but an additional treatment is the removal of hair with lime. After the hair is removed, lime is washed out. For drying, the skin is stretched with the help of reed between legs and head and tail, so that it is aired thoroughly. For salting normal salt is used, for washing soap-root and running water, and for the fleshing, dehairing and scraping sharp knives, sleekers and combs were needed. The shape of these tools can be traced back to the Neolithic. Traditional dry scrapers have a long wooden handle with a weighted short blade set at an angle.

Tanning with alum has its origin in Asia-Minor, Hungarians might have learnt the process between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century. The most common natural preservative agents are salt, alum and some material for acidification: lactic acid, sour milk, flour, semolina, maize flour, bran, leaven. The procedure is still known among nomadic peoples on the steppe of Eurasia. Mongolians, Bashkirians, Tuvais and Kirgiz use sour milk, Buryats use sour milk and rye-flour, Tatars of Volga use oatmeal-leaven, Evenkis use leaven-water, and Persians prefer barley-flour. However, these methods can be combined with other tanning types. The agent prepared with sour milk and lactic acid was still in use till recent time in Csik County and on the Great Hungarian Plain.

The skin is soaked in the liquor with salt and alum, and fermenting agent is strewn on the fleshy side. They are put together skin to skin or folded, and the skins remain in

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<sup>16</sup> Nagy László 1971. 192.

<sup>17</sup> Dorogi Márton 1956. 307.

the tanning liquor for 1-2 weeks. The proportion of the agents is always different, but generally alum is more. Wet skins are softened during drying – or the dried skins are made wet again for the process, till the leather is soft enough. Around Kecskemét the softening procedure was carried out with the feet, either with special footwear or barefoot.<sup>18</sup>

#### Finishing

Removing the last remaining flesh from the skin is a hard work, requiring strength, skill and patience. The furrier is sitting on a special stripping bench, and pulls the skin on a blunt knife. Barley-flour is strewn on the skin to make the surface rough, so that the flesh peels off easier from the skin.<sup>19</sup> The bench is a very typical tool of the furrier, often depicted as symbol of the trade, like on a grave-stone from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, or on the seal of the furrier guild of Kecskemét from 1581<sup>20</sup>.

Furriers might have learnt leather dying from the tanners recently, as well as the use of dyestuff made of oak-apple in Hódmezővásárhely. The leather was dyed brown or yellow. Leathers processed with alum were dyed yellow when cold. Older furs were white; brown or yellow furs were the younger fashion: dying was introduced during the Reform age.<sup>21</sup>

### **3. SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT – Masters related to sheep skin and wool**

#### Tanner

The Hungarian word *timár* referred in the Middle Ages to the profession of tanner (currier) and of the shoemaker, as documentary materials mention. Archaeological finds from the time of Turkish occupation indicate that the tanner produced shoes as well. Supposedly, they prepared finer shafts with alum and fixed them to the soles made of harder and thicker leather.<sup>22</sup> Since “*tobaks*” (see below) gained ground in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century, the “*timárs*” specialised on the processing of cow and buffalo leather.

#### Tobak, tobakos

The name of Ottoman Turkish origin refers to tanners working with similar methods as the Turks. We find this definition in the vocabulary Czuczor–Fogarasi: „the so called *tobaks* treat sheep and goatskin with white dog-droppings and sumac and produce leather, cordovan leather and leather for appliqué”.

The *tobaks* treated mainly the hides of goat, lamb and sheep. Sheepskin was the material for thicker and heavier leather (called in Hungarian: cordovan), sheep and lambskin suited for lighter and thinner leather, in Hungarian *szattyán*.<sup>23</sup> Their memory is kept alive in different towns because their former dwelling quarter is still called *Tabán*.

#### Shoemaker (Varga)

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<sup>18</sup> Hungarian Ethnography III. 326-327.

<sup>19</sup> Hungarian Ethnography III. 328.

<sup>20</sup> Nagybakay Péter 1985. 20.,22. pict.

<sup>21</sup> Hungarian Ethnography III. 328.

<sup>22</sup> Gáborján Alice 1957.

<sup>23</sup> Czuczor – Fogarasi 1862–1874. VI. 298. Quoted by: Hungarian Ethnograph III. 289.

These professionals treated hides with tanning but from the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century they specialised for making different leather shoes. One of them was called “cipellő” – fine, little shoe, mainly for women, mentioned the first time in 1380. They spread fast due to Western models. Material of these finer shoes might have been sheep hide.<sup>24</sup>

#### Boot-maker (Csizmadia)

The master did not treat hides; he produced only boots, house-shoes, ladies' shoes and Turkish shoes. Their first guild privileges are known from the year 1598 from Kassa.

#### Furrier (Szűcs)

The master used to treat and stitch fur skin and sheepskin. He supplied his goods to every social layer in the Middle Ages. Furriers founded their guilds very early. Guild privileges in Kolozsvár date from 1369. By the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, there are already over 20 furrier guilds in Hungary. Ferenc Zay writes in his memoirs that king Mathias, when preparing the siege of Szabács in winter in 1476, let make coats and fur gloves for 8 000 soldiers. Every furrier living between Várad and Pest worked for him.

According to data in the guilds cadastre, over 200 guilds had furriers among their members in historic Hungary, and 169 guilds were independent guilds of furriers.<sup>25</sup>

Hungarian furriers were experts at treating, sewing and embroidering sheepskin and coats. In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century German furriers detached themselves from them. They specialized on lining woven fabric and felt clothing with fur.

#### Fuller (csapó)

His work was to clean and to prepare wool for further processing. The word refers to refining the wool before spinning. It is the process of fluffing up the fibres by a tool which resembles a stringed instrument. The heavier (dirty, rougher quality) sank down, the lighter, better wool came up. The process was preserved the longest time in the trade of making wool satchels and by hat-makers till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fullers joined guilds in the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries; the most famous was the guild in Debrecen. One of the town's streets bears the name of the craft.

#### Guba maker (guba is a long sleeveless cape)

The weaver of wool makes the fabric for guba by a special technique: during weaving he includes selected woollen locks into the fabric following every 3-4 lines and fixes them with the weft yarn. This makes the cloak, the guba fur on its right side. The demand was high in the region to the East from the river Tisza and in the eastern part of Upper Hungary. The masters used to weave, to dye, to cut and to stitch the capes themselves and they sold them on the big fairs on the Great Hungarian Plain. Their biggest guilds were in the towns of Debrecen, Nagyvárad, Nagykároly, Miskolc and Ungvár.

#### Tailor of szűr (szűr is a long coat of shepherds)

His work included weaving the coarse wool after the process of fulling was achieved. He cut the simple coat for men using square patterns and stitched it. The name is

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<sup>24</sup> It was written in the charter of incorporation of the shoemakers in Lébény-Szent Miklós in 1713: „The proof of good knowledge of the trade is to be provided by cutting 10 pairs of fine ladies' shoes from five small leathers and one calf leather, one goatskin, three sheep or lambskin ...” (Priv. et art. Ceh. LIX. 25). Quoted in: Hungarian Ethnography III. 293.

<sup>25</sup> Hungarian Ethnography III. 128.

known first as family name in 1570. Upon the request of tailors making szűr coats in Kolozsvár, Marosvásárhely and Torda, the decree of Transylvania's prince Zsigmond Báthori prohibited in 1592 exporting grey broad-cloth in bundles.<sup>26</sup> These professionals started organising their guilds in a relatively late time, mainly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was the period when the demand for decoration of the former simple clothing for daily use became general and a new coat, the richly embellished "cifraszűr" became fashionable among peasants. The most important centres of production were the towns of Veszprém, Debrecen and Nagyvárad in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries nearly 800 masters were active in Hungary, as the Pallas Lexicon states. The Hungarian ethnographer, István Győrffy was born in 1884 in a family of tailors of szűr in Karcag.

#### **4. COMMERCIAL OUTLETS**

##### **Process of change, disintegration of the guilds, indications of survival**

The middle and the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the time of flourishing of the furrier trade due to the development when peasant clothing became more colourful. Beside the garments of daily use made of sheepskin, embroidered fur and leather garment was a characteristic element of the festive clothing of both men and women, such as the szűr (embroidered mantle) worn by shepherds in Transdanubia and by shepherds and peasants on the Great Hungarian Plain.

From the turn of the century the trade is in decline; guilds are disintegrating, urbanisation takes place and factory products are sold on a large scale. With the exception of Transylvania, peasants wear less and less home-spun and leather garments from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, in spite of the fact that sewing machines for furriers were widespread, contributing to higher productivity. But another consequence was the decline of the time-consuming manual stitching and embroidery.

While the trade of szűr-making practically did not exist any more, the last members of furrier dynasties go on working till the 1980s. The demand for traditional clothing for daily use however disappears together with the private farming activities of the peasantry.

The traditional furrier centres – like Kunszentmárton – started to supply a new type of product: fur-coats to meet the requirements of fashion trends and they changed over to factory technology. In the decade from 1990 however, these factories closed down or the production was considerably reduced. Moreover, the craft was no more taught in schools as from 1991. Merely a few families produce till today wide coats (suba), caps, gloves and accessories and prepare sheepskin – the product range of former Hungarian furriers.

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<sup>26</sup> Hungarian Ethnography II. Handicrafts 398.

To sum up, we can say that the trade of furrier, wool weaving, embroidery with wool and clothing in broad-cloth may have a chance for survival only in the framework of folk art. Every activity concerning the use of wool and skin of sheep is present in competitions, handicraft fairs and handicraft schools up to now. The rich ethnographic literature in Hungary and the numbers of objects in museum collections enable us to teach the techniques and the motifs and designs, as well as to give them new functions and as a consequence, to re-interpret and to preserve our traditions.

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