

Theses of PhD dissertation

**BOURGEOIS WAY OF LIFE-BOURGEOIS
MENTALITY**

**Researches on Family, Everyday Life and Mentality
Based on the Ladics Inheritance in Gyula
(1850–1950)**

Zsolt Bódán



Supervisor: Elek Bartha DSc

UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN
Doctoral School of History and Ethnography

Debrecen, 2013

1. The subject and aim of the dissertation

The research of the previously neglected bourgeois-bourgeoisie-embourgeoisement got bigger impulse after the democratic transformation of Hungary. Beside History and Sociology, the embourgeoisement of peasantry attracted the interest of Ethnography too. In spite of it the bourgeoisie is still at the borderline of the range of interests of Ethnography and its importance from ethnographical point of view can be defined by its model role. The bourgeois way of life determined by the bourgeois mentality as a model had effect on peasantry pointing out the direction of peasant embourgeoisement. In order to understand this process on the whole, researching peasantry on its own is not enough; first we have to study the lifestyle and mentality of the role model bourgeoisie as profoundly as we can.

The Ladics inheritance in Gyula offers us an outstanding opportunity of this kind of research. This unique and complex legacy of a rural, intellectual class family includes the Ladics's house, home of the family for more than a century with its entire furniture, the personal belongings of the family members and the archives of three generation. The main aim of this research is to uncover the typical characteristics of the bourgeois lifestyle and mentality through the example of a rural, middle class family at the turn of the century by mainly the processing of the family correspondence but also using different written and material records as well.

In the focus of the research stood an intensive study of a shorter period, the second half of Dualism between 1880 to 1914 which was extended by the study of a longer period between 1850 to 1950 mainly by the history of the Ladics family giving the background of the results uncovered by the intensive study of the first period.

2. The resources, method and structure of the dissertation

At our research, based on an interdisciplinary point of view, we tried to alloy the micro history and historical anthropology's methodology and view with the accumulated observation of ethnography about peasant lifestyle and culture and the linking results

of cultural history. Changing the focus of the research – using a micro anthropological focus – and putting a country bourgeois family in the middle of it, and extending the circle of research topics to all elements of everyday life by applying the holistic approach of anthropology and ethnography we aimed to uncover a specially reach and shaded picture of bourgeois lifestyle and mentality from the period of Dualism.

The qualitative analysis with striving after an emic approach and the aims of the research required a special data processing, based on emphasising of the unique characteristic of documents. Its primary sources could be the personal documents of the inheritance, especially the reach correspondence of the Ladics family. The bases of the analysis were about 2000 letters of the correspondence from which – using the methodology of qualitative social research, taking empiric material as a starting point, applying the grounded theory – we looked for the answers of our questions: what were the main characteristics of a rural bourgeois family’s lifestyle between 1880 to 1914 and what elements of bourgeois mentality can be discovered behind them.

The complex area of lifestyle, interpreting as the representation of mentality, for practical reason was divided into tree analytic category (everyday life, festive life, social life and leisure) completing with a fourth one, the family history which basically determined the structure of the dissertation. After the introduction a first chapter is about the history of the Ladics family than come the tree chapters about the bourgeois lifestyle of the family at the turn of the century, one of them dealing with the everyday life, another one with social life and leisure while the third with the festive life. The last chapter of the dissertation summarises the main characteristics of bourgeois mentality at the end of the 19th century based on the example of the Ladics family.

3. The new results of the research

I. The lessons of the family history.

The interpretation of Ladics family’s become possible by two classic historical model the “self-made man” and the “Boddenbrook-effect” The “founder” György Ladics established the rising of the

family. As a first generation intellectual, coming from a plain tradesman family, he rose among the most prestigious citizens of Békés county, supported only by his own strength and diligence like a real self-made man. Behind his successful course of life can be discovered the co-efficient of outer and inner factors. Amongst outer factors the most important seems to be the wider opportunities of social mobility in bourgeois Hungary while the inner factors can be found in the personal characteristic of György Ladics: talent, diligence, persistence, the honour of work, economic and temperate way of life. Essentially, his bourgeois view of life and mentality, based on the work ethos, which had close link to Weber's protestant ethic.

The history of the family's next generations matches to the Boddenbrook-effect. The second and the third generations of the inheritors were not able to repeat the founder's achievement. György Ladics's children had their carrier mainly thank to their father's social position, saving the family wealth and prestige but could not grow it further. In the time of the grandchildren the family came to a descent pathway, becoming less and less important and living a quiet life until the communist takeover in Hungary.

II. The characteristic of bourgeois way of life based on the example of Ladics family

1. Man role in a bourgeois family. In György Ladics' life the central position of money-making connected to carrier-building with the experience of rising from the low together led to the honour of hard work. Good example of this view of life the serious work-burden that the lawyer practise, the all sort of public appearances and the personally run estate gave to him. By this lifestyle basically he adjusted to the typical role written by the man centred society of his age. According to it man's primary duty was to create a solid financial background to his family, earn enough for a proper middle class life by his daily work. This role also gave man the right of earning and disposing money which naturally appeared in decision making situations and also in the hierarchy of the family.

2. Woman role in a bourgeois family. Based on the traditional view of woman in the man centred society of Dualism the woman role typically was limited inside the home areas in middle class families. The trinity of good housewife, mother and wife seemed to be unquestionable during most of the period. Although at the turn of the century the traditionally created picture of woman slowly started to change it didn't seem to have any effect on the wives and daughters of the Ladics family, their life remained amongst the traditional limits. The first duty of the woman of the house was the management of the household. The most important part of this was the arrangement of catering of the family in a shorter period by providing the everyday food, and in a longer one by stockpiling all the necessary things. Another important duty was the maintenance which included the question of cleanness as well. Besides organising and directing the household the question of the staff was under housewife's control too. In addition to housewife role raising the children, as a good mother, was another important part of middle class woman's life, just as the representation connected to the bourgeois social life.

3. Children in a bourgeois family. In the 19th century children won a central position in the middle class families connected to the way of looking at them as tokens of the family's future. At the Ladics family it appeared in the careful upbringing of children from the early ages and also in good education. In the boy's case to reach as high qualification as it possible, learning languages, aiming intellectual carriers like lawyer, doctor, engineer etc. were to keep and strengthen the social status of the family. In the girls case the careful education by the nunnery and private teachers aimed to prepare for traditional woman roles by which they also could strengthen the family's position with a good marriage.

4. The surrounding as the scene of bourgeois lifestyle. The frame of the Ladics family's way of life was determined by the narrower and wider surroundings they lived their everyday life. In a wider sense it was Gyula, a developing although just partly urbanised rural county town. Besides the built surrounding given by the town, the social surrounding, included a higher level of the middle class compare to other towns of the county, was even more important from the point of

view of the Ladics family's everyday life. In a narrower sense the surrounding was the home of the family which represented all the typical characteristics of bourgeois houses of the late 19th century. In the seven roomed family home the areas of privet and social life unambiguously separated from each other. Due to the independent intellectual profession of the head of the family in the Ladics house there always had been a study where György and László Ladics could work also could welcome their guests and friends. Besides other typical premises were the representative salon which connected the house to the outside world, the dining room, place for hospitality and family gatherings, and the bedrooms representing the private areas of the family. A bathroom also was in the house from the middle of 1870s. The furniture of each room represented the most important styles of the 19th century. The Ladics family's home is a good example of the bourgeois houses' double characteristic: familiarity and representation.

5. Social life, free time and leisure in a bourgeois family. The characteristic social life linked whit bourgeois lifestyle well documented was a part of the Ladics' every day and festive life. The clubs gave the established frame of the social life. In Gyula the most respected were the Gentleman Club, founded in 1841, and the Bourgeois Club, founded in 1861. Both György Ladics and his son László were presidents of the Gentleman Club for many years which clearly shows the social respect of the Ladics family in Gyula at the turn of the century. Clubs were basically the institutions of men society, offering them the opportunity to read newspapers, playing cards, having conversations although the dances arranged by the clubs would have been unimaginable without the ladies. Otherwise the balls of the carnival and autumn season or New Year's Eve were the most important events of the social life. Concerts and plays were also especially popular amongst middle class families. For woman the different kind of charity clubs meant the established frame of social life, most well known the Gyula Woman Club, founded in 1870, in which both Mrs György and László Ladics were active members.

The most important occasions of everyday social life were visits, which usually meant just short calls. Besides them the mutual invitations for lunch and dinner, or the youth's home dances were also

important events of the bourgeois social life. Walking was a popular way of spending free time also a type of social event just as the spring time trips and picnics or the summer time visits of the spas. Sport as a free time activity also became more important in the middle class at the end of the 19th century. There were wide ranges of individual ways of spending free time too like the more and more popular reading or the different kinds of hobbies for example drawing, painting, collecting postcards or stamps etc. just as needlework, still one of the most popular woman activities.

7. High days in a bourgeois family. Talking about the festive life of the Ladics family the base is the connection to Christian culture. Based on the correspondence Christmas was on the first place in the festive life of the family. The another two Christian high days also quite often appeared in the letters just as New Year's Day and carnival time witch whit its balls was especially popular amongst the youth. From the family festivals name days and birthdays were mentioned the most often.

The most important characteristic of the feasts was their family nature. The Ladics correspondence unambiguously shows that feasts were important occasions of cultivating relationship inside the closer family just as between the family and the relatives. Most of the feast's inevitable event was the family meal to which on some occasion special food connected like the turkey at Christmas, the ham at Easter or the milk loaf at all the tree big Christian high days. The reach and various festival meals besides rising the festive atmosphere were also a type of representation. The increased festive consumption can be interpreted as the appearance of representation. In this case it didn't mean just the meals but the custom of giving presents at many of the high days like at Christmas, Easter, Saint Nicolas day, name day, birthday, wedding and so on. Festive dressing or decoration of the home could also be an example of representation. In the Ladics inheritance we can find data for the individual feast too: the uprising of birthdays or the wedding anniversaries can be mentioned as examples. Interestingly enough the national holidays, born at that age, had not been mentioned in the family correspondence.

III. The main features of bourgeois mentality by the example of Ladics family.

1. The work ethos. In the centre of the mentality represented by György Ladics were carrier building, money-making and position acquiring which aimed to insure a solid financial background of the family. The head of the Ladics family, in his letters often characterising himself as the man of work, considered the honour of work as a central value of his life. Hard work was a key factor in his walk of life, besides his marriage, by which he was able to reach his wealth and social position.

2. Economy. The work ethos unambiguously connected to economy, carefulness, sober and organised lifestyle in the Ladics mentality. In the correspondence many example shows that kind of economic point of view, demanded by the head of the family, in the Ladics' daily life from the questions of household through dressing till the children's education. Especially about the expenses considered as luxury appeared strictly the economic view as a basic value of the mentality.

3. The family as a value. Based on the Ladics legacy the bourgeois mentality's most stressed mark, besides work ethos and economy, was the appearance of the family as a value. The wealth reached by hard work was not for itself but for the family, it aimed to insure the prosperity of the family. The family as a value included the idea of peaceful family life too which connected to the view of patriarchal family, whit the traditional man and woman roles, which was characteristic throughout the whole period at the Ladics family.

4. Learning as a value. The elements of scale of values presented so far - the work ethos, economy, the central position of family – most sharply, in explicit form appears at the children raising and education in the Ladics family. The boy's education aiming at least maturity exam, rather a degree widened by private lessons, travelling and knowledge of languages were to keep and insure the social prestige of the family reached by György Ladics. The "founder" Ladics's view of life careful education, as a personally experienced and working model of successful life got a central position.

5. Representation. The characteristic of bourgeois mentality, based on the Ladics inheritance can be shaded by the point of representation creating a kind of duality in mentality. While economic and sober lifestyle is a basic value in the family, it always appears in a higher level. Most conspicuously it appeared at the area of consumption: the essence of this dual point of view was not to neglect the consumer goods but to reach them as cheap as possible.

Economy was not above everything, the limit was the socially expected lifestyle connected to the social position of the family. The aim was a careful and sober life matches with the social status of the family. The puritan values appeared mainly in the everyday life while the social and the festive life of the family had a strong representation. As an example we can mention the hospitality of guests, lunches, dinners and invitations, or the elements of cultural consumption, like buying books or visiting concerts and plays or the quite expensive travelling to spas.

IV. Conclusions

The research of the Ladics inheritance gave the opportunity to get to know the everyday and festive life of a rural bourgeois family and the bourgeois mentality behind it. Summing up we can say that the bourgeois lifestyle and mentality represented by the Ladics family matches with, and strengthen the theoretical picture, just partly based on empiric research, previously drawn in special literature. The Ladics family's patterns of lifestyle went by the bourgeois way of life considered typical at the end of the end 19th century and its mentality coincided with the values of Weber's protestant ethic completed with the status signing representation. The drowned picture is a snapshot from the turn of the century. Both the everyday life and mentality had changed a great deal at the interwar period and after the communist takeover in Hungary. The outgoing research of the legacy gave the opportunity to reveal that process too and by analysing the changes appearing behind the Ladics family's history to reach a more complete understanding of Hungarian embourgeoisement.

4. Publications on the subject of the dissertation

1, „Karriertörténet a dualizmus korából” – a gyulai Ladics család. (A carrier from the age of Dualism – the Ladics family from Gyula) In: Dománszki Gabriella (Szerk.): A lehetőségek országa. Polgárosodás a 19. századi Magyarországon. Bp., 2010. 140–147.

2, Háztartási naplók egy gyulai polgárcsalád hagyatékában. (Household diaries from the legacy of a bourgeois family un Gyula) In: Erdész Ádám (Szerk.): Egy gyulai polgárcsalád világa. Tanulmányok a Ladics família történetéből. Gyulai füzetek 18. Gyula, 2011. 101–124.

3, Séták, vizitek, bálók. Egy polgárlány élete Gyulán az 1880-as, '90-es évek fordulóján. (Walks, visits and balls. The life of a bourgeois girl at the turn of 1880 and 1890) Bárka. 2011/5. 65–70.

4, Egy gyulai polgári háztartás a századfordulón a háztartási naplók tükrében. (A bourgeois household in Gyula at the turn of the century by the household diaries) In: H. Németh István-Szívós Erika-Tóth Árpád (Szerk.): A város és társadalma. Tanulmányok Bácskai Vera tiszteletére. Bp., 2011. 378–388.

5, Egy gyulai polgárcsalád karácsonya a századfordulón. (The Christmas of a bourgeois family at the turn of the century) Ethnographia. 2011/4. 373–389.

6, Ünnepek és Hétköznapok. Egy gyulai polgárcsalás élete a Horthy-korszakban. (High days and week days. A bourgeois family's life in Gyula at the post war period) In.: Szatmári Imre (Szerk.): A Békés Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei 36. Békéscsaba, 2012. 178–203.