

# Felnőtt vala egy édesz almafa...

Archaic linguistic features in  
Hungarian folk ballads

For the 60th birthday of  
Mare Kõiva

MMA

MAGYAR MŰVÉSZETI  
AKADÉMIA

# Archaic linguistic elements in the folklore



Village of Alsószolcsva, 1928. KJNT 11315



Kata Tamás at the microphone of Béla Vikár. Bánffyhunad, 1900. Néprajzi Múzeum fotótára

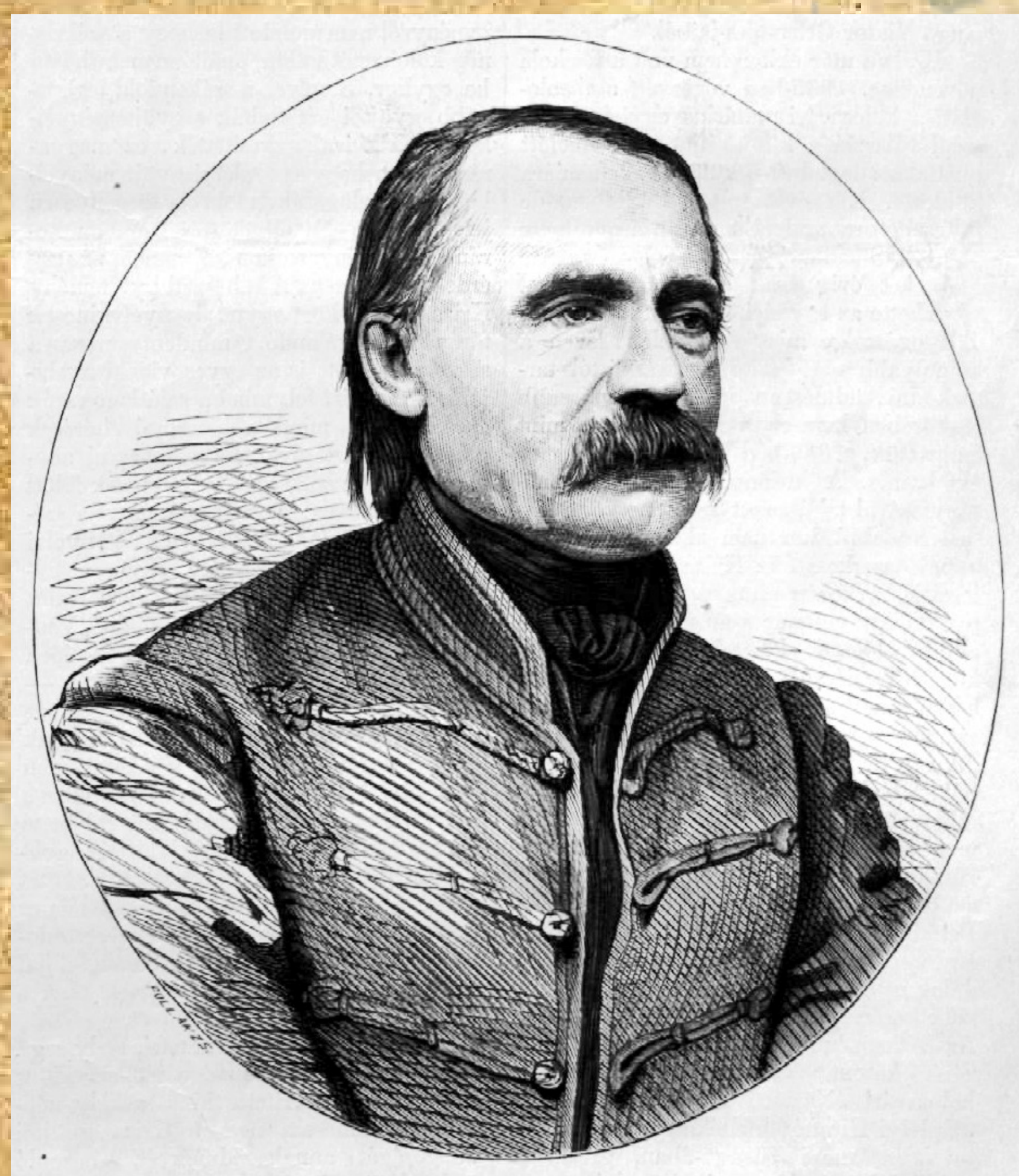


Pál Péter Domokos making a phonograph record. Trunk, 1932. Néprajzi Múzeum fotótára

The supposition of Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály (Kodály 1960) was certainly true, when they came to the thought that the oldest forms of Hungarian folk songs should have been sought in peasants' huts: "all the remains of the primeval layer of Hungarian spirit are confined into the cottages." In the collective memory of a thousand years, folklore has preserved linguistic treasures that are definitively vanished from the "written culture" due to the changing of genre norms, the spirit of the age and the language itself. This linguistic memory may keep older layers of the language than the philologically extrapolated age of the given ballad or folk song. With the ballads and songs of the first great Hungarian folklore collection "Vadrózsák" ("Wild roses") which was first published 150 years ago, we have got back something of the lost heritage: impressively beautiful ancient constructions, compact syntactic structures, the aspectual richness of the past tense system, the series of poetic synonyms. These were still known in the Csángó and Székely dialects at that time. From other regions, probably only the archaic folk prayers – collected by Zsuzsanna Erdélyi (Erdélyi 1976) – could show the temporal depths of the folklore language so animatedly. In his reminiscences, Béla Vikár wrote about why he took the road in 1896 to Tordátfalva, Énlaka and Siklód, villages in Székely Land: "My aim was, in the first instance, to discover the gardens of János Kriza's wild roses, which were left uncultivated for a long time. We already had the poems. But flowers have scent as well, and the scent of a poem is the melody." If the melody is the scent of the flower, language is its life-giving root.

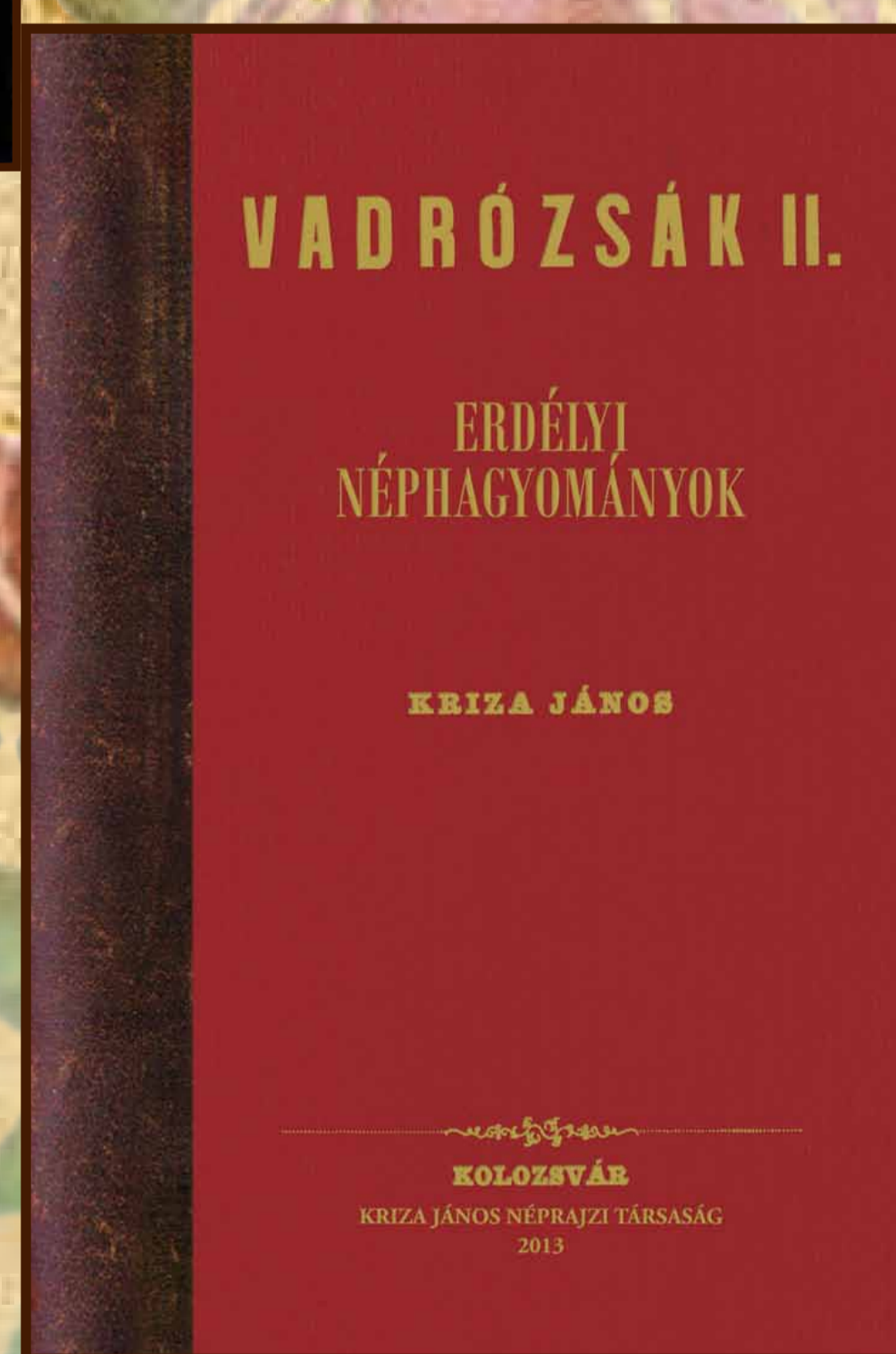


# Kriza János and the „Vadrózsák”



János Kriza (1811–1875)

**V**adrózsák (Wild roses) is the first great folklore collection from Székely Land. It contains 588 long folk songs and folk ballads, 19 tales, short folklore genres and a Székely idioticon. Its first volume was published in January 1863. Kriza was an early forerunner of scientific folklore collecting. He stuck to the fidelity of the texts and the dialectal transcription: “Slowly the thought clarified in my mind: to publish folk poetry and parlance with just the same pronunciation as people pronounce them – to present the flower with all its colours and scent to the public...” The first time when Kriza could think of editing the second volume of his collection was 21 years later, then he separated linguistic and literary publications deliberately. However, the continuous difficulties prevented him from finishing his work. When the Academy of Sciences finally decided to publish the second volume in January 1875, it was already too late. Kriza died in pneumonia two months later. The second volume of the Vadrózsák is the present of the 150th anniversary: it is published by the Kriza János Ethnographic Society in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca).



The first volume of „Vadrózsák”, first edition (Kolozsvár, 1863); the edition by Faragó (Bukarest, 1975); the newly published second volume (Kolozsvár, 2013)



*Felnőtt vala egy édesz almafa...*

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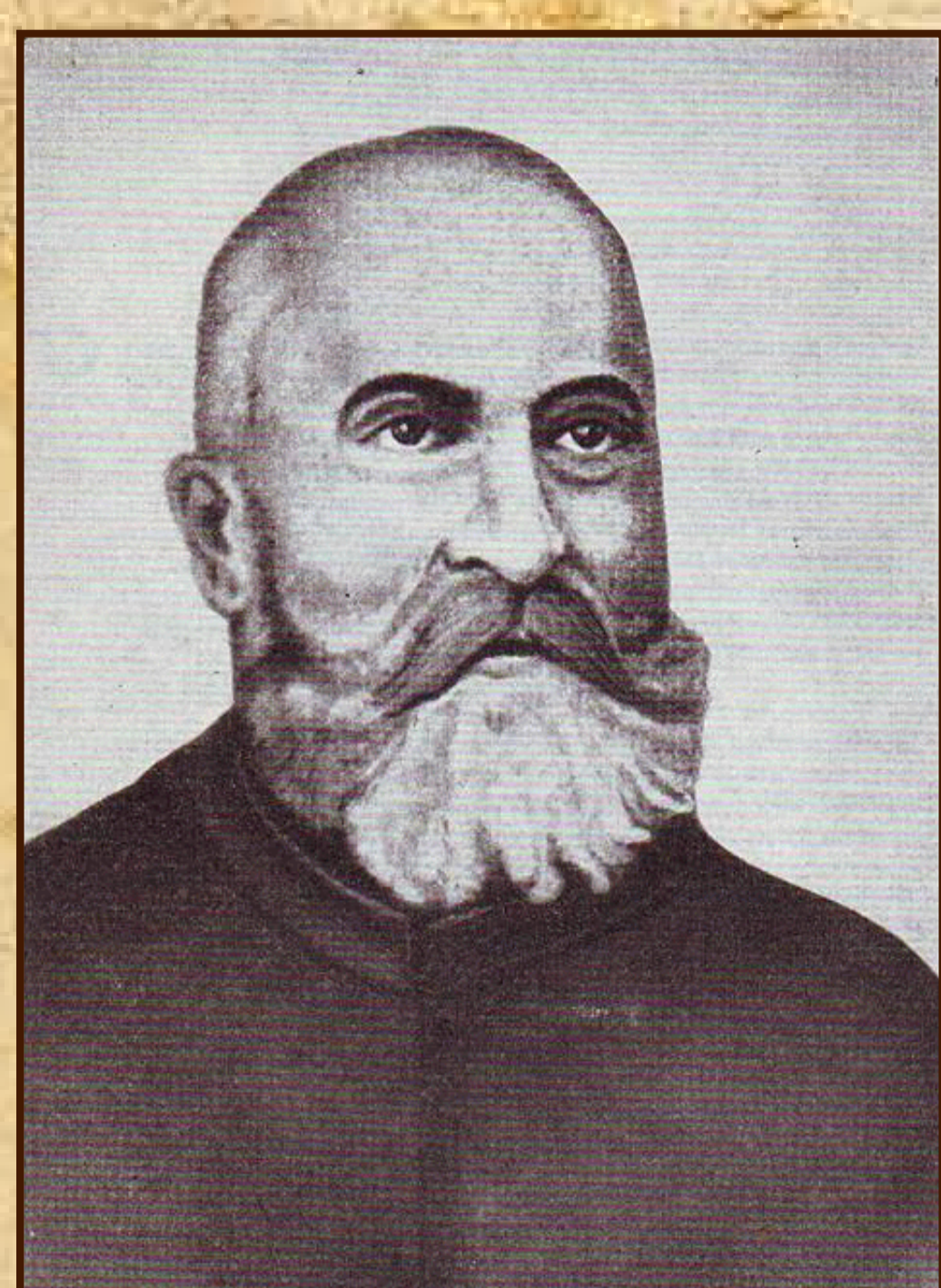
# Voltak is, vannak is Dallok...

“There were and still there are songs...”

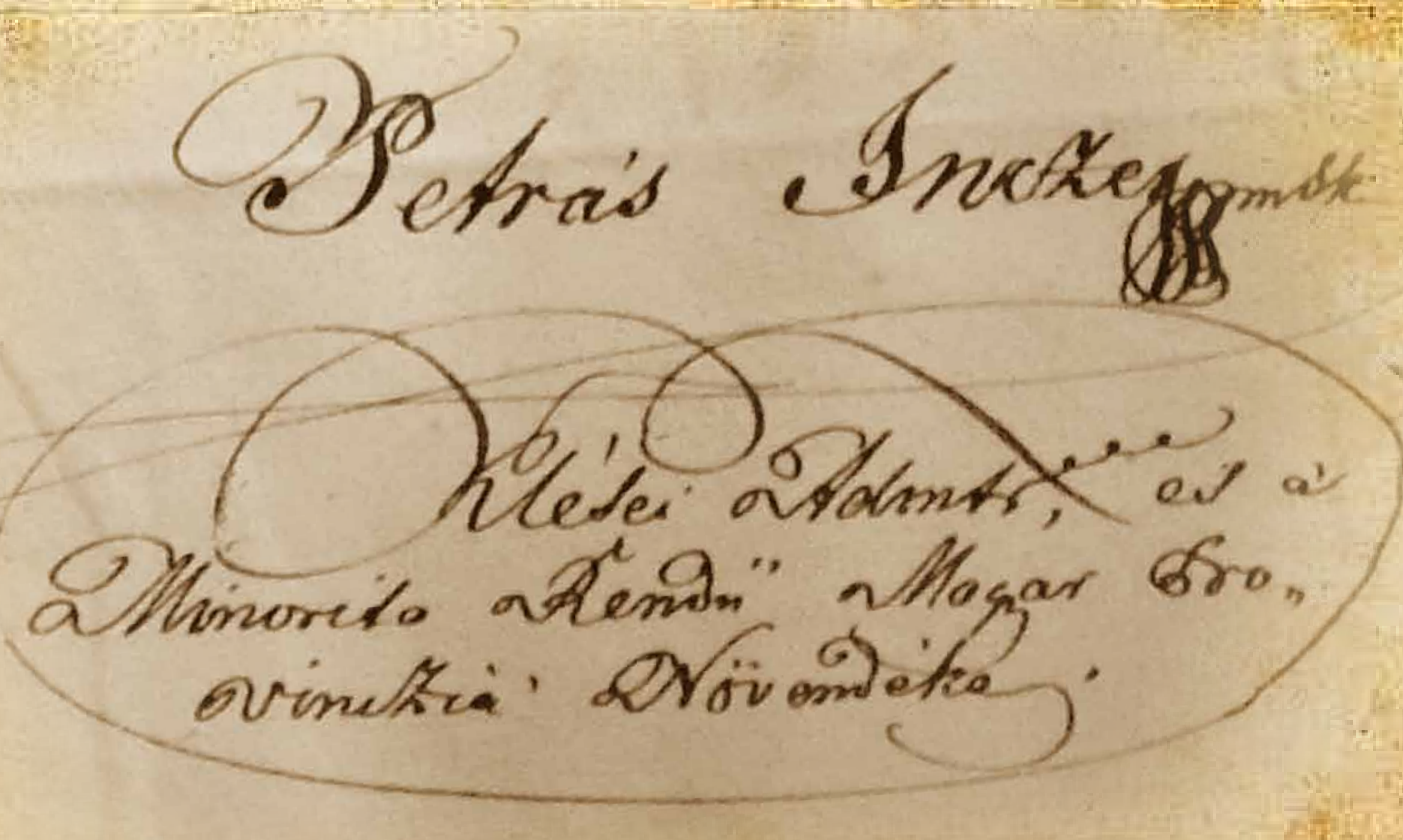


...as Ince Petrás wrote to Gábor Döbrenței with the joy of new discovery. Fortunately for our folklore research, in the summer of 1841 the young friar met the academic secretary and editor at the Transylvanian village Borszék, whose interest in the Csángós sparked a new-found trust in him. After their meeting, Ince Petrás asked to be transferred from Pusztina to Klézse, this is how he became the ever-loyal “monographer” of the village, close to his home, Forrófalva. Petrás collected all personally. As an honourable father, he not only knew the texts themselves, but also those who had sung them. He knew what to expect and what to collect from whom and where. He knew that the daily problems of a married woman could get in the way of lyrical, youthful emotions. His heart-stirring scripts are also linguistically thorough. His aim was perfectionism, and he couldn't be put off by disallowance, cavil or poverty. His first songbook containing the loveliest treasures of Hungarian folklore had already been ready by the time János Kriza was working on the first invitations to potential subscribers of Vadrózsák Wild Roses. His natural talent to researching dialects shows through his notes written next to the fair copies. Not long after returning from Borszék, he wrote: “after my recent travels I started noticing the little differences, some of which I have taken notes of... though the biggest differences are found in Csángó villages”.

In his two extant songbooks (from 1841-1842 and 1843) fifty-three songs and ballads can be found. From 1874 to his death in 1886 he gave the journal Magyar Nyelvőr a large amount of dialectic material, including not only folklore pieces, but also names of families and rivers, vernacularisms. His work was not recognised in his lifetime. Out of necessities he communicated under the pseudonym Rokonföldi. He left the punishment of his murderers, whom he had recognised from their voices, up to God.



Ince János Petrás  
(1813-1886)



Ince Petrás's signature  
MTAK RUI 8° 206/187 m 145



Paysage of Klézse  
KJNT 02699



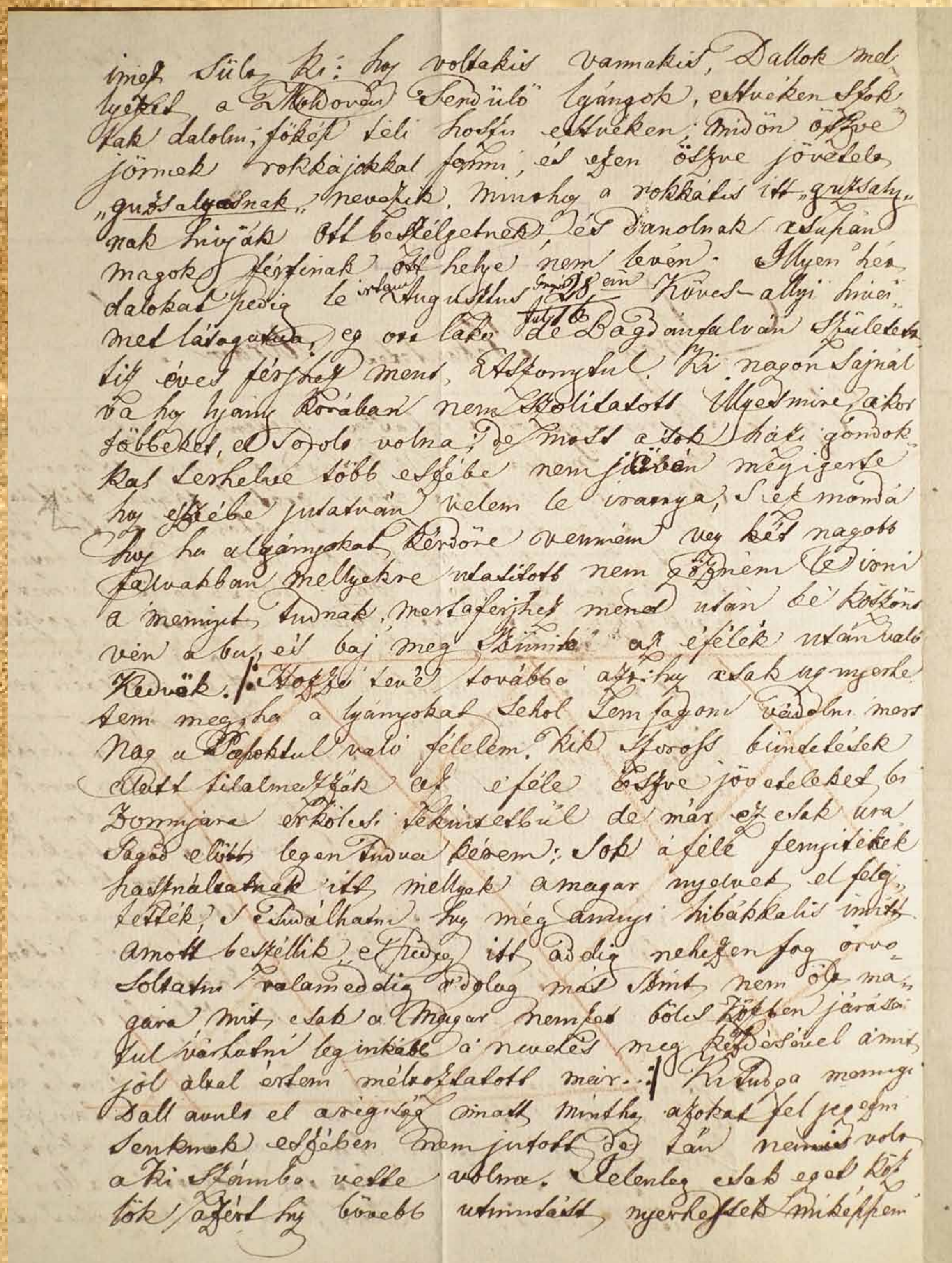
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# Elindulék este guzsalyasba...

## "I took the road to the spinning room..."

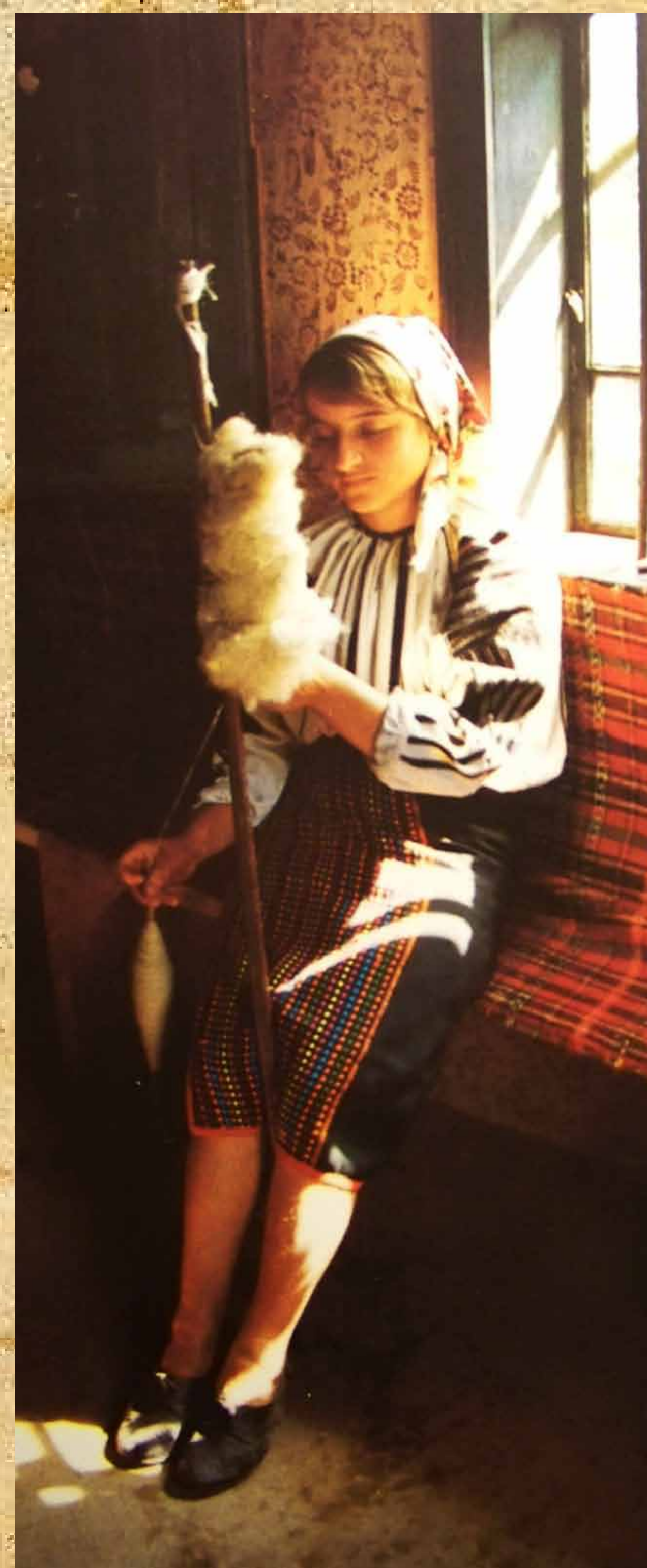
"There were and still there are songs that adolescent maidens sing in the evenings, especially on long winter evenings as they come together with their spinning-wheels to spin, and they call these gatherings spinning room ("guzsalyas")... They talk and sing just for themselves, since there is no place for men there. I have already written down seven of these songs on the 16th of July as I visited one of my devouts in the village of Kövesalja, from a woman who lives there but was born in Bogdánfalva and is married for ten years... she said that if I asked the girls in two or more villages that she recommended to me, I wouldn't be able to cope with recording all the songs they know, since as troubles and sorrow come along with marriage, the mood for singing dies away." (Ince Petrás's letter to Gábor Döbrentei, Pusztina, 8th September 1841)



Ince Petrás's hand writing  
MTAK RUI 8° 206/187 a 145e



Spinning. Galgahévíz, 1936. Petőfi Múzeum, Aszód



Young maiden with a distaff. Gergely Csoma: Moldvai csángó magyarok.

**„Elindulék este guzsalyasba,  
Elindulék este guzsalyasba.  
Megtalálám János szeretőmvel,  
Megtalálám János szeretőmvel.**

[...]

**Még elmennék este guzsalyasba,  
Még elmennék este guzsalyasba,  
Ha nem lenne zördögsülye bába,  
Ha nem lenne zördögsülye bába,  
Összerontsa szeretezők titkát,  
Összerontsa szeretezők titkát.”**

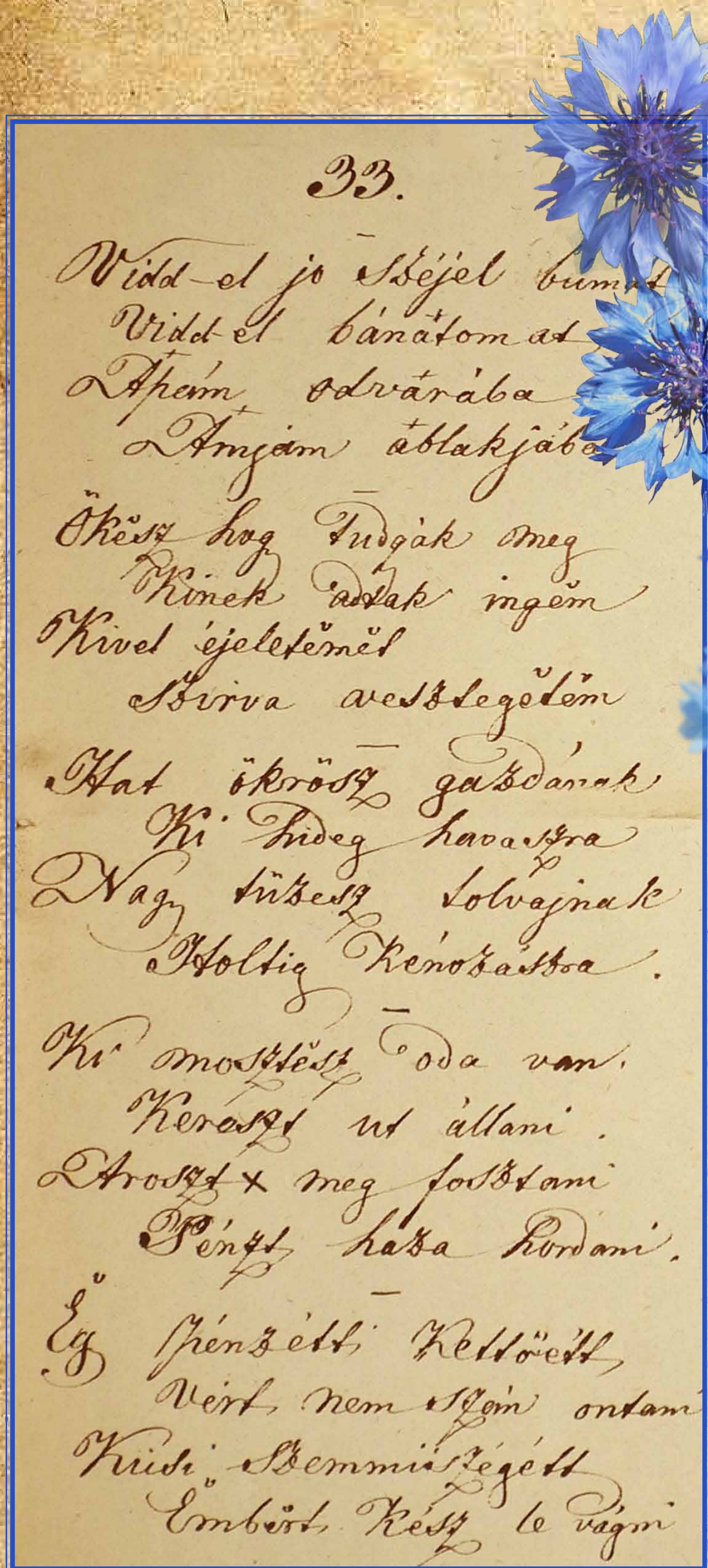
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# Én is csak kimönék búzavirág-szödni

## „I went out to pick corn flowers”



Szomszéd legény Gyurka

...  
 Uram a városba piros-csidma-vönni,  
 Apám az erdőbe somfa-vesszót-vágni,  
 Anyám a malomba fejr-liszt ölleni,  
 Anyám a malomba fejr-liszt ölleni...

(Ortutay-Kriza I. 1971: 196)

In the collective memory of a thousand years, folklore texts preserve linguistic forms that are definitively vanished from written genres: ecclesiastical and profane literature, due to the changing of the spirit of the age and the language itself. Folk poetry is less influenced by foreign patterns of translation, and even if the multilingual environment has effects on the vocabulary, syntactic structures are conserved by the isolated, language island-like situation. Ballads and songs can preserve syntactic constructions which are already disappeared from less archaic, unfixed texts even better, due to the prosodically fixed strophic structure. One of these syntactic forms is the construction with an unmarked object, which is well known from several old-style folk ballads, as: “Amennybevittleány” (“The maiden taken to heaven”), “A nagy hegyi tolvaj” (“The great robber of the mountains”) “A kegyetlen anyós” (“The cruel mother-in-law”). The common feature of these constructions is that the unmarked object is the argument of a non-finite verb, mostly with an imperfective aspect.

Old Hungarian (Kriza-Ortutay 1971: 43)

Én is csak ki-mön-ék búzavirág szed-ni  
 I too AUG PRV.out-go-1SG corn flower[NOM] pick-INF  
 ‘I went out to pick corn [lit. wheat] flowers’

Cf. Meadow Mari (Alhoniemi 1985: 48)

Kapka pačas it lak!  
 Garden gate [NOM] open PRS.NEG:2SG go  
 ‘Don’t go out to open the garden gate’



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# Visszajövetibe szekérutat csapott

## “Coming back they beat a cart-way” – The power of linguistic pithiness



**E**gy elmenetibe gyalog-ösvényt vágott, visszajövetibe szekérutat csapott (Going forth they cut a footpath, coming back they beat a cart-way) – tells the ballad about the two valiant Hungraian heroes, Szilágyi and Hajmási. *Sirass, anyám, sirass, éltömbe hadd halljam, Hadd halljam éltömbe, hogy siratsz hótomban* (Mourn me, mother, mourn me, Let me hear in my life how you mourn me in my death) – says fair maid Julia to her mother. Once these archaic syntactic structures were very frequent and they lead to the ancient layers of Hungarian language, where subordinative

constructions played much less role than in the present system of Hungarian. Pithy, synthetic structures could express everything as well as subordinate clauses, but they required a better facility in speaking and a more attentive listener. The great change in syntactic construction is traceable in the Hungarian translations of the Bible: the books of the priests Tamás and Bálint from Szerémség, written before 1450, show much more synthetic sentences than the equivalent texts from the 16th–17th centuries.

Old Hungarian (Ortutay–Kriza 1971: 44)

*Hadd hal-j-am él-t-öm-be, hogy sirat-sz hó-t-om-ban!*  
 let-imp2sg hear-conj-1sg live-pst.ptc-px1sg-illat how mourn-2sg die-pst.ptc-px1sg-illat  
 ‘Let me hear in my life how you mourn me in my death’

Cf. North-Eastern Coastal Estonian (Kuu) *Andsid aiga kasvaessa, /Anna aiga ehtiessa*. (ER II 106 (Ha 7));  
 Western Estonian (Saa) *Kuu es tule kutsuenna/ Päeva palju palletenna*. (H II 24, 827 (3))



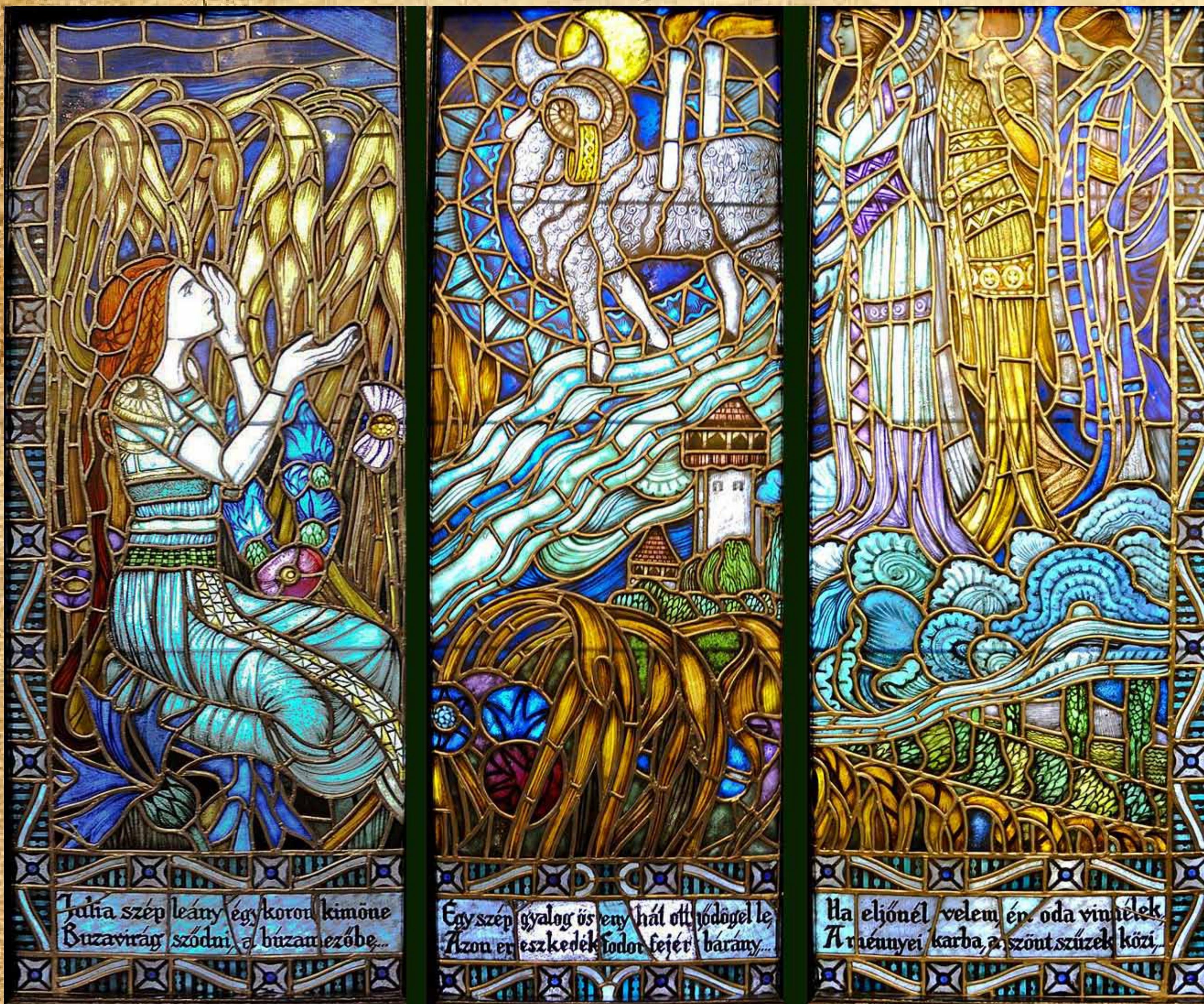
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# A mennyei harang húzatlan szólalék

## “The bell of Heaven rang without being rung”



A mennyei harang húzatlan szólalék – “The bell of Heaven rang without being rung” when fair maid Julia starts her way to Heaven. The finest examples of this unremembered, compact construction can be found in the closing lines of the ballad variants about “the maiden taken to Heaven” (see in the blue box). In present Hungarian, the forms like nyílatlan (unopened), veretlen (unbeaten), készületlen (unprepared), bárdolatlan (uncouth, unrefined, literally: unadzed) are used

only as attributives, except in some phrases, e.g.: látatlanban is megmondom, megnyit ér (I can tell what it’s worth sight unseen). The exact typological parallels of these forms which are equivalents to modal or final clauses are found in the Volga-Kama region, but in the Baltic-Finnic languages as well (see in the yellow box).

Bátori Bódizsár

*Bizon nem tagadom, lelköm jámbor  
uram,  
Léányokat szidom, a rossz léányokat:  
Virágomnak szépít nyílatlan leszödték,  
Bokrétába kötték, legényöknek tötték. –  
(Kriza-Faragó 1975: 41)*

Márton Szép Ilona

*„A mennyei kapuk  
Nyílatlan megnyílltak.  
S a mennyei gyertyák  
Gyújtatlan meggyílltak.  
Mennyei harangok  
Húzatlan zúdultak  
(Kallós 1973: 34)*

Hungarian (Ortutay–Kriza 1971: 44)

A mennyei harang húzatlan szólalék,  
the heaven-adj.Sx bell pull-neg.ptc sound-pst.3SG

Cf. Northern (coastal) Estonian *Too vesi vedelematta, Sõtku leivad sõimamatta, Pühi tuba tuusimatta, Otsi luuda luusimatta* (V I 26)



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# Ajh ne menj hazól ki...

“Oh do not leave home...”

**Ä**lj le mellém, elment mellőlünk (sit beside me, he went away from beside us) – when speakers of Hungarian use these forms even today, they do not realize how ancient suffixes and how archaic suffix order they use. Old style folk ballads are rich in ancient, primer suffixes and postpositions constructed with them.



## Contemporary Hungarian

mell- é- m :  
beside- LAT- Px1SG

mell- ett- em :  
beside- LOC- Px1SG

mell- ól- em  
beside- ABL- Px1SG

Cf.  
ház- am- ban  
House- Px1SG- INESS  
'In my house'

### Hazól/hazul:

*Ne menj apám, ne menj, ajh ne menj hazól ki,  
Anyám asszony bizon Barcsait szereti. –*  
(Barcsai. Kriza 2013: 129)

*Anyámé, anyámé, ne menj el, ne menj el,  
Ne menj el hazul a hajdúleginyekkel!  
Mert jel mutatódatt, hogy tíged megölnek*  
(Ne menj el hazul. Kallós 1971: 236)

### Messzünnen:

*Mert bizony jódogel nagy fekete sereg,  
Úgy látszik messzünnen, mint a setét felleg.*  
(Kerekes Izsák. Ortutay–Kriza I. 1971: 47.)

### Messzünnet:

*Ő es visszatére  
Rózsamező felé,  
Messzünnet meglátá,  
Há' körülbe vette*  
(Szegény árva asszony. Faragó–Jagamas: 84.)

### Onnat:

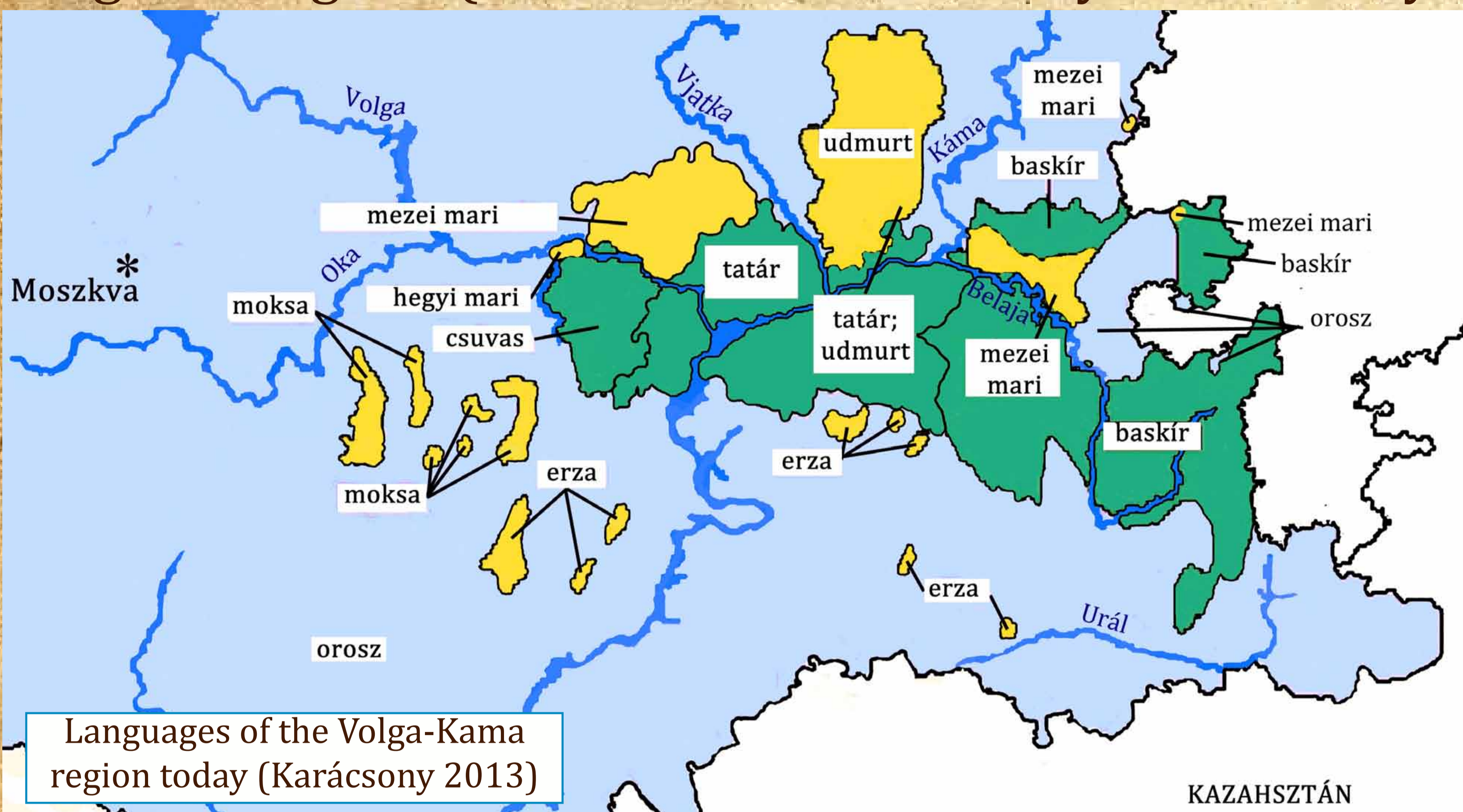
*Ő es onnat felreppene,  
Zöld nádosba béreppene*  
(Kövecses víz közepében. Faragó 2002: 159.)



# Szamócaszedni indultam...

## “Started out to pick strawberries” – Ancient contacts with the Volga-Kama languages

The tense system, the non-finite constructions and the case suffixes used in the old style Hungarian folk ballads are very similar to what we find in the Finno-Ugrian and Turkic languages of the Volga-Kama region today. The eastern border of this large linguistic area, extending as far as the Ural, is Bashkiria, to the south of the rivers Belaya and Kama. This is the region of the onetime Magna Hungaria, and this is where Friar Julian found the eastern Hungarians among Tatars and Bashkirs in 1236. In the time of Magna Hungaria (from the 6th to the early 9th century AD) proto-Maris, Volga Bulgars and



proto-Permic people might have been the close neighbours of proto-Hungarians, thus the typological similarities between Hungarian, Mari, Udmurt, Tatar, and Chuvash are not accidental coincidences. This places the archaic syntactic constructions that Hungarian old style ballads preserved for so long into a clear system of language contacts, going back to the proto-Hungarian

age. These linguistic forms survived in the ballads, and were known and used by the best singers of Székely Land and Moldavia even in the 20th century.

Contemporary Meadow Mari (Objectal construction)

Шыже тол-мы-м шиж-ына.  
Autumn come-PST.PTC-ACC feel- PRS.Vx1PL  
'We feel the autumn coming'

Khazan-Tatar (Poppe 1968:138) (IUO-construction)

Эбу чыг-ып кут-те сыер  
Grandma go.out-PRS.CVB2 depart-PST:3SG cow [NOM]  
сав-ар-га.  
milk-FUT.PTC-DAT  
'Grandmother went out to milk the cow'

Chuvash (cit. Krueger 1961: 157, 203 < Paasonen 1949)

Karta-na laša tit-ma kay-nă.  
herd-OBV horse[NOM] catch-INF go-PST.PTC  
'he went into the herd to catch a horse'



✓ Mari girls with distaffs in the early 1910s. Photo by Timofei Yevseyev (1887–1937), an effective Mari folklorist and ethnographer. Museoviraston kansatieteen kuva-arkisto, Helsinki, SU 132:75.



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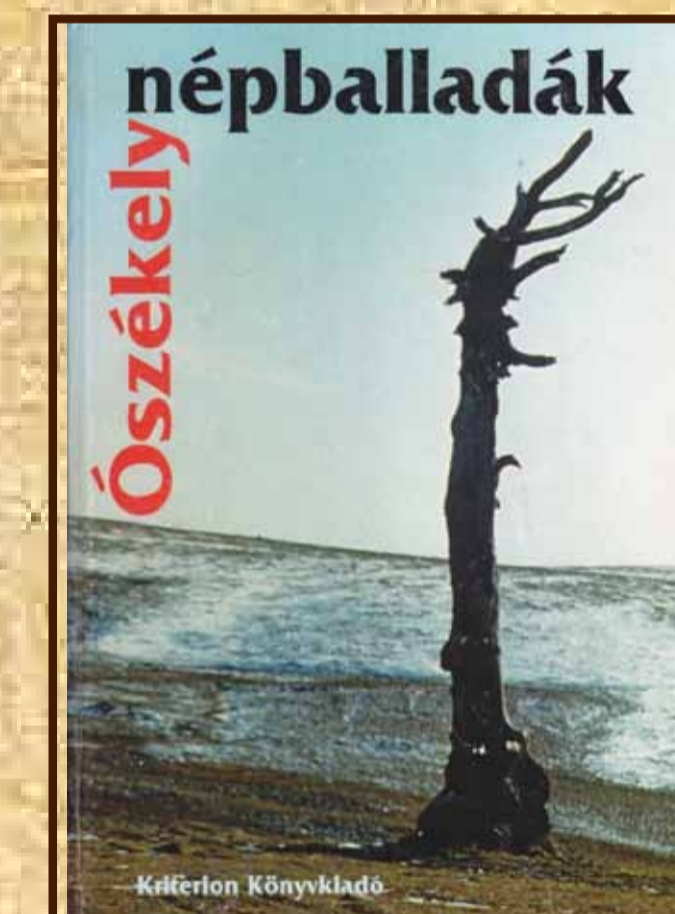
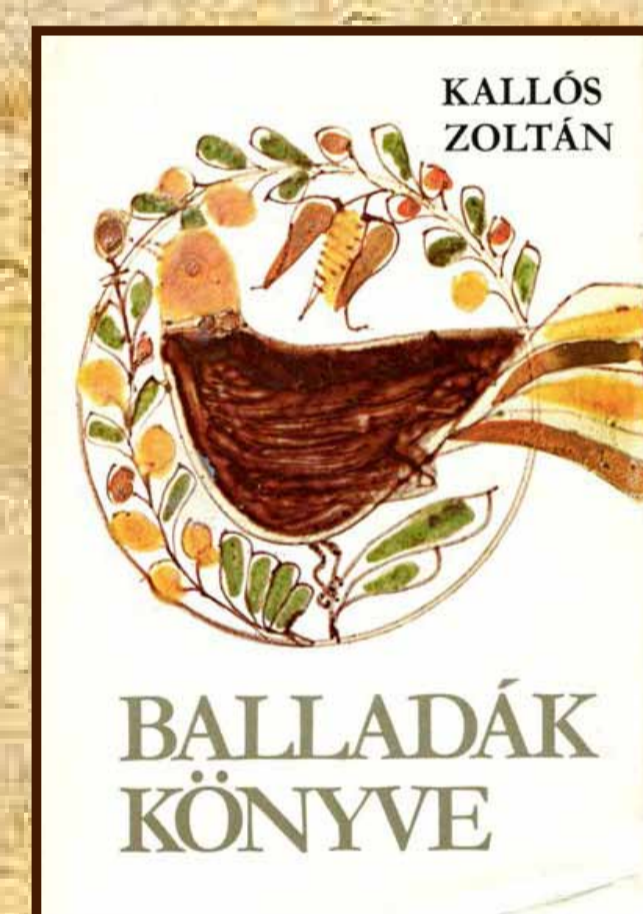
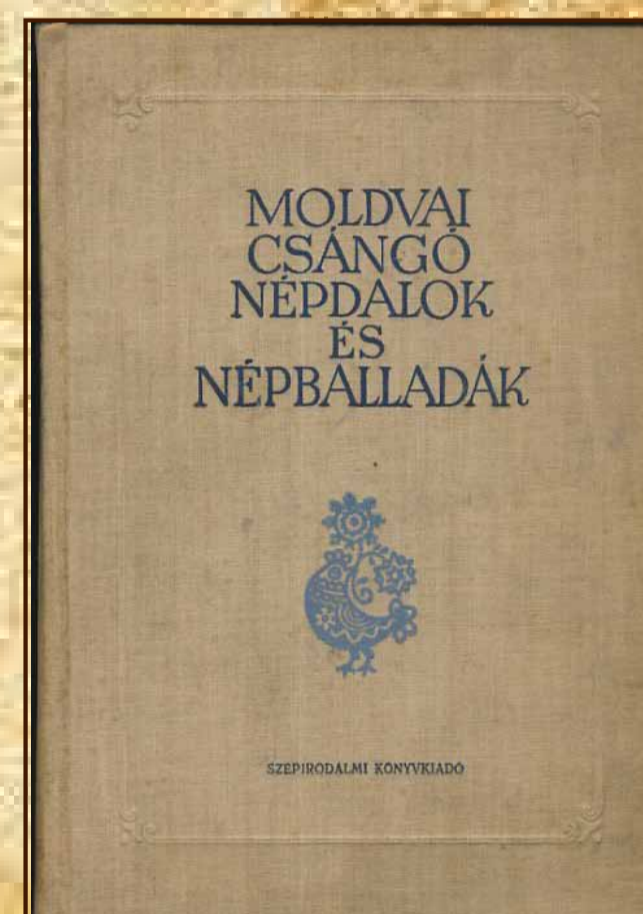
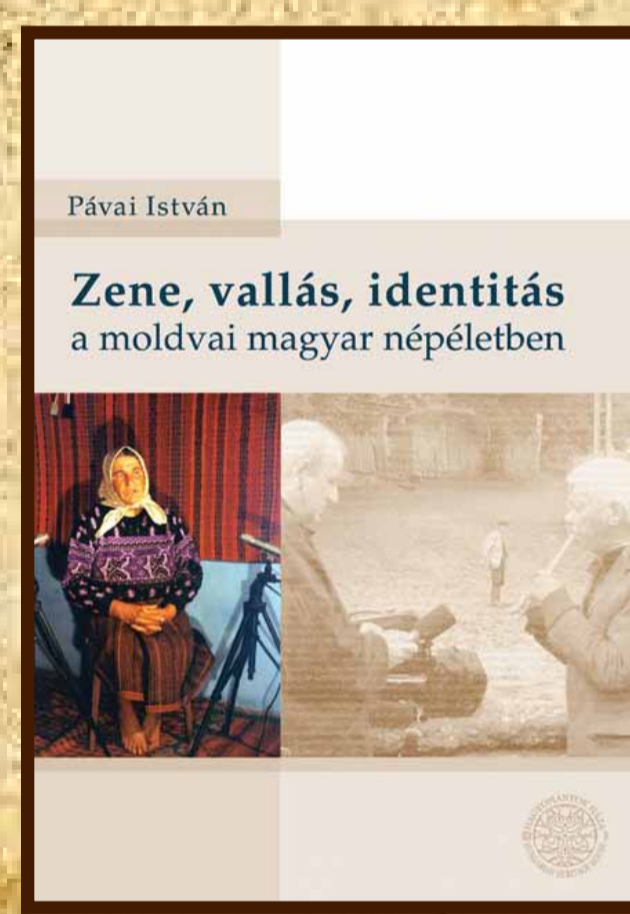
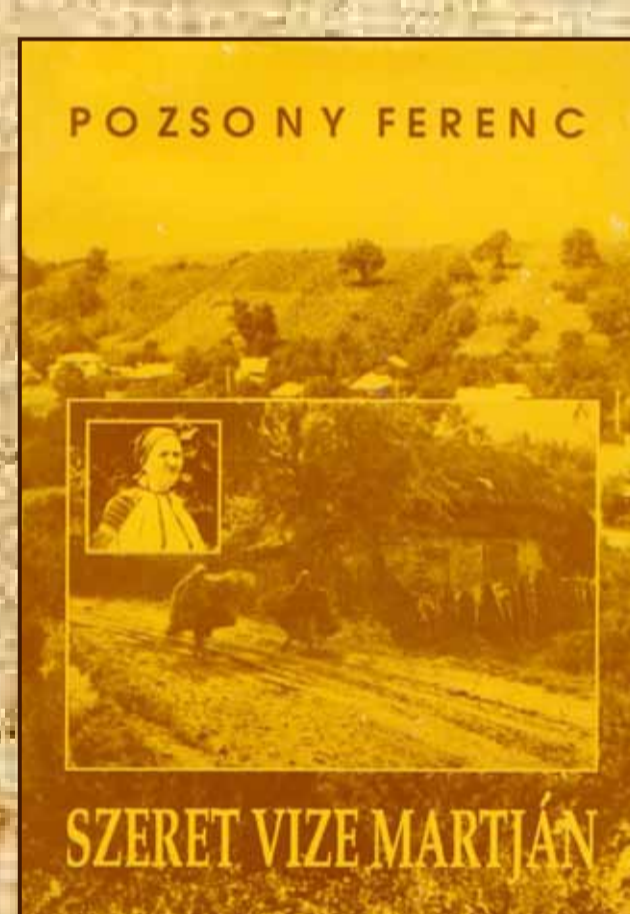


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