

19th-Century Fashion of Elite Hungarian Women

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Abstract: In 19th-century Europe, clothing functioned as a dynamic social language that articulated intricate hierarchies of status, age, and cultural belonging. This study examines Budapest's transformation into a sartorial laboratory where emerging nationalism collided with Western sartorial trends. From the first half of the 19th century, the rapid development of fashion and related industries in the Hungarian capital was driven not only by technological innovations in European textile production but also by the proliferation of fashion magazines and the dissemination of sartorial trends. Hungarian elite women played a pivotal role in shaping these developments, as middle-class women actively emulated their attire—observed at court balls, horse races, and other public events—through fashion media. Building on these developments, this study analyzes the dress codes associated with 19th-century social rituals and highlights the emergence of Hungarian ceremonial dress as a sartorial expression of national consciousness. Prior to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867—particularly between the 1830s and 1860s—this form of attire functioned as a visual symbol of Hungarian national identity and cultural resistance among the country's upper and middle classes. By reconstructing the clothing practices and social etiquette of upper-class Hungarian women, the study demonstrates how fashion became a contested terrain where personal aspirations, national identity, and European modernity were perpetually negotiated. These findings provide new insights into the interplay of cultural politics and material culture in Central Europe's historical trajectory.

Keywords: fashion, sartorial regulations, national identity

1. Introduction

When discussing the concept of fashion, it is important to mention that it can be defined in many different and broader ways, so there is not just one definition. It spans across several academic fields, such as sociology, psychology, communication, market research, technology, political environment, and the culture of the spirit of the age [1]. For this reason, the broad interpretation of fashion includes many areas and refers to "anything that, in a given era or environment, becomes a widespread and widely followed phenomenon [1]." For example: lifestyle, decoration styles, intellectual content, music, social behavior, etc. According to this broader interpretation, fashion can be divided into four types: material fashion, which is based on the imitation and following of certain objects, and is the most common form; behavioral fashion, which mainly relates to working, living, entertainment, and sports habits; fashion of ideas, which involves the way of thinking, perception, social movements, and new perspectives and views of the masses; and personality fashion, which is shaped by the

admiration, imitation, and following of certain special people, especially celebrities and stars [2]. All of these types share a common characteristic: they change very quickly. Fashion has a strong historical and geographical character and reflects the changes of social classes. In addition, the fashion system also includes production, distribution, and consumption [3]. These features all show that fashion itself is transient and changeable, and many scholars consider this to be its most defining quality.

This study mainly focuses on fashion in the narrower sense, that is, the system of clothing. Clothing in the modern sense of fashion likely appeared in the 14th century [1]. As a very important part of many aspects of fashion, clothing must be in harmony with the external environment, and through the visibility of what they wear, people can send concrete signals to their surroundings—for example, to express their social status [1]. Furthermore, clothing is also an important tool for individuals to express their relationship with a particular social group (whether to fit in or to differ from them) [4]. So, dressing also reflects people's choices and intentions, and it contains various messages. Social norms, ideologies, economic or social values, etc., influence the meaning of these clothing-related signs, such as colors, materials, and so on.

According to the German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel, fashion is the product of social class distinctions, and different classes have different fashions. The elite, standing at the top of the social hierarchy, are the ones who initiate new fashion trends. They treat fashion as a status symbol and use it to distinguish themselves from the lower social groups. Fashion spreads in society through imitation by the lower classes, and in order to maintain their difference from these classes, the dominant group creates new fashions. As a result, the spread and distribution of fashion happens from top to bottom—this is the so-called trickle-down theory [5].

In the 19th century, when the hierarchical system was already established, people did not have complete freedom in choosing their clothing. The spread of fashion was limited. As Charles W. King also noted, “fashion theory is not primarily the decision of one person, but an action on a social level [1].” Under social norms, clothing could still carry information, because people could consciously choose “signals” that matched their status, age, and customs [6]. Therefore, the study of 19th-century women's clothing plays an important role in understanding the social and everyday life of women in that period. In addition, the development of national identity in the 19th century also influenced the innovation and evolution of Hungarian fashion, and national clothing became a widely discussed symbol of the nation during that time.

This article first analyzes the accelerating effect of fashion in 19th-century Budapest, and then, in chronological order, it examines and presents the significance of the changes that occurred in Hungarian women's clothing during the century.

2. The conditions and media of the rapid spread of fashion in the 19th century

As a result of economic, technological, and democratic development, by the 19th century, following fashion was no longer the privilege of only the wealthy and those in power. After the Industrial Revolution, changes in production methods directly affected people's lifestyles, and naturally, these changes extended to clothing fashion as well. The emergence and rapid development of the textile industry transformed the way garments had previously been produced. Machines replaced hand-weaving, which provided employment opportunities for many people, especially women, and at the same time accelerated clothing production and thus the pace of fashion change. Meanwhile, the explosive development of new printing technologies allowed the publishing industry to grow rapidly, and fashion magazines—offering the advantage of quickly spreading fashion information—gradually became one of the most important channels for disseminating fashion. Naturally, ongoing urbanization and the expansion of social life also created a wide platform for the spread of fashion-

related information. At social events, people could present their own fashion sense and style, and discover new fashion trends.

2.1. Fashion magazines and advertisements

The development of reproduction techniques (such as woodcut, copper engraving, etching, lithography, etc.) greatly contributed to the growth of the fashion industry. In the last third of the 18th century, fashion magazines began to appear [7], which made it possible for fashion information to spread more quickly across different regions and social classes. The first literary fashion magazines, in a strict sense, were not the same as today's fashion or women's magazines, as their content was very diverse. They included illustrations and supplements on women's topics, but also published various literary works. For example, *The Lady's Magazine* from London, which was first published in 1770, included biographies of famous people, travel reports, historical events, and more in its early issues [7]. In addition to London, fashion magazines also appeared in large numbers in Paris and Vienna towards the end of the 18th century. However, before the introduction of copyright protection—which only came into force in the second half of the 19th century (in 1852)—many magazines copied images and articles from French fashion publications [7].

The first Hungarian fashion magazine, *Honművész*, was published in 1833. However, during this period, the primary aim of Hungarian publications was to promote national literature, and the content related to fashion was included only to attract readers' attention. For this reason, the written materials were not easily understandable for their female readers [8]. The magazine contained a lot of information about the theatre (e.g., plays, performances) and cultural events. Although every issue reported on fashion information, the proportion of such content was very low, usually limited to just a few lines and occasionally accompanied by illustrations of the latest Parisian or Viennese fashion trends. Most of the images were copied from Paris magazines, and several articles were published without any images. Occasionally, this section also included information or advice related to Hungarian tailors. For example, in issue No. 1 on January 3, 1839, a note titled "Warning Regarding Men's Hungarian National Dress" by Klaszy Venczel, a citizen of Pest and a Hungarian tailor, was published [9].

The appearance of fashion magazines made it possible for fashion information to spread quickly across the European continent. People from different social classes could learn firsthand about the newest trends from fashion capitals such as Paris, Vienna, and others. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, the focus of fashion magazines was usually on bourgeois women – people no longer looked only at the clothing of court ladies [7]. The desire for fashion was no longer limited to the upper classes. However, this did not mean that fashion lost its role in marking class differences. Each social group had its own strict dress codes. These unwritten rules clearly separated the different social layers. Those who did not follow the expectations could be judged by others and even excluded by members of their own group [10].

In the 1830s, the fashion industry and trade developed rapidly. In Pest, tailors and businessmen from all over the country gathered. They opened their own salons and companies and advertised their services in fashion magazines [8]. These advertisements in various fashion magazines significantly increased the number of clients and also raised the prices [11]. People from different parts of the country sent their body measurements to the tailors, who made the clothes and sent them back by mail. In this clothing customization process, the development of postal services and the railway network in the 19th century played an important role in spreading fashion. Some Hungarian nobles even traveled directly to Paris or Vienna to order the newest fashion items [10]. The favorite Parisian fashion brand of the Hungarian aristocracy was Drecoll, which also had a shop in Vienna [12]. After the War of Independence, fashion magazines like *Honderű* or *Pesti Divatlap* stopped publication.

However, new fashion magazines started to appear from the mid-1850s. In terms of content, they were similar to earlier magazines, but the proportion of fashion-related topics became higher [4].

2.2. Elite women in social events and daily interactions

Social events and daily interactions also played an important role in spreading new fashion trends during the 19th century. The study will discuss this in more detail in the next chapters of my study, but it is important to mention here that at various balls, newly married women appeared in their most fashionable and splendid dresses. The descriptions and illustrations of these balls provide valuable insights into the fashion trends of the period. These expensive dresses were usually only appropriate to wear once in the same social circle, which undoubtedly meant significant expenses. Besides balls, theatres and horse-racing tracks were also important places for aristocratic women, where they arrived in glittering dresses and displayed their latest fashionable outfits in the audience. Beautiful aristocratic ladies always followed fashion—they were the driving force and trendsetters of fashion innovation, and their style was imitated by middle-class women and even by those from lower social classes.

Strolling (Korzózás) was an important daily activity in the lives of both urban citizens and the nobility. It was a way to show off one's clothing, to socialize, and to observe how others dressed [1]. In the 19th century, the transformation of the textile and publishing industries, the acceleration of urbanization and democratization, and the growing variety of social events all created broader platforms for the spread of fashion. Hungary did not fall behind in this fashion race—beginning with the Reform Era, Budapest's fashion scene developed steadily. By the end of the 19th century, after Paris, Vienna, and London, Budapest had also become one of Europe's fashion capitals.

3. Public events as sartorial theater

As mentioned in the previous chapter, 19th-century Hungarian society was strictly divided by class, and every member of society was expected to follow the ethical norms of their own social group. Clothing, as a visible "identifier," played an important role in social interactions. However, the complicated rules of etiquette and constantly changing fashion trends often confused young people. Therefore, learning how to dress in a way that followed current fashion and matched one's social status was an important lesson for all upper- and middle-class women, starting from childhood. This can also be seen in the diaries of 19th-century girls, such as in the childhood diary of Etelka Slachta, where it becomes clear that following fashion and shopping played an important role in her life [13].

In 19th-century Hungary, aristocratic ladies often had their fashionable clothes made or purchased in Vienna. In the 1820s and 1830s, Vienna took over the central role of fashion from France, but after the 1849 revolution and the following years, Paris again became the center of fashion, followed by London and Vienna. Many Hungarian aristocrats, large business owners, and even members of the middle class traveled to Vienna to buy or order clothing. Even wealthy peasants who lived near the western border often went to Vienna for clothes [14]. Viennese fashion design enjoyed great popularity among Hungarian noblewomen because it always followed Parisian trends. Many Parisian fashion houses also sold their designs or models to smaller companies or other large European fashion firms, so Viennese salons were able to obtain the newest styles from Paris. They then sold these models, semi-finished garments, and fabrics to fashion salons in Budapest [14]. Naturally, in the 1830s, Budapest's fashion industry developed rapidly, and many Viennese tailors moved to Pest to open their own shops, bringing Viennese fashion trends with them.

3.1. Balls — a showcase of the most dazzling dresses in the wardrobe

Balls were among the most important events in social life, as they were not only places for making connections but also opportunities to display wealth and taste. During the Reform Era (1825-1848),

social life in Budapest became increasingly vibrant, and splendid balls were frequently organized. Announcements and advertisements for the balls appeared in contemporary fashion magazines, where readers could find the date, location, ticket prices, how to purchase tickets, and even information about the music to be played at the event (for example, such practical information can be found in the “Dance” section of *Honművész*, Issue No. 3, January 10, 1839) [9]. The proceeds from many of these balls were often donated to charitable causes.

The festive period and the ball season began on January 6, the holiday of Epiphany, and lasted until Shrove Tuesday. During this time, people of the same social class or group could attend the balls designated for them. In *Honművész*, Issue No. 3, published on January 10, 1839, there is a notice about a series of balls in Kalocsa: “Kalocsa – József Müller, innkeeper and host, issued a printed notice informing the esteemed public of the town that in the ballroom of his inn, civil balls will be held on January 6, 13, 20, 27 and February 3 and 10; and, according to the notice, ‘noble’ (nemesi) dance events will take place on January 15 and 29, starting at 8 p.m.” [9] This also shows that people from different social classes did not attend the same ball. Moreover, in general, not everyone could enter the balls of the aristocracy and the middle class—only invited guests were allowed to attend. These organizational rules were necessary mainly because of the strict social hierarchy of the time. At the same time, organizing balls in this manner also fulfilled another purpose—it gave young women the opportunity to find a desirable husband. In the 19th century, although the idea that people should marry for love began to spread slowly among the upper classes, for the majority, marriage still remained a relationship based on mutual benefit. Wealth continued to be an important factor in choosing a partner, while love was not considered essential.

In 19th-century Europe, fashion changed very quickly. The colors of the clothes were an important part of fashion information, and participants in dance events had to take time to consider them. In the early 19th century, similar references to fashionable ball gown colors could be found in the *Honművész* and *Honderű* magazines. In Issue No. 13 of *Honművész*, published on February 14, 1839, a grand ball held on February 6 was described: “One-third of the participants were ladies, appearing in elegant rose, white, and azure blue dresses, richly decorated with lace [15].” A similar report appears in *Honderű* from the same period: “White, pink, and blue ball gowns are the most sought after; delicate fabrics like linen, tarlatan, and all kinds of illusion alternate on the dancers. Those who do not dance usually wear only heavy silk, mostly with floral or ruffled French patterns.” [16] This latter magazine not only mentions the fashionable colors of ball dresses but also reports what kinds of materials the ladies wore [16].

Although the style of ball gowns changed quickly due to new fashion trends, women of different ages still followed relatively strict rules when choosing colors, materials, and decorations. Most young girls attended their first ball after their 18th birthday. After the age of 10, their skirts became longer. When a girl first wore a floor-length skirt, it meant that she had become a young lady. These girls, who were just entering society, wore simply cut dresses. In terms of color, most of them chose white. Only in the second year could they choose other soft colors, such as pink or light blue [8]. Young married women could wear more fashionable and eye-catching clothes. Especially those who were newly married could wear dresses with bold cuts and bright colors. However, women over the age of 40 did not really follow fashion anymore. Their ball gowns were much more conservative and usually made of dull-colored silk or velvet. In everyday life, they had to wear dark-colored clothes, and they had to wear the same clothes for a long time [17]. For example, Countess Stefánia Prandau, wife of György Majláth, had a formal court dress made for the coronation of 1867, which she wore two or three times. She wore it again at the 1896 millennium celebration and also at the coronation of Charles IV. Of course, it is also important to note that during the coronation in 1916, due to the financial shortages caused by the war, many aristocratic ladies had to wear old dresses. Clearly, in

the last third of the 19th century, when crinolines were no longer in fashion, the countess had to have her skirt altered to a narrower style because of the change in fashion [10].

In the 19th century, ball gowns were usually sleeveless, had a deep neckline, and featured a train. The most common materials were muslin, tulle, silk, and velvet. However, young mothers and older women were more cautious and conservative in choosing fabrics, colors, and styles. Ladies wore jewelry or decorative headpieces on their heads and long gloves on their hands. But the most important accessory was that each of them had to carry a folding fan [17]. Ball gowns were extremely expensive, and in most cases, they could only be worn once; however, for a second occasion, at least the decorations and accessories should be changed. This obviously placed further strain on the family budget.

In addition to balls, women also needed evening gowns for going to the theatre, concerts, formal dinners, and receptions. However, the cut and accessories of evening gowns in these settings were slightly different. As already mentioned above, dresses worn at dance events were mostly sleeveless. In contrast, at formal dinners or in the theatre, wearing a long-sleeved dress was required. In the theatre, women decorated their hair with jewellery and flowers, and those seated on the ground floor were also required to wear hats [18].

3.2. The horse racing track and daily strolls — venues for presenting the latest fashionable dresses and hats

During the era of dualism, large-scale horse races were held every spring and autumn in Budapest. The racing season here was very famous, and it could even rival the one in Vienna. One reason for this was the flourishing of Hungarian horse breeding: “Our horse breeding is of such high quality that it can compete with that of England, France, or any major country [19].” Many people travelled from far away to watch the festive horse races. Between 1866 and 1870, Empress Elisabeth and Archduke Joseph frequently attended the Budapest races [10]. This event was also a clear reflection of democracy – unlike the balls, people of all social backgrounds, rich and poor, nobles and peasants alike, could place bets [20]. Elite ladies, of course, never missed such wonderful seasonal occasions to show off their elegance and beauty at such grand events. They appeared in the stands dressed in newly designed outfits and wearing stylish hats. Before the start of the racing season, fashion salons also presented new stylish creations that ladies could select for themselves. In 1891, *Vasárnapi Újság* published a fashion article that described a “spring outfit that is also very fashionable for horse races,” including a picture of the dress. The article provided details about the dress's cut, fabric, and decoration [21]. This dress came from the fashion salon of Monaszterly és Kuzmik Utódai.

Monaszterly és Kuzmik was a nationwide fashion salon around the time of the 1867 Compromise, located on Váci Street. They regularly purchased fabrics in various shades and qualities from Paris and Lyon, keeping up with the latest fashion trends to offer high-quality garments for both the middle and noble classes in Hungary [10]. One of their specialities was traditional Hungarian dress; the salon also offered services for transforming, refurbishing, or redecorating clients' existing garments. According to *Vasárnapi Újság*, Empress Elisabeth herself also bought clothes there, and the salon earned the title of “Monaszterly és Kuzmik Utódai [22].” The Monaszterly és Kuzmik Utódai salon operated until 1908, but by the late 19th and early 20th century, their focus shifted away from middle-class customers. They began specialising in expensive dresses in the Parisian fashion style [12].

In the 19th century, daily strolls were extremely important activities for upper- and middle-class women living in the city. These occasions allowed them to show off their new dresses and observe others while keeping up with the latest fashion. Unfortunately, democracy was not fully reflected in this activity, as people from different social classes had separate walking areas. Even in public parks, where the rising middle class was allowed to enter, each class had different times reserved for their walks. In Budapest, aristocratic ladies often took walks on Kossuth Lajos Street, Váci Street, the

Danube Promenade, Stefánia Avenue, and Margaret Island. These elegant women would arrive in horse-drawn carriages and appear on these streets dressed in their finest clothes. In addition, parks and promenades became increasingly popular in the 19th century and were highly appreciated by both the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. Among them, the most popular was the City Park (Városliget), while the most elegant walking place was Margaret Island [20].

During their daily walks, aristocratic ladies wore elegant daytime dresses or suits and always wore hats. Many of them also carried long-handled umbrellas, which not only protected them from the weather but also served as decorative accessories. However, due to their heavy and complicated clothing, their movement became difficult: the corset made it impossible to bend, and the heavy skirts caused discomfort when sitting. (Although in the late 1870s the inner support structures were removed from undergarments, the new, tight-fitting dresses did not become more comfortable. It was only in the late 1890s and early 20th century that clothing started to become simpler.)

Nevertheless, it remained important for women to follow the rules of proper etiquette. In the 1850s, crinoline skirts, a style borrowed from the Rococo era, covered even the toes—only the tips of the shoes were visible under the large skirts. Etiquette teachers and dance instructors tried to teach women how to move without revealing their feet. For this reason, ladies were not allowed to take steps that were too large or too small, or to walk too quickly or too slowly [6]. Despite the strict requirements of their clothing and etiquette, these ladies still managed to express elegance and grace during their walks.

3.3. Folding fans as collectibles and functional objects

From the 16th century onward, Asian folding fans were widely transported to Europe, and the folding fan gradually became popular among the upper social classes in Europe (but it did not reach the lower classes). These fans were not only essential accessories for aristocratic ladies but were also used to decorate rooms. “The folding fan hanging on the wall can also be used to hold photographs, for instance, a folding fan may be covered with plush or velvet, and the photographs should be inserted between the folds of the fan, which is then hung on the wall in a position that displays the photo in the most attractive way. Japanese paper fans are also suitable for such decorative purposes, and they are especially fitting for this use.” [23]

In 1891, an exhibition of folding fans was held in Budapest, and the *Vasárnapi Újság* also reported on it in the same year. Nearly 7,000 people attended the exhibition [24], where, in addition to fans owned by nobles, aristocrats, and collectors, special fans made specifically for the exhibition were also displayed [25].

In the 19th century, the folding fan was not only considered a part of noble young ladies’ collections and a symbol of their rank, but it also served as an accessory to their ball and summer attire, as well as a necessary item in their everyday life — since under the heavy and complex dresses, whether for breathing fresh air or for cooling purposes, a fan was always practical. In the 20th century, as women’s clothing became simpler, the practical use of the fan gradually disappeared, and it was no longer fashionable [26]. Nevertheless, it still remains popular among collectors.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, ladies relied on gestures conveying distinct social meanings to communicate discreetly. Supported by etiquette handbooks like *“A legteljesebb virágnyelv és más titkos nyelvek”* (*The Most Complete Language of Flowers and Other Secret Languages*)—which systematically categorized 85 symbolic gestures—these coded expressions became an essential tool for nuanced interaction among women of status. They did not need to speak—by opening or closing their fan, placing it on their nose or chest, holding it in their left or right hand, they could express their emotions, show approval or disapproval, acceptance or rejection. This book not only offered women a way to communicate with each other, but also helped men better understand women [6].

4. An overview of the changes in Hungarian women's clothing in the 19th century

In Hungary, the aristocracy distinguished itself by wearing clothes that emphasized distinctly Hungarian national motifs. These clothes were not only the heritage of their ancestors' glorious history, but also symbols of the aristocrats' social rank. Wearing them was a way to express their national identity and to distinguish themselves from the ruling classes of other countries (since these clothes clearly preserved Oriental characteristics). This tradition was also adopted by rulers in the 18th century. For example, Maria Theresa not only dressed her children in Hungarian clothes, but also made Hungarian costume part of court and ceremonial dress.

At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, under the influence of romantic thinking, people began to recall the glorious deeds of their ancestors. During this period, a movement based on national identity emerged, whose defining elements included shared origin, language, religion, culture, historical memory, and so on. The Hungarian national identity movement first appeared in the field of culture and was clearly based on efforts to make the Hungarian language the official language. At the same time, the Germanization policy introduced by Emperor Joseph II between 1780 and 1790 caused dissatisfaction among Hungarians, which further promoted the awakening and development of Hungarian national identity. In the pamphlet literature that appeared in the second half of the 18th century, national dress—along with national music, dance, and language—was regarded as one of the most important symbols of national identity [4]. Thus, during the development of the national identity movement, Hungarian traditional clothing acquired a new meaning.

In 1790, during the final period of his life, Emperor Joseph II finally realized the failure of his policies and withdrew most of his earlier measures that had undermined traditional estates and national customs. He also decided to return the Holy Crown from Vienna to Buda and to have himself crowned as King of Hungary. For the Hungarian people, this event symbolized not only the return of the Holy Crown but also the restoration of the traditional order, noble rights, and national heritage. It was seen as a victory in a national struggle. People from all parts of the country took part in the celebrations of the Crown's return from Vienna. Nobles and members of the bourgeois class appeared in traditional Hungarian dress on the streets to welcome the procession accompanying the Crown. On such a grand occasion, the attire of women also became part of the written historical memory[6].

In fact, the Hungarian national women's dress was formed in the 17th century under the influence of Western Renaissance fashion. The cut, the materials, and the decorations of the outfit continued to follow European fashion trends in the later periods as well. At the same time, the front-laced bodices seen as traditional Hungarian elements were commonly featured in aristocratic women's dresses. However, these bodices actually evolved from late Renaissance styles and were not authentically part of Hungarian traditional attire [14].

From the 1820s onward, the national question became the central topic of all discussions [4]. During this period, Hungarians passionately debated the topic of national dress, because the nation was seen to be in danger. Therefore, everything from culture and history that could help distinguish them from other peoples and preserve their independence had to be protected. (Although in the 1820s, Hungarians generally followed European fashion trends [8]) However, the topic of national dress—just like other questions related to the culture and history of an independent nation—could be freely discussed, unlike political issues, which did not allow open debate [4]. This was important because it made it possible to raise questions about national identity indirectly. That is why questions related to national dress received more attention in Hungary.

Costume historians agree that the Hungarian ceremonial dress was born in 1830, at the coronation ceremony of Ferdinand V, when the outfit represented the Hungarian high nobility [6]. However, afterward—especially during the revolutionary period of 1848–1849—the Hungarian attire with

decorative braiding became the everyday and festive dress of a much broader segment of society, not only for the elite but also for the lesser nobility and the bourgeoisie [6]. As mentioned in the previous chapter, clothing expresses an individual's intention and reflects their relationship with a particular social group during a specific period (exclusion or inclusion). As explained by Spencer's imitation theory, when people wish to identify with a given social group, they follow its fashion; otherwise, they reject it [1]. Therefore, it is understandable that during this time, Hungarian dress—as an expression of personal national identity—became a garment worn by every patriotic person.

There is a close connection between national costumes and the Hungarian textile industry. In the 19th century, fashion magazines also promoted the idea that people should use textiles made in Hungary to make their clothes. At that time, Hungarian industry was not well developed, and it could not produce luxury dresses. Therefore, people imported these luxury items from abroad. A large amount of money flowed out of the country, and there was not enough money to support the development of domestic industry, which led to a vicious cycle. In addition, making clothes from simple textiles produced in Hungary could encourage thriftiness. If people wore these inexpensive garments, which everyone could afford, it could help promote national unity and reduce internal divisions [11].

Against this background, women became the object of demands for a sense of responsibility — "And this decision would be that for everything that your needs or comforts require and which the Hungarian homeland can provide — enthusiastic Hungarian women — do not use foreign products." [27]

In October 1844, under the leadership of Kossuth, the Protective Association (Védegylet) was founded to support Hungarian industry. During the winter season of 1844–1845, the association organized balls and demanded that guests should not wear foreign silk dresses, but rather national-style Hungarian dresses made from domestically produced fabrics — the so-called white-blue spotted cotton. This demand triggered debates. In the December 15, 1844 issue of *Pesti Divatlap* (No. 24), in the section "Capital News," the magazine criticized the "Weekly Review" article published in issue 23 of *Honderű*, which clearly reflected the differing public opinions on these Protective Association balls.

Those who opposed such dress code requirements for the dancing events — as mentioned in the *Honderű* article — believed that the girls danced in dresses of poor quality and uncomfortable to wear. In their view, these domestically produced materials were primarily preferred by the peasantry and did not suit the aristocratic status. Some fashion magazines also criticized the use of low-quality materials produced at home, considering the wearing of such Hungarian garments more of a duty than a personal choice. If no one wanted to dance in such poor-quality dresses, then no guests would be present in the ballroom. "Since it is not customary to dance in velvet or silk made by Koch or Valero, our young ladies would be very unfortunate if they were forced to hop around in dark-colored, striped or floral printed cotton gowns." [28, 29]

Supporters also firmly expressed their opinions, arguing that wearing a Hungarian-style dress made from materials produced in Hungary was a sign of patriotism. "There will even be enthusiastic women who, in the ballrooms, will wear simple cotton with proud national feeling, not with shame." [29] At the same time, this was also seen as support for the domestic textile industry, helping local industry to grow. According to them, this national dress expressed the recognition and preservation of national culture and identity. They believed that the expressions used by *Honderű* offended the patriotic spirit of Hungarian women and encouraged a love of foreign fashion and vanity among them. Therefore, they believed it damaged both national identity and pure feminine virtue [29].

In fact, the core of the debate in the newspapers was whether such a forced method was necessary to carry out the Protective Association's national industrial protection program. Many people thought that making the wearing of Hungarian clothing mandatory was not justified, and that the desire for

fashion was not a fault, since clothing only affects outward appearance, while language and culture were the real core of the national movement [11]. However, based on illustrations from that time, it could not be determined that how many elite women eventually chose to wear this fabric at the ball [8].

Following the suppression of the 1848–49 Hungarian Revolution by Habsburg forces, Hungary suffered brutal retaliation. No one was in the mood for entertainment, and during this period, there are hardly any records about balls. Women appeared in black [30], full-length Hungarian mourning clothes, to express their grief over the sad fate of the nation and their spirit of resistance.

Throughout the entire Reform Era, Hungarian dress was continuously renewed under the growing sense of patriotism at home [14]. In the 1850s, neo-Rococo styles gained popularity and seamlessly merged with Hungarian garments and capes adorned with ornamental cords or braids. Gradually, in the 1860s [6], this style became fashionable and remained popular in the following decades. Due to the ongoing exchange of fashion information between Vienna and Budapest, even during the Reform Era and the 1850s, these Hungarian-style men's and women's outfits were fashionable in Vienna. Vienna also helped popularize the Hungarian style in other European countries [14]. Beyond fashion, wearing Hungarian-style clothing became a way for many European countries to show their sympathy for Hungary during this time [14]. Later, in 1898, on the 40th anniversary of Hungary's War of Independence, many people in both Vienna and Paris wore Hungarian garments [31].

After 1867, when Franz Joseph was crowned King of Hungary, the Hungarian ceremonial dress no longer symbolized rebellion, and people no longer needed to express their rebellious thoughts through it. The political advantages of wearing Hungarian ceremonial dress gradually disappeared, and the tournure skirts, which were fashionable in the 1880s, could not be easily incorporated into it. Therefore, the Hungarian ceremonial dress was no longer considered everyday clothing but was only worn on official, religious, or personal special occasions (such as grand balls, dinners, formal events, weddings, etc.). By the end of the 19th century, the tailoring of the women's *díszmagyar* was once again in harmony with contemporary fashionable forms. (In the second half of the 19th century, the expression "*díszmagyar* " appeared more and more frequently, while earlier people had called this Hungarian-style dress "*magyar díszöltözet*"—Hungarian ceremonial dress. By the end of the century, however, the term "*díszmagyar*" was used in records related to the Millennium.) Women abandoned the earlier wide hoop skirt, so the skirt was no longer broad, but became slender, long, and bell-shaped. The famous French fashion house Worth, which had created Empress Elisabeth's coronation gown, also produced *díszmagyar* dresses during this period, possibly commissioned by French aristocratic ladies who had been invited to the prestigious Hungarian Millennium celebrations. Among the garments made by Worth at that time, even if the colors, embroidery, and other elements did not fully reflect typical Hungarian style, the characteristics of the *díszmagyar* could still be recognized—unlike the train attached at the shoulders in French and Austrian court gowns of the era, the train and skirt of the women's *díszmagyar* were integrated [31].

At the 1916 coronation, aristocratic women already appeared in *díszmagyar* court dresses designed in this style. It is important to note that due to the short time available for preparations and the material shortages caused by the war, many aristocratic women wore old dresses at the ceremony. (However, there were aristocrats who gladly wore clothes of historical figures or old garments inherited from their ancestors [6]. This was not surprising for the Hungarian nobility. For example, in 1862, at a ball held in the palace of György Károlyi, Baroness Révay appeared in a skirt that was said to be more than two hundred years old [4])

5. Conclusion

The 19th century was a historically significant period for Hungary. It experienced the nationalist movement, the establishment of the monarchy, and the celebration of the Millennium. These historical events influenced Hungary's internal political, economic, and social development.

Along with the gradual acceleration of industrialization and urbanization, Hungary's fashion industry and social life also developed. By the end of the 19th century, Budapest had become one of the most important fashion capitals of Europe, following Paris in France, London in England, and Vienna in Austria. The city was full of high-quality fashion salons, including several operating under Viennese brand names. The owners of these exclusive dress salons often traveled to Paris or Vienna to purchase semi-finished garments or fabrics and to keep up with the latest fashion trends. This allowed them to create beautiful dresses for noblewomen that matched the latest styles. Naturally, Hungarian noblewomen could also order garments directly from Paris or Vienna. The development of fashion magazines in 19th-century Hungary also provided a broader platform for spreading fashion trends. These magazines published the latest fashion news, helped tailors advertise their services, and in some cases even shaped public opinion regarding national clothing.

Aristocratic women were themselves trendsetters and creators of fashion. Their fashion sense was an admired example for women from lower social classes. In the mornings and afternoons, aristocratic ladies walked and chatted dressed in fashionable walking clothes along Stefánia Street, around Erzsébet Square, in the City Park (Városliget) renovated for the Millennium celebrations, and on Margaret Island. If they were in Budapest during the spring or autumn, the horse racing season drew crowds to the stands. Aristocratic ladies appeared at the racetrack wearing the latest fashionable visiting dresses with long sleeves, high collars, and elegant hats. In the evening, during the splendid balls, young women appeared in sparkling dresses and were the center of attention on the dance floor. Their dresses were chosen by their mothers, in accordance with unwritten social rules. These young ladies had learned strict ceremonial behavior and used their hand-held folding fans with grace to quietly express their emotions.

At the same time, 19th-century Hungarian women's fashion greatly reflected a combination of traditional Hungarian folk dress and European trends. The shape of the clothing followed the changes in fashionable European styles (although it did not adopt the bustle skirt popular in the 1870s), while still preserving traditional elements typical of Hungarian attire, such as the corded bodice, Hungarian embroidery, aprons, and other customary features. At the beginning of the 19th century, Hungarian dress received significant attention in the wave of nationalism as a national symbol. The Hungarian ceremonial dress evolved from the attire worn at the royal court and first appeared in 1830 at the coronation of Ferdinand V, at that time symbolizing noble status. After some important historical events, the meaning of the Hungarian ceremonial dress changed. As the national movement spread, more and more patriotic people began wearing Hungarian clothes, which gradually became part of everyday Hungarian wear. After the failure of the War of Independence, the black Hungarian mourning dress worn by women became a sign of the revolution's defeat and the silent protest of the Hungarian people. After the Compromise of 1867, the political significance of Hungarian dress slowly faded. It was no longer seen as everyday clothing, but it became a fashion trend and continued to appear at all major events. At the beginning of the 20th century, Hungarian ceremonial dress changed alongside women's emancipation, but it always preserved its traditional elements and became an increasingly important symbol of national identity and culture.

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