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Literacy and Illiteracy in Austria–Hungary. The Case of Bulgarian Migrant Communities

The present study aims to contribute to the clarification of the question of the spread of literacy in East Central Europe and the Balkans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by offering an examination of Bulgarian migrant diasporas in Austria–Hungary and, in particular, in Hungary, i.e. the Eastern part of the Empire. The study of literacy among migrants is important because immigrants represent a possible resource for the larger societies in which they live, so comparisons of the levels of education among migrants (for instance with the levels of education among the majority community, but also with the levels of education among the communities of their homelands) may shed light on how the different groups benefited from interaction with each other. In this essay I analyze data on literacy, illiteracy and semi-literacy rates among migrants on the basis of the Hungarian censuses of 1890, 1900 and 1910. I present trends and tendencies in levels of literacy or illiteracy in the context of the social aspects of literacy and its relationship to birthplace, gender, age, confession, migration, selected destinations and ethnicity. I also compare literacy rates among Bulgarians in Austria–Hungary with the literacy rates among other communities in the Dual Monarchy and Bulgaria and investigate the role of literacy in the preservation of identity. My comparisons and analyses are based primarily (but not exclusively) on data regarding the population that had reached the age at which school attendance was compulsory, as this data more accurately reflect levels of literacy than the data regarding the population as a whole.

Keywords: Bulgarian migrants, literacy, religion, age, destination, Austria-Hungary, identity

Literacy is a dynamic concept the meaning of which has changed over time. The ability to read written texts has gradually become commonplace in the Western world and the public significance of the written text has increased dramatically. In the Middle Ages, the main literate stratum was the clergy, since literacy was considered a path to a more perfect knowledge of God, which was a blessing bestowed on only a few.¹ The transition to widespread literacy took place in the period between the beginning of the seventeenth and the end of the nineteenth centuries, and it was intertwined with the rise of the bourgeoisie and

1 Васил Гюзелев, *Училища, скриптории, библиотеки и знания в България, XIII–XIV в.* (Sofia: Narodna prosveta, 1985), 35.

the development of services and technology that generated economic demand for literate workers. This transition was a slow and gradual process and took place at different paces in different geographical regions, but from a global point of view it was marked by unprecedented social transformation: while in the mid-nineteenth century only 10 percent of the adult population of the world could read and write, by the twenty-first century, despite the five-fold increase in population, 80 percent is regarded as possessing basic literacy.² In recent decades this transformation prompted considerable interest in research on the history of literacy and the processes of overcoming illiteracy, but attempts to study literacy in Eastern Europe (including the Balkans) have yielded only modest results, although there is a wealth of information in various statistical sources (such as household inventories, censuses) and personal records (letters, diaries, travel notes, memories, etc.) in the former territories and successor states of the Russian and Austro–Hungarian empires.³

On the Subject of My Inquiry

One of the diasporas I examine in this inquiry is the Bulgarians of the Banat (a region the majority of which lies in Romania today, though the southern part extends into Serbia and also Hungary). The Banat Bulgarians, who were Western-rite Catholics, numbered 14,801 in 1890 and 12,583 in 1910. By the late nineteenth century, they had already been settled in the Habsburg Empire for a century and a half. They were refugees from Chiprovtsi (a town and municipality in northwestern Bulgaria) who had left Bulgarian lands after the unsuccessful anti-Ottoman uprising of 1688. Together with the Bulgarian Paulicians,⁴ they traveled through Wallachia and southwest Transylvania (the latter of which was under Austrian rule) in the 1730s and settled in the Banat, which had been devastated and depopulated during the period of Ottoman rule and then fallen under Austrian rule. There they were given new places to settle permanently. In 1738, the Paulicians founded the village of Star Beshenov (today Dudești Vecchi,

2 *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006*, Chapter 8, The Making of Literate Societies, accessed september 5, 2014, www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/chapt8_eng.pdf, 189.

3 Stephen D. Corrsin, “Literacy Rates and Questions of Language, Faith and Ethnic Identity in Population Censuses in the Partitioned Polish Lands and Interwar Poland (1880–1930s),” *The Polish Review* 43, no. 2 (1998): 131–32.

4 Paulicians were also Catholics from the Danube villages of Oresh, Belene, Tranchovitsa and Petokladentsi.

Romania) and in 1741 the migrants from Chiprovtsi (along with some of the Paulicians) founded the privileged town of Vinga (today in Romania).

In the second half of the nineteenth century (after the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1848/49 and the abolition of serfdom), Banat Bulgarians developed as a rural community. Only Vinga had the status of a town, which representatives of the town wanted to disclaim in 1882 because the community was unable to pay the necessary taxes for the relevant rights. Nonetheless, according to the 1886 Law of Hungary's administrative-territorial division Vinga became a settled council town, if only for a short time (until the early 1890s). From the perspective of levels of education among migrant communities this is important because in general rural populations have lower levels of literacy than urban populations. The question is whether or not this was true of the Bulgarian settlements.

When studying literacy, one should keep in mind that earlier levels of literacy exert a significant effect on subsequent levels of literacy, as literate parents seek to educate their children. In this sense, the tradition of education is relevant to levels of literacy. Banat Bulgarians brought from their homeland in Bulgaria centuries of the Franciscan educational tradition, which originally developed in connection with the active spread of Catholicism and Catholic teachings and followed the principle of mandatory primary education.

The Banat-Bulgarian literary revival began in the mid-nineteenth century, a few years before the Austrian–Hungarian Compromise of 1867. Until then, Bulgarian was taught in Banat Bulgarian schools on the basis of either German or “Illyrian” (Croatian) textbooks. In Bulgarian churches, priests held sermons in the “Illyrian” language.⁵ Banat Bulgarians were exposed to strong Orthodox propaganda by the neighboring Serbs because of their linguistic closeness. After Banat again became part of Hungary in 1860 and fell under the jurisdiction of the Hungarian government, the Hungarian Catholic clergy decided to support initiatives to allow the use of Bulgarian in schools and churches and efforts to establish Bulgarian literature in order to neutralize the growing Croatian and Serbian influence over Bulgarians, to hinder the spread of the Pan-Slavic (i.e. “Illyrian”) movement, and to foster among the Bulgarians a sense of distinctive national identity and an attachment to the multi-national Hungarian state.⁶ The newly created Banat Bulgarian literary language was written not with Cyrillic but with the Latin alphabet.

5 Любомир Милетич, “Книжнината и езикът на банатските българи,” in *Изследвания за българите в Седмизрадско и Банат*, ed. Мария Рунтова and Любомир Милетич (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1987), 488.

6 *Ibid.*, 493.

Labor migrants from Bulgaria constitute the other significant group on which I focus in this inquiry. They were primarily seasonal migrants, Orthodox market-gardeners (vegetable growers and vegetable traders). In 1910, they constituted 88 percent of the Bulgarian community in Budapest. The other 12 percent was comprised of artisans and traders who were already settled and who belonged to different confessions. The growth in this community can be traced on the basis of the census data on citizenship (though the numbers should be understood as approximations, their apparent precision notwithstanding):⁷ 817 people in 1890, 1,674 people in 1900, and 3,139 people in 1910.

The source of this seasonal migration was the county of Veliko Tarnovo (in North-Central Bulgaria) and in particular the districts of Gorna Oryahovitsa, Elena, Tarnovo, Kesarevo, Dryanovo, Svishtov, and Sevlievo. The social group of agricultural workers, which came into being in the region during the period of Ottoman rule and specialized in vegetable farming, could not earn an adequate living in their homeland. The lack of sufficient fertile land and markets prompted the farmers from Lyaskovec, Draganovo, Polikraishte and other villages around Veliko Tarnovo and Gorna Oryahovitsa to migrate first to neighboring countries (Romania, Serbia) and then to more distant destinations (Austria–Hungary, Germany, and Russia). At first, Bulgarian market-gardeners were drawn to the Habsburg Empire in the mid-nineteenth century by the growing markets in Hungarian towns. Following the Austrian–Hungarian Compromise, the increasingly rapid industrialization and modernization of the capitalist economy led to a tremendous increase in the urban population, which needed to be fed.

A characteristic feature of this seasonal labor migration was that it consisted almost exclusively of young men. In 1900, they constituted 80 percent of the group that spoke Bulgarian as its mother tongue and 90 percent of the group with Bulgarian citizenship. The primary reason for this was the way in which the work was organized. The workers formed associations called “*taifas*.” A *taifa* was organized by a *gazda*, who was the leader of the group. The members of a *taifa* participated in a joint venture, investing both their capital and labor. They worked together, ate together, and lived together, and at the end of the working season they distributed the profits according to their participation and their investment of labor. Bulgarian market-gardeners usually resided in Austria–

7 These figures should be regarded as approximations only, since censuses were carried out at the end of the year and recorded only a small number of market-gardeners who remained abroad in order to care for the gardens in winter and do the early preparatory work for the upcoming season. In the working season, the number of Bulgarian market-gardeners was sometimes higher than the censuses would suggest.

Hungary while working in the gardens, which they did from early spring to late autumn. They then left the country and returned the following spring. So they worked abroad seasonally for several years until they they were able to set aside capital. Compared to a Bulgarian small-holder, whose yearly revenue from the sale of crops did not exceed 800 francs, gardeners in Hungary earned more than 2,000 francs in a season. However, even in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries very few of these migrant workers chose to settle in Hungary or stay for longer periods of time. In this regard, the number and proportion of families was small and birth rates were low.

At first glance, the timing of the sources seems to set the chronological limits of this inquiry, specifically the two decades between 1890 and 1910. In a broader sense, however, the lower chronological limit is determined by the proportion of literate among the oldest group recorded in the first census (i.e. those over 60 years of age), who began learning to read and write in the 1830s. In fact, literacy, which was one of the categories in the three censuses in question, referred to the ability of the population to read and write, an ability that could have been acquired in previous decades. In other words, the results of the censuses actually yield insights into this process among members of the Bulgarian migrant population (as well as the rest of the population) for almost the whole nineteenth century and the first decade of twentieth century. In the case of the Banat Bulgarians, the process of learning to read and write continued (to the extent possible) during their exodus from Transylvania to Banat. It then continued after they had settled in Banat. There already existed a network of schools in Banat. The Jesuits had been the first to create an organized educational system in the region following the liberation of the area from Ottoman rule. But while the Jesuits had only provided educational opportunities for boys from wealthy families, the Franciscan monks attempted to educate the poor.⁸ The Franciscan tradition was preserved primarily in the educational initiatives of Vinga citizens, who had had their own school since the late 1740s and early 1750s.⁹ In Beshenov, a school for the “children of the people” was also created in 1804, and there was another one, a private one (for children of the wealthy), led by a Hungarian teacher (where instruction was in Hungarian). In 1845, a school was opened in Bolgártelep (today Colonia Bulgară, Romania). These were all primary schools. Vinga was the only settlement to have a higher, two-year Latin School, and it only had it

8 Lénárt Böhm, *Dél-Magyarország vagy az u.n. Bánság külön történelme*, vol. 1, (Budapest: n.p., 1867), 29–30.

9 Карол Телбизов, Мария Векова, and Марин Люлюшев. *Българското образование в Банат и Трансилвания*. (В.Търново: Унив. изд. Св. св. Кирил и Методий, 1996), 88–89.

for a short period of time. In the second half of the nineteenth century there were ten Bulgarian schools at different times in Temes and Torontál counties, specifically in the settlements of Bolgártelep, Brestye (today Romania), Vinga, Denta (today Romania), Kanak (today Konak, Serbia), Lukácsfalva (today Lukino Selo, Serbia), Módos (today Jaša Tomić, Serbia), Óbesenyő (today Dudeștii Vechi, Стар Бешенов, Star Beshenov, Romania), Székelykeve (today Skorenovac, Serbia), and Szőlősudvarnok (today Banatski Dušanovac, Serbia). In these schools children learned to read and write in Bulgarian and, as of the last decade of the nineteenth century, in Hungarian as well. Where there was no Bulgarian school, Banat Bulgarians attended Hungarian schools or schools of other ethnic communities. Similarly, for example, the Bulgarian school in Bolgártelep was attended by the children of settlers from other national communities, including Germans, Croats, Hungarians, and Romanians.

On the Features of Censuses and Data

Bearing in mind the specifics of the censuses as historical sources, in this essay I regard mother tongue as a marker of ethnicity (as has become commonplace in the historiography, even if this assumption merits some interrogation). I present the diaspora of seasonal labor migrants from Bulgaria on the basis of statistical information on the Bulgarian (i.e. speaking Bulgarian as its mother tongue) population of Budapest, municipal towns (so-called “törvényhatósági jogú városok,” of which there were 30), and settled council towns (“rendezett tanácsú városok,” of which there were 110 in 1910), which for the sake of brevity I will refer to simply as “towns.” In this case, the selection of these sources is justified by the fact that the seasonal migrant workers (market-gardeners) settled primarily in the capital and in Hungarian towns, where they rented land and created their gardens and were better able to sell their vegetables. For 1900, I also consider the data for larger municipalities (“nagyközségek”) that were subsequently elevated to the status of settled council towns and were listed as such in the 1910 census.

In Hungarian censuses the Banat Bulgarians (who lived in Temes and Torontál Counties) can be identified on the basis of the data on those who declared Bulgarian to be their mother tongue and the data on those who practiced Western-rite Catholicism. Krashovans, who were also Catholics and who resided predominantly in Krassó-Szörény (the third county in Banat), were added to the Bulgarians in the Hungarian statistics. They figured together in a column headed “mother tongue Bulgarian, Krashovan.” The reason for this lay

in the fact that at the time scholars in Austria–Hungary were of the opinion that the Krashovans were of Bulgarian ethnic origin. Krashovans were strongly influenced by Croatian culture, but in the eighteenth century they still identified themselves as Krashovans (after the Karash River, on the banks of which their settlements lay). Therefore I have deducted their numbers from the total number of Bulgarians in Austria–Hungary, using the data from the primary tables for literacy where they were specifically noted.

In censuses (both Hungarian and Bulgarian), the question of language was not an issue in the assessment of literacy. In other words, someone who could read and write in any language was considered literate regardless of the language. Language as a category was included as early as the first modern Hungarian censuses of 1870 and 1880, but literacy was not correlated to mother tongue. For the Eastern part of the Austrian–Hungarian Empire, we have literacy data correlated to Bulgarian mother tongue from 1890, 1900 and 1910. Literacy data from 1890 referred to Temes and Torontál counties and were correlated with mother tongue and age. Data from 1900 and 1910 referred not only to the Banat, but also to towns throughout Hungary and separately to Budapest, i.e. they reflected literacy within both groups, Banat Bulgarians and (seasonal) labor immigrants. In 1900, census data on literacy included confession as well, and the data of the 1910 census correlated literacy and level of education.¹⁰

In the Hungarian censuses of 1890, 1900 and 1910, literacy was measured according to three categories. One could be classified as literate (i.e. able to read and write, regardless of education), semi-literate (able to read, but not write), or illiterate (able neither to read nor write). The semi-literate were presented in a separate group in accordance with the realities of the epoch. Semi-literateness was typical among women. In the particular case of the Hungarian censuses, the reason for the creation of the category of semi-literate lay in the perception of writing as a man's job, which was widespread among the Hungarian peasantry. It was regarded as adequate for a woman to be able to read the Bible and prayer books, which is why girls were given less opportunity to attend school. They were taught to read, but not to write well, and often, since they were given few if any opportunities to practice writing, they forgot what little writing they might have learned.¹¹

10 Lajos Thirring, *Az 1869–1890. évi népszámlálások története és jellemzői*, I. rész (Budapest: KSH, 1983), 54, 84, 123.

11 István György Tóth, *Mivelbogy magad írást nem tudsz... Az írás térbővítése a művelődésben a kora újkor Magyarországon* (Budapest: MTA TTI, 1996), 235.

In practice (with rare exceptions), anyone with at least one year of elementary school was regarded as literate in the Hungarian censuses, even if he or she did not use or had already forgotten how to read and write because of illness or due to aging. In Hungary, illiteracy was examined for the population over the age of 6. The population under the age of 6 was *a priori* considered illiterate. The literacy of children in their first year of school was recorded in accordance with their declarations in questionnaires.¹²

Regarding indicators of literacy and illiteracy within the community of Bulgarian seasonal migrants, one should keep in mind that, given their horizontal mobility and the very small number of newborns, children, and adolescents, the numbers reflected mostly the achievements of the Bulgarian education system, which were then “reported” according to the “model” of the Hungarian one, since only a smaller number of children of wealthy and permanently settled Bulgarian migrants actually studied in the schools in Hungary (which, since the first Bulgarian school was not established until 1917, were either Hungarian schools or schools in which the languages of other national minorities were used as the language of instruction).

In Hungary, compulsory elementary education was introduced for boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 12 by the 1868 Educational Act, while in Bulgaria this occurred only later, in 1879, with the formation of the new Bulgarian state and the ratification of the Tarnovo Constitution. Thus one should bear in mind that the Bulgarian educational system during the period in question was in a state of flux. It began to assume a modern form later than in other European countries. The architects of the Bulgarian educational system did have the advantage of being able to learn from the mistakes that were made elsewhere, however, and thus were able to create an institutional framework that was quite modern for its time. Drawing on the experiences of other countries, the Bulgarian educational system bore affinities with the Hungarian one. Basic compulsory education, for instance, was extended from 4 years of schooling to 6 in 1891, after which pupils could pursue two further degrees, the first of which took 4 years to complete (this was introduced in 1906), while the second took an additional 3 years (this was introduced in 1909). In both cases schooling was tuition-free. There were some differences, however. For instance, from the outset education in Bulgaria was independent of the church and primary

12 Tamás T. Kiss, “Az analfabetizmus. A dualizmuskori Magyarország kulturális/politikai problémája,” in *Kultúrkapuk. Tanulmányok a kultúr[politik]áról, az értékközvetítésről és a kulturális válaszról*, ed. Tamás T. Kiss and Tímea Tibori (Szeged: Belvedere Meridionale, 2013), 13.

education was free. In Hungary, elementary school was tuition-free only as of 1908. Unlike in Hungary, in Bulgaria the laws on public education treated the number of obligatory years of schooling and the age of compulsory school attendance differently. Obligatory elementary school lasted for 3, 4 or 6 years (usually 4 years), and the mandatory age at which a child had to attend school ranged from 7 to 13, 6 to 12, and 7 to 14. The new and completely different cultural and educational environment of the host country (Austria-Hungary) influenced the seasonal migrants from Bulgaria. This influence was indirect at first, simply a consequence of the perceptions among migrants of the well-established, time-honored traditions in Hungarian society for children to learn, and then quite direct, when the migrant families began sending their children to Hungarian schools. This practice was followed not only by wealthy and prosperous immigrants, but also by the poor. Since they were constantly moving between Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, they took home their positive foreign influences from the host country. It is no coincidence that in Bulgarian literacy statistics by districts in the years leading up to the outbreak of World War I Tarnovo county stood out among the counties in Bulgaria. In 1905, the average literacy rate in the county for the population at the age of compulsory school attendance and over was 47.4 percent (64 percent among men and 31 percent among women), while the average for the country as a whole did not exceed 34.8 percent (50.6 percent and 18.2 percent respectively).¹³

Literacy, Gender, and Age

Gender is a crucial factor in the question of literacy. Women were predominant among the illiterate, which was one of the important factors in their disadvantageous position in society, reflecting gender inequalities in education (for instance) in the nineteenth century. Gender imbalance is a common phenomenon in the history of illiteracy. Due to migrations and regional effects, the level of this imbalance varied.¹⁴

13 Румен Даскалов, *Българското общество, 1878–1939, vol. 2, Население, общество, култура* (Sofia: IK Gutenberg, 2005), 367–68.

14 Kenneth A. Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Incorporated, 1974); Lawrence Stone, “Literacy and Education in England, 1640–1900,” *Past and Present* 42 (1969): 69–139.

Literacy (%)	Men			Women		
	Literate	Semi-literate	Illiterate	Literate	Semi-literate	Illiterate
County	1890					
Temes	66.3	0.9	32.8	52.7	3.1	44.2
Torontál	62.4	0.3	37.3	44.6	3.4	51.9
	1910					
Temes	80.5	0.7	18.8	72.0	4.0	24.0
Torontál	76.0	0.6	23.4	62.4	5.1	32.5

Table 1. Illiteracy rates among the Bulgarian¹⁵ population over the age of 6 in Temes and Torontál counties by gender in, 1890 and 1910¹⁶

As a comparison of the data on the two genders reveals, literacy rates among the Banat Bulgarians did not differ from the typical trends. Literacy rates were higher among men and there were more semi-literate women as a percentage than men. Both trends emerge clearly on both the county (Table 1) and the village level (Table 3). The trend for the entire period was towards an increase in literacy and a corresponding drop in illiteracy in both counties and for both genders, while differences between the genders were gradually diminishing.

In 1890, in the Bulgarian population at or over the age of compulsory school attendance in Temes and Torontál counties (taken together) the ratio of the literate to the illiterate (including the semi-literate) was 57 to 100 for men. This number dropped to 29 by 1910. In 1890, there were 112 illiterate women for every 100 literate women, a figure which decreased to 51 by 1910. Analyzing the dynamics of elementary literacy education in both counties (together and separately), for the period between 1890 and 1910 in Table 2 one finds an approximately equal drop in illiteracy among women and men, though this drop was a bit more rapid in the case of women.

Gender	Men		Women	
	Temes	Torontál	Temes	Torontál
1890	52	60	90	127
1910	24	32	40	60
Total for 1890	57		112	
Total for 1910	29		51	

Table 2. Number of people regarded as illiterate (or semi-literate) for every 100 literate people in the Bulgarian population over the age of 6 in Temes and Torontál counties, by gender, 1890, 1910¹⁷

15 The term Bulgarian refers to someone whose mother tongue was Bulgarian clarified in the text earlier.

16 *Source:* Hungarian State Archives (further MNL OI), KSH-XXXII-23-h.

17 *Ibid.*

In addition to gender, another prominent factor in the question of literacy and trends in literacy is age. Although the importance of gender to illiteracy is much more striking than age, the two are in fact closely interrelated. Literacy data correlated to age for Banat Bulgarians is available only for the male population of Vinga. In the Bulgarian male population of Vinga, the literacy rate in the age group of 11–15-year-olds and 16–20-year-olds, i.e. among those who had been born after the Hungarian educational reform of 1868 (which introduced compulsory primary education), was the highest (88 percent and 85 percent respectively). According to Table 3, literacy rates declined as the age of the cohort group rose, especially in the groups over the age of 50, i.e. among those who had been born in the 1830s and 1840s. Among the group of people 60 years of age and older, the literacy rate did not exceed 50 percent. Groups among which illiteracy was high were comprised largely of people who had grown up in periods of significantly less educational opportunity.

Mother tongue	Bulgarian	German	Hungarian	Romanian
Age (born in ...)	literacy as a percent of the total population			
Under 6 (after 1885)	0	0	3	0
6–10 (1880–1884)	73	61	89	27
11–15 (1875–1879)	88	98	92	31
16–20 (1870–1874)	85	91	90	50
21–30 (1860–1869)	79	95	83	32
31–40 (1850–1859)	80	91	97	28
41–50 (1840–1849)	76	85	95	16
51–60 (1830–1839)	59	76.5	100	18
Over 60 (before 1830)	51	87.5	94	0
Total	75.3	87	92.6	27.2

Table 3. Literacy among the male population of Vinga by mother tongue and age, 1890¹⁸

Literacy and Confession

Research on literacy has long demonstrated a close interrelationship between denominational belonging and literacy, since religion has played a key role in its spread.¹⁹ I examine these relationships in the Bulgarian communities in Austria–

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Lockridge, *Literacy*; Stone, “Literacy and Education”, 69–139.

Hungary on the basis of the data for municipal towns and settled council towns, where the population (migrants from Bulgaria or Banat) belonged to different denominations. In 1900, Uniates²⁰ (Eastern-rite Catholics) and members of the Eastern Orthodox Church prevailed (43 percent and 41 percent respectively). Western-rite Catholics comprised only 15 percent of the total population.

These percentages were slightly different among women. Western-rite Catholics (63 percent) dominated, while only 26 percent of the female population was Orthodox and only 10.5 percent was Eastern-rite Catholic. Bulgarian diasporas in Austria–Hungary were clearly defined by religious affiliation. The members of the Orthodox Church were (seasonal) labor migrants, primarily market-gardeners and a small number of craftsmen. The Catholics of the Eastern rite were former seasonal migrants who had settled and changed their faith as a sign of their loyalty to the host country (and in the interests of ensuring their well-being and welfare). The fact that their children attended Hungarian schools was unquestionably a significant factor in this shift. In the towns, Western-rite Catholics were migrants.

In 1900, literacy rates were highest among Western-rite Catholics in urban Bulgarian diasporas (regardless of gender). Western-rite Catholics represented 54.7 percent of literate Bulgarian men and 58.5 percent of literate Bulgarian women. The second-highest rates were found among Eastern-rite Catholics, with 28.5 percent of men and 24.4 percent of women being able to read and write. Literacy rates were lowest among the Orthodox (16.5 percent and 17 percent respectively; Figure 1).

On the basis of data regarding illiteracy within different age groups, I examine the pace at which literacy rates changed among the different confessions (Table 4). For Western-rite Catholic men, who were Banat Bulgarians migrating from villages to towns, illiteracy gradually decreased in the younger age groups. Table 4 shows that among children between 6 and 10 years of age who were enrolled in school after the implementation of 1892/93 educational reform illiteracy completely disappeared. It decreased by 18 percent among the group of people who had been born between 1860 and 1869, i.e. among students who were enrolled in school after compulsory education was introduced in 1868.

Indicators of illiteracy among Orthodox men vary widely and no clear trends emerged. Illiteracy is conspicuous in the group of youths between the

²⁰ The term *Uniat* or *Uniate* is used to refer to Eastern Catholic churches that were previously Eastern Orthodox churches.

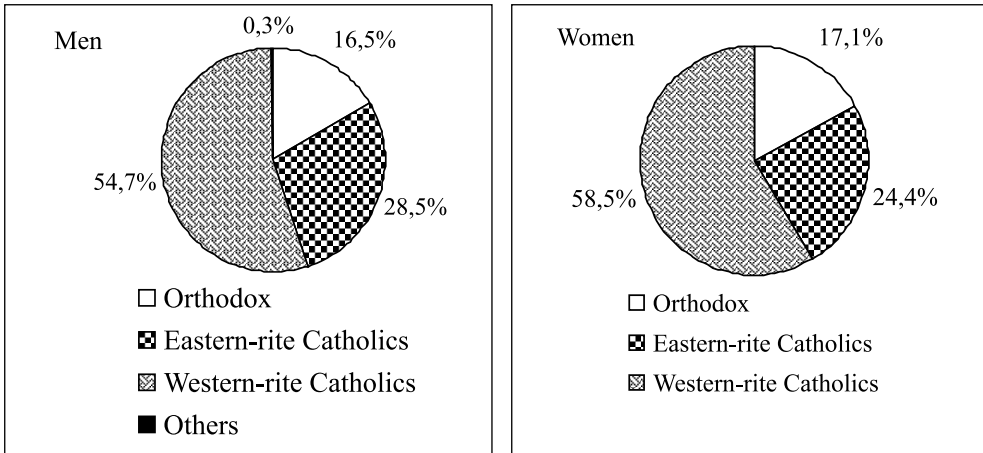


Figure 1. Literacy rates in urban Bulgarian populations over the age of 6 in Hungary (including Croatia-Slavonia, without Budapest), by confession and gender, 1900²¹

ages of 11 and 15. They were adolescents from poor families who sought work abroad instead of studying to earn a living or support their families. The smaller proportion of the illiterate is noteworthy among adolescents between the ages of 16 and 20 who went to school in Bulgaria in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when the modern Bulgarian educational system had finally taken clear form.

Confession	Men			Women		
	Orthodox	Eastern-rite Catholics	Western-rite Catholics	Orthodox	Eastern-rite Catholics	Western-rite Catholics
Age (born in ...)						
Under 6 (after 1895)	100	100	100	–	100	100
6–10 (1894–1890)	50	–	0	0	–	62.5
11–15 (1889–1885)	77	20	12.5	0	–	20
16–20 (1884–1880)	44	29	0	20	0	50
21–30 (1879–1870)	69	6	20	75	50	67
31–40 (1869–1860)	41	33	21	100	73	50
41–50 (1859–1850)	71	75	39	–	0	80
51–60 (1849–1840)	50	–	37	–	100	75
Over 60 (before 1839)	67	–	69	–	67	71
<i>Total (for the population ages 6 and over)</i>	53	24.5	18	56	54.5	62

(–) No people in the group.

Table 4. Illiteracy rates (%) in urban Bulgarian populations in Hungary (including Croatia-Slavonia) by confession and within different age groups, by gender, 1900²²

21 MNL OL, KSH-XXXII-23-h.

22 Ibid.

Illiteracy rates among Eastern-rite Catholic men were average and were declining. This drop in illiteracy can be observed in the group of men between the ages of 21 and 30 who studied reading and writing immediately after the introduction of compulsory education in Hungary.

Orthodox women born before Bulgaria's liberation (1878/79) were illiterate. An acute change is noticeable in the group of women between the ages of 16 and 20 who started schooling just after the creation of the independent modern Bulgarian state, when literate women predominated among the women who chose to migrate. There was no illiteracy at all among the Orthodox women who were at or above the age of compulsory school attendance (they were settled young women). Among Western-rite Catholic women illiteracy rates were similar to rates among Orthodox women.

The available data for the Bulgarian diaspora in Budapest regarding the correlation of literacy, confession, and age were reported separately in the 1900 census for people born in Bulgaria and people born in Hungary (Table 5). Comparing these data with the data for towns in Table 4, one notices similar overall trends: illiteracy was highest among Orthodox men (all of whom were born in Bulgaria). Illiteracy rates were second highest among Eastern-rite Catholics, while they were lowest among Western-rite Catholics (especially those born in Hungary).

There are some striking and significant differences in the data depending on whether the members of the cohort group were born in Bulgaria or Hungary, and these differences suggest conclusions that might otherwise not have been evident. Specifically, in the Orthodox community there were no illiterate men over the age of 50, which could be an indication that only men with the ability to read and write dared undertake long, international journeys in search of work as migrant laborers. The same was true of women. The few Orthodox women who had been born in Bulgaria were all literate.

Illiteracy was significantly lower among Eastern-rite Catholic men born in Bulgaria than it was among members of the Orthodox Church between the ages of 16 and 40, which implies a positive impact of the local educational environment in Austria-Hungary on the Bulgarian migrants. This effect was most pronounced among children between the ages of 6 and 10, among whom the literacy rate was zero. The fact that among Western-rite Catholic men who had been born in Hungary the illiteracy rate was also zero offers further support for this conclusion.

Confession Age (born in ...)	Men			Women		
	Ortho- dox	Eastern- rite Catholics	Western- rite Catholics	Ortho- dox	Eastern- rite Catholics	Western- rite Catholics
	Born in Bulgaria					
Under 6 (after 1885)	–	–	–	–	–	–
6–10 (1880–1884)	–	0	–	–	–	0
11–15 (1875–1879)	0	15	–	–	100	–
16–20 (1870–1874)	31	18.5	–	–	–	–
21–30 (1860–1869)	33	26	50	0	–	–
31–40 (1850–1859)	75	33	0	–	–	–
41–50 (1840–1849)	33	40	100	–	100	–
51–60 (1830–1839)	0	50	–	–	–	–
Over 60 (before 1840)	–	0	–	–	–	–
<i>Total (for the population at compulsory age and over)</i>	35.4	22.1	40	0	100	0
	Born in Hungary					
Under 6 (after 1885)	–	100	–	–	–	–
6–10 (1880–1884)	–	–	–	–	–	–
11–15 (1875–1879)	–	–	0	–	–	–
16–20 (1870–1874)	–	–	12.5	–	–	0
21–30 (1860–1869)	–	0	25	–	–	–
31–40 (1850–1859)	–	0	25	–	100	–
41–50 (1840–1849)	–	–	0	–	–	–
51–60 (1830–1839)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Over 60 (before 1840)	–	100	–	–	–	–
<i>Total (for the population at compulsory age and over)</i>	–	40	14.3	–	–	75

(–) No people in the group.

Table 5. Illiteracy rates (%) among Bulgarian populations in Budapest by confession, birthplace, gender, and age, 1900²³

Illiteracy among Orthodox men was higher in provincial towns than it was in Budapest, regardless of age. It was 53 percent among Orthodox men in towns and only 35.4 percent in Budapest. The same was true of Eastern-rite Catholic men, among whom the illiteracy rate was 24.5 percent in the towns and 22.1 percent in Budapest (among people who had been born in Bulgaria). The opposite trend prevailed among Western-rite Catholics: illiteracy rates among people who had been born in Bulgaria were lower in the towns (18 percent) than in the capital (40 percent) and evidently higher than for Hungarian-born Catholics, among whom the illiteracy rate was 14.3 percent (Tables 4, 5).

Literacy and Migration

In this discussion of the social nature of literacy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the ways in which literacy varied according to gender, age and confession, questions regarding the relationships between literacy and processes of migration have arisen repeatedly. I offer an additional example indicating a clear relationship between literacy and migration, specifically the literacy levels among the Bulgarians of Budapest in 1900 correlated with place of birth, i.e. whether one was born in Bulgaria or Hungary (Table 6). In this case, the effect of the foreign cultural milieu on the wider spread of literacy among Bulgarian men born in Hungary in comparison with Bulgarian-born migrants is not negligible.

Birthplace	Men			Women		
	Literate	Semi-literate	Illiterate	Literate	Semi-literate	Illiterate
Hungary	74.1	3.7	22.2	40	–	60
Bulgaria	75.3	0.3	24.4	40	–	60

Table 6. Literacy rates among Bulgarian populations in Budapest ages 6 and over by birthplace and gender, 1900²⁴

The conclusions I have drawn here regarding the relationship between literacy and migration confirm the findings of earlier scholarly inquiries. Migrants are unusual, “select” individuals, and literacy is a common feature among them. Usually literacy rates are higher among migrants than they are

²⁴ Ibid.

among people who remain in their homelands, regardless of background, age or gender.²⁵ Literacy influences not only the willingness of an individual to choose to emigrate, but also the distance he or she may be willing to travel.²⁶ Literacy rates are only slightly higher among migrants who travel only short distances than in the communities they leave behind, but literacy rates are significantly higher among migrants who travel long distances.

What are the peculiarities of the relationships between literacy and other factors among the Bulgarian migrant communities in Austria–Hungary? The case of Banat Bulgarians in the town of Nagybecskerek (today Zrenjanin, Serbia), who were migrants from neighboring villages with compact Bulgarian communities, offers insights into the relationship between literacy and distance traveled in the case of migrants from communities that were relatively nearby. In the Bulgarian diaspora of Nagybecskerek, the Banat Bulgarians predominated. In 1890 they constituted 94 percent of the Bulgarian community, 95 percent in 1900, and 90 percent in 1910. How did literacy rates of a small Banat Bulgarian migrant community change over time in an urban environment? The literacy rate among Bulgarian men was 67 percent in 1890, 76 percent in 1900 and 72 percent in 1910, while the literacy rate among women was 21 percent (1890), 38 percent (1900) and 79 percent (1910). The decline in literacy among men between 1900 and 1910 was due to an influx of Orthodox Bulgarians. According to the available data, literacy rates among Bulgarian men in Nagybecskerek were as high as they were among men in traditional Banat Bulgarian villages. Unlike Bulgarian men in Nagybecskerek, according to the three censuses all Bulgarian women were Western-rite Catholics. The data regarding literacy among Bulgarian men in Nagybecskerek in 1890 was also broken down by age (Table 7). The pattern differed from the pattern observed in the compact Bulgarian community in Vinga. In Nagybecskerek, the illiteracy rate among people between the ages of 6 and 40 was zero. The literacy rate among men was as high as it was among men in traditional Banat Bulgarian villages. Among women in Nagybecskerek, however, in earlier censuses literacy rates were low, but they peaked in 1910, just as they did among women in the compact Bulgarian village diaspora in Banat. Thus while among women the urban milieu had a positive influence with regards to the spread of literacy, among men the impact was negative.

25 Harvey J. Graff, *The Literacy Myth: Cultural Integration and Social Structure in the Nineteenth Century* (Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 65; Larry H. Long, "Migration Differentials of Education and Occupation: Trends and Variations," *Demography* 10 (1973): 243–58.

26 Ibid.

Age (born in ...)	In Figures		Percent	
	Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate
Under 6 (after 1885)	0	2	0	100
6–10 (1880–1884)	3	0	100	0
11–15 (1875–1879)	1	0	100	0
16–20 (1870–1874)	2	0	100	0
21–30 (1860–1869)	2	0	100	0
31–40 (1850–1859)	4	0	100	0
41–50 (1840–1849)	4	3	57	43
51–60 (1830–1839)	0	1	0	100
Over 60 (before 1840)	0	5	0	100
Total	16	11		

Table 7. Literacy among male Bulgarian Western-rite Catholic populations in Nagybecskerek by age, as absolute figures and percentages, 1890²⁷ (compare with Vinga, Table 3).

Bulgarian census data from 1900 and 1910 on Banat Bulgarians who returned to Bulgaria shed light on the relationship between literacy and distance traveled in the case of migrants from communities that were relatively far away. The return of a significant number of Banat Bulgarians to Bulgaria in the 1880s and 1890s was caused in part by high birth rates for a period of decades, as a result of which the land they had been given by the Hungarian state was no longer sufficient to ensure their livelihood. It was also prompted in part by a few consecutive years of agricultural hardship (1880–81), when due to high taxes the members of the Bulgarian diaspora were forced to travel across the country in search of work to make a living as laborers. Problems related to the ability of the Banat Bulgarians to earn a livelihood motivated many among them to return to the recently liberated “homeland” in the hopes of finding a reliable livelihood and a better life. I focus in this inquiry on five compact villages founded by returning emigrants: Asenovo (Nikopol district, Pleven county), Dragimirovo (Svishtov district, Veliko Tarnovo county), Gostilya (Dolna Mitropolia district, Pleven county), Bardarski Geran (Byala Slatina district, Vratsa county) and Bregare (Dolna Mitropolia district, Pleven county), which was already inhabited by Orthodox Bulgarians and where their ethnic presence was most notable. Literacy data was broken up according to nationality in the censuses, with the use

27 MNL OL KSH-XXXII-23-h.

of the category “nationality Bulgarians (without Pomaks²⁸).” However, literacy rates were not broken up according to confession, which would have helped us distinguish the level of literacy among Banat Bulgarians (as Catholics) from that of the other (local Orthodox) Bulgarians. (Data on confession refer to the entire population of the settlement.) The data on literacy was also not broken up according to age.

In 1900, of the five villages Asenovo had the highest literacy rate (54 percent) among Bulgarian men, followed by Gostilya with 52.2 percent and Bardarski Geran with 47.4 percent (Table 8). These figures were much lower than the average for the Banat villages ten years earlier. In 1900, Asenovo was almost entirely a village of Banat Bulgarians. 98 percent of the men and 95 percent of the women were Banat Bulgarians, so the rest of the Bulgarian population (Orthodox and Protestants) had only a minor impact on the overall literacy rates.²⁹ The majority of Banat Bulgarians in Asenovo came from Vinga, and they returned to Bulgaria after 1889. Literacy rates among them in 1900 were far below the literacy rates in Vinga even in 1890, which had been 67.3 percent (Table 8). Banat Bulgarians in Gostilya came originally from Star Beshenov and Ivanovo (today in Serbia), and those in Bardarski Geran came from Star Beshenov. Literacy rates among men there were lower than literacy rates among men in Star Beshenov in 1890 (55.6 percent) (Table 8). Literacy rates among female Banat Bulgarians who had returned to their homeland were highest in Asenovo, where the literacy rate was 38.2 percent in comparison with 57.9 percent among female Banat Bulgarians in Vinga in 1890 (Tables 8, 9). Gostilya was second with 24.2 percent and Bardarski Geran was third with 20.1 percent in comparison with 39.3 percent among female Banat Bulgarians in Star Beshenov in 1890 (Tables 8, 9). The Bulgarian migrants who returned to Bulgaria in the 1880s from the region of Banat were mostly poor, landless,³⁰ and, as evidenced by the statistical information presented here, less able to read and write than their compatriots in Banat. Thus those who were illiterate also comprised a kind of “select” group of migrants. They usually came from regions in which literacy rates were above average and where they consequently found themselves at a disadvantage and

28 Pomaks is a term used for Bulgarian-speaking Muslims who are indigenous to Southern Bulgaria.

29 *Резултати от преброяването на населението в Княжество България на 31 дек. 1900 г. по общини и населени места*, vol. 7 (Sofia: n.p., 1903), 60.

30 Петър Мнятев, “Едно движение на банатски българи за заселване в България от края на XIX в” *Известия на Научния архив*, (1968), vol. 4, 46.

therefore were more inclined to consider returning.³¹ As the statistics indicate, many people who were unable to read or write also traveled significant distances. In this sense, with respect to migration literacy constituted an important factor in at least two distinct ways. On the one hand, the ability to read and write seems to have made someone more likely to consider emigration (a significant decision involving risk and investment), while at the same time illiteracy may have been a contributing factor in the decision to return to the country of origin, an equally significant decision requiring similar investment. Whatever the case, in their “old-new” country these immigrants represented a significant human resource with special skills, whether in their new countries or upon return to their homelands.³² For instance, Banat Bulgarians brought farming technology from Banat, where agriculture was at a higher level than in the post-liberation Bulgaria. They introduced the so-called “Austrian iron plow,” which was pulled by horses, and other new agricultural tools. And as I demonstrate below, even the illiterate among them quickly embraced the innovations and “absorbed” the culture of the host country.

	1900		1910		Increase	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Asenovo	54.0	38.2	68.8	64.1	+14.8	+25.9
Bardarski Geran	47.4	20.1	60.5	49.9	+13.1	+29.8
Bregare	37.5	6.2	54.6	21.7	+17.1	+27.9
Dragomirovo	35.7	15.8	46.4	21.8	+10.7	+6.0
Gostilya	52.2	24.2	54.0	32.3	+1.8	+8.1

Table 8. Literacy rates (%) in the whole population of Bulgarian nationality (excluding the Pomaks) in the villages of Asenovo, Bregare, Bardarski Geran, Gostilya and Dragomirovo, by gender, 1900, 1910³³

In the early twentieth century, literacy rates among the Bulgarians of Banat were higher than the average literacy rates in the Bulgarian villages (with the exceptions of Dragomirovo and Bregare for men and Bregare for women) (Table 7). According to the first Bulgarian official statistics, in 1890 the average

31 Ibid.

32 Graff, *The Literacy Myth*; Long, “Migration Differentials.”

33 *Резултати от преброяване ...* vol. 4 (окр. Враца), 53, 56; vol. 7 (окр. Плевен), 82; vol. 11 (окр. Търново), 175; *Резултати от преброяване на населението в Царство България на 31 дек. 1910 г. по общини и населени места*, vol. 4 (окр. Враца) (Sofia: n.p., 1915), 28–29, 34–35; vol. 7 (окр. Плевен) (Sofia: n.p., 1922), 40–41; vol. 11 (окр. Търново) (Sofia: n.p., 1923), 102–03.

literacy rate was not more than 5 percent among men and 1.5 percent among women. Within two decades, these rates rose to 41.8 percent and 14.9 percent respectively (without excluding the population under the age of 6).³⁴ But during the post-liberation period, Bulgaria made an educational jump and school attendance became a central part of its educational system. The immigrant community also benefited from this process. In 1910, literacy rates among the denizens of the five aforementioned villages were still growing. Asenovo led in literacy among men (68.8 percent), followed by Bardarski Geran (60.5 percent), Bregare (54.6 percent) and Gostilya (54 percent) (Table 7), each of which had literacy rates higher than the Bulgarian average. Literacy rates among women grew by twice as much as they did among men (in Gostilya the difference was four and a half times as much) (Table 7).

	1890				1910			
	Men							
Mother tongue County, village	Bul- garian	Hun- garian	Ger- man	Other	Bul- garian	Hun- garian	Ger- man	Other
<i>Temes</i>								
Vinga	67.3	72.7	72.3	Romanian 22.7	54.6	76.8	35	
<i>Torontál</i>								
Bolgártelep	52	64.3	35.7		64.3	45.5	66.1	
Star Beshenov	55.6	69.4	57.3		65.1	54.1	82.5	
Ivanovo	50.8	28.6	55		61	55.8	64.3	
	Women							
<i>Temes</i>								
Vinga	57.9	×	×	×	72.3	54.6	76.8	Romanian 35
<i>Torontál</i>								
Bolgártelep	35.4	43.5	36.7		52.6	40	64.7	
Star Beshenov	39.3	59.3	45.6		54.4	57.9	65.2	Romanian 0
Ivanovo	29.8	14	37.9		54.2	41.6	55.8	

× No data.

Table 9. Literacy rates (excluding people who had completed secondary or high school) in the total population by gender in some villages in Temes and Torontál (with a Bulgarian population of over 100 people), 1890 and 1910³⁵

³⁴ Даскалов, *Българското общество*, 367.

³⁵ MNL OL, KSH-XXXII-23-h.

Levels of Education in 1910

In the 1910 Hungarian census the question of literacy was broken down according to additional factors. In addition to the question of the ability to read and write (to which one responded by indicating one of the three aforementioned categories, literate, semi-literate, or illiterate), two further questions were asked about the level of education and separate columns were included for those who had completed elementary school (“általános/elemi iskola”) and those who had completed secondary school (“középiskola”). In Hungary, one received one’s first degree after having completed elementary school, which consisted of six classes and two upper classes called “repeating school” (“ismétlőiskola”), which were not visited by masses. The focus of education in elementary school was on acquiring the ability to read and write. One received one’s second degree after having completed “secondary school,” which included eight classes and was offered in institutions of two types, gymnasias (in which pupils were given classical and humanitarian education) and “real” secondary schools (which prepared students for careers in engineering). A level of “general education” was achieved through training in the first four years of secondary school.

Records in the original census tables show that Bulgarians in Austria–Hungary (primarily Banat Bulgarians) attended elementary school only up to the fourth grade, after which few were enrolled in secondary school. I analyze the levels of literacy among Bulgarians in Austria–Hungary, drawing a distinction between the capital city and provincial towns in the case of seasonal migrants. I also examine town-village relations in the case of Banat Bulgarians (Table 10). In the Banat region, I take the data into consideration separately for each of the three counties, omitting towns, since the Catholic Bulgarians were a rural population. I present the towns separately in the three counties, because the Bulgarian population in these counties was of mixed confession. As I have already mentioned, Banat Bulgarians were Western-rite Catholics, seasonal migrants were Orthodox, and Eastern-rite Catholics were converts from the Orthodox church who had settled down permanently.

In Temes county, I take into account the towns of Fehértemplom (today Bela Crkva, Serbia) (a settled council town), Temesvár (Timișoara, Romania), and Versec (Vršac, Serbia), both of which were municipal council towns. Temesvár had the largest Bulgarian population. Of the 64 men, one had completed each of the three levels, while none of the women had. In Versec, one of the six Bulgarian men had completed the fourth grade. In Torontál county there was

	Males who completed the			Females who completed the		
	8 th grade	6 th grade	4 th grade	8 th grade	6 th grade	4 th grade
	of the high school			of the high school		
Temes county <i>(without the towns)</i>	0.46	0.06	0.13	0.0	0.0	0.26
Temes county – towns	1.37	1.37	3.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Torontál county <i>(without the towns)</i>	0.07	0.04	0.23	0.0	0.0	0.02
Torontál county - towns	0.0	0,0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Krassó-Szörény county <i>(without the towns)</i>	2.94	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Banat region (total)	0.24	0.05	0.19	0.0	0.0	0.26
Budapest	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.0	5	5
Towns in Hungary <i>(without those in Banat)</i>	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.0	3	0.0
Individual towns						
Temesvár	1.56	1.56	1.56	0.0	0.0	100

Table 10. Bulgarian high school graduates as a percentage of the literate Bulgarian communities in Banat, the capital city of Budapest, and towns throughout Hungary (including Croatia-Slavonia), also broken down by gender, 1910³⁶

one municipal council town, Pancsova (Pančevo, Serbia), and two settled council towns, Nagybecskerek and Nagyikinda (Kikinda, Serbia), in which there were small communities of Bulgarians of different confessions. Not one of them completed high school. In Krassó-Szörény county there were two settled council towns, Lugos (Lugoj, Romania) and Karansebes (Caransebeș, Romania). None of the members of the Bulgarian communities of these two settlements completed secondary school either. According to the Hungarian censuses (summarized in Table 10), Banat Bulgarians from the villages in Temes county had higher levels of education than those from villages in Torontál county. They had a comparatively sizeable number of eighth-grade graduates, which largely exceeded the number of sixth-grade and fourth-grade graduates. In the early twentieth century, girls in the communities of Banat Bulgarians did not attend high school (with the exception of a few girls from Temes county, who

36 MNL OL, KSH-XXXII-23-h.

completed the fourth grade), although in the Eastern part of the Monarchy girls were granted access to high schools as early as 1895.

Among the men of the Bulgarian community of Budapest (568 of the total 608 people who were Bulgarian by mother tongue), who were of various confessions (though the Orthodox Church dominated), the proportion of students who studied at high schools was greater than among the men of the Banat Bulgarian communities. Bulgarian women in Budapest (the other 40 people), who were mostly migrants, had lower levels of elementary literacy than the Bulgarian women of Banat, but those who pursued studies were seeking to acquire a better education.

Conclusion: Parallels of Literacy

As a kind of conclusion, I compare literacy rates among the Bulgarian migrant communities in Austria-Hungary with the levels of education prevailing among the populations of the Dual Monarchy and Bulgaria in general. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the general trend among the Bulgarians in Austria–Hungary was towards higher literacy rates. Among women, this was lower than for men in both groups (the Banat Bulgarians and Bulgarian seasonal workers). In this respect, the Bulgarian immigrant women were not an exception, neither in comparison with women in Hungary nor in comparison with women in other European countries.

In 1910, literacy among men was the highest in Budapest, and it was higher among Banat Bulgarians than among Bulgarian market-gardeners in provincial towns (Table 12). The highest literacy rates were found among the men of the Budapest Bulgarian community, among whom there was a big jump in the first decade of the twentieth century (from 75.2 percent in 1900 to 87.8 percent in 1910). Literacy rates were higher among the women of the Banat Bulgarian community than among female seasonal migrants.

One trend among Bulgarian women is noticeable: in Budapest and in the provincial urban diaspora women who had the opportunity to pursue studies strove to acquire a better education. This is revealed by the 1910 census, which includes not only data regarding literacy but also data concerning people who had completed secondary school. 9 percent of the women among the literate Bulgarian migrants in Budapest had completed secondary school in comparison with only 2 percent of the literate men, and in provincial towns (except in Banat)

3 percent of literate women had completed secondary school in comparison with 1.2 percent of literate men.

In 1910, elementary literacy rates were higher among Banat Bulgarians than the average for Hungary (including Croatia-Slavonia), which was 66.7 percent.³⁷ This was also the case in earlier censuses. In 1890, the average level of elementary literacy among Banat Bulgarians was 58 percent (taking both women and men into account), compared with 50.6 percent for the lands of the Hungarian crown (i.e. including Croatia-Slavonia). Within the diaspora of labor migrants, in 1900 it was 65 percent (again taking both women and men into account) among Bulgarians in Budapest and the towns, whereas the national average was 59.3 percent.³⁸

It is worth noting that the elementary literacy level of seasonal Bulgarian migrants, most of whom were market-gardeners, was much higher than the average of 30 percent for Bulgaria at the time³⁹ and the average of 22 percent for the rural population in Bulgaria. This again confirms the relevance of literacy and education as factors in the processes of emigration.⁴⁰ But illiteracy data on Bulgarian seasonal migrant market-gardeners in Budapest are not so favorable compared to the host country. The illiteracy rate was above the municipal average, while among Banat Bulgarians in Temes County illiteracy was lower (23% in 1910), than the county average (30 %) (but still higher than illiteracy among Bulgarians in the capital city).⁴¹

Nationality by mother tongue	1890		
	Men	Women	Total
Banat Bulgarians	56	44	50
Croats	50	34	42
Hungarians	59	48	54
Germans	68	58	63
Romanians	11	8	14
Ruthens	13	7	10
Serbs	39	22	31
Slovaks	51	37	43

Table 11. Literacy rates in Hungary (including Croatia-Slavonia and the population under the age of compulsory school attendance) by nationality and gender, 1890⁴²

37 József Kovacsics, ed., *Magyarország történeti demográfiája. Magyarország népessége a honfoglalástól 1949-ig* (Budapest: KSH, 1963), 309.

38 Ibid.

39 Даскалов, *Българското общество*, 301–64.

40 Атанас Тотев ed. *Демография на България* (Sofia: BAN, 1974), 366.

41 Tóth, *Mivelhogy magad írást nem tudsz*, 230–31.

42 Ibid., 232; MNL OL, KSH-XXXII-23-h.

In the lands of historic Hungary Bulgarians lived in multinational communities. According to quantifiable data regarding literacy (in this case including the population below the age of compulsory school attendance), Banat Bulgarians were in the forefront. In 1890, they were third after the Germans and Hungarians, taking men and women into account separately (56 percent and 44 percent, respectively) and as a whole (50 percent) (Table 11). For Banat Bulgarians, higher education was a natural pursuit, since in the second half of the nineteenth century they experienced their literary revival.

Educational level <i>County, Budapest, towns</i>	Men				Women			
	Literate	Semi-literate	Illiterate	Total	Literate	Semi-literate	Illiterate	Total
1890								
Temes and Torontál counties	63.8	0.5	35.7	100	47.5	3.3	49.2	100
1900								
Budapest	75.2	0.6	24.2	100	40.0	0.0	60.0	100
Towns	65.6	0.6	33.8	100	77.8	0.0	22.2	100
1910*								
Budapest	87.8	1.2	11.0	0	59.5	5.4	35.1	100
Towns <i>not including towns in Temes and Torontál counties</i>	68.8	0.6	30.6	100	48.9	0.0	51.1	100
Temes and Torontál counties	76.7	0.7	22.6	100	65.5	4.5	30.0	100

* “Literate” also includes people who continued their education.

Table 12. Literacy rates among Bulgarians at or over the age of compulsory school attendance in Temes and Torontál counties, Budapest, and other Hungarian towns by gender, 1890–1910⁴³

During the period under examination, from the perspective of literacy Hungary lagged behind the countries of Western Europe (England, France, Germany). For example, by 1911 England had already overcome illiteracy (which had been reduced to 1 percent, both among women and men). In 1900, the rate of illiteracy in France was 5 percent among men and 6 percent among

43 MNL OL, KSH-XXXII-23-h.

women. In 1870, the rate of illiteracy in Prussia for the population over 10 years of age was 10 percent among men and 15 percent among women. In the Western part of the Austro–Hungarian Empire (Cisleithania), the average rate of illiteracy for the population over the age of 10 was 21 percent among men and 25 percent among women. However, Hungary was far ahead compared to the Balkan countries, including Bulgaria, and this undoubtedly contributed to the higher rates of literacy and higher levels of education among the Bulgarian immigrant population. In 1899, the illiteracy rate among the population at or above the age of compulsory school attendance in Romania was 78 percent. It was 61 percent in Greece in 1907 and 80 percent in Serbia in 1900.⁴⁴ In Bulgaria, the rate of illiteracy for the population over the age of 7 was 70 percent in 1900 and 58 percent in 1910.⁴⁵

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⁴⁴ Ibid., 238–46.

⁴⁵ Атанас Тотев, ed. *Демография на България*, 366.

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