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THE ROLE OF SCHOOL DANCES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY. RITUAL-CENTRIC EXAMINATION OF THE FORTEPAN VISUAL DATABASE

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Abstract

In the first half of the twentieth century, photography allowed families and groups to capture important moments. In the 1920s and 1930s, cheaper and simpler cameras appeared on the market, which became available to many people. It was the Kodak revolution. The intimate family spaces opened; the everyday life of the schools became visible. The Fortepan visual database is a collection of such photographs taken between 1900 and 1990. As a cultural imprint of the time, the photograph has become a new source for researchers to observe a symbolic world we know little about. The oldest communication medium is the human body, so its movement in space can take cultural anthropological and pedagogical anthropological research to a whole new level. Rituals interarm everyday life, forming a transition between past, present, and future. It creates community, order. School celebrations are a good way to see hidden content that settles social conditions. The research looks at how school dances appeared in the 1920s and 1930s and how school dances changed to different social influences, and what ritual elements appear in them.

Keywords: school dances, celebrations, rituals, body image, image analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, ethnographic and pedagogical anthropology studies are increasingly coming to the foreground in educational research. The following study was carried out with The Ministry for Innovation and Technology's professional support¹, in which I examined the anthropological characteristics and ritual features of school culture and youth life of the period 1900–1950. In the 19th century, fear of the child's body was characterized by a complete attitude, its discipline, and the breaking of

 $^{^{1}}$ The so called ÚNKP-19-3 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology.

its will. The pedagogical and life-reform movements of the early 20th century had a positive attitude towards physical manifestation, which can be observed in individual reform pedagogical concepts, movements covering many aspects of human life. In reform pedagogy, dance can play a role, among other things, in self-expression, in relation to nature, in games, in resoluble crises involving the transition between ages. (Németh & Skiera, 2018) The anthropological perspective provides a new framework for his research into the transfer, constructing, and storage of knowledge (Gehlen, 1974; Connerton, 1999; Turner, 2002; Wulf, 2007). For these, the hermeneutic research paradigm provides new aspects that complete the interpretation and understanding of phenomena. I chose this aspect for the research, using the method of image analysis and analysis of age documents. To understand and observe the events of the past, the images that show a stiffened scene of the past are suitable for their understanding and analysis of hermeneutics, the science of understanding. In this research, I chose photographs of school celebrations, special occasions, sporting events, dance shows to "observe" the past. As visual imprints of ritual action in that space and time, photographs become suitable for understanding the era. The source of the selected images is the Fortepan image database, which contains more than 139,000 images. These images mostly come from family albums and museum collections, including advantages and challenges for the researcher. Items can be searched in the database using keywords, entering dates, and locations. First and foremost, pedagogical studies that explore ritual processes in schools by analyzing data from a series of photographs provide the methodological background of my research (Ouyang, 2010; Pilarczyk & Mietzner, 2005, 2013). During the selection of images, I sought to choose pictures of school celebrations, dance demonstrations that clearly show the characteristic features of the body image, changes in the female ideal, the importance of ritual manifestations.

2. THE IMAGE AS A SOURCE

Pedagogical anthropological and hermeneutic research is increasingly focused on the method of analysis of photographs. In the field of social sciences, photography is used as a source with a myriad of approaches. Anthropology is a systematic study of the nature of human existence, i.e., culture, which, as defined by Margaret Mead, writes Ernő Kunt (1995), is a form of behavior acquired by a group of persons united by a common tradition. Visual anthropology is an examination of the mediums, photographs, video films that capture human culture. The great illustrated magazines also nurtured community myths through photographs, symbols that personified various normative social values.

When photographs are used as sources, the corresponding textual description interprets, analyses, and becomes a complete data source for research.

Its objectivity is not challenged because it shows a momentary state in the world, thus giving us the means to analyze situations that we have not observed. However, it does not matter what images are analyzed. In fact, it is mostly made for showing as an illustration. It is common for set sequences to show an apparent reality. In turn, they lose their spontaneous character. However, if good images are selected, "The rite of solemnity and sanctity of the group and the world implements the deepest

intentions of folk aesthetics, celebration, communication with other people and the aesthetics of union with the world." (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 341) German art historian Hans Belting (2007) also believes that the image is more than a perception product. According to him, images are created as a result of personal or collective symbolism, and if the concept is strictly taken into account, it can only be an anthropological concept; since we live with images, we understand the world in pictures.

In older photographs, people tended to appear with severe facial expressions and dignity. This is due, among other things, to the process of taking a photo. The photographers belonged to a high social circle, and the studio was respectable, so apart from the circumstances, everyday people could be marveled in the photo studios. Later, when more accessible, cheaper methods were developed to take a photograph, many people could afford to take pictures, but visiting the photographer remained an outstanding, solemn occasion.

In the 1920s, illustrated weekly newspapers were born in Europe and created a group of photojournalists who made photojournalism and photography a social examination tool. It is based on photography as an image of culture is displayed. Photography can help to nurture family and individual traditions, as they regularly capture the most important moments of the life of the community and the individual, the moments of everyday life, thereby carrying the value of being captured. (Boerdam & Warna Oosternbaan, 2000) A family photo can be defined in two types of images, depending on the subject of the social environment in which it is used. According to the first, every photo is a family photo with relatives or families on it. The second is that everything the family keeps as a memory, even about other people, about the environment. Bourdieu's work, *A Middle-brow Art*, deals more deeply with family photography and its subjects.

The method, image analysis, and its structure are derived from Erwin Panofsky (1984), and Pilarczyk and Mietzner (2005, 2013) researched his theory. In their work Das reflektierte Bild, they write in detail about the use of images in research. Photographs are part of everyday life, and their ubiquitous visual impulses are addressed continuously, consciously, and often unconsciously. In addition to texts, they are the essential information carriers of our time and have long shaped our thinking, emotions, and actions. The medium of photography has become as important an expression as writing. The photo opens its questions as a source, which we would not be answered based on traditional sources. Such is primarily the question of the body, the meaning of the expression of habit and body, gestures, and facial expressions in educational and narrative institutions. The phenomena of nature, body, space, or time are significant as basic research and empirical in specific pedagogical situations. For example, in an increasingly virtualized learning environment, a change in body perception is a fully open field of research whose relevance is undeniable, writes Pilarczyk and Mietzner (2005). The same applies to deteriorating natural conditions in the light of urbanization, affecting leisure time and the increasing importance of different sports.

The pictures include the richness and possibilities of problems. They are not clear; subjective aspects influence their reception. It may be a problem that we cannot interpret an image taken at a specific historical time in the way that the man of the time would have understood it.

In addition to Panofsky's three-step method of image analysis, Pilarczyk and Mietzner say that the first level is the pre-graphic description, in which all the elements in the image are read, as well as the establishing of correlations without interpretation, such as knowledge of the world, familiarity with the material world. In an iconographic description, the elements of the representation are associated with each other. The description of the subject can be seen, how the image was created, the contemporaries, the person who created the image, the technique of taking the image. In iconographic interpretation, the aim is to present the more in-depth, even symbolic meanings of the photograph, as the image's creator might have thought. A secondary report can be defined at this level. During iconological interpretation, the researcher seeks a deeper understanding of the work of art in the light of the researcher's knowledge, the history of culture and technology, religion, science, everyday life (Panofsky, 1984; Pilarczyk & Mietzner, 2005, 2013).

3. RESEARCH ON FORTEPAN

Fortepan's website is continuously updated with new images, so the visual database is expanding every day. At the end of 2020, we have nearly 140,000 digitized photos. These photographs are made up of family albums, museum collections. Keywords can be used to search images. These tags are associated with the uploader's image, but anyone can add new keywords to the image after logging on to the page. We can also search for a country, geographical name, city, person, description, donor name. Research on Fortepan is complicated because the keywords associated with the images often do not match the words assumed by the researcher, so we can find the right images by changing several keywords. The importance of *Fortepan's* image material was also noticed by the Hungarian National Gallery, where between April 16 and August 25, 2019, the history of 20th century Hungary was presented through the perspective and life events of the average person, entitled All Past my past #huszadikszázad #privatfoto #Fortepan. In this research, a combination of several keywords was used to find the right images. The dance keyword was assigned to 877 images. For dance and school keywords, 18 images were filtered out of the search engine. Most of these were less useful to the research. I looked for something done at some school event, a ceremony, performance, and some presentation. That is how I searched for keywords school and celebration. The search results were 50 images, from which I selected the pictures showing dancing or school celebrations. The difficulty of searching is that the right images are often associated with different keywords that would not be logical from a researcher's perspective. For example, dance, school, and ceremony as keywords, do not give out a picture. That is why I collected some keywords (school, dance, ceremony, performance, folk dance) that I used to find the most suitable pictures.

When analyzing the images, the subjective factors were also considered, such as the circumstances in which the photo was taken, the purpose of taking the photo. Most images are characterized by both spontaneity and a set character.

4. CHANGES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The modernization processes accelerated in the last third of the 19th century, radically transformed the natural environment and the structure of traditional societies, the way of life, privacy and way of thinking, and relation to the religion of individual people and social groups. They changed and reorganized work and housing conditions, social relations, leisure, meals and clothing, community customs, and religious practice with unprecedented speed (Németh & Skiera, 2018; Pukánszky, 2006). By the end of the 19th century, after the transitions, the industrial urbanization era transformed the population, transforming family and household forms. Besides, the common theme of educational discourses of the time was the joint education of boys and girls, ceding, and the sex education of children. The movement that unfolded after the turn of the century ranges from the political movements of the era calling for radical social change, to artistic endeavors opposed to the stiffened forms of official academic art, to the radical transformation of ordinary life as a whole. The movement is linked to many artistic and religious manifestations of the period, but new trends in philosophy, literature, science, pedagogy, and emancipation and social aspirations are linked to it at several common points. At its heart was self-reforming a new man and creating a harmonious world of the future man, free from disease. In the first half of the 20th century, a new concept of body emerged, the guiding principle of which was naturalness and simplicity and health and beauty, in order to create the ideal body of the new man in harmony with himself and with nature, which can be successfully displayed in the practice of everyday life (Pukánszky, 2006, 2013; 2017).

An important pole of life-form aspirations was the ideal female body, the display of the body culture movement that made the naked female body visible, and the reform dress that emphasized the dressed female body's naturalness. The clothing reform that emerged, as a result, is linked to several contemporary reformist movements, such as the women's emancipation movements in which women could work, or the various health, hygiene, women's and youth movements, sexual reform, the women's body culture movement, which emphasizes the beauty of the naked female body. One of the central motifs of contemporary discourse on the reform of women's clothes is the female body's release from the cage of the corset. This health aspect is also related to the changed role of women in the liberation of the body. Fashion reform emphasized the hygiene and health of the female body and its naturalness and natural beauty. The movement's influence, which initially conquered urban elite groups, soon spread to the broader social strata, especially among young girls, by which it increasingly emphasized naturalness and natural beauty (Németh & Skiera, 2018).

In anthropology, there was a stronger interest in body theory because, in premodern societies, the body was an important surface on which social status, marital status, tribal attachment, the peculiarity of the age, the characteristic signs of gender, and religious affiliation can be easily and unequivocally presented. While in modern societies, the use of bodily manifests, clothing, posture characteristics, cosmetics is crucial for the indication of wealth and lifestyle.

The body's importance has also been re-appreciated in the recent development of social theory in terms of the analysis of culture and consumption. The devel-

opment of consumer culture in the post-war period, the emergence of postmodern themes in the arts, and the feminist movement are among the social changes that have influenced recent social theory developments. In addition to commercial and consumption-oriented interest in the body, the importance of maintaining condition, maintaining a beautiful body, and delaying aging, sport was a priority. Various visualizations of the body have drawn criticism of popular culture and artistic theories, closely related to the consequence of changes in gender relations.

There are different positions between the male and female bodies. Some say that discrimination is a social problem, and in this case, it is not primarily an ontological difference. Gender inequality is purely socially constructed. The other view is that there are fundamental differences in personality, values, attitudes, and lifestyles. Moreover, the reason for the differences is the different body structure, their relationship to the world, for example, through the experience of childbirth (Turner, 1997).

The early 20th century's pedagogical movements have a more positive attitude towards physical manifestation, which is mainly manifested in reform pedagogy. The liberation of the body from the means of discipline and the aim of increasing human quality were, among other things, the movements of the life-form. The ritual body is formed by these interactions—a connection between the body and the environment, as in Muslim prayer. The sacral space is created, the connection with the environment, every movement in space is the totality of sacral and ritual networks of relationships (Bell, 2009). The body's role in this process of movement by the transfer of knowledge, the maintenance of memory.

Also, in the case of dance, significant changes are observed during the use of the body. Among regulated dances are reform dances, unlimited dances that promote the body's freedom, showing a free, healthy body. The dance movements, with the new elements of life they conveyed, and the new female ideal, also influenced the body culture movements (Németh, 2013; Boreczky, 2013; Boreczky & Fenyves, 2015; Fenyves, 2016). Free dance has already been the subject of many studies. The indepth analysis of this subject goes beyond the scope of this paper because of the diverse approach to the subject.

Rituals create a community, create and solidify the community's identity through the symbolic content of the actions of the persons involved. In this framework, the participants' actions in the ritual interact with each other, are connected, and create a new rite (Wulf, 2007). The types of ritual acts were grouped into different categories. Ritualists studied the context of religion, ritual, and myth, which may have served to interpret social structures.

The mimetic basis of cultural learning is memory, which is the place of know-ledge that provides a complex identity. For the unit organizer's impulses and action orientation to be enforced, three aspects are necessary: storage, callability, inert communicative ability, ritual appearance, and collective participation. The instruments of this are rituals, which play an essential role in shaping the community's collective memory.

5. ROLE OF SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS AND DANCES

School celebrations have played an important role in the lives of schools. They take on a role that evokes the past and the present, connecting them the two, and the relationship to the festive occasions determines their meaning. Knowing all this, school festivities are important in two aspects of childhood socialization. They can affect collective identities. Through celebration, the community and audience present, form a collective that can be interpreted symbolically. It can also be considered a rite of passage, the success of which depends on verbal and visual messages. They can also have an impact on historical identity. They play an important role in the creation of historical memory.

Onstage events create a connection between the present and the past. This can also be interpreted as a journey in which a personal relationship can be formed between those present and the remembrance object. For the process of celebration to become a celebration, its socialization function must be in place so that the content of the feast and the social context of the celebration are exact. Celebration creates an emotional effect; the presence of symbols strengthens the sense of collective identity. Remembrance creates the way from the past to the present. A feast is an opportunity to create a sense of community, but it is also socially defined. The various factors that play a role in the child's socialization, such as family, school, media, are simultaneously sided by and override each other to assert their purpose. This creates a disorientating effect on the participants in the socialization process. A festive event at school can be considered a ritual if it meets the criteria described above. The celebration is part of the ritual process. The transition from the past to the present, the collective sense, the common knowledge that can only be created when we are present, and we do not just see the celebration as a monotonous act without mandatory content (Szabó, 2006).

The ritual processes of educational institutions often do not work with sufficient efficiency. These are due, for example, to the uniformity of the celebrations. They are often treated as a prescribed event, i.e., children are assigned what to do. The content is closed, based on outdated formalities, boring, and does not take sufficient account of the child's age characteristics. Therefore, it can trigger revulsion and passivity among children. Due to the *get it over with* approach, the lack of festive atmosphere, the child, the parents, the educators may suffer rather than live the festivities. The need for renewal here is just as important and necessary (Barcsai, Hagymásy & Márton, 2009). Social perceptions of celebrations are continually changing. The fact that some celebrations can become a scene of current political affairs does not make it any easier. Thus, the importance of celebrations is great, since they provide an open space for the provision of political factors and symbols (Szabó, 2006). The school celebrations were to strengthen the cohesion of the pupils and to honor each other's work. Typically, during the period under consideration, mostly Christian holidays, calendar holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, deaths, name days, political events, and historical anniversaries were celebrated.



Figure 1. Fortepan code: 153126

From a ritual point of view, the most unique celebrations in school life are the year-opening and end-of-year occasions, national holidays, Christmas, Easter. The first selected image was taken in 1937. The event can be a school-year opening celebration or a national holiday. On the stage, two young students in national attire recite. The enlarged image clearly shows the girl wearing an ornate coronet, a vest, and an apron, with two other pupils holding the school flag next to them. Among the audience, we can see children, adults, who can be parents of children, so we can assume that this is a celebration that is also open to parents, which is of particular importance to everyone.

In the first half of the century, the building of national consciousness was particularly strong. Moreover, national attire increasingly symbolized togetherness and love for the homeland. The flag's original significance and purpose are to ensure that everyone in the crowd can see where they belong. To belong somewhere, to belong together is a need in the depths of the soul; therefore, the external expression of belonging, the flag, is a symbol of the soul's depths. The flag symbolizes the spirit of the school. The flag-bearer must preserve the spiritual creations of the nation. Their posture is straight, respectful. Celebrations like this were very important in schools' life because they strengthened national consciousness and the sense of belonging to the community, of belonging to the school as a family. We often see poetry, drama, theatrical performances, and dances that fit the occasion's themes during school celebrations. The following image shows such a school celebration.

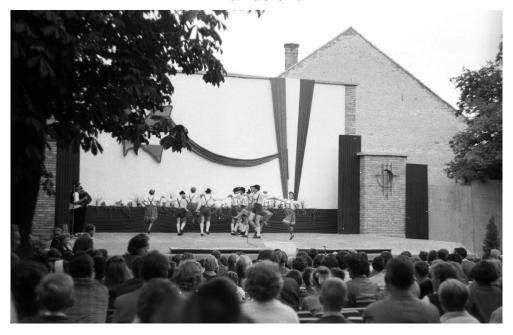


Figure 2. Fortepan code: 79249

Celebrations of folk dances were common in schools. This is supported by the photographs in the school bulletins of the period, among others. The photo was taken in 1949 in the common courtyard of the Budapest Primary Boys' School in the capital and the Pannonia Street Primary Girls' School in Budapest. Schools often staged dance shows, which were presented to a wide audience in exchange for ticket purchases. In the enlarged version of the image, the dancers are dressed in Tyrolean costumes. The boys are wearing bridle shorts, a white shirt, a similar bridle skirt, and a white blouse with a hat on their heads. Most schools sought to introduce young people to the traditional dance of several nations. The Tyrolean dance was popularly edited because of its unique melody and style. The learning of couple dances was especially important for young people, as the students were able to prepare for social events after their life in School, which included dancing and getting to know men.

The purpose of dance teaching is to give the students a light, beautiful, subtle gesture. After basic positions, dance steps, arm movements, and rhythmic dance movements, it is crucial to know and master classical and modern dances. Many times, the students show their skills by performing their design dance compositions. The movements contain joy, pain, freedom, and bondage so that children are given related content to their moods and spiritual development. The primary purpose of folk dance is character formation; imitation in regulated dance plays an important role, thereby keeping alive the body's knowledge and transmitted through the body. The body's movement, the symbols placed on the body (embroidery of symbols, folk costumes) embodied the given culture's symbols (Németh, 2013; Boreczky, 2013; Boreczky & Fenyves, 2015; Fenyves, 2016).



Figure 3. Fortepan code: 83949

In addition to traditional folk dances, more modern dances were an eruption of regulated dances (Németh, 2013; Boreczky, 2013; Boreczky & Fenyves, 2015; Fenyves, 2016). Antiquity, purity, and originality can also be seen here as a life-changing motif that includes an untainted form of dance, costume, and customs. In nature, in this case, the scenes danced in the schoolyard embody the desire to return to nature. The more informal dance structure is illustrated by the above image, which was taken in 1938 in Budapest in the courtyard of the New School in the 12th district. A large audience attended the school ceremony. The dance show consists of a group of young girls wearing light-colored, light-material dresses with a flower wreath on their heads. The fabric and tailoring of the dress allow for easy movement. The details of the performance, the dances, the movements, the story were often made by the children. Here we can see examples of something similar.



Figure 4. Fortepan code: 85044

During the performances, the students learned more informal dances, made costumes, and often displayed details related to their studies and historical events. The plays were also important for language learning since they were then able to practice their language skills. The fourth image depicts the characters in a play. The photograph taken in 1923 is significantly different from the 1930s and 1940s. Although the characters wear costumes, their hairstyle is a fitting reflection of the time's feminine ideation, which has sparked a fierce debate in the era's social discourse. The actors wear a swinging dress made of light-colored, very light fabric, which is pulled at the waist in some cases. On their heads, there is a flower wreath. In plays like this, students had the opportunity to step out of conventions and move freely, dance, and play more informally. In the 1920s, women's situation changed a lot, emancipation efforts reached within the school institution walls, and the effect of this can best be observed in dances and plays through photographs. This can be seen from the fact that in the early 1900s, many more pictures of traditional dance appeared, while later, in the 1930s, more and more photographs of plays and modern reform dances were included in school bulletins and school albums. The dances gave the girls hold and a sophisticated movement, which helped develop the age's attractive body image. The dance occasions were ritual events in the girls' lives, at which point they could step out of their roles and become ladies looking for a partner.



Figure 5. Fortepan code: 94067

Learning dances has become central to the upbringing of girls. Moreover, the presentation of traditional folk dances was not limited to performances only. The above picture was taken in 1938 in Budapest, in the courtyard of the Royal Hungarian College of Physical Education. The girls entertain the participants during a break in a sporting event. They present a traditional women's folk dance, thus strengthening national consciousness and belonging to the community. Dancing outdoors gives a more informal effect to otherwise regulated traditional dances. For a long time, sporting events were accessible exclusively to men because they believed women could not participate in such events. Then, at the turn of the century, sports facilities were expanded for ladies. Furthermore, the ever-expanding possibilities have created opportunities for students to find the right way to move.

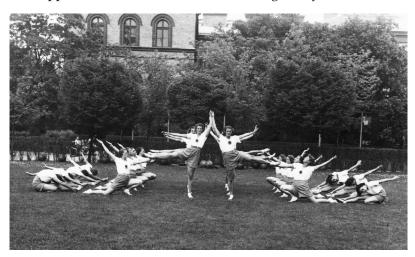


Figure 6. Fortepan code: 94074

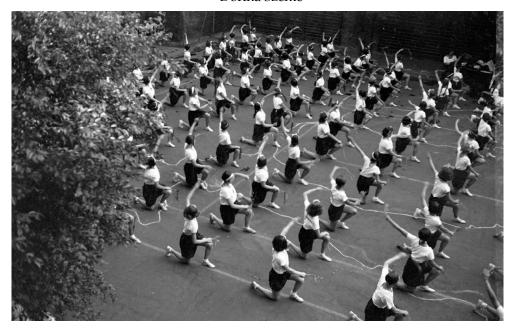


Figure 7. Fortepan code: 74917

Floor gymnastics was one of the first allowed forms of exercise for women because it was not considered dangerous, and the movements allowed them to express their feminine, light nature. This is evidenced by contemporary journals and school bulletins, which detailed possible forms of physical education. One of the great efforts of the body culture movements was to make critics understand that the female body, although different in its anatomy from that of a man, will be strong and persistent in movement. Different sports shape the body and the spirit, thereby allowing the girls to be even more persistent, their concentration improves. The body of a strong, independent Hungarian woman is healthy and athletic. As a result, floor exercises were complemented by tennis, swimming, basketball, ice skating, and many other sports considered safe for the ladies. The above two pictures also show gymnastic exercises as well as gymnastics movements. Both images were taken in 1938 and show a special stiffened, set state. The first image shows the school's gymnastics team, who regularly attend competitions to test themselves and their knowledge. The moves are very talkative. At the same time, they radiate light femininity, flexibility but also strength and aspiration. Images of floor exercises always carry this dichotomy, which symbolizes women's aspirations in the era's social conditions. Floor gymnastics has become a form of movement that allows women to show their feminine traits and the ancient power with which they struggle unbroken to have the same opportunities in society as their male counterparts. The militant nature of nation-building is illustrated in the second image, in which the students can be seen in the same posture, in a semi-kneeling position, with a ribboned wand in their hands. The image is strong in symbols. Girls' symbolic posture represents femininity, a strong, confident image of a woman, and victory, togetherness, and aspiration.

The main objective of the era was patriotic education, which in the photographs was the formation of a disciplined body, the militant posture.

6. SUMMARY, OUTLOOK

Rituals are rules-driven activities of a symbolic nature that direct participants' attention to thoughts and feelings they consider particularly important. These are formalized actions, repetitive in nature, not only out of momentary inner agitation but also with the aim of instability to create feelings. Their effect is not always limited to ritual occasions, although it usually occurs in special places and times. Their repetition automatically refers to continuity with the past.

School rituals are most easily observed by celebrations. On a deeper level, the rituals of everyday life related to eating, behavior, learning, communication can be connected here. On the one hand, school rituals' role is to create the rhythm of everyday life, to maintain safety and discipline.

They are forging individuals into a community, flying a flag. Everyday rituals help students cope with crises and transitions, and school celebrations crown the sense of community, lift those present from the everyday profane space, and create sacral space and time. The turn of the century was also special in this respect because the institutional upbringing of women was constantly transformed, for which the social and economic environment, which had changed because of industrialization, was a fertile substrate. The emergence of counterculture movements has exacerbated the need for change, which has infiltrated the school's institution undetected.

The war years of the first half of the 20th century sometimes hindered the period's emancipation processes, but the reforms, in an unbroken way, found the channels through which they could consolidate their new views.

Through dances taught in schools and following their changes, changes in society can be well tracked. The presence of traditional and modern dances in schools has helped to cope with temporary conditions due to the pupils' age. The purpose of the dances was to bring joy, to make the audience forget about the current problems. The physical ideal reforms of the era, which affected clothing, fashion, art, dances, sports, had an impact on science, philosophy, and pedagogy. In this research, I examined the specific manifestations of ritual phenomena for which the *Fortepan* visual database can provide many new additions.

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Figures

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