Five holograph diaries, each wrapped in brown paper with the title written on the front wrapper. First two diaries 7 x 5 inches, third diary 8-1/4 x 6-3/4 inches, fourth and fifth diaries 10-1/2 x 8-1/4 inches. 190pp, 368pp, 233pp, 120pp, 42pp respectively (counting used pages only): approximately 115,000 words. Text primarily in Hungarian with occasional German and English passages and/or words. Chipping, short tears, and tape reinforcement to paper wrappers; tape reinforcement to some hinges; few gutter breaks to first diary, although binding still holding. Overall, very good condition.

Also includes a later edition of her book describing these travels, Rejtelmes Kelet: Egy Magyar Leány Utazása Indiában, Sziámban, Jáva Szigetén, Kinában, Japánban, Koreában, Mancsukóban ([Budapest]: Singer és Wolfner, [n. d.], circa 1943); the first edition was issued in 1937. Illustrated paper-covered cloth binding. Black and white plates. Tears and wear to paper joints; toning to leaves; few scattered gutter breaks. Good. With approximately 100 medium format negatives and sixty photographs from Ceylon, India, Sudan, Egypt and other locations, and two additional letters, one of ten pages written to her future husband Jack Gardiner.

[Click on Title for Additional Images]
Julianna Geszty was a multilingual author and traveler from Budapest, who embarked on a remarkable series of travels through various countries in Asia in the 1930s, connecting with local politicians and luminaries and observing local culture. She would publish a book on her travels, *Rejtelmes Kelet: Egy Magyar Leány Utazása Indiában, Sziámban, Jáva Szigetén, Kínában, Japánban, Koreában, Mancsukóban* (roughly translated as *Mysterious East: Travels of a Hungarian Girl in India, Siam, Java Island, China, Japan, Korea, Manchukuo*), in 1937. The book was well-received, leading to a reprint six years later. Geszty was a trained chemist who had studied at the University of Berlin. Following her travels, she married the American diplomat John Pennington Gardiner, who she met while traveling in China in 1934. The two would marry in Budapest, with Geszty eventually moving with Gardiner back to Massachusetts, where she would lead Hungarian relief efforts in Massachusetts in the 1950s and become president of the Boston Author’s Club. She was the first Hungarian woman to travel in Manchukuo, and gained fame throughout Hungary for her prolific travels during the period.

Offered here are Geszty’s original diaries from these travels, comprising over 950 pages of detailed descriptions, approximately five times as much material as would end up in her book as well as approximately 180 photographs taken on her travels. Geszty’s observations of the cultures of the countries she visited are incisive and at times inflammatory, offering an unfiltered view of the daily lives of women and the local customs. They are valuable as a document of cultural exchange, as a record of a remarkable accomplishment of will and intelligence in an era when few women and perhaps nearly no Hungarian women visited these countries, and for the rich detail provided on each place she visits, in particular the highly detailed accounts of her receptions in the various countries she visits.
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Julianna Geszty Diaries, 1933–1935.

The broad shape of her travels is as follows: in 1933, she leaves Hungary, traveling through Italy, Greece, Egypt, Palestine and Djibouti to India, where she spends a month, before continuing to Burma, returning to India, and leaving again for Ceylon, Djibouti and Sudan, making her way back to Hungary in May. In 1934, she sets off again, this time for a longer period, the second trip repeating some stops. She begins in Hungary, travels through Serbia and Italy then by boat to Greece, Palestine, Ceylon, Siam, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, The Philippines, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan and Monchukuo, then back to China, where she spends several months before continuing to Singapore, Siam, Cambodia, Ceylon, Sudan, and then on her way home, Egypt and Italy. The second trip lasts over a year, and her extended stay in China may have had to do with her involvement with Gardiner, as the two meet frequently during the trip.

As a group, the journals are a valuable primary source for scholars studying the experience of women or foreign travel correspondents in Asia and Africa during the 1930s. Several other interesting themes emerge in Geszty’s records of her travels: the meeting of ‘east’ and ‘west’ – a theme made more poignant by her education in Germany and eventual marriage to an American, as well as the relationship between Hungary and cultures to the east; for example, she refers to Burma as “the real east” in contrast with India, and often references literary works such as “1001 Nights” with a romantic interest in ‘the east.” The political infrastructure of the British and Dutch empires in their final decades is on full display in her writings, as she travels with the blessings of the colonial governments. In her first trip to India, Geszty gives detailed accounts of the British colonial apparatus, and as a guest of the British state, she is directed through India by various British colonial officials. She writes: “I arrived in India and stayed at the Taj Mahal hotel from where I went to Mr. Shepeard and Mr. Low editor-in-chief. Mr. Carpenter, director general of Indian railways organized my further journey in India. I had lunch with Mr. Peter Pazze who told me that Miss Row stands by Gandhi’s side as a revolutionary. Since I was under English patronage in India I broke off all contact with Miss Row.”

Perhaps most illuminating, and uncommon considering the difficulties for female journalists traveling in Asia and Africa during this period, is the attention given to the plight of women in the countries she visits. Her status as a female author gives her an uncommon perspective in certain cases where the local cultures prohibit the mixing of genders. In India, she encounters “women behind bars,” which prompts her to ask the question, “Where is the modernism of the twentieth century?” In the Philippines in 1934, she observes, “...we went to the homes of the Igrotok. The men were lying close together on benches, one on each floor. ...the women live in the house opposite. They are shy and hid their faces when we arrived. ...there are real test marriages among the Igrotok. If a man is not suitable for a woman, they can divorce without commitment and look for another partner. It’s almost 20th-century morality.”

Geszty’s encounters provide a detailed blueprint of the journalistic, diplomatic and political circles in each country she visits. She also meets several cultural luminaries: In Calcutta, she meets Rabindranath Tagore,
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Julianna Geszty Diaries, 1933–1935.

“who spoke about the spiritual connection between Hindus and Hungarians... it was a pleasant visit and he was a kind and warm-hearted person.” She also meets Abanindranath Tagore on the same visit. There are many observations of the local people and culture that illuminate the lack of familiarity between the cultures at this point. She describes a Chinese jeweler, for example, as, “a person of immense wealth, who lives simply, like a down-to-earth kulli. He's got every penny in his pocket. His wife and children were taken away by bandits, ... released at a price. The jeweler left his family among the bandits for a long time, and only after much deliberation did he pay. His wife has suffered from heart spasms ever since. A typical Chinese character.”

Although there is much on current events, including several harbingers of events to come - a bombing on a train in China, the announcement of a murder by the Nazis, the “idolization” of Mussolini in Italy, and so on - Geszty doesn't make any overt commentary on fascism and Nazism. Given the events in Hungary at the time, this is a notable omission, and could be for several reasons. It is possible that she was wary of having her diaries confiscated; that she was instructed to be apolitical in her reportage, so as to avoid any trouble for the news outlet that she was working for; or that she was simply apolitical. Her connection and eventual marriage to Gardiner may point to the latter, given the efforts by the United States during the period to remain neutral. So Geszty and Gardiner may have found common ground on that point. When she first meets Gardiner, she writes: “Jack Gardiner is a fine man. He's witty, smart, interesting, and a man of opportunity. He went to Harvard University in Boston. We had a great time. We talked for a long time. Our thoughts were the same. Sometimes life is very good!” Nevertheless, Geszty was almost certainly not a Nazi/fascist sympathizer: if she was, it's much more likely that she would've praised the rise of fascism she saw on her travels, especially because there would have been no repercussions even if her diaries were read.

Overall, Geszty's journals provide a richly detailed document of one woman's remarkable experiences as she travels through Asia during the interwar period. We have a full summary of the journals, with additional quotes, available on request.

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