

THE INSTITUTIONAL APPLICATION OF FOLKLORE IN HUNGARY

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1.

Power holders (state, clergy, elite interest groups), in their drive for power and dominance, have always used and manipulated folklore (understood here as the unsophisticated and spontaneous art of the rural people, "peasants") to serve, propagate and enforce their diverse purposes. Prior to scholarly interest in folklore, sources document that oppressive institutions were aware of the value of folklore as an ideological weapon and routinely developed methods of application to help further their cause and effectively soften the harshness of their measures and ordinances.

Among the oldest and most successful manipulators was the Christian Church which established its ideology, behavioral pattern, and practice of worship. It created a balanced dichotomy between everyday and holiday, work and celebration, and divided the year according to sacred seasons modeled after the existing system of pre-Christian folk religion. The Church did not destroy earlier beliefs and worship systems, but accommodated them by reinterpretation and reconciliation of the old and the new. Over the centuries the clergy authoritatively maintained equilibrium between traditional and innovative elements, thus creating a homogenized ideological platform for public worship. While the cult of saints at shrines (built on the sites of earlier devotion) and mystery plays were encouraged, the recurrence of their traditional elements was suppressed and condemned as "paganry" in synodal decrees. In its effort to educate and control the masses, members of the clergy acquired a broad knowledge of folklore through active observation and the collection of materials. Tales, anecdotes, legends, magic acts and experience stories were incorporated into sermons with appended moral conclusions and warnings in order to produce ideological homogeneity. While condemning secular songs, dances, music, and mummery in animal masks, Hungarian clerics acknowledged the aesthetic beauty of poetic expression in love-songs, as "pearls in manure". Fighting both the ancient remains of feminine divinity cults and heresy that threatened the hegemony of the Church, scholasts established the concept of witchcraft and devil possession and set the stage for the persecution of witches. Both the famous *Malleus Maleficarum*, guidebook and canon of witch trials, and the illustrative protocols of confessions contain elements of folk belief, the practice of folk magic and medicine, and legend narratives. Following authoritative doctrinal manipulation and alteration, these case reports were returned to the folk masses and are still present, among both the rural and urban populations, as the essential repertoire of supernatural tradition.

During the feudal period in Hungary, secular powers also depended on the ideological control of common people by the dominant church on the basis of the *cujus regio eius religio principle*. But in more practical matters, such as the recruitment of soldiers for the army or when competing political factions wished to attract mass support for their claims to power, folklore manipulation was employed (Pesovár-Dobos, 525–26). From the time the regular Hungarian army was established in 1715, attractive young officers appeared at fairs, *kermises*, and other popular gatherings in their showy military attire to promote the heroic image of the soldier. They invited young men for drinks in the pub and challenged them to join in dance competitions. Musicians struck up an enticing old tune and the unsuspecting recruits, intoxicated and enraptured by the fiery rhythms and the virtuoso dance, were easily lured into wearing the shako and saber which symbolized accepting the military life.

My study of historic and soldiers' songs resulted in the identification of two distinct categories expressing contradictory sentiments (Dégh-Katona-Péter, 1952). One consisted of lamentations about the suffering of unwilling, homesick recruits who were in the barracks, far away from home, mother, and sweetheart, in fear of death on the battlefield. The other expressed the pride and joy of being a soldier, serving to the last and dying happily for king and fatherland. In these latter songs the soldier's virtue is true manliness: idol of women; protector of the weak, carefree carouser, virtuoso dancer, master of weaponry and irreconcilable fiend of the enemy.

My sources revealed the origin of this second category of folksongs and the situations in which they were implemented for ideological reinforcement by military authorities. Army officers ordered the singing of these songs, particularly when marching, to lift the spirits of the enlistees. Although these songs followed traditional formulas and made to fit popular tunes, slight changes brought them up-to-date by substituting the names of the ruler, war hero, enemy, time and location of the battle. During the last 250 years of Hungarian history, identical songs consistently have been varied and manipulated by the government to fit the current military operation.¹ Communal singing by command was complemented by widely publicized printed song books up to World War II and even later during recruitment for the new People's Army.

It is well known that the most popular folk melodies often served as empty vehicles for political messages propagated by aspiring interest groups. One classic example is the Kossuth-song (Dégh, 1952; Ortutay, 1952; Katona, 1980), often referred to as the Hungarian Marseillaise; the most popular version was sung in the fall of 1848 in connection with Kossuth's recruitment tour and was distributed soon afterwards in print. Its origin is obscure. Some trace it to an eighteenth century semi-folk recruitment song, others to a nonpolitical love song. Nevertheless, the 600 variants of folk and nonfolk inspiration were liberally disseminated and adjusted to address crucial issues during the War of Independence for the purpose of changing political interests. As pioneering Hungarian folklore scholar Lajos Kálmány observed in the 1880s, "The historian must consider our soldier and patriotic songs to acquaint himself with the folk evaluation of a given epoch." The folk, indeed, can become a dependable sounding-board of contemporary political issues.

The Kossuth-song became the symbol of struggle for national independence after the defeat and continued as a symbol during the years of Austria's bureaucratic suppression. Even the singing of the song was considered an act of subversion. To avoid being accused of conspiracy, only the tune was hummed and neutral or nonsensical words were substituted in the text, such as:

The big calendar of Gyula Müller
Edited by István Friebejusz
Typography by Gustav Emich
in eighteen-fifty-four.

The Kossuth-song was among the most popular melodies utilized by canvassers in the political struggles. They used it at parliamentary elections with the application of strophics, praising a political party and its nominee while denigrating the opponent. The attractiveness of the tune helped popularize candidates and rapidly folklorized the stanzas created by hired governmental or opposition party propagandists (Dégh, 1952; Katona, 1980).

2.

When folklore was discovered as the naive art of the "ignorant" folk, collection began and assimilation of materials gave rise to folkloristics as a distinct scholarly field. In fact, from the outset the discipline tried to emphasize its importance to the general public by rejecting the idea that collecting, classifying, and analyzing materials is conducted for its own sake – for mere description and interpretation. As is well known, the discipline of folklore emerged as a by-product of political aspirations in Europe, particularly in small ethnic minority groups within large and powerful empires (Dundes, 1985). Distinctive indigenous schools developed on the basis of given socio-economic conditions and reached the highest level of scholarly sophistication, while also remaining strictly nationalistically oriented. That is to say, folkloristics in essence retained its nationalist-populist-public service motivation.

Hungarian national independence and the liberation of the serfs were major factors in shaping the discipline and its peculiar mission for the national cause. (Ortutay, 1939; Horváth, Fenyő, 1976) Between 1762 and the 1850s leading members of the progressive elite appealed to "fellow patriots" to collect folklore and to retrieve and preserve relics of original national traditions lost over the centuries but which were still discernible among the folk. During this period patriotic sentiments were expressed to this effect. One author declared that "The first national culture evolved from the songs of the folk under the most difficult conditions" and that "these are the first flowers of early national life worthy of appreciation." Another asserted that "It is within the public interest to gather these songs" which are "treasures of national value". The same author added "there were poets in the past and there are still some who make folksongs which filter down to the folk..." And finally, Fenyő summarized, "Songs are sung by

the common folk, or people in low ranks, to rejoice at social gatherings or pastimes". (Fenyő, 126–271)

The patriots (educators, clergymen, public servants, authors and scholars) responded enthusiastically to the call and turned their concern with the folk and their poetry into a cultural movement in the service of national unity: the creation of a unified national literature on the basis of folklore. Thus literary populism² in Hungary meant active inclusion in literary works of themes, stylistic expression, aesthetic norms and ideology of the lower classes. The extremely flamboyant political utilization of folklore was expressed by the revolutionary poet Sándor Petőfi, whose poetic application of folklore to sacrificial death on the battlefield became the ultimate expression of national heroism. He wrote the following in a letter to poet János Arany on February 4, 1847:

No matter what, folk poetry is the real poetry. Let us make it dominant. If the folk will rule in poetry, it will also come close to rule in politics. This is the task of the century, to fight for which is the desire of all noble souls who have seen the martyred millions while a few thousands idled and enjoyed life.

No wonder the conscious political utilization of folklore by nineteenth century populists, who were the most respected, and worshipped, poets and statesmen of the most glorious epoch of Hungarian history, is often mentioned by contemporary state ideologists. It is they who made the effort to legitimize their cultural policy and further the involvement of a unified socialist art. (Révai, 1948)

3.

The classic epoch of interest in folklore already possessed the attributes that became increasingly characteristic in later epochs – stabilization of ideas in the development of the discipline of folklore and exploitation by the arts, literature, and public education. As in the beginning, these remain inseparably intertwined and interdependent. Although the nature and intensity of the relationship varies according to needs and governmental ideologies, none can be understood without the other. If, as Dundes suggested, a national inferiority complex triggered scholarly study and "fakelore" (manipulation of folklore) (Dundes, 1984) from the outset and led to the establishment of a distinctive national identity, then it can be illustrated in Hungarian history. The changing tendencies in these processes can be divided according to the following historic periods: the millennial celebration; the interwar period of rising consciousness; and the rapid beginning with the 1949 turning point in Marxist–Leninist cultural politicalization and indoctrination.

Folklore theory, research methods and orientation during the period from the 1880s onward developed to service national causes and made its impact on the presentation and manipulation of materials; thus, it also shaped public appreciation of folklore. In the beginning, Hungarian folklorists' primary duty was to compile and publish a body

of materials "before it is too late and will be devoured by civilization". In the spirit of the Grimmian principle, they selectively chose representative pieces which were aesthetically pleasing and edited the texts to restore the original perfection of an anonymous folk and eliminated the awkwardness of individual informants. The texts thus presented were not only useful for artistic delight, but also adequate for comparative diffusional text analysis – the first scientific approach to folklore. When interest changed and ethnographic accuracy became a *sine qua non* in research, complementary information to illuminate the text became more important. Community studies focused on the life of folklore genres in villages with regard to individual artists and the creative process. Yet, the focus remained on archaic peasant life, folklore items and their survival in modern post-peasant times. Holistic descriptions, observations, and scrupulous recordings of all the events were required. Public service (presentation of aesthetically pleasing pieces for artistic use and consumption as a goal) kept Hungarian folklorists eclectic. They differentiated between original, pure peasant folklore and folklore corrupted and contaminated by folk-alien, rootless urban elements, destructive of tradition.

Folklorists' attitude toward folklore – both discipline and subject – characteristically differs from the attitude representative of other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Folklorists are natively (or by choice) involved with and committed to their subjects; they join in a give- and -take relationship perpetuating the flow of folkloric interchange. Thus folklorists increasingly broaden their commitment "to the benefit of the folk" while feeling that urbanization, step-by-step, drives nations to cosmopolitanism. If not always directly or consciously, folklorists make their materials accessible to professional mediators in various fields. For example, during the last century a large number of folktales, compiled, edited and annotated by expert folklorists for children, resulted in authoritative implementation and redistribution of tradition. This kind of utilitarian dissemination of archaic folklore materials by folklorists, however, was complemented in even more pervasive fields: by professional mediators such as artists, writers, politicians, educators, social workers, museologists, commercial agents, cultural program coordinators and center directors. Folklore's attractiveness as a recreational and nostalgic form of mass entertainment makes it flexible and adaptable to the general public. Organized groups of lay people or professionals can occasionally engage in dancing, singing, and playing folk games as a form of diversion. The academic, applied and recreational mass-use and manipulation of folklore (taken from print, oral, written or electronic media sources), insures the feedback of folklore to the folk for screening, regeneration and perpetuation. This circulation between scholars, appliers, laypeople, creators, peddlers and consumers, elite and the folk, is continuous and interdependent. Thus "pure", "original", "genuine" folklore and "fakelore" (Dorson, 1969) – the phenomenon defined in processual, functional terms as "folklorism" by Hungarian scholars (Verebélyi, 1981) – cannot be isolated and separated from each other. They are interdependent, natural companions in perpetual flux and need to be observed together as a folklore process, an entity in itself.

4.

By the turn of the century literary populism, aimed at the nationalization of oral prose and verse forms, was complemented by a new interest in folk arts and crafts. Architects, interior designers, sculptors, painters and industrial artists borrowed styles and decorative elements from peasant households. The educated urban and provincial middle class introduced peasant or peasant-inspired textiles, furniture, and pottery into their fashionable homes and displayed their patriotic commitment by wearing folk-style national costumes made by fashion designers. A new architectural style, rich in peasant decoration, was evident on important public buildings in Budapest and other urban cities (Kresz, 1952). By the time the Millennium of the Hungarian nation was celebrated in 1896, artistic populism was complete. This period became a landmark permeated with a feeling of national rejuvenation: a new beginning for a second millennium. As a focus of attraction, professional ethnographers erected an ethnographic village in the large Municipal Park of Budapest consisting of twenty-four fully furnished peasant houses representing the country's most colorful artistic material products. Nevertheless, the real attraction was the choreographed performance of village dancers and the spectacular costume parade of peasants. The display attracted the young Bartók and Kodály and persuaded them to visit villages in order to put together a basic resource of archaic peasant melodies for a new national music to be created by professional composers. Deeply committed to the tradition of 1848, the young Bartók composed his *Kossuth Symphony*. At the first performance he appeared on stage in self-styled national costume. Disappointed by the way Brahms and Liszt applied pseudo-folk music created by the Hungarian provincial elite, Bartók offered his services both as scholar and composer to "the good of the Hungarian nation". As critic A. Kern noted in 1910, Bartók and Kodály "were convinced that the roots of Hungarian music are in the very deep, hidden, unadulterated singing and music-making of the folk... The one with turanian power and passion. Once, hundreds of years ago, this must have been the tone of all our music." (Bartók *Breviarium*). The principle to exclude the new style and adapt archaic music which was discernible from the contemporaneous peasant repertoire made the Bartók-Kodály movement appealing to the young urban elite who, from the early 1930s, carried the torch of populism in Hungary (Dégh, 1987).

The folk movement resurged periodically between the two wars in relation to important political issues and conflicts created by social inequity, peasant poverty, territorial loss, urbanization and industrialization.

In addition to the musical revolution of Bartók and Kodály and their disciples, one of the most notable attempts to propagate the peasant folk was the creation of the *Pearl Bouquet*. This annually staged, government-supported show of organized song and dance ensembles introduced urban audiences to customs from more than 100 villages. Local grade school teachers were organizers and coaches and also participants in the performance of the partly-existing, partly-reconstructed dances and songs of their villages. The cheering audience was instrumental in supporting and propagating the revival and reassertion of the old customs of performing villagers, and of folklore in ge-

neral. Marxist culture politicians of the 1950s harshly criticized the Pearl Bouquet as "lacking in principles, exploitive, and serving the interests of the bourgeoisie". (Kresz, 1952) Lately, however, there were more positive and appreciative opinions of the pioneering role of the enterprise (Andrásfalvy, 1978).

While the Pearl Bouquet and the folksong movement of Bartók and Kodály succeeded in introducing peasant art as a superior manifestation of Hungarian folklore and the folk as carriers of significant features of national character, writers and scholars, driven by social conscience, visited villages and gave accounts of peasant misery in shocking colors. The contradiction between the public worship of folk art and the abuse of the folk was depicted in scholarly and journalistic sociographies, ethnographies, novels, and poetry, often by new authors of peasant extraction. The populists, in opposition to the government, formed their political faction often challenging the system and facing prosecution. They saw their mission as propagating the rejuvenation of the nation by returning to its true value; folk tradition as the basis for a unified educational system.

In his pamphlet, *Folk Tradition and National Education* (1939) István Györffy, founder of the Hungarian ethnography chair at the University of Budapest projected his educational policy in which ethnographic research plays a major role. Concerned with the Nazi menace in the year of Austria's annexation to Germany, he sent his proposal to the Ministry of Education. The introduction reads:

"World history events in recent times warn us to increase our national forces and unity ... the ultimate and greatest resource of Hungarian society is the Hungarian folk ... spiritual unity must now be expressed by the intelligentsia ... Unity can be achieved by making folk tradition the basis of national education ... (86-87) the nation does not live only in its language but also in its folk traditions. (57)

Györffy's legacy was picked up by the arbitrators of national culture (cultural politicians, folklorists, sociologists, artists and writers), who were building a new concept of public education after cleaning up the rubble of war (Ortutay, 1962).

5.

When the Ninth Division of the Red Army invaded Budapest and destroyed the occupying forces of the Third Reich (which was making its last stand in the Buda Castle), it "liberated" Hungary – the last unwilling ally of Nazi Germany. The populace, emerging from bomb shelters, encountered a new world growing out of the total destruction. Heaps of bodies, both soldiers and civilians, lined the streets and thoroughfares amidst the rubble of what was the capital city. The traffic of vehicles plowing through the remains of humans and buildings was vigorously controlled at crossings by female soldiers and the pulsating polyphonic singing of marching soldiers filled the air. Signs of life and a promise of a new start appeared in bright red: flags, five-pointed stars, symbols and hastily put-up posters appeared on damaged buildings, conceal-

ing bullet holes. Members of the newly formed civilian militia sported red armbands on their shabby winter coats. Slogans were inscribed on the red decorations surrounded by victory signs declaring the defeat of the enemy: "Hail to the Heroes, The Glorious Soviet Army and its Great Leader, Comrade Stalin", "Death and Eternal Damnation to the Enemy of the People, the Fascist Villains", "Proletarians of the World Unite, Down with Capitalism", etc. At the center, flanked by banners and framed with gold laurel leaves, stood the portraits of Stalin and Mátyás Rákosi; Rákosi, the exiled Commissary of the 1919 Hungarian-Soviet Republic, returned to become the General Secretary of the new Communist Party. There were also pictures of other exiled Moscovite politicians who came with Rákosi to help lay down the foundations of the new Marxist government and the leadership of the Party.

For Hungarians, this was their first encounter with the joyous future-oriented, optimistic but uncompromisingly combative and purposeful communist demeanor, which was expressed in terms of celebratory public display of heroic images, signs, symbols, and slogans as a complex hierarchy of meanings (Armstrong, 1952, 327-46). At the time, Hungarians could not yet read the message of the spectacle and its details. However, the first celebration of May Day soon set the pattern of ritualized patriotic festivities. Floats and pageants signified actual political statements. The happily cheering marchers carried banners and portraits of champions of the Party. From the platform the leaders waved to the crowd, which then dispersed for picnicking and playing celebration of the worldwide unity of the working class (Voigt, 1981, 38-40).

Ritualizing the form and standardizing the contents of additional patriotic festivities continued:

March 15 (1948/49 War of Independence)

April 4 (The Liberation of 1945);

August 20 (originally honoring Saint Stephen, Hungary's first king, first converted into the Feast of the New Bread and later to the Day of the Constitution);

November 7 (The Great October Revolution).

The program of these festivals followed similar guidelines and became important vehicles of indoctrination by annual repetition. Simultaneously essential bureaucratic changes were carried out: nationalization of private business, mines, factories, banks and estates; dividing large estates for redistribution among landless agricultural workers; and the assumption of government dominance over competing political parties. By 1949 the Communist Party rose to power. This year was the turning point when the cultural revolution was declared. It meant the beginning of indoctrination of the masses into a new symbol system and a new etiquette of behavior. Through the indicated public forms, mass indoctrination began on all levels. No political system before demanded the total involvement of the citizenry in daily politics and concerted reaction to events on the basis of an established ideology such as the Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Historical materialism, the scientific basis of the new system was dispensed through formal education, whereas private life (work, recreation) had to be profoundly politized. Slogans multiplied and became usable formulas, sayings, and proverbial phra-

ses, when applied to important issues: "Yours is the factory, you build it yourself", "Learn better to be worth more – Produce more to live better". These examples illustrate the relationship between folk sayings and actual issues.

"In the midst of our work and (class) struggle, we have to take note of sayings which originate in factories, cooperative farms, construction sites, machine stations, among members of the army, and young writers... "in the epoch of the building of socialism the ability of the folk to create sayings is improving. Several of the combative slogans of the Hungarian Worker's Party and M. Rákosi became known as proverbs among the entire folk (Békés, 1952).

This does not come as a surprise:

Like Lenin and Stalin, their best Hungarian disciple, Comrade Rákosi also uses proverbs as effective weapons ... this method of application of folk sayings embodies a lesson and a priceless example for writers and folk educators.

(Ibid.)

These excerpts suggest that the spectacular and appealing means which bear the semblance of folklore, or are authentic folklore, serve well in mass education, helping transform people's moral values, world view, social and working relationships. The aim of education was the creation of a new "socialist man" – the "communalist man" – a kind of superman devoted to and capable of creating a new egalitarian socialist state.

Socialist transformation in Hungary followed the Soviet model as exemplified by the subsequent periods of the Soviet Epoch from 1917. Concurrent with the restructuring of the economy, industrialization and farm mechanization, was the campaign of ideological enlightenment. War was declared on internal and external foes: revolutionary vigilance was encouraged to fight against the remains of the bourgeoisie (the class-enemy) and the infiltration of hostile ideologies from capitalist-imperialist environments. Under the leadership of the working people (alliance of workers and peasants), and endowed with the most advanced theory, the building of socialism was to begin.

According to Marxist doctrine:

The basis of society is its economic structure: the summary of production relationships in the given period of social progress. The economic base ultimately is determined by the development of forces of production. The superstructure mirroring the base is the sum total of corresponding political, legal, artistic, religious, ethical and philosophical views and their pertaining institutions and organizations; the most powerful among them being the state. In this relationship economic basis is primary and decisive, while the superstructure also plays an active role in the life of society. It reacts to the basis, siding or blocking progress. The superstructure of socialist society has particular significance because it plays a major role in the building of the economic base of socialism already in its transitory period.

(Új Magyar Lexikon 1,57).

Furthermore:

Social consciousness of individuals is basically determined by their class-adherence, life conditions, activities, and goals. It is however, not attached to given social existence. Previous forms of consciousness may be carried over and aid, retard or block the progress of social existence.

(Ibid. 317).

Guided by these principles, the formation of the superstructure as well as class struggle becomes a matter of paramount importance. Therefore, special attention is paid to the ideological domain: the social sciences and humanities as vehicles of ideological messages. The Soviet example was instructive in showing how struggle for ideological purity has been a Leitmotif in the subsequent phases of history (Tokariev, 1951), helping strengthen the accomplishments of the October Revolution, building the union of working people, defeating fascism in the Great Patriotic War. The Communist Party initiated ideological purification, criticizing deviation from true Marxism and socialist patriotism and attraction to bourgeois ideas. These ideas represent pessimism, decadence, belittling of the leadership of the working people, misinterpretation of national heroes, and falsification of history.

During the Stalin era (from 1946), particularly during the sharpening of the class struggle, cultural politician A. A. Zhdanov launched his attack on cultural life (Oinas, 1973, 53–54). He introduced public criticism of deviant scholars and artists, ending in self-criticism and repentance for making mistakes. The Party, and Stalin himself, acted as absolute authority in setting artistic and scientific trends. Stalin's *Marxism and Linguistics*, for example, attacks N. J. Marr's theory that language has class-character and belongs to the superstructure. Stalin's statement that "language is a vehicle of communication" had to be evaluated by all scholarly fields of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in order to propose ways of applying his ideas to respective fields of knowledge (Marr-vita, 1950). No wonder that under this patronage system, submission and humility were the expected attitudes of scholars.

In 1949 Rákosi declared that Hungarians were behind in the political clarification of culture: "It is time we create a new and clear situation through honest and sincere criticism and self-criticism." (Rákosi, 1945. 368) In his programmatic address in 1949, the President of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society echoed Rákosi's suggestion:

It is true that the development of Hungarian ethnography was uneven. We tried to internalize Marxist-Leninist ideology but experienced intermittent relapses and grave errors... We must face our mistakes openly, with unyielding self-criticism.

More importantly, inspired by Stalin's definition of culture of the socialist era as being national in form and socialist in content, the president elucidated the tasks awaiting the folklore scholar:

Collection and analysis of present day folklore will decisively realize the traditionality and the generative nature of culture. This is how the discipline will fulfill its mission and furnish ideological guidance and practically applicable materials, in terms of the dialectical relationship of tradition and progress and the political conception of the worker-peasant alliance...

Furthermore:

The discipline of folklore has to supply properly interpreted materials for the diverse sectors of Hungarian mass movements, so that the features of our national character should permeate the new socialist content of culture (Ortutay, 1949, 20-21).

Thus, the atmosphere was prepared to launch a new style utilitarian exploitation of folklore. It was assumed that at this early stage of forming the foundation of socialism, and that the economic transformation was so overwhelming it would precipitate immediate new folklore as part of the superstructure, expressing the feeling of gratitude and loyalty of the people.

Ideologists, concerned with the evolution of socialist culture free of class-conflicts and biases, reached back to the legacy of pioneer nationalists. Identification with the heroic past was often ascertained by politicians. "We are the lawful heirs and direct successors of all that was viable and future oriented in our millennial history", said Rákosi, and his words alerted folklorists to distinguish between progressive (useful) and retrograde (harmful) traditions. And he continued. "The future of the Hungarian people is bright. It is our historic mission to pursue the aims of the heroes of 1848, Kossuth, Petőfi, and Táncsics" (1945). Rákosi also explicitly suggested cultivation of the heroic tradition: "Now that we regained national independence, it is time more than ever to reach back to Hunyadi, Rákóczi, Kossuth, and Petőfi's stimulating traditions." Party ideologist Révai (1948) makes direct reference to legitimization: "A hundred years ago national independence and liberation of the folk were united and made a program for the century. Now, for the first time, working masses became leaders of social and national causes as they acquired political leadership of the country."

Once the link to past heroism and patriotism was found, it became the task of folklorists to collect new material from the folk and keep it alive among them. Folklore, defined as "a specific form of social consciousness which mirrors reality in artistic images" puts the folklorist to task. According to Istvánovics (1962), collectivity is an essential feature of folklore and mirrors concepts common to all working people as they develop in history with the growing awareness of class struggle. In socialist society collectivity means the ethical and political unity of the folk. The evident task is to do fieldwork in cities and villages, agricultural and industrial workplaces, and gather the body of evolving new folklore. Folklorists and creators of new folklore must work hand-in-hand to act as agitators for the realization of socialism (Sokolov, 141).

The establishment of the Ministry of Folk Education in 1950 marked the beginning of organized, public indoctrination of the masses through folklore and its derivatives. The cultural revolution took steps to fill a new need - "folksong, play, and art became an everyday diversion for the working people in the city and country and an inexhaustible resource for literature and arts..." (Ethn. 1952. 1-8). Through the Folk Art Institute (1951) and the Folk-and-Home Industry, Inc., the folk arts (a selected body of progressive folk traditions which mirror the reality of the folk) became the cooperative product of the folklorist, the folk, and the art expert. This relationship has al-

tered over a period of more than three decades. Trends in folklore, folklorization, and defolklorization that were developed further through agencies and individuals were serving purposes that were more practical and commercial than ideological. However, the network of folk-based professional and lay art was kept under ideological control.

In the beginning Stalinist models were followed. The Folk Art Institute was "to support and propagate the forms of folk art and to make it useful to the cultural revolution" (Kresz, 1952).

In an atmosphere of keen political vigilance, the life of common people was permeated by ideological enlightenment. Newspaper-reading circles were formed in the workplaces, to assure that people kept abreast of daily events and properly evaluated them. Ideological seminars offered instruction in Marxism and ad hoc meetings or rallies were called to respond to relevant international political issues. Consciousness raising in the interest of increased productivity, the promotion of actual programs, collectivization, the anti-clerical movement, selling government Peace Bonds, were also communicated through artistic means (books, movie and theater productions). If novels and dramas could depict the everyday life of workers in the vanguard, why would it not be possible to show how traditional folklore is modified and how new folklore, rooted in the new economic base, is created?

Soviet folklorists had already compiled a large body of materials created during the Soviet period. Eyewitnesses reminisced about their experiences during the October Revolution, the Great Patriotic War, and their encounters with war heroes and founding fathers. New epic poetry sung the praises of Lenin and Stalin, both of whom also appeared as folktale heroes. Lyric songs commented on the bravery of soldiers in the Red Army, the industry of kolkhoz peasants, miners, and factory workers – the Heroes of Socialist Labor.

In their new endeavor, Hungarian folklorists followed the ideas of Maxim Gorky expressed at the first All-Union Congress of Soviet Workers in 1934. These attested to the superiority of oral literature which can be attributed to the fact that it was created by the working people and reflected their life and work experiences. Therefore, oral literature must be collected and taught as the basis of the history of all literature and as an inalienable part of the contemporary literary movement. "Folklore is just as much a part of contemporary social life as artistic written literature." (J. Sokolov, 1941, 26.) According to Gorky, folklore "yields a great deal of material both... to poets and prose writers..." (1937, 450). The Writer's Congress was also attended by collective farmers and workers who produced "new collective farm songs" and asked for the "creative guidance" of the folklorists. Sokolov stressed the "necessity of active intervention in the process of folklore", because "the actual tasks of the contemporary workers' and collective farmers' folklore are exactly the same as the actual tasks of proletarian literature" (27). No wonder traditional folk narrators and artists were coached by folklorists not only on how to improve the style and the traditional themes, but received instruction in ideological enlightenment and were empowered to create stories inspired by current events.

When the Hungarian Folk Art Institute began sponsoring folklore fieldworkers, guidelines were set to shape the viable and most conveniently applicable "progressive traditions". Folklorists were expected to function as propagandists in assisting the improvement of existing forms of expression. For example, folkdance specialists carefully recorded customs, dances, and play-party games from older villagers and reworked them for stage presentation for a broader national audience. Thus, with the help of local educators, the foundation for the future folkdance ensemble movement was established. At that time collaborative work at state farms and village communes was a new experience in labor relations; it did not work well. In order to help consciousness-raising, cultural propagandists resorted to the use of folklore. For example, fieldworkers were asked to adjust the May-pole tradition to the new need. An attempt was made to persuade members of agricultural brigades to erect the May-tree in front of the highest producing worker's house instead of the house of their sweethearts, as was customary. In another case, inspired by the application of the traditional Russian chastushka to topical ideological themes of the Soviet epoch, Hungarian urban and rural workers' song groups (including office workers, intellectuals, students, and professors), were asked to create their own stanzas criticizing corruption and praising virtue within their own circles.

Folklore, particularly dancing, singing, and music making, soon became a general recreational activity. Specialists made their village collections accessible to the masses and thus non-peasant groups, coached by artists and folklorists, appeared in programs of festive events. As the ensemble-movement spread, groups competed with each other locally, regionally and nationally. Distinction was blurred between villagers who manipulated a selected set of their own tradition and those who lacked such tradition and synthesized several forms. The goal was to create a national folk-based style as suggested by Bartók and Kodály. In the dance field, several artists (M. Rábai, I. Molnár, E. Muharay among them) rose to fame by similar efforts that culminated in the establishment of professional state folkdance ensembles with selected artists from the ranks of talented amateur performers.

The Folk Art Institute and experts of the Folk and Handicraft Association had a somewhat different policy of organizing and retraining market-oriented traditional craftspeople. Potters, carvers, and other producers of practical objects were urged to return to traditional forms as well as adapt new symbols; village women formed their own cooperatives to weave and embroider their regional patterns on non-traditional objects for new decorative uses. Through the special stores of the Folk and Home Industry Association the popularization of art pieces was successful. Cultural centers, party and government offices, restaurants, hotels and private homes were soon filled with folk art objects. Urban and rural consumers picked colorful ashtrays, pitchers, wall plates, coverlets or pillows for their homes, without regard or awareness of regional styles. Tourist souvenir hunters, delighted by low prices, did not care for ethnographic information. The goal to make decorative folk art an "integral part of the cultural mass movement" (Kresz, 6), was achieved through the total blend (or confusion) of regional and ethnic styles. While household utensils lost their traditional value for the

peasant household, they became decorative elements and symbols of a new populism in urban homes.

Ethnographia, the journal of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society, reported an exhibition of folk artists in honor of Mátyás Rákosi's 60th birthday on May 9, 1952. The article stated that the nation owed tribute to the celebrant because under his wise guidance culture became more national in form and increasingly more socialistic in content. The evolvement of a new Hungarian folk art is also attributed to him, particularly the enormous boom in decorative folk art. (*Ethno.* 1952, 1) The exhibit included gifts made by folk artists from each village in the country. The traditional objects (textiles, pottery, carvings, beadwork, painting, sculpture, honeycake) contained inscriptions (slogans, initials, dates), symbols (flags and red stars, the new coat of arms of the People's Democracy of Hungary, etc.) to document a new period of cultural revolution.

The anonymous author of the article concludes with:

This exhibit has a significant artistic and scientific meaning. It was the first mass-based representation of our new folk art. As such, it is the faithful mirror of the artistic taste of the whole country. Despite unevenness, it is the indisputable proof of the fact that the new Hungarian folk decoration found the way to continue living amidst the folk democracy.

(Ibid, 8.)

6.

Following Stalin's death, the XX. Congress of the Soviet Communist Party condemned the personality cult characteristic of his dominance and a thawing process began. A new, less rigid cultural policy was evolving in the Communist Bloc. In Hungary relaxation of the stiff dogmatism made it possible to launch an attack against the remains of the Stalinist system and create a new form of "folk democracy".

The institutional direction of the folklore movement was broadened under the firm leadership of the Folk Art Institute. This was done on the basis of decentralization and the establishment of partnerships with regional and local agencies. The number of specialists in related fields of folk culture greatly increased as academic, as well as secondary training, was made available. New careers emerged in the domain of folk education through the foundation of museums, culture clubs, folk art centers, and libraries.

In this new era ideological clarification concerning archaic and emergent new folklore, that is, problems about the responsibility of the artists, writers, folklorists, and questions on more efficient methods of application became the ongoing subjects of intellectual exchange, debate, and controversy. Discussion often occurred at the closing sessions of artistic performances, indicating keen interest in refinement and a firm commitment to public service. "... these deliberations evidently help not only the preservation of folklore values in the most appropriate manner but also do everything to serve the interest of socialist society and public education." (V. Voigt, 1978, 1). More im-

portantly, crucial issues were often discussed in public forums, revealing the deep involvement of society. *Élet és Irodalom*, the central weekly literary magazine, published the debate over the "cultural democracy's uses and abuses of archaic and new style folksongs, old style pop songs and new beat music. Triggered by national folksong competition broadcasts via radio and television folklorists, ethnomusicologists, public sector specialists, writers, composers, and sociologists expressed their opinions, which amounted to a deep re-thinking of the "folk art renaissance" of 70s and early 80s. From February through May, 1981, 15 authors expressed their feelings. The concluding remarks of I. Vitányi, Director of the Folk Art Institute, presented an idea of the official position on the state of the arts. Vitányi's sociohistorical periodization of the folklore movement as related to social progress is worthy of attention:

This is the fourth [folk art] renaissance in the twentieth century history of our culture. (The first: the early years of the 1900s with Bartók and Kodály in the lead...; the second in the 1930s, a prelude to the democratic folk revolution; the third, during the years after the Liberation; and the fourth, now.) This listing in itself indicates that in a broader sense, we are talking about reaching back to half of the country's population were peasants and not only the existence and future of the peasant class was unsettled, but also its culture. Since then, we have become an industrial-agricultural country, but we still bear the negative impression of the peasant past in production constraints and discrimination effecting the life of the rural population. To eradicate disadvantages is a key problem to our social progress and public education. We have to find the way to organically accommodate our traditions into our public education so that they can express and prepare the way for cultural progress of the segments of the population who were left out from the autonomous institutional current of culture. (*Élet és Irodalom*, May 9, 1981, 4.)

Concern for the formation of a culture that is national in form and socialist in content continues. The folk element is still regarded as the unique expression of collective cultural identity. The goal is to unite all layers of society by sharing that common folklore (peasant) heritage, thus creating the communal socialist orientation of culture. Nevertheless, over the years the main concern with channeling and directing the folklore movement became more profuse and ramified because of the more liberal treatment of scholars, artists, and audiences. More room was given to individual and local initiative, innovation, experiments, and formation of trends and schools. There is a growing awareness of the interdependence of scholars and artists in shaping the future of folklore. Yet the platform of the previous era and the institutional control of folk arts remains the same, aiming at the same goal.

There is an important factor which characterizes the movement. The basic ideologization was carried out during the Rákosi Era, but in the memory of the older generations there were bourgeois survivals (even after 40 years) which were overshadowed by new experiences. On the other hand, today's younger generations (producers and consumers of folklore) brought up in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, have little, if any, awareness of internal class-conflict. The rural and urban – peasant, worker, intellectual – were acculturated by an integrated educational system. Their interest in folklore, particularly as a form of recreational activity (either as a performer, or as a memb-

er of the audience) is the same. Vitányi's essay in *Népszabadság*, the central daily of the Hungarian Worker's Party (January 7, 1979), explains the meaning of the emerging socialist art in clear terms:

Socialist art stands for national art but without limitations of the bourgeois concept of nation... This new culture involves the entire people and is truly collective. People turn to it not only because of its national qualities but rather because of its nature which is present in both the artistic content and the structure of public education... This new collective art, of course, can exist only in a communal society – i.e., in the socialist and especially in the communist societies – which brings the collective idea to full realization. On the other hand, the development of collective art is not only the outcome of a communal society, but the essential condition for the evolution of a communist society.

Folklore, as well as its artistic applications, became a part of general education both formally in schools and informally through regular media programs. Academic folklorists appear on prime time radio programs lecturing (Jávor–Küllős–Tátrai, 1978). Village artists perform ballads, funeral laments, magic healing ceremonies, play instrumental music or demonstrate procedures, of making art objects. TV quizzes test participants' knowledge of folklore as a discipline – its classic genres and noted performers. On the other hand, academic folklorists safeguard the application of folklore both in the works of professional and amateur ensembles and festivals; they serve as jurors in competitions and supervise commercially produced folk-art objects. Folklorists are also consultants for movies and theater plays in which folklore or ethnographic elements are used. This kind of part-time sector work, so to speak, legitimizes the manipulation of folklore by culture-club directors and festival and lay folk-ensemble organizers who are also trained in folklore.

While speaking about village ensemble work and folk manipulation of its own tradition, B. Andrásfalvy relates it to the pioneer work of E. Muharay in the 1950s. The ensembles presented spectacular celebratory events of local folklife (weddings, carnivals, seasonal rituals, and spinning-bee entertainments), garnished with dance, music and a variety of prose folklore. This tradition has been maintained and further developed by local community leaders. In tradition-bearing villages the *Pávakör* (Peacock Circle) functions as the recreational workshop for the elaborate traditional customs which the villagers enjoy. If successful, villagers present their play in regional communities and meet in competitions. The best win prizes, distinctions and invitations to perform at vacation places, retirement homes, and youth camps. Village groups who attain status develop a whole variety show program and are then bussed from place to place to perform.

Another recreational village activity is conducted by the women's embroidery and handicraft workshops. After working for hours under the guidance of a teacher, individuals enjoy personal creativity for its own sake and use the products to decorate their own homes. (Andrásfalvy, 1978, 25–27)

Over the past 15 years Hungarian folk ensembles have not only met with each other in competition; but also competed internationally with the aid of the Folk Art Institute, collaborating with other culture-political agencies, to create the Folklore Festival of the People of the Danube Valley. The reformers were mostly from socialist bloc countries. The program for the VII event in 1981 contained the statement of the late György Martin: "...this is the only festival in Hungary in which we are able to introduce the authentic forms of folklore. All other festivals are the competitions of choreographers and folkdance ensembles..."

The festivals, the gatherings of performing groups, became the scene of artistic and scientific discussions. While folklorists and art experts supervised the work of the ensembles and participated in the judgment of competing groups, they also met in sessions to discuss the question of authenticity, the folklore value of the programs, the theoretical significance of the movement known as *folklorismus* and its impact on evolving new folklore, and the future of the discipline. With the publication of these discussions and exchanges of experiences by international folklore scholars, Hungarian folklorists attained international visibility and recognition. Although the phenomenon had been the point of interest since the early 60s, particularly in Germany and West Europe (Moser, 1962), Hungarian participation broadened the scope of study. In a way, the Hungarian type of folkdance and song movement entered the stream of the international folklore movement, which erupted largely as a humanistic response to the pressures of the alienating industrial society's affluence and technological efficiency. The festival and its revivals, in their spectacular public forms, express the identity claims of a young generation while appealing to preindustrial harmony, the good life, and the desire to foster genuine artistry as opposed to mass homogenization. Vitányi, in his essay, explicitly dissociated Hungarian folklorism from its Western forms:

Nowadays more than ever, the folk art movement becomes a worldwide phenomenon, not a reactionary nostalgia (as in Western countries). For the developing countries, folklore is the only cultural tradition to preserve and develop as their own national culture... It is a historic question whether this demand leads them towards bourgeois or socialist culture. The unique Hungarian situation originates from having common characteristics with both the rich and the developing countries. We can still adapt from a burgeoning folk tradition. Folk art has always played an integral part in the development of professional Hungarian art. But we also have a universal art to help establish a new collective art based on folklore... This is the Hungarian model of folklorism..."

Hungarian folklorists, accepting the international consensus in defining folklorism (Voigt, 1978, 1979, 1980), pointed out distinctive features of orientation towards the arts and political purposes:

Folklorism in a narrower sense, is primarily an aesthetic communicative process which, contrary to folklorization, departs from folklore toward non-folklore. In a broader sense... it is the communicative process, or the end-product of total or partial implantation of traditional peasant culture into an alien movement. Empowered by new social, political and aesthetic content, it gains new significance by assisting cultural leveling of social classes, calling attention to social, ideological and even political issues in this homogenizing process. (Fejős, 1981)

In addition, Niedermüller (1981, 66) states, "One of the most important tasks of Hungarian folklorism research, both for scientific and ethical principles, is the description of sociocritical tendencies in order to help political decision-making. This is to say, folklorism research has to join other social sciences committed to terminate discord in our social life."

Without going into details about the impact of academic and doctrinal principles (translated into practice by local folk culture agents) on folklore and the folk, the results seem to be confusing. Guests of the VII Danube Valley Festival were invited to observe a staged wedding ceremony *in situ* on the premises of Decs, a "tradition-preserving" village in the Sárköz ethnic region. Everything seemed authentic except that the couple were not to be married and that Christmas animal mummers from the neighboring Bucovina Székelys were brought in as clowns for the post-wedding entertainment. Where are the village folk going? Will making villagers aware of the value of their archaic traditions help them continue preservation and creativity along traditional guidelines? Or will peasant youths, after leaving the village and joining the working class, return to the cultivation of archaic folklore as is fashionable nowadays among young urbanites? Will they continue to reconstruct their own heritage or adapt and create a new expressive form from the displaced rudiments accessible to them?

Cultural politician J. Báthory (1981, 88) has pointed out that in the field of folk arts there are two contingents producing real value: marginal peasant communities which still preserve authentic folklore and the young folk of the city. In fact, in recent years the urban youth movement has experienced a new boom. As pointed out elsewhere (Dégh, 1987), the folklorism of young urban intellectuals, in the Bartókian sense, was influential in making archaic peasant art the basic source for the renewal of folk and lay arts, as well as the creation of a new professional art. At this time, the youth movement for a "new collective art" seems to be the product of inspired artists who, with the support and stewardship of the Folk Art Institute, catered to a genuine need for artistic expression.

Two distinctive forms have been developed to give an institutional frame for this need. Both are described and documented by illustrations in the book, *Nomadic Generation* (1981). One form is the *Táncház* (dance house), a kind of dance club except for its claim to be a recreational dancing occasion with strong educational, moral, behavioral consciousness-raising overtones. The name is adapted from the dance hall set up for traditional occasions in Szék (one of the best researched Hungarian villages in Transylvania). Originating in Budapest, the dance-house movement spread to cities all over the country where cultural centers provided the place for the entertainment. Membership consists of folkdance and music-loving young people, ranging in age from 14-30 (mostly students, intellectuals, and about 25% factory workers) all wanting to have a good time. (Sági, 1979, 43) The leaders, however, are professional choreographers and musicians trained in the folkstyle regional dance dialects and musical instruments. In addition to obtaining dance instruction, attendants also enjoy the performances of invited artists and lectures given by writers, scholars, and artists.

The youth movement, also sponsored by the Folk Art Institute, activates interest in objective art. The goal is to preserve "authentic folk art" which, with the passing of the generation of genuine folk artists, will vanish if it is not preserved and continued by young artists. To promote this cause, workshops, courses, seminars, camps, visits to museums and studios of peasant ("naive") artists are organized. The instruction covers pottery carving, architecture, textiles, embroidery, and other crafts. Studios, dormitories, and exhibition halls were built to promote amateur arts and crafts, as well as to discover new naive and sophisticated artists with roots in peasant art (Sági, 1981, 44-45).

The promoters of the young artists' movement are critical of the tourist market flooded with clichéd, mass-produced souvenirs for the china cabinet (Nomadic Generation, 81 and 89). Nevertheless, the Hungarian government, through its tourist agency IBUSZ, fully promotes the Hungarian image of the 1930s - the drinking, goulash-eating, carousing, csárdás-dancing, puszta-dwelling, Gypsy violin-addicted Magyar (Greverus, 1977).

The tourist industry in Hungary is booming and scores of gift shops sell the cliché products of the Folk and Handicraft Corporation, homogenizing the aesthetics of the new consumers who are decorating their dwellings nostalgically and museumizing them. Tourism as a commercial enterprise is a form of folklorism the world over; in equal measure the East and the West market symbols of national character and folk identity (Bausinger, 1971, 172-9). Hungary offers its visitors an ever-increasing number of shows, guided tours and pageants, misinforming them about the goals and achievements of its cultural policy. Gulyás-parties, pigslaughterings, candlelit carriage rides to the Puszta with arranged kidnaping attempts by bandits (*betyárok*) on horseback, gypsy band concerts, folkdance programs in hotel halls, all demonstrate little of modern Hungary.

Interior tourism, on the other hand, developed by local travel agencies under the advisory assistance of the Folk Art Institute, seems to place more emphasis on educational tendencies than on commercial gain. Vacationers are urged to visit many points of interest, explore attractive places in the country, and learn about natural, historical and cultural monuments. Outdoor museums, and so-called protected villages are specific sources of folkloristic enculturation from which urban visitors can get the taste of seemingly routine folklife. Dressed in local costume, the visitor attempts spinning and weaving, horseback riding, and cooking palacsinta; he or she can purchase local folk art objects and picture postcards, all for relatively modest fee.

The most spectacular tourist-oriented event is the reconstruction of the traditional county fairs. The foreign visitor receives a printed calendar of "folklore events" which is available to the natives through newspapers or radio announcements. The schedule lists all folklore programs, festivals, and local, amateur and professional ensemble performances across the country.

These fairs are mainly folk art fairs and take place from spring to fall, held in connection with patron saints' days. Regional potters, cloth-dyers, basket weavers, carvers and other craftspeople, as well as salespersons from textile cooperatives, bring their

goods – most of which is usually available anywhere the year round in the stores of the Folk and Handicraft Cooperative. The fairs are indeed persuasive vehicles of taste integration.

7.

Finally, I will return to my initial premise that power holders have always used folklore as an effective persuasive tool to achieve their goals. This seems evident and only proves that folklore is an ever-present basic expression in all cultures. Its attractive forms and styles lend themselves to become a means of communicating messages of current significance. In fact, this flexibility and applicability keeps folklore alive. The quality of folklore is well known to manipulators of the masses and it is for this reason leaders develop strategies of application. In Communist Central and East Europe, folk educators were trained in the native folklore in order to help governmental goals. Through a network of educational agencies, a systematic indoctrination is conducted using folklore in order to change the worldview. Those who have folklore will give it to those who do not, thus everybody will come to a consensus by sharing this folklore.

Every entrepreneur who wants to popularize his merchandise – be it toothpaste or politics – must convince the public that his product is worthy, has a good reputation. The strongest evidence is when the product can already exhibit success and popularity before the time of its advertisement. Hence commercial advertisements and political statements anticipate popularity and insist that the customers buy that particular product (“More and more people eat Tombstone Pizza!”), or that the folk, *en masse* choose to listen to this particular politician. In other words, the folk *will not* buy this merchandise, *will not* follow this politician, it *is* already doing it.

In deciding whether a movie is good and worth seeing, the prospective viewer is influenced not so much by the critics as by friends and neighbours. The opinion of people of the same mind is more influential than authority and circulates through the same conduits as folklore. From this point there is only a small step to reach a conclusion that folklore, by definition, is the most authentic conveyor of public opinion. Once a segment of the society formulates an opinion, it is controlled through folklore. By way of folkloristic persuasion, this will help convince the rest of the population about the validity of that opinion. Therefore, to manipulate folklore effectively, public opinion’s enhancement of folklore’s prestige is the primary task. The second task, and the most essential, is its interpretation and suitable correction.

Thus, folklore (or what seems to be folklore) is the most influential tool of persuasion.

(1984)

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