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THE HUNGARIAN FOLKLORE HERITAGE AND EASTERN EUROPE

Bártók's comparative study, in which he briefly summarized the results of his East-European research appeared more than thirty-five years ago. It stands to this day as the greatest achievement in the comparative study of Hungarian and other folk music. It was precisely its outstanding quality which prevented it from becoming an active force in further research; scholars did not dare to use it, to develop it further, or to incorporate it in their experience in other branches of ethology. Thus the time has come to compare Bártók's deductions with other ethnological studies, so that completing, and to a certain extent, modifying one another they might serve as a basis for drawing more generalized conclusions.

For a start, one should recall Bártók's most important conclusions. The summary of his research work was that both the old and the new style of Hungarian peasant music were entirely Hungarian, as regards the old there are even Cheremissian parallels. This old style, however, remained, so to speak, entirely within Hungarian limits. We can only speak of adoption on a large scale in two small areas where Hungarians live intermingled with their neighbours: Croatiuns in the valley of the River Mur and Rumanians in the Transylvanian Plateau. In the Transylvanian Plateau the Rumanians adopted even old Hungarian dance music of the verbunko type which spread to other Rumanian areas where they are known as adelauns.

A Slovak layer superimposed itself on this old style even before the emergence of the new style. Bártók estimated the proportion of tunes of Slovak origin in Hungarian folk music at forty percent. He must have been thinking of the 15th century when he spoke of the "so-called non-national epoch." But according to him this influx was not due to direct popular reception. "There is every indication," he writes, "that Hungarian gentlemen had a major role in dragging in alien musical elements." Bártók refers to so many of the tunes having a party game character, and to the fact that "what little gentlemen know and like of the village folk tunes is chiefly of such an alien nature." He added that "direct adoption of Slovak material—without gentlemen acting as intermediaries—is only in evidence in any significant quantity in Hungarian villages bordering on the Slovak speaking area."

As against this Bártók pictured the effect of the Ukrainian kolomejka as a mutual influence of folk origin, which—as he said—"I feel rather than know"—had produced the following sequence of development: the kolomejka turned into Hungarian swineherd's songs.

song, this developed into verbunko music, and the songs of the new style emerged from the latter. The last stage of this mutuality was the spread of the Hungarian new style songs in Slovak, Ruthenian and Moravian villages, and even later in Bohemia, Galicia and Böhmen.

Bártók's research was supplemented, and partly modified, by Kodály who pointed out parallels from the Volga region and correspondences in various epochs of European art music and the folk-songs of Western peoples. The Cheremissian, Chuvash and other melodic correspondences from the Volga region have put the Eastern origins of the Hungarian old style beyond question—something that Bártók had only intimated—the Eastern origin of the swineherd's song and its independence of the kolomejka became obvious. While the links of the verbunko dance music with the swineherd's songs have become even clearer, a greater role in the emergence of the new style has lately come to be attributed to the influence of the popular art song and, through it, West European music.

Szabolcsi must be given the credit for tracing one of the types of dirge and the tunes connected with it to the times preceding Turkic influence in the formation of the Hungarian people; this was confirmed by more recently discovered archaic European parallels which would suggest the existence of a type of Un-European tune over a large area.

Comparative research into the ballad, popular beliefs, folk tales and dances also has its contribution to make.

Ballads have been collected for a long time and with a great deal of zeal throughout Europe. A survey covering the whole of Europe is therefore possible. It became obvious that a large number of Hungarian ballads were of French origin, and that they were transmitted in a direct way without any other people acting as intermediaries. They must therefore have been transmitted by French and Walloon settlers during the 14th and 15th centuries. It appears that with the exception of one here and there, ballads of other origin were not adopted by Hungarians. The genre and certain of its pieces assimilated from the French spread over extensive areas in Eastern Europe, mostly showing the effect of the Hungarian adaptations. Some Hungarian ballads include sections of fragments of heroic songs originating in times preceding the Hungarian's settlement, but transformed in the spirit of the new genre. What has this added to the results of folk music research?

3 Béla Bartók: Népszene és a szup népek népzene (Our Folk Music and the Folk Music of the Neighbouring Peoples).
6 Lajos Vargyas: Kultak a népbállala közp­kori története. II. A lengyelbaladó kipatt voltal­t baladjának. (Researches into the Medieval History of the Folk Ballad. II. The Survival of Heroic Songs from the Time of the Hungarian Settlement in our Ballads) Ethnographia 1960.
Above all the knowledge that in addition to the Eastern ancient stratum of the folk song pre-dating the settlement of the Hungarians a similar effect could be pointed out in other areas of folklore. Moreover, apart from Siberian Turkic parallels one has also come up—precisely in the apparently youngest, the Izsák Kerekes ballad—which has preserved a memory of Turkic-Ob-Ugrian contact. Secondly, the fact that considerable Western European cultural influence flowed into East Europe through Hungary. Here one must take note of an important lesson in methodology which must also be applied in comparative studies of folk music: that the problems of Eastern Europe can not always be solved purely in Eastern Europe, and only comparisons taking cognizance of broader vistas—both European and Asian—are able to throw light on complex interrelationships. I came upon an example where only a single, fragmentary and corrupted Hungarian variant exists, but numerous complete and extensive Balkan epic songs,7 and judging by the material of the two neighboring peoples one would have presumed that the neighboring tradition was older; but more distant links revealed that the direction was the reverse, but the more ancient traditions of the neighboring peoples has preserved the adopted elements better. A further lesson in methodology is that one must never decide on the question of adoption-transmission purely on a quantitative basis, but must also consider the differences between individual peoples, that is whether traditions are flourishing, or declining.

This stratum of ballads of French origin also suggests how the elements of Western culture made their way to Eastern Europe. At any rate other roads exist besides the German-Bohemian-Moravian-Slovak route established in certain indisputable instances by Bartók, chiefly with regard to more recent examples. This lesson is valid particularly for more ancient times. But pieces of seemingly more recent origin are not always new either, nor did they always come to Hungary from the North, not even little tunes of a party game character. Parallel with Hungarian ballads the French and Rhinelan German correspondences of a whole series of other folk songs have emerged, among them the song with the text "Hogy veti el a parazat" (How does the peasant sow it) Bartók 257ª. Among the French this was a group dance of medieval origin, where certain elements of the text were mimed; traces of it are preserved by the wedding game-tunes of peasants in Békés County. But if the seemingly new pieces of "German-Bohemian character" conceal earlier, Western connections, how much more one might conjecture this to be the case in the numerous ancient, modal melodies that have accumulated in the music of the Hungarian villages side by side with the ancient stratum of the new style. Even if certain types, for example, some Phrygian melodies such as those on the opposite page turned up only in that narrow strip along the Hungarian-Slovak language frontier, possibly on both sides of it. It would be an error, considering their Slovak variants, or because of characteristics that differed from Hungarian pentatonic melodies, to exclude them in advance from the style of the old melodies, from the Mixešydatnian "valászi" melodies, as well as from the most expressly Slovak music, the Lydian melodies. As regards their area, that certain narrow Northern strip was in actual fact the centre of Hungarian life at the time of the 150 year long Turkish rule (what is more, even later, in the period of the Kuruc wars). Only there was there a possibility for the survival of European fashions, and for passing them on to the serfs of the castles. (At that time)

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7 "Völgy és lagyó", (Valiant and gracious), Vargyas: Francia esetek ring (Stratum of French Origin, Ethnographia 1960, p. 109.)
Transylvania was already living a life of its own, and that corner of the Northwestern part of Transdanubia where this same life survived, lost its earlier traditions during the later vigorous spread of an urban middle-class way of life. Let us reflect that most of the songs deriving from the Kuruc period were discovered in that narrow strip in Nyitra, Bars, Hont, Nógrád and Gömör Counties. At any rate, the Hungarian ballads also remind us that decisions on connections with the neighbouring peoples can only be made after an exploration of the complete European interrelationships.

Research into popular belief supplements the picture. Two studies are at our disposal, Géza Róheim’s and Vilmos Dicszegi’s work on the Shaman belief of the Hungarians, which appeared in 1958. The conclusion of the former is that the Hungarians’ popular beliefs were of Slavic origin; their household was of Slavic origin, and so were the many-kinds of beliefs connected with the life of the household, the magic rhythm, their conception of various supernatural beings, witches, goddesses, and all the major feature customs that were connected with the different phases of the annual cycle in all the agricultural peoples of Europe. He was only able to point to Eastern tradition in the person of the priest-magician. But surprisingly rich traditions of this sort were pointed out by Dicszegi, whose work made it evident that this sphere of beliefs was an element of decisive importance in Hungarian folklore traditions which has survived with great persistence. But this Eastern heritage has remained within Hungarian limits in the same way as the ancient stratum of music. Here, too, the presence of the Siberian Turkic character is overwhelming, but in very faint traces he was also able to point out Ugrian features.

The world of folk tales is closely connected with popular beliefs. Numerous ancient belief elements have been kept alive to this day precisely by popular tales, among them the beliefs about the practices of the shamans. This is the sphere of beliefs that is charted to an even greater extent than the ballads. The accumulation of data in the sphere of tales is not only extensive, but national and international catalogues also facilitate orientation. This renders it possible —although no newer comparative evaluations have been made concerning the tales—for us to establish: the Hungarian priesthood preserves, in this most international of genres, numerous elements predating their settlement ranging from initial formulae to whole types. The “Heavenly body liberator” type of tales is akin to Siberian tales, but it actually preserves a type of ancient myth which speaks of mankind’s very first great accomplishments, such as the legend of Prometheus stealing fire. And the Kriza legend which tells of the “mõndõlõcsék” —that is, of the little lambs—in the gurb land contains astounding parallels. If the Hungarian legends of the creation are included as well, which show outlines of the Ugrian and Turkic correspondences, then

9 Géza Róheim: Magyar népi és néprajzi kultúra (Hungarian Popular Beliefs and Folk Customs), Bp. 1926.
10 Vilmos Dicszegi: A tánulmányi emlék a magyar népi mõdõlõcsékben (Vestiges of Shamanism in Hungarian popular culture), Bp. 1958.
11 Laszlo Vargyas: Széthirtés mõdõlõcsék a magyar néprajzban (Elements of Siberian Heroic Songs in the Hungarian Folk Tale). Néprajzi Kulturális Értesítõ (Etno-Graphic Communications) 1961.
12 Sándor Sólyomczy: Néprajzi mõdõlõcsék (The Dragon Figure of the Folk Tale) in Etno-Graphic Communications 1931.
13 Laszlo Vargyas: Kétsép helyezõk az Ember põhida alakjában (Eastern Elements in Hungarian Folk Culture) Antropológia Hungária I/1. 1947; by the same author: Hungarian ethnographic communications (Studies of the Dance) 1965.
14 Géza Róheim: Magyar népi és néprajzi kultúra (Hungarian Popular Beliefs and Folk Customs), Bp. 1958.
16 Ernõ Papp: Az etno-geográfiai tântoval (The Etno-Graphic “Course”) in Ethno-Graphic 1966.
17 György Martin: Magyar néprajzi kultúra (Hungarian Ethnographic Communications) 1959.

we might say that folk music, ballads, tales and popular beliefs combined have preserved quite considerable vestiges of Hungarian culture from the time before the settlement. Yet, only the first steps have been taken in comparative research. It is true that contrary to notions held up to now the Hungarian people have retained far more of their pre-Christian traditions than the other nations of Europe. The explanation is self-evident: the Hungarians entered a territory with an already developed culture with their own divergent culture. The Hungarians—possibly even at the price of modernization—had to cling to more aspects of their old self, than those who in their old territory, amidst their old neighbours and relatives, had steadily formed this culture for themselves.

The dance, the direct relative of folk music, whose exploration and comparative study was last to be started but with such vigour that it can already be studied as reliably as other folk arts, remains to be discussed.

Although here no “ancient”, that is pre-conquest traditions can be pointed out, a strongly national, separate dance culture is still the more in evidence. We know two of its components that also link the Hungarians with their neighbours: the csárdás and the man’s solo dance. The csárdás, just like the new folk songs, is of recent origin becoming popular in the 19th century, and little music of folk songs spread amongst the neighbours of the Hungarians with great vigour. The solo dance influenced a narrower region earlier, just like the ancient folk songs, although in a somewhat wider sphere than they generally within the Carpathians, it spread to many Rumanian villages in Transylvania and also among the Slovaks, chiefly the Gérals. The Moravians were the only people outside the Carpathian Basin to show this influence.

What kind of conclusions can we draw about what is common to or conflicting with each other in the enumerated relationships? Above all the fact that Eastern elements so vigorous in Hungarian folk culture generally did not get past the national limits. This is as true of music, as of legends and popular beliefs. Why? To obtain an answer the elements that did get further must be considered; primarily the ballad which penetrated the furthest.

It is clear in the case of the ballad that we are concerned with something that was new for the medieval peasantry, which was an expression of peasant prosperity in the last centuries of the Middle Ages. It was the new social content, the new manifestations of development within it that captivated the peoples: the new fashion. This made its enormous radiation understandable: in the North—for example, the Ruthless Mother-in-law—all the way to Archangelsk, and in the South—for example, Klement the Mason—all the way to Cetã and Trebizond. This social modernity, of course,
stemmed from the French peasants, and the reason the Hungarians were able to transmit it to such a large area was that because of their settlements in Hungary it made its appearance and was received earlier here than elsewhere; and of course the Hungarian formulations were also modern, and therefore fashionable.

This "modernity" was absent in the old folk song style. However great its aesthetic value may have been, nevertheless it did not represent anything radically new—let us say—in comparison to a valia of melody of Zölyom, or a Rumanian melody with the range of an octave from the region of Bihar—but only something different. For the most part a difference in degree, but within an identical level of development. This also was sufficient for nationalities living in close contiguity with each other to adopt it, particularly if the way of life of one of the peoples also offered other elements as an example to their neighbour. But it was not likely to be the subject of major diffusion.

The aesthetically less weighty new style was better suited for diffusion; for that, too, expressed a radically new social attitude, just as the decorative art that flourished before it. Bartók also applied the adjective "modern" to it a number of times when he searched for the answer to the problem: why did these songs exercise such a powerful influence on the neighbours of the Hungarians?20 This decided perceptible "modernity", the gay, confident, new spirit, and its emergence at a late date clearly indicates that we are confronted with an artistic expression of a peasant life liberating itself from the centuries of restriction and with developing urban middle class attitudes.21

These clear examples with a social content can orient us when it comes to the other of the mutual influences or their absence. In the case of the 40 per cent with alien influences kept in evidence by Bartók the social attraction is self-evident. The influence reached the Hungarian people through the class of gentlemen (in other words: secular and sacred art music to be heard in Hungary) that is, from a higher stage of social development. On the other hand, it is quite natural that the allusion to the faith of the Hungarians at the time of their settlement could not have meant anything new to the peoples living here; the reverse was true. For the Hungarians the realm of beliefs and customs connected with agricultural life, particularly the many dramatic and simulating traditions, minstrelsy, slams collecting, carnival games, the straw dummy, Midsummer bonfires which thrived in a rich and varied chain already at the time of their settlement all the way from Byzantium to England was something new. It is also clear that the "Heavenly body liberator" ancient myth and the like already represented a superseded stage of development when the Hungarians arrived here and turning into the "Mindelváchkák" Christian legends they only caught up with the times and did not lead them. The ancient elements—sections of epic song—only became suitable for further diffusion with penetrative force when they were assimilated in a framework of a currently fashionable manifestation, such as the ballad, at the time it flowered. This occurred on two occasions: the mythical heroic song section assimilated in the legend of Molnár Anna (Annie Miller)—the scene under the tree—made its way far to the West, to the Germans, the Danes and the Dutch, and the building sacrifice—its Cauca­casian germ, turning into Kőmives Kelenem "What facilitated the spread of the new Hungarian tunes in other language territories? First of all: the sparkling rhythm of the tunes themselves, and the freshness of their melodic line—that is to say: their modernity..." (Bartók: Népmelók és a szomoló növények, 21), ([Our Folk Music and the Magic of the Nourishing Peoples.]) "This is how this phenomenon might be explained: for these peoples the structure of the new Hungarian songs was apparently too long, too complex, one might almost say: too modern!" (Ibid. 30).

There are few subjects concerning the history of the past century on which historians have expressed as varied and as conflicting opinions as the Austro-Hun­garian Empire. In this case conflicting attitudes are due not merely to each historian's particular approach or method but also to the fact that the population of Austria-Hungary consisted of a most singular mixture of nationalities. The historians of the eleven nations living within its boundaries had acquired the habit of analysing the problems in the light of contemporary political antagonisms, for the most part only from the point of view of their own respective nationalities. Hence it is not surprising that Heinrich Benedik, the noted Austrian author of a work on economic development