

# Two Traditional Central Transylvanian Dances and Their Economic and Cultural/Political Background

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Received: February 11, 2020 • Accepted: March 2, 2020

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on a theme that until now has only been addressed to a lesser degree in dance folkloristics, namely the relationship between dance and politics. I examine two types of Central Transylvanian folk dance, the local variations of the dance group called *eszközös pásztortánc* (Herdsmen's Dance with implement) and the local variations of the dance group called *lassú legényes* (slow male dance), attempting to study their transformation in terms of form and function during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a traditional and revival context.<sup>1</sup> Using two case studies, I also reflect on the unique system of relations between folklorism and folklorisation in an attempt to illustrate Hungarian and Romanian socio-economic factors and cultural policy underlying the transformation of these dances.

**Keywords:** dance, politics, society, economics, folklore, folklorization, ethnic markers

## INTRODUCTION

According to the comprehensive summary by Susan E. Reed, western dance anthropology had already perceived the relationship between dance and politics as early as the 1970s, although it was not until the 1980s that research on the subject began to intensify (REED 1998). Interest continued to mount thereafter as well, which is evident in the fact that six out of the ten dance-related articles published in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Yearbook for Traditional Music dealt with the political aspects of dance (see WILD ed. 2001).

Since 2000, Hungarian dance research has also placed a greater emphasis on studies that examine the political background of phenomena in connection with dance and musical

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding the traditional dance types of the Alpine-Carpathian Region see more on the Knowledge Base of Traditional Dances: [http://db.zti.hu/neptanc\\_tudastar/index\\_en.asp](http://db.zti.hu/neptanc_tudastar/index_en.asp) (accessed July 13, 2020).

culture (A. GERGELY ed. 2010; KAVECSÁNSZKI 2013, 2014; KÖNCZEI 2007–2009).<sup>2</sup> One reason for the delay is that the field of dance folkloristics that developed in Hungary during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century focused primarily on the formal-structural characteristics of dance and musical accompaniment. Historical studies conducted by György Martin and his colleagues reveal the social and cultural/historical background behind changes in Hungarian dance culture, but the political circumstances of the time created obstacles to doing research on the present.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, this does not mean that dance folkloristics in Hungary ignored politics altogether: the role of dance in creating national identity can also be interpreted as a political issue, and Hungarian researchers have attempted to do so.<sup>4</sup> Several have also written about the political role of the dance house movement formed during the 1970s,<sup>5</sup> and parts of other studies have dealt with the attention given to dance within the framework of socialist cultural policy<sup>6</sup> (KAVECSÁNSZKI 2014:81–84).

In my opinion, understanding of either the historical changes taking place in traditional dance culture or the operating mechanisms and the impact of the revival movement so closely connected with the realm of tradition is also quite difficult to achieve without knowledge of the given political context. Taking this into account, my study will attempt to track changes occurring during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the form and function of two types of Central Transylvanian dance popular in both Hungarian and Romanian folklorism. In the first part, I will endeavor to shed light on socio-economic circumstances and policies behind the disappearance of *eszközös pásztortáncok* (lit. herdsman's weapon-like implement dances) from traditional village culture. Some related phenomena have survived due to the impact of Romanian stage folklorism, the causes of which I will also examine, touching upon issues of cultural policy. The second half of my study will focus on the unique mutual impact that folklorism and folklorisation have on one another, tracking the formal changes and migration of another type of Central Transylvanian dance. In the course of my analysis, I aim to show how the given changes reflect the underlying political will in both Hungarian and Romanian cultural policy.

The information used in this study is derived from my fieldwork conducted in the *Mezőség* region (Transylvanian Plain), my experiences gleaned from more than twenty years of participatory observation in the Hungarian and Romanian revival milieu, ethnographic surveys and academic publications.

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<sup>2</sup> The convergence of international and Hungarian interest was evident in the symposium held in Szeged during the summer of 2018 by the ICTM Study Group on Ethnochoreology, the main theme of which was Dance and Politics. The lecture I gave there for the first time also serves as a basis for the present study.

<sup>3</sup> By the 1950s, new cultural research paradigms sensitive to political changes had been all but eliminated from scientific life by the prevailing socialist ideology of the time (SZÓNYI 2019:40). In addition to ideological barriers, however, it should also be mentioned that the questions asked by Hungarian researchers in the field of dance folkloristics, which focused less on the cultural micro-processes of the present, were also in line with the pseudo-archaist, ethnically-oriented and national focus typical of ethnographic research approaches in Eastern-Europe during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive summary see: KAVECSÁNSZKI 2013:93; 2014:79–81. Among Hungarian dance researchers during the 1950s, it was Anna Gábor who called attention to the fact that folk dance could not be separated from the social and political environment typical of the given village or region (GÁBOR 1956:366), but she only provides examples from pre-socialist eras (GÁBOR 1956:369).

<sup>5</sup> For summarization, see: KAVECSÁNSZKI 2013:94.

<sup>6</sup> For summarization, see: KAVECSÁNSZKI 2013:94.

## STICK DANCES IN THE MEZŐSÉG REGION OF TRANSYLVANIA (ROMANIAN: CÂMPIA TRANSILVANIEI)<sup>7</sup>

Combat-style dances using implements had already caught the attention of Hungarian intellectuals interested in dance during the early 1900s, but actual source investigation and analysis only began to take place after the 1950s. In these dances, folk dance researchers claimed to recognize remnants of the medieval *hajdútánc* (lit. “Hajdú” dance)<sup>8</sup> and even older weapon dances – some of which can be traced back to antiquity. (ANDRÁSFALVY 1980; MARTIN 1990a). The first part of this text will attempt to illustrate the likely economic and political reasons behind the disappearance and transformation of variations primarily found in the Mezőség region of Transylvania and their survival on the stage.

Among the local terms for the herdsmen’s weapon-like implement dances earlier discovered almost exclusively in South Transylvania, *haidău* (Romanian term for “Hajdú” dance) is the most noteworthy from a historical perspective, its etymology indicating that the origins of the dance can be traced back to the *hajdús*. Presumably, this was György Martin’s starting point when he designated this dance genre as Romanian “Hajdú” dance in a study published in 1980 (MARTIN 1980a:169). According to Martin, in comparison with other herdsmen’s dances, the use of implements in the “Hajdú” dance is simplistic. Dancers generally use their sticks as props held vertically from the ground, sometimes tapping them on the ground or switching the sticks from one hand to the other; sometimes they pass the stick under their legs or dance above sticks laid cross-wise on the ground. Several variations of the stick dance still survived in South Transylvania up to as late as the 1960s: ethnographic fieldwork has revealed various forms, including informal solo dances and regulated group dances featuring the use of sticks, or versions involving couples and performed with women (MARTIN 1980a:173). In the light of their formal characteristics, their passive use of sticks, their integral connection with partner dances, their rich treasure of motifs, their “refined mode of performance” and their slow tempo, Martin concluded that the Romanian stick dances developed in Transylvania represent a unique regional–ethnic category among pre-18<sup>th</sup> century East European herdsmen’s dances (MARTIN 1980a:177).

In her fundamental study comparing the ritual *kaluser* dances of Transylvania and the Danube Plain, Anca Giurcescu writes: the primary role of the dancer is to protect the community from various malevolent female mythical beings (GIURCHESCU 1992:34). According to Giurcescu, the stick and other implements were already vital elements in the struggle against such beings in distant eras of history.<sup>9</sup> Along with other stick dances (*de botă* –lit.and *haidău*), she categorizes *kaluser* stick dances as being among the oldest forms of male dance in Transylvania.

<sup>7</sup> Referred to hereafter as: Mezőség.

<sup>8</sup> *Hajdús* were armed herdsmen employed frequently for military service in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Hungary. The name may originate in words *hajtó* or *hajdó* (lit. herder). For their service against the Habsburg empire, they were settled in the eastern part of Hungary in the seventeenth century. The term *Hajdú* is used today as the identification of people.

<sup>9</sup> “The essence of the Romanian căluș resides in the fact that in a remote historical past the myth of iele has been connected with the men’s stick dances. Comparative research has proven that the group of călușari belongs to a widespread category of men’s dances with implements (sticks, swords, brooms, handkerchiefs, etc.) existing in the European ethnocultural space.” (GIURCHESCU 1992:35).

Among Romanian researchers, Constantin Costea also addressed the relationship between two large groups of male dances (ritual and stick dances). In his view, it was at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the group of secular male dances with an amusement-entertainment function became separated from ritual *kaluser* dances. The reason for this was the gradual disappearance of *kaluser* traditions from various territories in Transylvania, with the exception of areas in the vicinity of Szászrégen (Reghin) and Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara) (COSTEA 1993:94–95).<sup>10</sup> The role of stick dances in the dance culture of Romanian communities in Transylvania, including the “Hajdú” dance, also declined gradually. According to Costea, by the time of the period between the two world wars these dances could only be found along the mid-section of the Maros River and on the plateau of the Küküllő, with some additional traces in the Hortobágy Valley (Hártibaciu) of South Transylvania. The author mentions that the disappearance of the dance was slowed somewhat by various folk dance festivals and competitions at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (COSTEA 1993:95). Among the historical data in connection with the “Hajdú” dance, Costea calls attention to acrobatic movements in addition to the use of implements (leaning on sticks, leaping over sticks) and a mode of performance which imitates combat (COSTEA 1993:94).

In addition to South Transylvanian territories, Hungarian dance folklore research has also collected a significant amount of data in connection with herdsmen’s implement dances in the Upper-Tisza region. Territories lying in between, such as Kalotaszeg and Mezőség, were long considered to be blank spots in this respect. Research I have conducted since the early 1990s has revealed, however, that around the turn of the 19-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, various implement dances were fashionable in these areas as well (VARGA 2010a–b). I have collected a significant amount of data, mainly in connection with stick dances, in the course of my fieldwork in Roma (Gypsy), Hungarian, and Romanian communities in Mezőség. In villages and settlements located in the inner and southern sections of Mezőség, which are isolated in terms of infrastructure, I have discovered remnants of practically every form of implement usage typical of herdsmen’s dances (passing the stick under legs, leaping over propped sticks, dancing above sticks laid cross-wise on the ground, sticks thrown and caught). In addition, examples of combat-style motifs (stick twirling, intimidation with sticks, cutting and stabbing motions) were also mentioned by my sources in the area (VARGA 2010a:681–683; 2010b:Chapter IV).

Naturally, it is impossible to accurately reconstruct the stick dances that once existed in Central Transylvania exclusively on the basis of verbal recollections, but certain formal and functional motifs can still be outlined:

- A. Motifs suggesting passive use of the stick (surviving for the longest period of time in Mezőség and the surrounding areas)
- tracing figures while leaning, leaps, leg-slapping, high-kicking (similar to variations found along the Maros and Küküllő Rivers);
  - hitting the stick to the ground.

<sup>10</sup> Other authors have also pointed out the possible connection between ritual *kaluser* dances and Transylvanian stick dances (KARSAI – MARTIN 1989:19). Dejeu’s study, for example, claims that some of the “obsolete” motifs found in Romanian male dances are derived from the *kaluser* (DEJEU 2000:174).

B. Motifs suggesting active use of the stick (seemingly more archaic):

- Movements in the stick dance or weapon dance style (stick-twirling – even face to face, striking sticks together);
- Movements in the herdsmen’s dance style (passing sticks under legs, leaping over propped sticks, dancing above sticks laid on the ground or laid cross-wise);
- dexterity dance movements (throwing sticks to one another, striking sticks together in front of or behind the body).

Based on the data available until now, it is possible to approximately determine the spread of herdsmen’s implement dances in Central Transylvania, transformations in their form and function and the process of their disappearance. Evidence suggests that during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century implement dance culture in the territories studied continued to retain an extremely rich motif repertoire and form. These dances disappeared from the dance repertoire of Hungarian villages in Transylvania around the 1920s and later between the two world wars in Romanian settlements. By 1950–1970, their role in Mezőség had all but vanished. It is probably for this reason that György Martin and his colleagues found no recent data on herdsmen’s implement dances in the course of their fieldwork in Kalotaszeg and Mezőség. In fact, these dances were scarcely mentioned in verbal recollections either. This might also be why their analysis of historical transformations in musical accompaniment led them to the conclusion that during the Renaissance and Baroque ages “ritual male dances were reduced to male dances performed as the opening dances at balls while medieval weapon dances (“Hajdú” dance) became merely demonstrations of bravado and then tame couple’s dances” (MARTIN 1990c:430.) This view (along with the lack of archival research in Transylvania) probably contributed to the false belief that implement (herdsmen’s) dances were not typical of certain parts of Transylvania during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (MARTIN 1980a:169–170).

Data discovered during the course of my own research sheds a new light on György Martin’s claim regarding the unique development of Transylvanian dance culture. In my opinion, reasons for the decline and gradual disappearance of stick dance culture in Transylvania can rather be found in transformations of economic policy taking place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### *Changes in economic policy*

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, approximately 40–60% of settlement boundaries in Mezőség were in the hands of village communities, and private property covered significantly less territory than today.<sup>11</sup> Usage of the land owned by villages was determined by the institutions established for that purpose (the village magistrate, the local precinct). Within the two-field system, cultivated land alternately used as pasture could be rented by private farmers as well, but at certain intervals ownership of these lands would regularly return to the village community. A significant portion of the surrounding forestland

<sup>11</sup> Prior to land redistribution at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only about 40% of the 12,000 acre boundary in the village of Szék was in private hands; the rest constituted common property (Kós 2000/II:327).

was also considered common property which could be utilized by every member of the community in accordance with certain regulations (Kós 2000/II:14–15).

Based on studies by Bertalan Andrásfalvy, Károly Kós and others, we know that the aristocracy deprived of serfdom after 1849 and forced into private farming attempted to accumulate wealth by expanding its own private lands (ANDRÁSFALVY 2004:131–136; Kós 2000/I:144; BALATON 2006:22). In addition to drainage and deforestation, new farmland in Mezőség could be gained through the appropriation of forestland and pastures owned by villages, and this was made possible by the farm-reallocation and land distribution act of 1871 (Kós 2000/I:65, 144; statute 1871). The law divided the aforementioned community territories among private individuals in proportion to the amount of private land they owned. Consequently, individual farmers and landowners who already had large holdings acquired vast tracts of previously common land, while poorer farmers were almost completely displaced from the common property that once served as a social safety net.<sup>12</sup> It was Károly Kós who most vividly described the impacts of commensuration in Mezőség: “the reallocation of large tracts of common land in proportion to individual land ownership – on one hand eliminating common pastures, which were the last refuge for the poorest residents in the village, yet on the other hand accentuating stratification among noble estates and small peasant farms, and also among the latter, based on land ownership. (...) So-called free management of independent family farms (...) provided opportunities for predominance (...) taking advantage of greater starting capital and all sorts of speculation, which (...) led to labor exploitation (...) and to the poor being cheated out of their smaller holdings” (Kós 2000/I:140). As a result of these measures, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century large estates in Mezőség comprised one-half to two-thirds of the total village boundaries, as much as all peasant holdings combined (Kós 2000/I:145).

Land reform laws enacted between 1882 and 1912 also brought about serious transformations in animal husbandry. Tracts of land combined in the course of farm-reallocation were used by mid-sized and large estates for independent shepherding while smallholders could only acquire grazing land with great difficulty and despite collaboration. Following land redistribution, farms everywhere in Mezőség had switched to the three field system, which meant that the amount of fallow land that had previously been used exclusively for grazing decreased even further. Due to legislation favoring private ownership, an enormous number of villages in Transylvania were left with no significant amount of pasture land (TÁRKÁNY SZŰCS 1944:4–5). Large-scale deforestation over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries eroded the local ecological balance. This transformation took a particularly heavy toll on villages in Mezőség, which were already struggling economically while farming poor quality soil (MAKKAI et al. 2004:4–5). Due to poverty among smallholders who ran sheep-farms, it was during this time that herders developed the custom of collecting their sheep in common herds for springtime milking trials, referred to locally as *juhmérés* (measuring of sheep’s milk)(K. KOVÁCS 2008:119).

It was also because of reallocation and redistribution that the free range and semi-extensive farming methods typically employed by the vast shepherding class in the

<sup>12</sup> Village communities that were harmed in this way brought lengthy lawsuits against large landowners, but to no avail. (Kós 2000/II:332–333). For more on the impacts of land proportioning in Transylvania, see also: ANDRÁSFALVY 2004; VARGA 2007, 2008.

entire Mezőség region until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century practically disappeared from the territory. After the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, traces could only be found in the form of extensive sheep grazing. Since forestland was also divided, livestock that had primarily been pastured there were also forced onto fallow land (K. Kovács 2008:118–119),<sup>13</sup> which was unable to provide sufficient fodder for free-range cattle. In turn, farmers in Mezőség began to favor more intensive forms of animal husbandry, which required the production of feed, the use of stockyards and animals more suited to these methods.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to changes in farming methods, a significant shift also took place in the regional ecology. In the period following the abolition of serfdom, the growing sheep stock that took the place of cattle led to further deforestation, which continued to decrease the biodiversity previously typical of the territory, and this contributed to the severe erosion of topsoil in the area (SZABÓ 1995:38).

The new provisions also altered the structure of settlements in Mezőség. In the course of the reallocation that accompanied the land reform law, many farmers received tracts of land located on the distant outskirts of villages, which eventually made it sensible to move there. This led to the development of a veritable network of individual farms in the vicinity of larger villages in Mezőség (Kós 2000/I:145).

As a consequence of the above, by the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the agricultural system that had until then served as the foundation of social and cultural life in villages underwent a complete metamorphosis. In parallel, community institutions regulating the close collaboration required by farming life (e.g. the authority of the village magistrate, the local police headquarters, or the street police referred to in historical research on Szék [Sic], etc.) also transformed and disappeared (Kós 2000/I:156–157; 2000/II:335–340, 343–351). Everyday lifestyles and culture also changed in the wake of this socio-economic transformation. As Károly Kós writes, along with the increased significance of large farming estates, symptoms of land-hunger among peasants typical of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also appeared in Mezőség, which disrupted and reshaped the social unity and customs of peasant communities in many locations (Kós 2000/I:140). Prior to the land reform, even those who held less private property could become large farmers (in the case of a large animal stock), but thereafter it was the amount of property owned which became the basis of wealth. This is how the *slow-paced* peasant (meaning one who did his work at a calm and steady pace) was replaced by the fast-paced, profit-oriented, capitalist agricultural entrepreneur type (Kós 2000/II:334). Based on his research experiences in Bálványosváralja (Unguraş), László K. Kovács describes how the peasant working on reallocated land “slowly, but surely begins to avoid the traditional rules of

<sup>13</sup> It was during this time that long-horn white cattle, which had previously been a status symbol, gradually began to take a back seat. It is no coincidence, therefore, that one of the most important rite in wedding feasts, namely the representative display of the bride’s dowry on ox-driven carts, also began to lose its significance. As a point of comparison: the 17<sup>th</sup> century inventory of a serf’s inheritance in Vasasszentgotthard listed 16 yoke-oxen! (Kós 2000/I:61)

<sup>14</sup> Examples include Swiss cattle and oxen. Villagers in the community of Szék, who rigidly preserve their traditions and have great difficulty accepting change, still considered ox farmers to be the shame of the village after the Second World War (Kós 2000/I:103). In place of pig species that could even thrive in coniferous forests until the turn of the century, farmers began to favor domestic pigs. Older forms of farming associated with forests and wetlands, for example bee-keeping and foraging, also began to wane around this time (Kós 2000/I:25, 43).

the community as his attitude to life changes” (K. Kovács 1947:47). The researcher goes on to say: “Redistribution became a milestone, a juncture at which the people of Bálványosvárálja left behind a large portion of their old customs; *most of their songs, their old modes of dance...*” (italicized by the author) (K. Kovács 1947:47). Similar processes occurred throughout the entire Mezőség region. Regarding Szék, for example, Károly Kós stated that redistribution led to sharper disparities in wealth, a weakening of public administration and the erosion of what had previously been a vigorous community life (Kós 2000/II:334). In summary, it can be said that farming became more feasible and efficient as a result of the legislative and economic changes taking place during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but also that the legislators of the time and the landowners who used their lobbying power to wangled the reforms were indifferent to the socio-cultural consequences of these changes. All of this was revealed much later by ethnological research in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Another impact of the economic changes described above was the formation of a narrow strata of large landowners and a broader strata of poor peasants in the villages of Mezőség at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kós 2000/I:140). The oldest sources contacted in the course of fieldwork launched during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century were still able to recall the tensions that arose as a result. Studying phenomena in dance life, for example rifts in dance communities and the intensification of certain punitive-exclusive rites, like *kimuzsikálás* (lit., getting tuned out\*), I also sensed the impacts of reallocation and commensuration (VARGA 2016:254–255).<sup>15</sup>

It is likely that the life-blood of the rich and varied implement dance culture of the Mezőség region in Transylvania during the 19<sup>th</sup> century may have been the still densely populated and mobile peasant strata of the time, which also maintained contact with more distant areas (for example the Great Plains and the Upper-Tisza Region) due to its characteristic migration.<sup>16</sup> As I have already mentioned, farm reallocation and land redistribution at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century restricted and localized extensive animal husbandry, hence sheep herding as well.<sup>17</sup> From then on, husbandry conducted by shepherding communities (*esztena*\* collectives), only required hiring local shepherds,

<sup>15</sup> For a brief period at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the small village of Visa (Vișea), which could only afford to organize weekend dance events, separate “dances” were organized by farmers and poor peasants.

\* Translator’s note: *Tuning out* involves a ritual in which a girl is expelled from a dance event with musical accompaniment as a consequence of “inappropriate” behavior.

<sup>16</sup> Having studied shepherding in the Borsa Valley during the 1940s, K. Kovács László wrote that in the 1800s local shepherds also migrated to distant territories (K. Kovács 2008:227–228) and that as a result of the disappearance of extensive farming after the 1850s many “independent” shepherds arrived in Transylvania from the Great Plains. Their presence in the villages of the Borsa Valley is verifiable from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (K. Kovács 2008:36, 229).

<sup>17</sup> This is implied by the increasing prevalence of localized partner shepherding and *esztena* communities in the Borsa Valley (K. Kovács 2008:34–44, 229).

\* Translator’s note: *Esztena* denotes a collective of sheep herders using common grazing land, on which they set up accommodation as well as units for the production of milk, cheese etc. These constituted one variation of traditional farming collectives, so-called autonomous farming communities, which were generally prevalent in Transylvania.



who primarily came from the Romanian community.<sup>18</sup> As extensive animal husbandry gradually diminished, so did the peasant strata most familiar with implement dances, forced to move from grazing lands into villages. Thus, a process of change similar to ones taking place in other territories of the Alpine-Carpathian Region may also have occurred in the dance culture of Mezőség, when certain elements of pastoral culture – e.g. implement dances – shifted to villages, where their combat-like features and the related use of sticks were passively absorbed into the local dance culture.<sup>19</sup> I agree with György Martin concerning his claim quoted above: the solo-improvisational features of newer dance trends may have indeed influenced local peasantry, but in my opinion the remnants of medieval weapon dances were only rejected from the dance repertoire around the time of the First World War, directly after the period of land redistribution (Compare with: MARTIN 1990c:430).

### *The survival of stick dances in the context of revival*

Ethnographic research indicates that the Romanian population in the Maros-Küküllő Region adjacent to Mezőség were still using stick dances in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Studying the reasons for this longevity, I believe that Romanian cultural policy tightly interwoven with stage revival played a significant role. György Martin wrote that in complete accord with the identity forming activities of East European peoples, the Romanian intellectual elite of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century also made efforts to create national symbols from representative elements of folk tradition (MARTIN 1984:355). *Kaluser* dances proved to be the most suitable for this purpose.<sup>20</sup> According to Anca Giurchescu, a stylized version of the dance was already being used at various spectacles in Transylvania in 1851. Consequently, different variants continued to survive in urban settings and then became “re-folklorized” (GIURCHESCU 1992:37). The practicing of *kaluser* traditions

<sup>18</sup> In the majority of villages located in the inner part of Mezőség, from time immemorial only local shepherds or those from the immediate vicinity were employed. In his 1947 study on shepherding in Bálványosvárálja, László K. Kovács writes that shepherds could only be local due to the wide range of tasks they were responsible for (K. Kovács 1947:196). The situation was similar in the Borsa Valley as well (K. Kovács 2008:233–234).

<sup>19</sup> Analyzing the South Transdanubian dance dialect, Martin wrote the following: “Earlier data in connection with herdsmen’s implement dances (...) is well-supplemented by the recollections of elderly sources in the villages of South Transdanubia regarding old-time pig farmer’s dances, which suggests that such dances that survived up the end of the last century were virtuoso performances richly enhanced by the use of implements and combat-style movements (...) As pastoral culture gradually strengthened along with the rejection of extensive farming and shepherds moved from grazing lands into villages, this robust form of dance changed in form and function, stripped down and tamed as it was gradually taken over by the peasantry. In this way, it was practiced by a narrower stratum and became the general mode of dance among the peasantry throughout the entire South Transdanubian region, suited to the dance tastes of the farming population.” (MARTIN 1990c:405). It is likely that a similar process took place in the Rábaköz region (MARTIN 1990c:402).

<sup>20</sup> “In the mid-nineteenth century, Romanian revolutionary intellectuals of Transylvania designated *călușerul*, (healing and fertility rituals involving dancing), which they considered to be genetically rooted in the antique Roman culture, as a symbol of Romanian Latin origin and of their long continuity. Since 1850, stylized dance forms originating from the ritual *căluș* were performed at festive occasions throughout Transylvania.” (GIURCHESCU 2001:116, footnote 14).

in villages was initially forbidden by the Romanian communist regime, partly because of their close connection with the realm of beliefs (GIURCHESCU 2001:112) and partly because of their overly nationalistic connotations (GIURCHESCU 2001:116). During the 1960s, however, the regime turned in the direction of hardline nationalism and began to support performances of the *kaluser*<sup>21</sup> and other traditional dances on the theatre stage, using the aesthetic features of folk dance to send the audience messages in keeping with its ideology (GIURCHESCU 2001:114). In this way, the *kaluser* and related stick dances (for example the aforementioned *haidău* and the *de botă*) also became tools of Romanian political will, which ensured their survival regardless of whether they are examined in a rural or urban setting (GIURCHESCU 1992:40–43).

Villages located in the inner territories of Mezőség were left out of this “re-folklorization” process. I see the reasons for this as being their remoteness from large cities and the fact that in comparison to the Maros-Küküllő Region Mezőség is more isolated – in terms of infrastructure as well as economically and culturally. It should also be mentioned that dance groups in many of the villages of Inner Mezőség either did not function at all or only for a very brief time over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, data from my fieldwork indicates that institutional Romanian dance instruction in the Maros-Küküllő Region and in South Mezőség was already introduced to schools after the First World War. According to my information, many village dance ensembles were formed directly after the Second World War in settlements located near urban centers. Moreover, we have also found indications that Romanian dance groups already existed in this territory during the inter-war period. Further research is required on the subject, but on the basis of data collected until now, it seems that institutional Romanian dance instruction has existed for nearly one-hundred years in the Maros–Küküllő Region and in the southern part of Mezőség.<sup>23</sup> This suggests that stick dances continued to be kept alive all the way up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the revival framework supported and influenced by Romanian cultural policy.

## THE KORCSOS AND THE TÂRNĂVEANA

“The accurate, multi-faceted and detailed definition of dance types is a prerequisite for examining the mutual impact of Transylvanian-Hungarian and Romanian dances and their regional variations. (...) Study of the mutual impacts primarily yields results in areas with a mixed population, where dance culture by its very nature is richer and

<sup>21</sup> “During the ‘revolutionary’ period of the Communist regime in Romania, *călușerul* dance was banished, being considered the bearer of overly strong nationalistic connotation. It has been revived and has become almost a compulsory part of official staged performances since the mid-1960s, when the Communist regime turned highly nationalistic.” (GIURCHESCU 2001:116, footnote 14).

<sup>22</sup> The results of my fieldwork up to now show that a Romanian dance group only existed for a longer period of time in Kötelend (Gădălin) between the two world wars. In addition, dance ensembles functioned for a brief period in Gyulatelke (Coasta, previously Julateluc) and Magyarpalatka. The latter were formed after the Second World War and only survived for a few years.

<sup>23</sup> Data on Magyarfráta (Frata) from the 1930s already mentions school and village festivities involving music and dance. These have continued to be organized up to the present day (LĂCRĂMIOARA 2016:11–15).

more layered than in »pure« areas with no interaction” (MARTIN 1980b:188). György Martin mainly put these thoughts on paper on the basis of his research conducted in the Mezőség area. He was the first to write that male dances here were practiced by both Hungarians and Romanians (MARTIN 1990c:436). Based on subsequent research, we know that the sources interviewed generally associated ethnic notions with *lassú legényes* táncok (lit. slow lad’s dances), mainly performed by Hungarians<sup>24</sup> in the region, while the asymmetric, pulsatory variations mainly danced by Romanians were considered by locals to be Romanian.<sup>25</sup> Folk dance researchers were only able to film the Mezőség variations of rare lad’s dances from the oldest informants who were born during the 1920s or earlier. Around the time of the first Hungarian dance folklore research conducted in Mezőség near the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a newer slow lad’s dance appeared in the given territory from the south, which was referred to as *tárnăveanca*, or *tárnăva* (translated to Hungarian as Küküllő-menti i.e. “from along the Küküllő”). Its origins can presumably be traced to the rare lad’s dance practiced by Romanians in South Transylvania, referred to locally as the *ponturile* (translated roughly to Hungarian as *pontozó* i.e. pointer), (KARSAI – MARTIN 1989:19). The *ponturile* took on a regulated form in the Romanian revival context between the two world wars, for example in Keménytelke (Cipăieni, previously Chimitelnic).<sup>26</sup> Variations with a fixed set of motifs became part of the dance repertoire of weddings and balls in some of the villages in the Maros-Küküllő Region. Thanks to its popularity on and off-stage, it spread quite rapidly throughout the South Mezőség area and, by the 1950s and 1960s, also appeared in Inner Mezőség under the name *tárnăveana* (MAGYARFRÁTA 1995). Sources in Visa provided accurate recollections of its appearance:

“This *tárnăva*... it’s a Romanian dance that people do here in the Mezőség. It’s rarer than the *verbunk* [quick male dance], a bit. (...) [Based on its name] this dance comes from the Küküllő area. That’s why it’s called *tárnăva* (...) It just came in now, after the war. (...) The music players went to outside villages and that’s when they picked up on how people danced there, ‘n then, well...they brought it back to the village. But some guys from Béré came here, and we saw the dance from them before. (...) They learned it from the players, too. Josif Corpadean, ‘Serban’, and Todor Farkas...same age as me. Those two, did it together’ [danced it], I liked how they danced that *tárnăva*. But the players taught it [to them]. The ones [the two Romanians from Béré] I saw before here in Visa’. It may be that they danced it even before that in Béré’ (...) but I saw these then,

<sup>24</sup> György Martin actually differentiates among two categories of male dances in Mezőség. These include the following: *sűrű legényes* (appr. quick lad’s dance), and *lassú legényes* (lit. slow lad’s dance). The category of slow lad’s dances can be divided into four sub-categories: *verbunk* (recruitment dance), *lassú magyar* (lit. slow Hungarian) and *ritka legényes* (lit. rear lad’s dance). The latter has a Hungarian (Magyar tánc – lit. Hungarian dance) and a Romanian version (*românește în ponturi* – lit. Romanian in points) (MARTIN 1980b). My writing excludes discourse on the *verbunk* since it would severely over-complicate the study.

<sup>25</sup> Known locally as: (*românește*) în ponturi, (*românește*) de ponturi.

<sup>26</sup> It can be assumed on the basis of recorded films that the formal features of the new dance arriving from the Küküllő region via Romanians and Gypsies were also influenced by Romanian revivalist dance instruction, which developed more strongly in Transylvania after the First World War and supported uniform stage performances. It is likely that the spatial use of the dance and its highly regulated structure of motifs were due to this (KEMÉNYTELKE 1969). See also examples from Budatelek (Budești) and Mezőszopor (Soporu de Câmpie) (GÁLÁT et al. 2019:17–19).

when I wasn't a soldier yet. Around nineteen fifty-one/fifty-two'. (...) And it looked pretty close [fast] in pairs, n' if you could take it, you could dance with girls [too]."<sup>27</sup>

In terms of its form and structure, the *tárnăveana* male dance is far more rigid than older Hungarian and Romanian variations of the aforementioned Mezőség slow lad's dances (See: HORVÁTH 1970:15–17, 37–57). Dance forms with a defined set of motifs (few motifs with regards to steps, side-slapping heels, scissoring slaps and profuse thigh-slapping combined with clapping) were extremely popular men's dances in the villages of Inner Mezőség between the 1960s and the 1990s, and certain motifs (side-slapping heels, scissoring slaps) also appeared in close men's dances (VARGA 2011:75). These were typical in the spatial usage of the dance in all forms, including solo, with partners face to face and in a circular arrangement. During common dances, the dancers made such intense efforts to coordinate the motifs that they often took a short break in the event of deviation in an attempt to rejoin the process. Collected data clearly shows that among Hungarian and Romanian sources from the villages of Inner Mezőség, those born in the 1930s and the 1940s both knew and practiced the fixed-form *tárnăveana* dance. The aforementioned generation born during the 1920s was familiar with the *tárnăveana* and could even dance it, but analysis of their performance revealed that in the musical accompaniment they tried to use motifs from earlier slow Mezőség lad's dances, which they were also familiar with.<sup>28</sup> Exceptions include a few Roma musicians from Inner Mezőség, who presumably encountered the dance earlier than local Hungarians and Romanians due to the mobility of their occupation.

On the other hand, several factors make it difficult to accurately map the spread of this phenomenon and the social and cultural processes behind it. One of these is that our sources in Mezőség use the single term *tárnăveana* to signify all elements in the studied group of dances, meaning its solo and partner forms in addition to the musical accompaniment.<sup>29</sup> Locals unfamiliar with the scientific principles of designation and categorization as well as researchers with only superficial knowledge of local terms and the notions of grouping behind them frequently spoke out of phase with one

<sup>27</sup> Told by János Fodor *Selyem* (b. 1932), August 21, 1998. In Visa. Collected by Sándor Varga. The village called Béré (Bărăi) mentioned in the text is located between Visa and Magyarpalatka (Pălatca) Magyarpalatka remained a significant center for the musicians of Inner-Mezőség all the way up to the late 1980s (VARGA 2016:261).

<sup>28</sup> These differences can be seen in two dance films shot in Visa in 1964. In the film MTA BTK ZTI Ft 802.8a-b, the old Mezőség rare lad's dance is performed solo by Vilmos Kiss *Császár*, born in 1916. The film MTA BTK ZTI Ft. 802.6a-b shows the rare lad's dance registered as the *tárnăveana* being performed by (left to right): Mihály Gáspár "Misi" (1913), Samu Papp (1937), Zoltán Kiss *Császár* (1943), Sándor Kiss *Császár* (1940). The movements of the man on the left, the exquisite dancer Mihály Gáspár *Misi*, show how he is attempting to adapt to the steady dance process of the other three men, but he is unable to do so (VISA 1964a–b).

<sup>29</sup> István Pávai already called attention to this earlier. (PÁVAI 2012:97, 383.) In connection with such phenomena, Martin denotes them as being a polymorph category with mixed genres of complex, sociotype dances (MARTIN 1979:207).

another.<sup>30</sup> In comparing earlier research and related critical perspectives in professional publications with information gleaned from newer fieldwork that takes emic categories into account, it turned out that elements in this group of phenomena did not appear in Mezőség simultaneously, and presumably not from a single direction. According to relevant studies, the musical accompaniment of the *tárnăveana* in the aforementioned partner and men's form arrived to Mezőség earlier from the east, sometime between the two world wars. Presumably, the impact of the Marosszék *korcsos* (lit. hybrid) dance was behind the diffusion of the music. György Martin also noted the circulation of the *korcsos* dance and wrote the following in his study entitled Hungarian dance dialects of the Maros–Küküllő Region: “The other incoming couple's dance, the *Marosszék forgató*s (lit. Marosszék turning), or *korcsos* – which is actually archaic in its own region – arrived about half a century ago under the name *féloláhos* along the river Kis-Küküllő to the area of Dicsőszentmárton, but today it is still less developed in form and melody than in Marosszék and along the Nyárad river to the north. Its circulation was inhibited by certain dance technique factors.” He continues in corresponding footnote 27: “The whirl dance emphasizes the up-stroke and an inner-leg twirl, which is the opposite of the traditional Hungarian couple's dance stressing the up-stroke and outer-leg twirl. Similarities in stress and music metrics to those of the old Romanian *învîrtită* (Romanian term for turning) – along with its Székely origin – may be the reason why the whirl dance was designated as *féloláhos*” (MARTIN 1982:188).

As György Martin already noted on the basis of his studies launched during the 1960s, a similar phenomenon can also be observed in Mezőség around the 1940s, when motifs typical of local couple's whirling-twirling dances began to be applied to new music that had appeared in the 1930s. “Occasional usage of the *forгатó*s couple's dance called *korcsos*, *tirnava* or *tirnoveanka* with fast *dűvő* accompaniment\*, coming to Mezőség from the east, in which the still inconsistent alternation of the up-stroke and down-stroke, indicated this newer permeation” (MARTIN 1990c:437).<sup>31</sup> Gyula Pálfi concurs with the above in his studies of the set of dances used in Vajdakamrás (Vaida-Cămăraș) in the inner area of Mezőség. Like Martin, Pálfi merely describes the *tárnăveana* as a couple's dance: “Name variations: *tirnava* or *tirnáva*. Musical accompaniment: MM quarter = 84–104 tempo, 2/4 measure, fast *dűvő* *kontra*-accompaniment counter-melody. The melodies consist of four-bar sections, and melodically structured interludes are also common. The local variation of the fashionable *Marosszék forgató*s spread to Vajdakamrás in the 1940s. Locals regarded the dance as originating from the Küküllő Region – referring

<sup>30</sup> Even so, data from extensive interviews seems to indicate that the sources were aware of the differences in the phenomena behind the *tárnăveana* name, even if they did not use separate terms to designate them. See for example the source quoted above, who mentions the men's form of the dance, but also the partner version. For more on the problems of communication between researchers and sources, see also: PÁVAI 2012:340–341.

<sup>31</sup> A single piece of data testifies to the fact that around the 1960s and the 1970s in the village of Búza, locals also danced seven-step to the music of the *tárnăveana* (GALÁT et al. 2019:22). Connections with various dance types for shorter and longer periods of time also suggest the relatively late arrival of the given phenomenon. Further research is required.

\* Translator's note: In the rhythmic scheme fast *dűvő*, the first two quavers are sounded in unison by the double-bass and viola or contra player's down-stroke and the second two quavers up-stroke (FÜGEDI – VAVRINECZ 2013:20).

to the Romanian meaning of the name. Frequent variations on the name elsewhere include *korcsos* or *féloláhos*” (PÁLFY 1988:267–268). Footnote 28 of his study reads thus: “The lack of a Hungarian variation of the name (Tirnavă is the Romanian name for the Küküllő River) may suggest that the dance was taken directly from Romanians, but a simpler explanation may be the fact that the gypsies of Magyarpalatka – although they are Protestants – do not speak Hungarian.” (PÁLFY 1988:267). In a later text (1996), Pálffy still mentions the *tárnăveana* as a couple dance, noting that both Hungarians and Romanians use the same term. In the same study, he writes that the dance appearing in the Inner Mezőség area at the end of the 1940s may have taken root via the periodic structure of its musical accompaniment, that shows features similar to earlier dance melodies in Mezőség, but also that the increased tempo was typical of this region (PÁLFY 1996:8). At the same time, it is confusing that the table of contents in the publication also lists the name *korcsos* alongside the term *tárnăveana* (ÉRI et al. eds. 1996:3b musical track) in a way similar to Martin’s aforementioned summary. István Pávai also lists the examined phenomenon among couple’s dances. Like Martin, he traces the origin of the dance to the whirling dances of the Udvarhelyszék and Küküllő region, which were practiced with *fast dívős* musical accompaniment, and he also mentions the so-called *korcsos* variations danced in the East Mezőség and Upper Maros territories (PÁVAI 1993:93–94). Equally troublesome is the fact that he considers the *korcsos* designation to be valid for Inner Mezőség as well, and his use of terminology also blurs differences between the dance and the music.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, he clearly perceives the rhythmic pulsation of the combined couple’s and men’s dance variation in relation to the local lad’s dance.<sup>33</sup> His usage of terminology implies uncertainty, however.<sup>34</sup> The situation is further complicated by the fact that the term *korcsos* in connection with the dance culture of Mezőség also appears in other academic texts. In a study considered by Hungarian folkloristics to be one of the first report on Mezőség, for example, József Faragó writes that Hungarians in Pusztakamarás (Cămărașu) already referred to the so-called *korcsos* as a very old couple’s dance during the 1940s (FARAGÓ 1946:8–9). At the same time, his fieldwork over the last few years in connection with the dance culture of Pusztakamarás and its vicinity i.e. Berkenyes (Berchieșu), Magyarfráta (Frata), Mezóméhes (Miheșu de

<sup>32</sup> “Awareness of the ethnic mix is also reflected in the name variation *korcsos*, used in the East-Mezőség and Upper-Maros regions. The *dance* [italicized by the author] spread to the Inner-Mezőség under this name – relatively late – but it was actually the *music* [italicized by the author] that became fashionable there because the dance to the one-eighth counter-melody does not stress the down-stroke, but is combined with the local *csárdás*, which stresses the up-stroke, in such a way that a musical eighth corresponds to a danced fourth.” (PÁVAI 1993:94).

<sup>33</sup> “This results in an extremely virtuosic couple dance, which the man can enhance with figures and slaps since the *kontra*-accompaniment is similar to the rare lad’s dance, the difference being that the accompaniment to the *korcsos* is continuously swinging while that of the lad’s dance is spasmodic” (PÁVAI 1993:94).

<sup>34</sup> Melody sample no. 70 illustrates a Mezőség *tárnăveana* (PÁVAI 1993:265–267) while no. 71 shows a Magyarpalatka *korcsos* (PÁVAI 1993:267–270). The latter was recorded at a 1985 dance event in Viza (PÁVAI 1993:418.) In Viza, the dance is clearly designated as *tárnăveana*, but as far as I know the name *korcsos* only began to be used in other villages of the Inner Mezőség area after 1990. In a later book, István Pávai refers to the melody mentioned above as *tárnăveana* (PÁVAI 2012:83–86), whereas his description of the spread of the *korcsos* is identical to the text from 1993 (PÁVAI 2012:272).

Câmpie), Mezőörményes (Urmeniș) prove that Hungarians living here practice dances characteristic of Marosszék (GALÁT et al. 2019:15, 20). For this reason, associating this village located on the boundaries of the Mezőség and Marosszék with the Mezőség dance dialect is questionable.<sup>35</sup> In 1964, Zoltán Kallós also mentions a couple's dance of newer origin in connection with the range of dances practiced in Válaszút (Răscruți), but his data concerning its name is uncertain.<sup>36</sup> Based on all of the above, after the 1970s, a significant number of amateur Hungarian dance and music researchers as well as dance instructors participating in ethnological fieldwork began to designate variations of the *târnăveana* with the name *korcsos*,<sup>37</sup> and some of these were even mistakenly registered in the written records of films made in the course of research.<sup>38</sup> This also reflects professional uncertainty with regards to terminology.

As I have mentioned above: research launched in the 1990s is yielding more and more information regarding the fact that lad's dances in Mezőség after the 1950s were also danced to the music of the *târnăveana*, although evidence of this has been blurred by the lack of attention to local terminology. As in the case of the above, variations of the *târnăveana* men's dance have been mistakenly registered by Hungarian dance folklorists as *korcsos* and *ritka magyar* (lit. rare Hungarian), or rare lad's dance.<sup>39</sup> In doing so, they spread the false belief that the dance fits the form categorized by György Martin as *mezőségi* (italicized by the author) slow lad's dance and also that locals consider the dance to be Hungarian. In contrast, intensive fieldwork during the 1990s revealed that

<sup>35</sup> Based on textual descriptions of the movements, it can be concluded that the couple dance mentioned here correlates with the Marosszék *korcsos* (FARAGÓ 1946:8).

<sup>36</sup> "A new dance form common to Romanian and Hungarian villages located in the direction Bonchida (Bonțida), Szék, and beyond to Mocs (Mociu), has recently begun to spread among the Romanians of Válaszút. This dance exists in the Székely region in the area of Marosszék and Marosvásárhely under the name *korcsos*. It is also danced in Visa, directly in the vicinity of Válaszút." (KALLÓS 1964:245). György Martin's study on the dance cycles practiced in Bonchida makes no mention of either the *korcsos* or the *târnăveana* (MARTIN 1978). Our research conducted in Válaszút and Bonchida yielded no data in connection with either name. According to musicians playing in the Kis-Szamos area and in Erdőalja in Transylvania as well as Erdőszombattelki (Sămboieni) and Ördöngösfüzesi (Fizeșu Gherlii), however, the dance called *târnăveana* spread to these territories the 1960s and the 1970s. The oldest sources in the village of Erdőalja Ormány (Orman), born in the 1910s, were not familiar with the term *târnăveana*, whereas those born during the 1930s knew of it and danced a local rare lad's dance (*ungurește* lit. Hungarian) to the music. (Data originates from the early 2000s.) Uncertainties regarding familiarity with the dance and the music suggest that the phenomenon in question scarcely touched the territory (Kis-Szamos Valley, Erdőhát in Transylvania) and did not take root.

<sup>37</sup> See some musical releases popular in the folk dance movement: (KALLÓS – MARTIN 1985:track A/4. ÁRENDÁS ed. 2010:track 4). The web-page *Mozdulatba vésett gyökerek* (Roots Carved in Movement) was established with the aim of digitally preserving the intellectual/cultural legacy of the Hungarian minority in Romania. Its registry of dance recordings from Báré, Magyarpalatka, Magyarzováti (Suatu) and Mezőkeszűi (Chesău) reads: *korcsos (târnăveana)* (MÉDIATÁR 2020).

<sup>38</sup> The name of the MTA BTK ZTI Ft 685.17 dance is registered as *korcsos*, with *tirnava* later scribbled beside it in pencil (VAJDAKAMARÁS 1969). See also: dance no. MTA BTK ZTI Ft 1100.3b. (VISA 1981a). The terminological confusion is also apparent in another film recording of a dance from Visa (Ft. 1113.49), designated in the registry as *Târnavă*. (VISA 1981b).

<sup>39</sup> For example, see data from registered notes on the following dances: VISA 1964a–b, and MTA BTK ZTI Ft. 548.1 (MAGYARPALATKA 1963); Ft. 988. 4, 5, 11, 14, 15 (VISA 1978); Ft. 1113.38 (MAGYARPALATKA 1981) and Ft. 1113.45 (VISA 1981b).

the Gypsies, Hungarians and Romanians interviewed in Mezőség all regard the dance to be a new arrival of Romanian origin, one that clearly came from the Küküllő Region.

Due to the research deficiencies described above, primarily methodological, as well as a view which neglected to take into account the multi-ethnic features of Mezőség culture, the group of studied phenomena designated as *târnăveana* came to be embraced and known in the dance hall movement under the name *korcsos* and is in most cases associated with a Hungarian ethnic image.<sup>40</sup> We see a similar pattern on the part of Romanians as well.<sup>41</sup> In the case of the latter, the dance is clearly designated as *târnăveana* and is consistently referred to in professional literature as such.<sup>42</sup> The dance plays an important role in folklore performances and is unequivocally regarded as a Romanian national treasure in the context of Romanian revival. Further evidence is the fact that the 2003 UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage includes the male dance (*târnăveana*) as a ritual dance among Romanian male dances (CERTIFICAT 2003:13–14, 25). The Romanian lad’s dance was placed on the list in 2015 (MALE DANCES 2015).<sup>43</sup>

In moving from the traditional environment to the revival context, the dance thus underwent a transformation in function and meaning: it bears additional political meaning and ethnic markers among both Romanians and Hungarians. This is even more apparent in the communication between sources and Hungarian researchers, dancers and folklore tourists after 1990, in which it was not only Hungarian dance sources in Mezőség, but also Gypsy musicians who began to use the term *korcsos* with increasing frequency.<sup>44</sup> Misunderstandings in connection with the studied phenomena can even extend over borders, passing through multiple ethnic “refractions”. The story below also illustrates this: In 2006, during an evening at a Transylvanian dance camp given high-priority funding by the Hungarian government, I made an experiment and asked the revival musicians from Kolozsvár who were providing the music for the dance hall

<sup>40</sup> A Google search on January 18, 2020 revealed that out of the first 50 Hungarian language entries for the word *korcsos*, 23 referred to variations in the Marosszék and Upper Maros Region – which is correct according to our present knowledge of dance folklore. On the other hand, 26 entries linked to pages where the term *korcsos* was associated with the dance hall category of Hungarian dances from Mezőség. Among the latter, three links provide supplementary information using the term *târnăveana* in quotation marks or parentheses.

<sup>41</sup> A Google search on January 18, 2020 revealed that out of the first 50 Romanian language entries for the word *târnăveana* 15 referred to the dance. None of these links contain the term *korcsos* or mention any possible Hungarian references.

<sup>42</sup> In Zamfir Dejeu’s summary, as in the case of other Transylvanian dances, the *târnăveana* is clearly regarded by the author as being of Romanian origin. The dance is described as a rare lad’s dance typical of Kolozs County and the Maros–Küküllő Region. According to Dejeu, in North-East Transylvania (e.g. in Beszterce County), the same dance is referred to as *rarul* (lit. rare). (DEJEU 2000:213).

<sup>43</sup> The 2015 UNESCO decision caused a smaller scandal within the Hungarian folk dance movement (SZILVAY 2017).

<sup>44</sup> I see the development of this phenomenon as the result of public education activities by Zoltán Kallós, who consciously used Hungarian names to designate the Romanian or “Romanian-like” elements of Mezőség culture. Several interviews revealed that sources in Mezőség first heard the names of certain dances (*akasztós*, *korcsos*) in statements made by Kallós on the radio. Among my Romanian sources in mixed villages who knew Hungarian, but did not listen to Hungarian-language radio, none of them were familiar with these terms.



to play a *tîrnăveana*. Their response: “Well, that’s typical of Hungarians from Hungary. They don’t even know the Hungarian names for the dances here...it’s called *korcsos!*”

All of this is completely in line with the political ideology of the folk dance movement in both countries. Increased financial support for the national minority across the border, manifest in a growing number of festivals, folk art camps and media coverage show that Hungarian as well as Romanian cultural policy not only supports folk art as a community-building and artistic activity, but also uses it as a tool of propaganda. At the same time, new analyses of the connection between folk music, folk dance and present-day political bias is practically non-existent today, albeit “at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, behind the manifest function of preserving folk dance culture present only in revival form, which is to say the ‘neutral’ and ‘harmless’ preservation of tradition, there is always also a latent function that aims to develop and reinforce awareness of national (ethnic) identity in representation through dance. Whether the latter comes to the forefront, meaning how ‘visible’ and ‘articulate’ dance policy becomes, depends on the political-social attitude towards the audience.” (KAVECSÁNSZKI 2013:94).

## IN CONCLUSION

The contextual approach has rarely appeared in Hungarian folk dance research and never became a decisive theory “recast” in Hungarian research material.<sup>45</sup> In spite of endeavors that also pointed in this direction during the 1940s,<sup>46</sup> the trend eventually faded into the background – as I have already mentioned in my introduction. László Felföldi cites the appearance of the functionalist approach in the same dance monographies in which the authors devote separate chapters to the general economic-geographic or political features of the studied settlements and territories (FELFÖLDI 1997:103). Only in rare cases do the authors connect these with or make mention of these in relation to dance culture, never presenting the cultural or socio-political context in a way that dance phenomena can be interpreted functionally within this framework. Generally, this involves ethnographic descriptions in which the authors present the researched dance material, the individual dance personality and dance life of the given village alongside separate chapters dealing with cultural-social background, leaving the reader to “imply” the connections. Therefore, we cannot regard them as representing a functionalist or contextual approach – since this would require a separate interpretive and methodological framework and system of tools (Vö. SZŐNYI 2019:39–40).

In this study, I have attempted to explain the reasons for the transformation of two dance types by describing the cornerstones of the related economic and cultural policy context. My research bears witness to what is now regarded as a scientific cliché: when cultural phenomenon are removed from their earlier environment to a new framework,

<sup>45</sup> Even so, Hungarian reflections on international examples were already taking place in 1939 (VARGA, S. F. 1939).

<sup>46</sup> Here I am primarily thinking about studies by Márta Belényesy in connection with changes in the dance culture of Szeklers in Bukovina. (BELÉNYESY 1958). We are already familiar with appeals for this dating from the period before the communist takeover, which practically spelled out a program (KAPOSI 1947:24–25).

they take on an entirely different role and meaning strongly influenced by the unique system of rules in the new cultural milieu. It can be added that changes in the form of the aforementioned dances also signify this transformation; due to their power of verification, I therefore consider the study of form and structure to be important in the case of anthropological studies as well.

Like Dr. Károly Kós, I believe that it is not possible to outline changes in folk life, folk culture and individual phenomena without knowledge of relevant historical and economic-political processes (Kós 2000/I:137). In my opinion, understanding the disappearance of implement dances in Mezőség would not be possible without examining local historical events related to economic policy.

The case studies above show that folklore and folklorism co-existed simultaneously as two systems which had a mutual impact on one another. I agree with Anca Giurchescu when she claims that the difference lies in the fact that folklore cannot be controlled whereas folklorism is the result of a strictly controlled selection and transformation, which is why folklorism is always a part of cultural policy.<sup>47</sup> In the course of presenting traditional folklore on the stage as folklorism, the past is depicted as the present, giving an image of continuity. It is in this way that, folklorism using frequently standardized rhetorical symbols on stage becomes a tool enabling the political elite to legitimize itself and its activities. (GIURCHESCU 2001:116).<sup>48</sup> These attempts at legitimization can then be further justified by the manipulation of certain expressions, such as authenticity, “pure source,” etc. These in turn help to justify the credibility of the performed dance and music productions and their place among our common national treasures.<sup>49</sup> Views that increasingly spread in public education and academic circles concerning the origin, “authenticity” and ethnic affiliation of the studied dances did not correspond to established

<sup>47</sup> “Folklore and folklorism can exist as two simultaneous systems of communication, mutually influencing each other. The major difference between folklore and folklorism lies in the fact that folklore is an uncontrollable process, while folklorism results from the strictly guided selection and transformation of folklore. Therefore folklorism was, and still is, used in cultural politics as an important instrument for education and social change” (GIURCHESCU 2001:117).

<sup>48</sup> For example, legitimization of the communist regime was reinforced through cultural competitions during the 1950s, which attempted to use happy scenes of village life to conceal the reality of poverty-struck rural areas during the organization of agricultural cooperatives. Similar phenomena could be experienced in connection with the Gyöngyösbokréta (pearly bouquet) Movement in the interwar period, but strong state support for today’s televised talent show called “Felszállott a páva” (translated roughly as “The Peacock Takes Off”) also suggests political intent.

<sup>49</sup> “In order to legitimate folklorism, the Communist cultural management equated folklorism with folklore by covering up their basic difference and presenting all forms of folklorism as »present day folklore« and »folklore of the socialist epoch« Conversely, the uncontrollable, living tradition was marginalized, being considered subject to pollution and disintegration. According to this theory, real and authentic folklore should exist only in the artistic and crystallized forms as presented by professional and amateur ensembles. Because it bears such connotations as originality, purity, and genuineness, the concept of authenticity was, and still is, invoked to support this theoretical confusion. However, authenticity is a romantic construction. If authenticity has the connotation of »truth,« then every performance which makes sense for the people is implicitly authentic. Conversely, in the context of a stage performance even the closest reproduction of a folklore model still remains an imitation.” (GIURCHESCU 2001:117).

scientific facts at all.<sup>50</sup> György Martin regarded Transylvanian male dances as a separate branch of old East-European dances which “as a consequence of the unique internal development of Transylvanian dance culture independently reached a high level based on long-standing elements preserved from the Middle-Ages and the Renaissance.” (MARTIN 1990b:331). It was also Martin who noted that “the main source of the extraordinary richness of folk culture in Transylvania was the relationship between villages of mixed ethnicity, where the culture of Hungarian, Romanian, and Saxon peoples as well as that of the Gypsy population resulted in a fertile mutual impact that developed over the course of several centuries” (MARTIN 1990c:431). Thus, relevant historical and ethnographic research suggests that the dances mentioned above originated and formed in the mixed ethnic environment of Central Transylvania. Seen from this perspective, dance is part of European cultural heritage and that of the Hungarian, Romanian and Gypsy culture within. With regards to ethnic affiliation, discourse on a shift in proportion can only take place on the basis of far more thorough historical source analysis and internet-based research.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Nóra Adorjányi-Szabó, József Both, János Fügedi, Zoltán Karácsony, Dániel Lipták and István Pávai for their help in writing this study.

This study was created in the framework of project no. K 124270 via the K\_17 research funding program with the support of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

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<sup>50</sup> It is also worth examining a scientific policy issue in connection with this. Historical dance data in Hungarian folkloristics with regards to practically all implement dances implies the “Hajdú” dance as being the first Hungarian national dance (KÜRTI 2017; 2018:159–160) while the majority of Romanian researchers see traces of the first Romanian national dance, the *kaluser*, in the same sources (FIRICĂ 2011:4–6). Giurchescu in fact concurs with György Martin in viewing the ritual *kaluser* implement dance as originating from the “Hajdú” dances and the wider group of leaping dances (GIURCHESCU 1992:40–41).

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