

THE POLITICS OF CULTURE: FOLK CRITIQUE AND TRANSFORMATION OF
THE STATE IN HUNGARY

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

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In the 1970's, a folk revival movement—*táncház*—emerged in the capital city of Hungary, Budapest, that gained wide popularity and has continued to flourish for over thirty years, due partly to its focus on the participatory practices of folk dance as social dance; as an associative activity. By examining *táncház* in relation to a populist movement, or “folk critique” of the interwar period, the cultural politics of the socialist period, patterns of liberalization in late socialist and postsocialist periods, and the broadening webs of governance focused on heritage in the post socialist period, I show that the content of the revival is contingent on historical circumstances.

Arguing that associative forms and state forms are mutually constitutive, this study examines why ethnonationalist expression is pervasive in revivalist settings today by viewing it through historical and political economic lenses. The study shows that while folk revival is not always and necessarily ethnonationalistic, the “folk critique” that preceded *táncház*, was focused on the cultivation of citizens, as is *táncház*, today. By viewing the revival as an associative activity concerned with the cultivation of the “volk” (*nép*), the study challenges the claim made by participants that, as a voluntary leisure activity, *táncház* lies outside the political sphere. It shows both how the aesthetic

practices of *táncház* work to “cultivate” participants as particular kinds of Hungarians, and how such cultivation is related their behavior in the political sphere.

Civic cultivation ensues from the interaction of nation making and state formation, and the study elucidates the revival’s relationship with state formation in the late socialist and postsocialist periods. A rollback of social citizenship has coincided with a “cultural turn”, the origins of which can be traced to the late socialist period and connected to webs of governance focused on civil society and cultural citizenship. Examining these processes in relation to *táncház* “nationalism”, I offer one perspective on the “rise of ethnonationalism” and the “rising tide of populism” in the Post Socialist era, suggesting not only that we attend to historical nuance, but that we consider the “state functions” of supranational agencies as implicated in nation making and ethnonationalism.

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Glossary of Hungarian Terms

Bokrétás Szövetség-The Association of Bouquets.

Bokrétások Lapja-The Bouquet Journal.

Csardás-“of the inn”-A dance “invented” in the 19th century from elements of folk dances.

Egyke-The diminutive of one-used to describe the “one child” system practiced by peasants.

Fáj-Race.

Fiatal Népművészetek Studioja-Studio of Young Folk Artists.

FIDESZ-Originally, The Young Democrats. It later added MPP-Hungarian Citizen’s Party to its name, becoming FIDESZ-MPP.

Föld-Land.

Gyöngyös Bokréta-Bouquet of Pearls –A folk revival movement in the 1930s and 1940s.

Hagyományörző- “tradition keeping” (usually referring to people or ensembles).

Hitel-Trust, The biweekly of the political party Magyar Demokrata Forum (MDF).

Idegenforgalmi vendégház-Tourist guesthouse.

KISZ-Kommunista Ifjúság Szövetsége- The Communist Youth League.

Kollégium-College, dormitory.

Középosztály -The middle class. Used until the socialist period to mean the class made up of the bureaucratic/officer class derived from the nobility.

Magyar-Hungarian.

Magyar Földművés Játékszín-The Hungarian Cultivators’ Theater.

Magyarország-Hungary.

Magyarország nemzetiségei–the nationalities of Hungary.

MDF-Magyar Demokrata Forum- The Hungarian Democratic Forum.

Menetjegy iroda-Booking office.

MIÉP-Magyar Élet es Igazság Pártja The Hungarian Life and Justice Party.

Mozgó Világ-World in Motion, an arts and literary journal.

MSZP-Magyar Szocialista Part -The Hungarian Socialist Party.

MSZMP–Magyar Szocialista Munkas Part -Magyar Socialist Worker’s Party.

Műkedvelő-“Art loving”.

Művelt-Cultured, refined.

Művelés-The act of Cultivating (See also *Népművelés*).

Művelődés-Cultivation, Culture (see also *Nemzeti Művelődés*).

Natio-the latin for nation, used in Feudal jurisprudence to mean those with rights:nobility.

NÉKOSZ-Népi Kollégiumok Szövetsége-The Association of Folk Colleges.

Nép-“people”, folk. Parallel to the German “volk”.

Népi-of the people, folk.

Népies-folksy.

Népi írók-Folk writers, also known as populist writers.

Népi Kollegiumok-Folk colleges.

Népi mozgalom-the “Populist movement”.

Népi nemzeti művelődés-Folk-National cultivation.

Népművelés-People’s cultivation.

Népművészet Mestere-Master of Folk Art.

Népművészet Ifju Mestere-Young Master of Folk Art.

Népoktatás-People’s education.

Néprajz-Ethnography.

Néprajzi Kutató Csoport-Ethnographic Research Group.

Népviseleti hely-“place of folk costume”.

Nemzet-Nation.

Nemzethalál-death of the nation.

Nemzetiség-“Nationality”.

Nevelés-Upbringing, socialization.

Nevelési egyletek-Pedagogical societies.

Országos Háziipari Szövetség-National Cottage Industry Association.

Polgárság-The bourgeoisie, used until the socialist period as a gloss for Jew. Now used by FIDESZ in its broader title: the Hungarian citizen’s party.

Regös czerkészet-The wandering, or caroling scouts. A subtype of the boy scouts.

Székesfővárosi Népművelési Bizottság-Capital City Council of People’s Cultivation.

Szabad Szó-Free Word. The journal of the Peasant Party.

SZDSZ-Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége-Alliance of Free Democrats.

Regöls-a folk practice akin to caroling.

Regös Cserkeszet- Wandering scouts.

Rendszerváltás-“regime change” as finished act.

Rendszerváltozás-“regime change” continuous.

Szellemi-spiritual, intellectual .

Tájház- guest houses (literally landscape house).

Támogatott-Sponsored (One of the Three Ts).

Táncház-dancehouse. The name of the folk revival movement that emerged in the 1970’s in Hungary.

Tánc és illem tanárok-dance masters, “dance and courtesy instructors”.

Táncoló nép-dancing people.

Tárgyi-material.

Tiltott-Forbidden (One of the three T’s).

Tört-Tolerated (one of the three T’s) .

Urbánus (plural-*urbánusok*)-Urbanist. Often translated as urbanite. One side of *Népi-Urbánus* debate of the 1930s.

Új Szellemi Front-New Spiritual Front –A initiative by Gyula Gombos to secure the aid of important intellectuals (including Bartok and the populist writers) in the 1930s.

Verbunk, or *verbunkos*-A solo men’s dance which is part of folk repertoire. Reinvented, like the *csárdás*, in the 19th century.

Visszahatás-mutual influence .

Zsidó-Jew.

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the *táncház*, a folk revival movement that emerged in Hungary in the 1970s. Although it is about Hungarian folk dancing and those Hungarians who do it regularly, the study concentrates equally on how the *táncház* is an instance of what I term “folk critiques”. In the twentieth century Hungary has witnessed a number of movements that have defined citizenship by emphasizing the folk. My thesis turns on the fact that because in Hungarian, as in many languages, the very terms folk (*nép*) and nation are laden with contradictions, their interpretation is sensitive to the political and economic environment. Rather than relying on the notion that folk revivals are expressions of nationalist sentiment, this work argues that folk revivals are constitutive. By examining folk revival as an instance of folk critique, I illuminate how it is implicated in cultivating citizenship and the possibilities for its enactment. I examine how these practices of folk revival are imbricated in the processes of state formation and nation-state formation, and in projects of civic cultivation and the production of collective memory, which often turn on notions of cultural distinction. In order to elucidate the refractions of folk critiques and the specific constitutive folk related practices of *táncház*, this study tracks their elements over the “longue duree”. Insisting on the historical contingencies of nationalism, the study will illuminate how these folk dance-centered practices aimed at the cultivation of citizens have assumed an ethnonational expression in the postsocialist period.

Because my fieldwork was conducted in 2004, on a movement that only arose in the 1970’s, readers may be surprised to find entire chapters dedicated to periods

long preceding its emergence. I examine *táncház* as a form of association¹, asking in what ways it produces and reproduces a “framework of sense”(Melucci 1988), and to what effects. Although referring to *táncház* as a movement, studies of *táncház* have tended to describe it as a thing, rather than as an element in a process of state formation spanning distinguishable political economic regimes. I build on this work while adding a historical perspective that allows insight into how and in which ways elements of *táncház* have changed over time. *Táncház* arose in the 1970s, in what has been referred to as the “Gulash Communism” of the government of János Kádár. Its rise reflected local and international trends in folk revival dating back to the 1930s, as well as the peculiar circumstances of the late socialist period in Hungary. However, it would be incorrect, indeed naïve, to describe its contemporary manifestation simply according to these circumstances, for the conditions in which *táncház* exists continue to change. While I employ the terms socialist and post socialist as conventional markers of a broadly acknowledged periodization, I illustrate how *táncház* emerged and contributed to a generalized associative milieu spanning this conventional chronology. My frequent reference to the “late socialist period will help to define the roots of contemporary developments.

It is my contention that no such study would be complete without attention to the social changes in Hungarian society over the last century, in relation to which practices of folk critique and folk dance, and the authority of particular practices and places, have developed. As such, beyond participant observation, I have relied on literature, archival materials, and accounts of the past to elucidate earlier folk critiques and their relationship to *táncház*, as well as the early days of *táncház* itself.

¹ With Chris Hann, I see “no need to reduce associations to formal associations built up of individual members conceived primarily as entrepreneurial actors”(2006:162).

With regard to participant observation, my research was intended to expose me to “tacit knowledge” through participation in bodily and spatial practices engaged in by revivalists. The design of my 2004-2005 participant observation was based on the notion that the sensual, bodily participation in the dance and dance events would be crucial to discovering the way in which a “framework of sense” (Melucci 1988) may be produced through the practices of the movement. Given this, I attempted to enter into *táncház* practices as any newcomer would: After several preliminary forays into the world of *táncház* in 1995, 2000, and 2002, I attended *táncház* events for one year in 2004, slowly becoming more familiar with dances, music, and *táncház* goers. Participation in *táncház* and my status of guest at Heritage House and at the Ethnographic Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences immersed me in a network of individuals variously connected to and knowledgeable about the *táncház*, including those people who ceased to participate for one reason or another. Beyond those connections, my research has benefited from hours of discussion with Hungarian friends not involved in any of the above. I am grateful to all of them. Convinced that what they are doing is good and believing-despite my statements about my intentions- that my study was motivated primarily by recognition of the beauty of folk dance and music, *táncház* goers reluctantly accepted, if they ever did, that this would be a critical study. I could not have gained the knowledge I share here without their gracious acceptance of and faith in me.

Civil Society and Cultivating Citizens of the National State

This dissertation examines *táncház* within the process of what I term civic cultivation. I define civic cultivation as the process resulting from struggles within civil society concerning the education of the masses toward the practice of

citizenship. This project of civic cultivation should be considered within the context of activities including what has been referred to as adult education, moral education, public education, public cultivation, extracurricular education, socialization, and cultural, or aesthetic, enlightenment. My choice to employ the term *civic* before the term cultivation is to highlight the historical situations in which such activities arose—within the radically altered political contexts in which citizenship was redefined as something arguably attainable by all people.

While nation and civil society are often contrasted with one another, their mutually informing relationship becomes more apparent when examined within the process of state formation. Antonio Gramsci (1971) made it clear that civil society cannot be understood except in relation to the state. Chris Hann has suggested that “the task must be to investigate their complex and continuous interactions”(1996:9), while Philip Abrams (1988) has urged that we examine the practices and processual dimensions of the dynamic formation of “the state”. The development of civil society in Hungary, as in East Central Europe, was intimately tied to the making of a “nation-state” out of a feudal kingdom enveloped in a greater empire in an age when the nation state was becoming the dominant form of polity in Europe. The tension between the terms nation and civil society in this region and in others continues to be noted (Verdery 1996, also see Chatterjee 1986). Associational life blossomed in Hungary during the 19th century periods of reform and romanticism; among them were those aiming to articulate the nation through the promotion of economic and political independence, and the establishment of a “national culture”. Such efforts were made sometimes in opposition to and sometimes in cooperation with the government, as coalitions formed around specific interests. Debates over the nation- over who should be included in the political nation and the relationship

of the political nation to the ethnic nation—were intimately connected to ideas concerning the requirements and privileges of citizenship. Key to these debates were ideas about culture, or cultivation. As Terry Eagleton asserts, “for the state to flourish it must inculcate in its citizens the proper sorts of spiritual disposition; and it is this which the idea of culture, of *bildung*, signifies a venerable tradition from Schiller to Mathew Arnold” (Eagleton 2000: 6). He views culture, cultivation, as a kind of “ethical pedagogy aimed at producing citizens (Eagleton 2000:7).²

In Western Europe the development of the nation-state system and associated social transformations were connected with revolutionary demands for civil liberties and rights. The idea of democracy—that the nation was to be made up of the body of citizens of a polity “in contract” with the state- required a transformation of the nature of state sovereignty. While it took a long time before the population as a whole would enjoy political rights (if this has ever been fully achieved), according to Jurgen Habermas, “Nationalism stimulated this move from the status of private subjects to citizenship”(1996: 285).³ Such a process required a transformation of subjectivities, and efforts were directed at the making of citizens out of the agrarian class, quite often referred to as “savages” (Weber 1976). According to Eagleton, “the early bourgeoisie was preoccupied with *virtue*, with the lived habit of moral propriety, rather than the laborious adherence to some external norm(1990:24).” An “ambitious programme of moral education and reconstruction” was required for the cultivation of such virtue, for there was no guarantee that subjects emerging from

² Eagleton warns that while the verb culture as cultivation was sometimes a synonym for civilization, as a noun, culture would evolve into its antonym (Eagleton 2000:9).

³ Interestingly, however, Habermas also asserts that democracies have proven less stable “wherever national movements and wars of liberation against a foreign enemy had first to create borders for nascent national states” (Habermas 1996:284).

the ancien regime would “prove refined and enlightened enough for power to found itself on their sensibilities”. In this social and cultural revolution,

What is at stake [here] is nothing less than the production of an entirely new kind of human subject—one which, like the work of art itself, discovers the law in the depths of its own free identity, rather than some oppressive external power (Eagleton 1990:19).

This process took different forms in different parts of the world, depending on their position in the World System (Wallerstein 1974) and associated trajectories of state formation (Wolf 1969, Weber 1976, Anderson 1984, Gellner 1983, Gilbert and Nugent 1979, Chakrabarty 2000). Introducing a different lens for examining this process, Norbert Elias reconstructs its development by examining the sociogenesis of the state and “civilized personality” as related processes. Suggesting that the period of colonial conquest marks the moment when “nations consider the process of civilization as completed within their own societies”, he points to the differences between Germany and France in this regard (1978:50). As the French empire reached its height, civilization was asserted as something universal (if with strong historicist connotations), and as a justification for rule, whereas for the besieged German ‘nation’, “constantly [seeking] out and constitut[ing] its boundaries anew” the term *Kultur*, which stressed the particular identity of groups, came to have more salience (1978:5-6). There is a movement in both cases, nevertheless, toward the control of impulses, for, as Elias writes: “prohibitions supported as social sanctions are reproduced in the individual as self control” (1978: 186, 187,190).

By adopting this comparative analytic, Elias illuminates the particular circumstances through which this integration has been pursued as civic cultivation. Civic cultivation has been pursued through policy or social movements; that is, in the dynamic process of nation-state making. In places where “political dominance

assumes... more openly coercive forms”, as in the case of Germany in the 18th century (or, we might add, Socialist Eastern Europe), the response might appear, writes Eagleton, as “aesthetic counter strategy- a cultivation of instincts and pieties over which such power rides roughshod”(Eagleton 1990:27). Under those conditions the particular form of *Bildung* arose in which personal cultivation was detached from political expression. As opposed to the French case, where the boundaries of the nobility were porous toward bourgeois elements, the concept of *Kultur* developed among the German bourgeoisie as a distinction marking the deep and spiritual, against the formulaic and ceremonial of the court (ie: civilization). As social conditions changed, and characteristics of the bourgeoisie expanded to become national characteristics, this distinction, which had begun as a class distinction, became a national distinction (Elias 1978:31). This comparison illuminates the particularities of the historical formation of specific projects of cultivation.

Elias’ perspective allows us to detect critical differences and similarities between polities that underwent such integration. The lands that comprised the Habsburg Empire offer an interesting case for the examination of the tensions between processes of *Kultur* and civilization-making. While only a few would assert they were colonies (see Verdery 1983:132)⁴, coercive forms of dominance and geopolitical relations similar to those in reaction to which the ideology of *Kultur* and the practice of *Bildung* arose in Germany can be said to have been present.⁵ And while certainly Imperial rule of these lands differed in significant ways from that of

⁴ See also Böröcz (2001) for an interesting analysis of colonial patterns in relation to contemporary EU expansion.

⁵ I would use caution before describing the Eastern Lands of the Habsburg Empire and Western lands of the Ottoman Empire as modern colonies (Scott-the nature of modern power). Nevertheless, the colonial argument was made by Hungarian nation-statemakers in the face of diversification of the economy in its attempt to lift itself out of the semiperipheral status in the world economy (Verdery 1983:128).

the overseas colonies of European states, we might note that the technologies and discourses used to understand and govern these European populations (Foucault 1991), the concept of civilization among them, coexisted historically and indeed, coevolved, with those applied by western European powers in the colonies. Politics such as Hungary engaged in struggles for nation-statehood at the same time as European colonial powers were applying discourses about backwardness and civilization, conceptions of the pre-political, and finally, theories of race, to colonized peoples; establishing them as outside modernity and accordingly, unprepared for self rule or citizenship (Chakrabarty 2000:43). In other words, the struggles of these future nation-states occurred as modern techniques of governmentality came into fruition in colonies as well as within European nation states.⁶ Indeed, technologies and techniques of modern governmentality such as the census were being applied by the Habsburg Empire to “know” its “peoples” or “tribes” (volkstamms). Further, the politics and peoples of East Central Europe, indeed, of peripheral Europe, were subject to a discursive “Orientalism” based upon a dichotomy of east and west deriving chiefly from western usage, while they also adopted it in their own nation making projects (Bakic-Hayden and Hayden 1992, Wolff 1994, Kideckel 1996).⁷

While Partha Chatterjee distinguishes between the conditions of colonizers and colonized by pointing to “the rule of colonial difference”, David Scott argues that we need to “impose historicity on our understanding of the rationalities that organized the forms of the colonial state”, which means taking a closer look at the particularities of European modernities. While Scott concedes that “to be sure

⁶ Governmentality, as Foucault conceived it, involved the emergence of population as the object of political rationality (Foucault 1991). This focus on the right disposition of things replaces the sovereign focus on territory and is dependent on multiform tactics.

⁷ See also Schneider (1998) for another example of the refraction of Orientalist discourses in peripheral Europe.

modern power in its colonial career may indeed have operated by ‘rules of difference’ nonidentical with those in its European career”, he insists that interrogating the content of modern power allows a better understanding of colonial projects (1999:32). An attack on the conditions which produce behavior was understood to have governing effects on conduct (1999:33), the government of which is the “distinctive strategic end of modern power” (1999:33). The decisive locus of operation for such modern power, Scott argues, is “the new domain of ‘civil society’” (1999:34).

In this new political rationality, Scott argues, “power works not in spite of but through the construction of a space of free social exchange and through the construction of a subjectivity normatively experienced as the source of free will and rational, autonomous agency”(Scott 1999:37). This marked a shift in the point of application of power- toward “reorganizing the conduct or habits of subjects” (Scott 1999:43). He marks this as the introduction of a new game of politics that the colonized would have to play if they were to be counted as political (1999:45), and we can say the same about the agrarian masses in Europe.

As Scott notes,

Europe, between the early modern sixteenth and the late modern nineteenth centuries, was an arena of profound alterations in the languages of the political-the concepts that it depended on, the technologies that enabled it, the institutional sites through which it operated, the structures that guaranteed it, and the kind of subjectivities it required (Scott 1991:51).

Taking Scott’s lead, this study contributes to the knowledge of European particularities necessary for understanding modern power, and also for understanding the lasting effects of particular forms of subjugation within Europe.

In his discussion of the colonial case of India, but included in a general contribution to the study of nationalism, Chatterjee has suggested that one difficulty

with approaches to nationalism “arises because we have all taken the claims of nationalism to be a political movement much too literally and much too seriously” (1986: 5). They fail to recognize a vital historical development that is present in anticolonial nationalism. Anticolonial nationalism, according to Chatterjee,

creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power. It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains—the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the “outside”, of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology...the spiritual on the other hand is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity. The greater one’s success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one’s spiritual culture (Chatterjee 1986:6).

Chatterjee’s attention to the production of an inner sphere of sovereignty in distinction with an outer sphere (connected with coercion) helps us to distinguish patterns of representation reflecting the tensions often recognized as those between civil and political, *kultur* and civilization, and national and civil, within Europe as well. Indeed, his description of the Bengali case is reminiscent of the German context to which both Eagleton and Elias point; the context in which the idea of *Kultur* was posited as a response to that of civilization. Elias writes:

the watchwords expressing this self image of the German intellectual class, terms such as *Bildung* and *Kultur*, tend to draw a sharp distinction ...between this purely spiritual sphere as the only one of genuine value, and the political, economic and social sphere, in complete contrast to the watchwords of the rising bourgeoisie in France and England (1978:27).

Elias suggests that this formulation resulted from the “long political impotence of the German bourgeoisie combined with the late unification of the nation” (1978:27). As we will see, in the Hungarian case, there is direct analogy with Chatterjee’s model, in which social actors find salience in the opposing categories of spiritual/intellectual and material/political—in the distinction between inner and

outer.⁸ It is with this in mind that I emphasize the project of citizenship. Recent political trends associated most obviously with post socialism, postsocialism,⁹ and neoliberalism, which stress the political and civic aspects of citizenship, function to obscure the complex history of social citizenship, fought for and achieved in Europe in specific ways (Seligman 1992). If cultivation is a technology of government aimed at the production of citizens, particular projects of cultivation oscillate between conceptions of *Kultur* and civilization. The history of *tánczás* and folk critiques in Hungary illustrates this oscillation. Examining the process of cultivation in relation to specific struggles over citizenship allows us to more deeply probe the relation of nation and civil society, in particular, the subtle process that produces a “self evident” or mobilizable opposition between inner and outer, spiritual and material, in specific situations. It is to highlight this history that I choose to speak of civic cultivation.

Examining cultivation as an instance of the sociogenesis of the state and the civilized personality, it is important to note that rights to citizenship, in Hungary as elsewhere, were often contingent on the level of cultivation reached both by classes of people and by individuals. In the age of European colonialism, citizenship was denied or greatly circumscribed for colonial subjects and domestic working classes and peasantries alike; both were consigned to the “waiting room” of self government (Chakrabarty 2000). The premodern status assigned to these groups according to historicist thinking, implied that they were not prepared to act as citizens and thus to

⁸Parallel to this, scholars have turned their attention to historical trends resulting from the tension between the concepts of *Kultur* and Civilization (Finkelkraut 1995; Eriksen 2001). Finkelkraut (1995) argues that the tension between the Enlightenment notion of civilization and the Herderian notion of *Kultur*-two approaches toward what we term culture- have led to a curious and dangerous synthesis of the two, in which in the name of the universal, cultural particularity is promoted.

⁹ In this work I employ postsocialism to refer to the conditions in those countries in “postsocialist Eastern Europe” which were under Communist party control. I use post socialism to refer to the global conditions since the “fall of Communism”, as in the “post socialist condition” which has followed its elimination as a viable alternative to Capitalism (Fraser 1997).

take part in political citizenship (Chakrabarty 2000: 8). In Europe, this was illustrated in limitations on the franchise according to land ownership and literacy requirements. In this context, where whole populations were barred from citizenship, a preoccupation with “the people” and things folk—a central facet of the nation building problematic—was intimately connected with the assertion of citizenship rights. It is at this juncture of civilization and *kultur*, as they relate to questions of citizenship, but also to the mandate for and the assertion of unique difference in the form of national cultures, that I propose we view civic cultivation and the development of a not uncontradictory discourse of the inner, or spiritual, as a domain of sovereignty in Hungary. It is as an element in the process of the production of certain kinds of (national) citizens according to the ideas of enlightenment, cultivation, and education, both ethical and aesthetic, that I will introduce the *táncház* and the populist movement that preceded it in interwar Hungary.

Civil Society in Eastern Europe?

The *táncház* arose under conditions of Hungarian “actually existing socialism”, a situation under which Western theorists suggested there was no room for “civil society”, that sphere broadly understood as the sphere between the family and the state (Hann 1996:6). While the view that there was no “civil society” in socialist Eastern Europe has led to an influx of “civil society”-building NGOs to the region since 1989, it has also led to a reevaluation of the concept itself by anthropologists (Hann 1996, Verdery 1996, Gal 1998). Verdery (1996) explores the historically specific ways that notions of nation, Europe, and civil society have interacted in this region, asserting that the notion of civil society, “revived” by dissidents in the late 1980s as a term for a “sphere free of politics”, competes with

the term “nation”. For Eastern Europeans in the postsocialist period, “civil society”, thought to be held together by impersonal bonds of interest, may signify a “return to Europe”, or alternatively, a neoimperialist encroachment of Western European or Cosmopolitan values (see Verdery 1996). Indeed, to postsocialist subjects for whom social citizenship was the primary form of citizenship, “civil society” in its common sense contemporary meaning may appear as the unwelcome bed partner of the kinds of inequalities and dispossessions that beset their lives following the introduction of “shock therapy” and the evolution of (neo) liberal state forms. Indeed, for some, the “nation”, informed by “traditional” bonds such as kinship, religion, and ethnicity, may represent a sphere free of both socialist and liberal influences, both understood as foreign.

Because the term “civil society” can represent to Eastern Europeans the kind of secularizing, individualizing, “Westernizing” impulse now seen in the practices of NGOs, anthropologists would be wise to enlarge the concept to encompass “alternative forms of social relationship to those assumed by liberal-individualism”(Hann 1996:5). Challenging the idea that in Socialist Eastern Europe there was no space between the state and family in which individuals could engage in autonomous association, scholars such as Hann (1996) and Buchowski (1996) consider associations such as Solidarity in Poland to be evidence of the existence of civil society-like spaces. However, Hann’s reminder that “the main distinguishing feature of the opposition to communism in Eastern Europe was its anti-political character (1996:8),” and Gal’s (1998) suggestion that politics remains a “dirty word” in the region, indicate that we would be well advised to look for politically meaningful associations in places that are not explicitly political, nor confined to registered associations (Hann 2006). My dissertation approaches *táncház* as just this

sort of politically meaningful association. Further, as Hann argues, by adopting a broader approach to such forms of association, “we may recognize the way in which older local institutions and values—including perhaps those associated with Socialism—may be adapted to meet contemporary conditions”(2006:162).

The political significance of *tánczás* is, however, ambiguous and complex. Although the general conception of this dance movement by its participants is that it stood in cultural, if not political, opposition to the Communist regime, placing it among the spiritual movements of “ethical civil society” (Renwick 2006), the institutional and organizational backgrounds for it were most frequently provided within state cultural facilities, complicating any simple image of the “sides” as discreet. Indeed, it has been noted that much struggle to change socialism occurred in spaces “*within* the state”(Hann 1996:9). Accordingly, the *tánczás* can be counted among the emerging spaces of associational life burgeoning in the semi entrepreneurial culture houses and clubs in the last few decades of “Gulash Communism” (Striker 1989). This broadening cultural sphere and the *tánczás* critique of state products and initiatives and of the meaning of Hungarianness, provided the backdrop for the most significant political protests of the late 1980’s—one centering on the demand for a public burial of 1956 reform/revolutionary hero Imre Nagy, and the other opposing the “village destruction” initiatives in Romania, which many viewed as biased against ethnic Hungarians. In the context of socialism, to claim one’s Hungarianness through participating in *tánczás* was a way to subtly oppose what was seen as foreign rule and an engineered socialist culture, while showing a humanitarian empathy for oppressed ethnic Hungarians in neighboring states. It was, one might argue, a manner of exercising citizenship in a situation where action in the political sphere was circumscribed, but where

everything was potentially political. In a flawed yet nominally centralized political system, popular and populist *táncház* practices helped to delegitimize the regime while legitimizing a sphere of sovereignty not unlike the *Kultur* and *Bildung* over which coercive power “rides roughshod” (Eagleton 1990:27).¹⁰

Recognizing the mutual determination of associative and “state” forms allows us to consider the form this movement took under socialism, but also the one it takes now, as critic of the “civil society” which has accompanied neoliberal state formation and related structural changes (Yudice 2003), including a “cultural turn”(Jameson 1998) in which “culture talk” has become ubiquitous as a way of “talking-or not about politics” (Mamdani 2005). We will see that while culturalist movements such as *táncház* may appear nationalistic and essentializing, they may also constitute a critique of the influx of what is viewed by some as the homogenizing and profane culture of neo liberal globalization. Ironically, “global civil society” and its venues may also be implicated in the ethnonationalism and sense of absolute cultural difference expressed in the contemporary *táncház*. The coincidence of the “spread of cosmopolitan values” including respect for diversity and “preference for democratic forms of governance”(Kaldor, Anheier and Glasius 2003), the diminishment of the welfare state, and the dominance of an “archipelago approach to cultures”(Hyland Eriksen 2001) suggests that they may be linked in important ways. This raises questions about state formation and about the relationship of supranational governance with national cultivation.

To explore how the broad network of *táncház* institutions and practices is linked to struggles over the meanings of the people, or folk (*nép*), nation, and citizenship, I approach *táncház* as a form of associative life, offering an ethnographic

¹⁰ Katherine Verdery (2002) makes the case that postsocialism shares many features of postcolonialism. See also Böröcz (2001).

and archival examination of how the *táncház*, as a particular kind of associative form, constitutes the practice of an “alternative framework of sense” (Melucci 1988 247). Among the effects of the formation of a “framework of sense” is the production and reproduction of particular constellations of collective memory about Hungarianness; mutually defined in relation to the political sphere.

Táncház expresses itself as a social movement both in that it asserts pressure on public policy and public discourse and also in that it is propelled through its inner contradictions. One important contradiction that I attend to is the way in which “community” is conceived (*nép*). The historical depth of the dissertation is designed to reveal shifts in the meaning of community in relation to the processes of state formation. The history of Hungarian folk critiques in the 20th century appears to be one of gentle shiftings along a spectrum of approaches to community. We witness these shifts in *táncház* as well. Opposition during the socialist periods, argues Slavoj Žižek (1993), conflated *gesellschaft* and *gemeinschaft*, contributing to the salience of notions of *gesellschaft* in the postsocialist period. Yet as we will see, the local environment is far from the only source of such essentialized notions of culture and sovereignty. I identify other sources of this “cultural turn” in the “post socialist condition” (Fraser 1997), not confined to the postsocialist countries of East Europe. Yet if concrete material practices, rather than some kind of essence, lie behind the “consensus” that “community members” may feel or act upon in the public sphere if only in isolated moments, we are wont to consider the relationship between association and intersubjectivity. Indeed, any study of cultivation requires deeper thought about the relationship between aesthetics and ethics.

Framing Thought About Folk Dance: Dance and Dance Events

While dance, as an art, seemingly falls under the inquiry of aesthetics, I contend that the examination of folkdance as it is found in *táncház*- of folk dance as it is practiced as social dance- requires a reexamination of the relationship between aesthetics and ethics. It was not until the 18th century that aesthetics was abstracted out as an independent field; indeed at the very same time as a consensus was emerging over a grouping of a number of practices into the category of fine arts (*beaux arts*)(Gracyk 2004:2). While Emmanuel Kant, often considered the father of contemporary aesthetics, took pains to differentiate the fine arts from the practical arts (or craft), and entertainment on the basis of its disinterestedness, the lines between these categories are at best fuzzy (Gracyk 2004:2). A distinction was also made between the fine arts and the performing arts, connected with the “emphasis on art as individual expression and as private property” (Firth 1996:116). Indeed, the somewhat arbitrary lines between these categories, which reflect historical biases, have surely hindered important developments in aesthetic theory, which is often reduced to the study of art and its appreciation or judgment. Yet, while drawing these distinctions, Kant and his contemporaries did not limit their consideration of aesthetics to that of art. In fact, for them, moral and aesthetic value were not easily distinguishable, and their discussions of taste were the basis for “investigating...a broader range of issues concerning intersubjectivity”(Gracyk 2004:3), pressing topics concerning the establishment of a bourgeois social order under which, in contrast to absolutist coercion, “power would become *aestheticized*” (Eagleton 1990:20).

The practice of dance, of course, long predates efforts to categorize it as a fine or performing art: categorizations that have led to a plethora of works examining the performative dancer almost entirely divorced from examinations of

dance as a social activity. Such connections have quite often been left to the examination of ritual. As Ian Frith points out, the objectification of art led, in the case of music and performance in general, to an emphasis on “the work, the score, rather than its performance”(1997:116), limiting the manners in which we might recognize its relationship to intersubjectivity. Considering that dance has been a source of contention in Europe since at least the Middle Ages, when church organs banned “pagan dances” (Pesovár 1982), and considering also the role of dance and dance events¹¹ in the teaching of manners and etiquette (e.g. the European court and ballroom), we begin to glimpse the role dance may play (and has been recognized to play) as a medium of socialization. A number of studies of dance point to this socializing power (Mooney 1896, Deren 1953, Cowan 1990, Dirks 1997, Langman 2003, Nemes 2001).

Moralizing discourses about dance, its role as a symbol of identity, and its status as a kind of heritage or cultural property, compel us to consider both what it is about dance that is so powerful, and what it is about dance that is thought to be so. Dance, in short, may be described as art, as ritual, as text or symbol, as propaganda, yet it has been part of socializing practices as far back as we can trace: and not simply in environments conventionally considered under the rubric of ritual (although the literature on ritual does encourage us to consider its relationship to social control). Jane Cowan writes: “symbolically resonant and sometimes politically valorized, dance events are also intense sociable sensual and aesthetic experiences...these events are configured by power relations” (Cowan 1990:232). We must investigate the particular power relations in which dance is implicated if we

¹¹ Recognizing that it is not simply dance but also its social context that is important, and taking inspiration from Simmel’s notion of sociability, Cowan defines the dance event as temporally and spatially bounded, and “framed” apart from everyday life (1990:18).

want to discover how it is related to the constitutions of particular kinds of subjects—indeed, citizens.

Interestingly, folk dance falls into the category of practical arts, into which both folk art and craft are put, and from which the category amateur art also emerged. It is because art is a specialized field in our society that aesthetics has come to have such a narrow focus. The history of art as a social practice is obscured by this abstraction. While scholars (Williams 1977, Bourdieu 1993) have insisted that the production of art is indeed a social practice, most examinations have limited their consideration to the practices of the production of specialized art, which moves the examination of the aesthetic away from a broader consideration of the ways in which “power secures itself” through “culture”—“through routine practices rather than signs” (Eagleton 1990:145). That is, praxis and hegemony may trump ideology. Such an examination requires consideration not simply of the process of the production of art, but of its reception (Williams 1983). Contemporary aesthetic discussions of dance, in which it is most often considered a performing art; rely on an assumed performer and spectator divide. Beyond studies on ritual, few scholars have examined dance as an associative form (see Cowan 1990 as an exception, and Caton who illuminates it tangentially through his discussion of poetry) in which dance is both produced and received by a public.

The aesthetic revolution of *táncház* was informed, as were other youth movements of the period, by an impetus toward participation that brought folk dance down off the stage, reintroducing its qualities as social dance, and thus sparking a new public. To recognize the relationship of aesthetics and ethics in folk dance as social dance, we must let go of the distinction between performer and spectator or artist and audience; this is, in fact, the essence of nonspecialized art

(folk art, amateur art). Although the adaptation of folk dance to the stage in the 20th century has produced artists known for their prowess in the field, *táncház* practices are based on the idea that folkdance is the provenance of “the people”(indeed the dance of the folk), that anyone may do it. The dance in *táncház*, then, is, like many folk arts, a collective amateur art. As *táncház* was germinating as a new form, aestheticians and cultural managers, defending it against accusations of nationalism, argued (drawing on ideas of utopian socialists such as Proudhon, Owen, Fourier and Saint Simon, as well as Marx and Lenin) that its value, indeed, the value of folk art in general, lies in its power to create and maintain community, and that such features could be useful to the building of socialist society (Vitányi 1971). The assertion that dance can be connected to community building underlines its function as a social activity, as an associative form. And here it is the relation to intersubjectivity that is important. Discussions of formal art have focused on the intersubjectivity among spectators, or audiences, obscuring the associative dimensions of performance (Firth 1996, see also Adorno 1941). The subjects of this study are intersubjective not simply as spectators, but as participants in a sensed activity; as practitioners of a bodily practice. They make up an associative public, for whom the material forms of dance and its behavioral etiquettes are connected, however contradictorily, with values.

Anthropologists and others have explored how the cultural practices of poetry, song, music, and dance are related to the construction and maintenance of identity, values, and sentiment (Caton 1990, Cowan 1990, Feld 1990, Stokes 1992, Silverman 1983, Lausevic 1996). Cowan examines how discourses about and the practice of “dance events” and everyday sociability contribute to the perpetuation of ideas about and practice of gender roles, and Feld inquires into “how expressive

modalities are culturally constituted by performance codes that both actively communicate deeply felt sentiments and reconfirm mythic principles”(1990:14). Caton (1990) argues that poetry is a constitutive practice, and demonstrates that the media and contexts of production and reception of different genres of poetry assure that they address and constitute different kinds of publics. While products of the *tánczás* movement reach a wide and diverse public, this study focuses on the public made up of individuals who regularly participate in *tánczás* events. How, it asks, does participation in these events produce and reproduce a public that shares material practices, values, sentiments, and political views. How, despite change and contestation, do participants engage in collective action, sometimes in the political sphere?

Perhaps any anthropological study to attend to such a nexus should begin with Emile Durkheim’s notion of *conscience collectif*, or collective effervescence, which suggests sensually experienced emotional states. (We can see its development in Halbwach’s notion of collective memory (1992), and Turner’s notion of ritual *communitas*(1969), and in Melucci’s (1988) framework or community of sense). But like some interpretations of Kant’s *sensus communis*, Durkheim’s *conscience collectif* remains outside the body in practice (stressed by Hegel, Marx after him, and finally Bourdieu, with his employment of the notion of *habitus*). Melucci, postulates a “community of sense”, and encourages us to investigate how it is informed by practices and innovations not free of conflict (and for this reason, his “framework of sense” may be more applicable)¹²

¹² In this work, I suggest that “frameworks of sense” may be revealed as “communities of sense” when they come into conflict with public policy (Melucci 1988).

Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the habitus (1977, see also Mauss 1979), anthropologist Charles Hirschkind has attended to a sensorium honed through cultural practices, through which the world is made perceptible (2001: 623-624). Hirschkind argues that the practice of listening to sermons on cassette tapes among Muslims in Egypt is a "practice of ethical self-discipline", which aids practitioners to "hone an ethically responsive sensorium; the requisite sensibilities that they see as enabling them to live as devout Muslims in a world increasingly ordered by secular rationalities"(2001:624). Hirschkind is emphatic that this linkage between listening and sense is not simply "established metaphorically, but also through discipline, the training and inculcation of sensory habits", including bodily dispositions (2001:628). Just as Hirschkind's listeners may learn, beyond the moral lessons of the sermons, "the ethical habits and the organization of sensory and motor skills necessary for inhabiting the world in a manner considered to be appropriate for Muslims", so *tánczás* goers learn those appropriate for the practice of a certain kind of *Hungarianness* through what I term the practice of folk dance as mother tongue. My dissertation reveals that these practices have developed in relationship to various 20th century projects to produce and reproduce *Hungarianness*, and thus, cultural distinction. Hirschkind's focus on the sensorium enhances Melucci's notion of frameworks of sense (Melucci 1988).

Organization of the Dissertation

The chapters are organized to situate the *tánczás* folk revival within a history of folk critiques concerned with the cultivation of citizenship and collective memory, and to progressively illuminate why ethnonationalist sentiment is expressed in *tánczás* today. Insisting that they are implicated in each other, Chapter 1 presents a general overview of Hungarian state making and nation making until the 20th

century, focusing especially on the practices centered on the nation and “the people”. It ends by introducing the first folk dance revival, which arose in the 1930’s. Chapter 2 introduces the interwar populist movement—a significant precursor of *táncház*—in the context of practices of civic cultivation. It relates the populist folk critique to the project of “folk national cultivation”, and associated practices (among them, amateur ethnography and folk dance), which illustrate continuity with the *táncház*. Whereas Chapter 2 focuses on the ethics of cultivation, Chapter 3 examines the institutional sites of cultivation as they developed from the postwar period through the late socialist period. I examine the relationship between institutions of cultivation and cultural management, focusing on how new forms of association emerged in the latter period, ripening the conditions in which *táncház* could emerge. Situating it in the context illuminated in chapter 3, chapter 4 describes in detail the emergence and development of the *táncház* movement in the 1970s and its institutionalization through the 1980s. In Chapter 5 I lay out a general theoretical framework for approaching collective memory, seen here as the product of the interaction of institutionalized forms and practices and their changing interpretation (Halbwachs 1992). I focus on the production of what Melucci calls a “framework of sense” in *táncház* (which I argue in chapter 6 may congeal into a “community of sense” in “moments of danger” (Benjamin 1969), when the relation to the political sphere is revealed). By examining specific forms and practices central to *táncház*, I make apparent how *táncház* related memory is grounded in concrete sensorial practices including folk dance as mother tongue and place-centered tourism. Chapter 6 examines the political and economic conditions in the socialist period in which *táncház* arose, structured around the Revolution of 1956 and its aftermath. Showing how the earlier *népi* movement and then *táncház* engaged with a

transforming political sphere, I argue that the roots of what has been identified as a “cultural turn”(Jameson 1998), associated with a “post socialist condition”(Fraser 1997) may already be discoverable in the late socialist period. I focus on the Transylvania protests in 1988/89 as a “moment of danger”-in which interaction with the political sphere becomes visible, and also as an example of the further turn toward “culture”. Finally, chapter 7 examines the political economic context for *táncház* in the post socialist period, more specifically, at the turn of the millennium, elaborating even further the conditions in which “culture talk”(Mamdani 2005) has become a significant way of describing the world. I introduce a discourse of the stolen regime change which critiques both Communist and “liberal” elites through a cultural lens as background for two “moments of danger:”: the polarization of the population around two political parties , and a referendum on granting citizenship to “Hungarians over the border”. I illuminate how *táncház*’s role in these “moments of danger” is related to the production of cultural distinction, in this case, as related to the practices of heritage tourism. I link the notion of heritage to cultural property and rights regimes, showing how these elements may combine to enforce ethnonational expression in *táncház* circles. The conclusion investigates these conditions further, asking how we might investigate the relationship of supranational organizations to *táncház* and Transylvanian tourism in order to illuminate a heritage regime that links cultural property, cultural distinction and rights regimes to ethnic politics in Transylvania.

CHAPTER 1

Making the Nation-State in 19th and 20th Century Hungary

Noting along with many others that “the concept of the nation state has so thoroughly conjoined the state with the nation that it is almost impossible to think of one without the other”(Sharma and Gupta 2006:7), Sharma and Gupta argue that in a period characterized by shifts in the global order from internationalism to transnationalism, it may be time to question the naturalization of this relationship, allowing us to attend to characteristics of “the state” obscured by this naturalization (2006:7). Scholars (Corrigan and Sayer 1985, Joseph and Nugent 1994) interested in this process have revealed the role of state formation in ordering a society through regulation of social forms of life to make the functioning of a capitalist economy possible. While this chapter focuses on the nation state making process through the early 20th century, it does so in order to reveal how the naturalization of this relationship has been produced and reproduced. This chapter embeds the “invention of tradition” in the process of nation-state making in 19th and 20th century Hungary, in a period when the national state was only just coming into its dominance in Europe. The term “invention of tradition” has been employed by Eric Hobsbawm to mean “both ‘traditions’ actually invented, constructed and formally instituted, and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period...and establishing themselves with great rapidity” (Hobsbawm 1984:1).

Following Abrams (1988) and Corrigan and Sayer (1985), Joseph and Nugent have suggested that “bringing the state in without leaving people out” requires “a concept of popular culture that can be analyzed in relation to a notion of state

formation that equally recognizes the importance of the cultural dimension of historical process and social experience” (Joseph and Nugent 1994:12). Indeed, any “revolution in the way the world is made sense of” (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:2) occurs in the way both subjects and the state elaborate their experience, in the manner in which “state activities, forms, routines, and rituals” for “the constitution and regulation of social identities are elaborated” (Corrigan and Sayer 1985:2; see also Joseph and Nugent 1994:14). The lesson of state formation, argue Joseph and Nugent, is that popular culture and state formation can only be understood in relation (1994:15). Here a word on popular culture is due: Joseph and Nugent point out that a remarkably small amount of work on popular culture in Latin America approaches it as “an issue of power-a problem of politics”(1994:15). Their observation that much work on popular culture is framed, “within the terms of an older tradition of studies of folklore” (1994:15) is valid for East-Central Europe as well. While their definition of popular culture (borrowed in part from Cultural Studies and Stuart Hall) as “the symbols and meanings embedded in the day to day practices of subordinated groups” meaning rather than material practices, their emphasis on the quotidian and on a process of struggle is helpful (1994:17). Any examination of the invention of tradition must take the question of popular culture into account, for it is its relation to everyday life that gives any invented tradition its power.

This chapter examines the invention of national tradition by the Hungarian elite in the process of nation-state formation in 19th and 20th century Hungary. Beginning with an overview of institutions and practices connected with peasant romanticism and the “invention” of a Hungarian “national culture”, I contextualize these in relation to reforms in the late 19th century when Hungary was a political

entity subsumed within the Habsburg Empire, through the early 20th century when Hungary became an “independent nation state”. I then examine the sudden political territorial and population shifts resulting from the break up of the Empire after World War I and the consequent legacy of ethnographic and folkloristic material, ideals, and practices attending to a territory much larger than the truncated Hungarian nation state that emerged at that time. Finally, I focus on specific practices and institutions leading to folk music collection and the revival and staged performance of folk dance in the first half of the 20th century, including the first folk dance revival in Hungary, The Bouquet of Pearls movement.

William Roseberry has suggested that while references to the agrarian, or “peasant” “moral economy” may impose a vision of order on a disordered past, “the ‘moral economy’ need not have existed in the past” in order for it to become a meaningful image (1989:59). Indeed, “it may be *perceived* in the past from the perspective of a disordered present,” becoming a resource for “protest and accommodation, despair and hope”(1989:59). Intended to give the reader a taste of the history and breadth of the preoccupation among Hungarians with the nation and the so-called folk, this chapter surveys different approaches to the definition, practice and invention of national and folk “traditions” informed by varying political and aesthetic ideologies and political economic conditions in 19th and early 20th century Hungary. As it is my contention that practices of nation making cannot be separated from the process of state formation, the inclusion of historical information about Hungarian state formation is not tangential, but is rather central to the story told here. As I hope to make clear, not only is nation making always connected to state formation, but the ways in which citizens engage with representations of the nation are determined in part by state forms with which they

interact. Indeed, such representations of the nation also point to competing ideologies and forms of citizenship.

National Awakening and Struggles for Independence

In the first half of the 19th century, the Habsburg Empire, struggling to retain its fading power in the emerging system of European nation-states, witnessed the “national awakening” of a number of “peoples”, or “nations” within its borders. This “Age of National Awakening” was the East-Central European response to the historical processes that had brought about the dominance of the nation state system and the capitalist mode of production in Western Europe. Under the influence of the German romantic philosopher (or anthropologist) Johann Gottfried Herder, the Hungarian nobility embraced the discourse of the nation-state; formulating resistance to the Empire to which it was subordinated by stressing distinctive “national” characteristics and traditions, indeed “inventing” them through this process. This new formulation of the nation-state required a shift in the meaning of the Latin word *natio* from its earlier usage as that narrow category of those with political rights within a feudal polity, to one that included “the people of Hungary” in a republican sense.¹³ Institutions of national culture played an essential role in this task of “national awakening”. Indeed, according to Tamás Hófer, the study of peasant culture developed in Eastern Europe precisely in order to serve this project of national cultural history (Hófer 1989).¹⁴

While the polity of Hungary was subsumed within the Empire for nearly 400 years, it would be a mistake to think that “Hungary” had never existed as some form

¹³ For discussions on the complexities of the term *natio*, see Verdery (1983:116), Sugár (1969), and Habermas (1996).

¹⁴ Scholars have linked the peasantry to national consolidation in Latin America (Roseberry 1994) and Israel (Lees 1997), and to ethnonationalist movements in Brittany (Maynard 1997), to name only a few examples.

of political entity. While Habsburg dominance over Hungary was based on a disputed claim to the throne of Hungary's monarchy beginning in 1526, the Hungarian feudal diet continued to function. It was in the diet that attempts were made to assert independence in the face of an absolutist state. Indeed, Habsburg attempts to centralize the state were always partially foiled by the insistence of Hungarian nobles on their constitutional privileges. In need of revenue, Habsburg rulers dared not neglect the constitution (Verdery 1983:116, 182). By the early 19th century, reform movements aimed at economic independence and national development arose around the notion that Hungary was the victim of colonial exploitation. This belief was justified in part by the uneven development connected with the productive division of labor in the regions of the Empire. Eastern parts, Hungary included, remained largely agricultural, while western parts became more industrially developed (Verdery 1983:129-130).

In the year 1848, revolutions exploded across Europe, spurred on by radical political and economic changes and inspired in part by aspirations focused on the nation-state form. Within the Habsburg Empire, increasingly burdened by stagnant economic and military performance, revolution broke out in Vienna, spreading quickly throughout the Empire (Verdery 1983:182). In Hungary, revolutionary activities were sustained by an uneasy alliance of factions seeking national independence, some of which sought broader social reforms or even radical changes in the social structure, while others defended a feudal social order. The goals of these factions were only partly compatible, and the failure of the revolution may be attributed in part to the contradictions between them. At the root of this tension was the reformulation of the meaning of the nation to cover all those "legally

empowered citizens” of a nation-state (Habermas 1996:282, see also Sugár 1969).¹⁵ This switch to the meaning of nation as “a body of associates living under common laws and represented by the same legislative assembly” (Sieyes 1964:58) was connected to the broader social revolution involving the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the adoption of Enlightenment ideas about citizenship in the relatively homogenous polities of Western Europe. In this process, the language of representation and the rights of man and citizen became coupled with the language of the nation.

Indeed, “‘the people’ identified with ‘the nation’ was a quite revolutionary concept, more revolutionary than the bourgeois –liberal programme which purported to express it” (Hobsbawm 1962:81+82n). However, as Verdery asserts, this mutual reinforcement between economic transformation and state centralization on the one hand and the development of nationalism on the other resulted in different phenomena in Western nation-states than in the Habsburg Empire. “While these processes interacted in Western European nation states to transform class systems within unified nation-states, they gave rise in the Empire to the emergence of “nations” (Verdery 1983:115). During the revolutionary period and afterwards many among the Hungarian nobility, while advocating independence for the kingdom vis-à-vis the Habsburg Empire, remained reluctant to give up their feudal privileges. Indeed, while the revolutionary legislation of April 1848 abolished serfdom, tithes, forced labor and capital punishment, many found the granting of these basic rights to be scandalous (Frigyesi 1994:258). Differences over the

¹⁵ The term “nationality” – *nemzetiség, volkstämme* – was employed within the Empire- in East-Central Europe the way that many elsewhere would use “ethnicity”. This is not insignificant – it reflects both the identification of groups within the Empires and the adaptation of the Western idea of the nation to conditions of Empire. There is a tension between nationality, seen as primordial and the nation as constructed (Sugár 1969).

meaning of “the nation”, then, were implicitly tied to stances on citizenship; who should belong to the political nation, and what kind of citizenship a member of the nation would be entitled to were critical questions.

In Hungary, the decades leading up to the 1848 Revolution were marked by movements of national reform and by peasant romanticism. As Hófer (1980) has argued, “institutions of National Culture” were key to the creation of an image of a “National past”. These years witnessed the establishment of the National Museum, the National Theater, and the Hungarian Academy of Science, as well as the establishment of Hungarian as the official language of the state (1843-44) (Hanák 1991:97). “By 1848, “associational fever” had taken hold, with more than 500 associations in Hungary”(Nemes 2001:806), united by a “rejection of the status-quo cosmopolitan culture, a corporate social hierarchy, and an economic policy perceived as damaging to Hungary”(Nemes 2001:810). Among these were economic associations aiming at national reform, including the Protection Association, founded in 1844 by the National Diet to “prevent[ing] Hungary’s impoverishment by promoting domestic industry and commerce”(Nemes 2001:808). Members of the association pledged that they would buy only domestic goods and employ only domestic craftsmen for six years (Nemes 2001:808). While the campaign itself only lasted for 2 years, Nemes argues, “it was on the dance floor and in social life, as much as in meeting halls and merchants’ warehouses, that the Protection Association had its greatest and most lasting impact”(Nemes 2001:809).

It was in this context that the Hungarian nobility embarked on “inventing” a national dance from motifs borrowed from “the folk”¹⁶ resulting in the introduction

¹⁶Frigyesi shows how in the second half of the 19th century the chasm between the aristocracy and the (often impoverished) gentry was vast, even while they together defined “the nation”. Prior to this period, under the influences of French revolutionary thought, the gentry envisioned itself as the people—*populus*;

of the newly “invented” dance, the csárdás, as a ballroom dance.¹⁷ While its name, meaning “of the pub or inn”, indicates that it is derived from popular sources; no single dance with this name appears to have existed before.¹⁸ By the mid 1840’s, the csárdás had become de rigueur at many balls including those organized by the Protection Association.¹⁹ At these dances expressing and promoting Hungarian patriotism, the use of the Hungarian language and the sporting of “national dress” were highly encouraged, while the German language and dances such as the waltz were frowned upon (Nemes 2001:813). While through their interaction with the press and its public, patriotic associations were able to nurture a “virtual consensus” that social life should be more “Hungarian” (Nemes 2001:809), what “Hungarian” meant, continued to be broadly interpreted.

Hungarianness: The Linguistic Nation and the Historical Nation-State

Hannalore Burger suggests that the developments in philosophical thought that produced the construct of a *Sprachnation* were quite destructive for old multinational Empires including the Habsburg Monarchy. While for Enlightenment thinkers language was understood as a means to an end mainly toward the acquisition of education and science, the “first linguistic turn” philosophers –

the “vehicle of the constitution” (Frigyesi 1994:261). The loss of the privileges of feudalism sent this group into further impoverishment. While they could no longer cling to the phrase that the nation is made only of nobles, the gentry continued to define itself as “the core of the Hungarians” (Frigyesi 1994:263). For this reason, the claim that traditions were adopted from “the *volk*” or “peasantry” may obscure the origins of the practices.

¹⁷ Another contender for the status of national dance, the *verbunk*, or *verbunkos*, a men’s solo dance, derived its name from *Werbung Kommando* – the recruitment arm of the standing army of the Habsburgs instituted in the first half of the 18th century. Developed as a coercive technique for recruiting individuals into the Austrian army, the dance was another site of contact between old and new, and local and regional dance styles. While late in the century the practice was replaced by regular conscription in the other areas of the Empire, the practice continued in Hungary and Transylvania (Lányi et al 1983).

¹⁸ For centuries there had been diffusion between the cultural practices of nobles and non-nobles. Indeed, the noble classes, especially the aristocracy, of Hungary were incorporated into a cosmopolitan world of European nobility, and it was the social dances of this group with which they were familiar. Nevertheless, examination of popular dances has revealed historical patterns in dance styles that indicate waves of diffusion (Vargyas 1980, Pesovár E 1980).

¹⁹ Mark Rozsavölgyi, famous composer and violin virtuoso who played for the national theater, and Béla Wenkheim, a Hungarian Baron of Frankish descent who belonged to the Reform party in Parliament and would later become Interior Minister in the post-compromise government, were typical of those popularizing the csárdás (Pallás Lexikon 1893).

Hamann, Herder and Humboldt – placed emphasis on the diversity of languages, each connected with a particular world view (Burger 2003:2). Indeed, Herder asserted that language could not be reduced to a tool, for a national language was a historically produced treasury of thoughts specific to any given nation and, as such, was both representative of and constitutive of the *volksgeist* (Herder 1960:143, Burger 2003). In this paradigm, nations, in theory at least, should be distinguishable from each other by the languages spoken by their members.

According to Burger, in the 19th century,

After the term *nation*, in the sense of *Sprachnation* (language nation) – a concept which was constructed by Fichte, Herder and others – became very popular, diglossie and even more polyglossie come under strong suspicion. Multilingualism suddenly appeared as an indication of *decadence* and a danger for the still rather delicate construct of *national identity*. Unlike former conceptions of *nation* which were mainly based on territory, religion or forms of government, with the beginning of the 19th century language became the only criteria for the term *nation* (Burger 2003:1_2 italics in original).

Indeed, the new republican understanding of nation conflicted not only with the feudal use of the Latin word *natio*, but also with the contemporary use of the term nationality –

volksstamm – within the Habsburg Empire. This term, associated with language groups and determined according to people’s mother tongue, was used in the Hapsburg census to map “nationalities” within the Empire.²⁰

Hungarian thinkers were deeply affected by Herder’s prophecy that, an island in a sea of Slavic and Germanic languages and peoples, the Hungarian language, and accordingly, the Hungarian “nationality” itself, was destined to disappear.

According to Czigány, this reference in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* made Herder a “household name” among Hungarians, encouraging the

²⁰ Similarities with Western Europe are apparent in that language was seen as a unifying nation-making force (Weber 1976, Anderson 1984), and language standardization used as a nation making technology, yet the dynamics of nation-state making were different here, as state and “nation” were not coterminous.

development of the discourse about the death of the nation (*nemzethalál*), popularized by leading poets of the period (Czigány 1984:103). Nation-state aspirations had encouraged a revival of the use of the Hungarian language by the nobility, many of whom spoke German more comfortably. Initiated at the end of the 18th century, a language reform movement had supplemented the Hungarian language with tens of thousands of new words already by the first quarter of the 19th century (Hasselsteiner 1990:161; Hanák 1991:99). Involving the standardization of spelling, grammatical restructuring, the adoption of foreign terms, and the coining of new “Hungarian” terms, this reform aimed at adapting the language to express modern thought, with emphasis on scientific and literary expression. Nevertheless, reflecting the tension between this Enlightenment approach and the Herderian romanticism discussed above, language was also understood as the bearer of “national values”. Accordingly, the Hungarian Academy of Science supported the collection of folk songs and of regional vocabularies (Kósa 1998 27, 29). Further, the language of the folk had become an important resource for poetry and national songs, resulting in an increasing interest in the collection of folk verse and folk songs in the first half of the 19th century. Believing folk poetry to be the “real poetry”, poets, including 1848 revolutionary hero Sándor Petőfi, committed themselves to writing poems based on folk songs (Kósa 1998:27).²¹ By the 1840s this romantic literary style, which quite often also took the peasantry as its theme, was at its height.

Language reform and the collection of folk language reflected and provided a basis for the conviction that language was both the bearer and signifier of nation.²²

²¹ Carol Silverman (1983) shows a similar situation in Bulgaria.

²² See Silverman (1983:55) for the Bulgarian parallel.

In the *sprachsnation* paradigm, a Hungarian speaker was a Hungarian; for it was language that signified nationhood. As the Empire charted *volkstamms* according to language use, Hungarian aspirations for nation-statehood required proof of a Hungarian majority. Indeed, the subsequent ethnic assimilation that took place in the form of magyarization was part of a political project; a project of reform connected to independence from Empire and the establishment of an independent nation-state. Accordingly, in the 1870s, after the Compromise that established the Austro-Hungarian Empire, there appears to have been a decrease in tolerance toward “minorities” reflected in the closing of many “minority language” gymnasias (Kann and David 1984:380). These reflected on the one hand an offensive action on the part of Hungarian nation-state makers and, on the other, a defensive reaction by the Hungarian authorities against claims to autonomy by minorities within Hungary argued along the very same lines as Hungary’s claims of independence vis-à-vis the Empire (Kann and David 1984:380).

Indeed, as we have seen, the notion of what we might call an ethnically²³ Magyar, Hungarian language-speaking nation-state did not easily allow for multiethnic or multilingual notions of the polity. Rather, the establishment of official status for the Hungarian language and related policies combined with age-old social relations hindering “ethnic” equality to cause tension with the non-Magyar populations which made up approximately half of the population of Hungary (including Transylvania); sparking their opposition and intensifying their own “national” movements (Verdery 1983:188).²⁴ Although the failure of the

²³ The term ethnicity did not become common until the 1970’s (Hyland-Eriksen 2002), yet the tensions reflected in the uses of nation and nationality in the case of central Europe – associated with language use and religious denomination – point to the way in which ethnicity would be taken up as a term.

²⁴ In this system ethnicity and class combined in a single social taxonomy more often than not. For discussions of why and how, see Verdery (1983) and Sz cs (1990).

Revolution hinged largely on the nobility and aristocracy's jealous defense of privilege, the tension between "nationalities" over their relationship to states and citizenship helped to seal Habsburg victory. Fearing oppression under an independent Hungarian state, and seeking nation state status for themselves, "minority" nationalities entered into alliances with the Empire (Verdery 1983:189).

While the meaning of the Hungarian nation was being redefined with language as its primary marker, the argument for an independent Hungarian state stressed historical precedent: the crown lands of Saint Steven, Hungary's first Christian monarch.²⁵ By the time of the 1848 Revolution, "Hungary" had existed as a polity for over 800 years. In 1001 (tribal leader) King Steven had embraced Christianity, accepting a crown from the order of pope Sylvester II and establishing a feudal state (Kontler 2002:52).²⁶ In subsequent centuries, the rulers of Hungary encouraged the development of a "multiethnic" kingdom: not only were there groups already dwelling in the Carpathian basin at the time of the Magyar conquest in 896, but Magyar kings actively promoted colonization of the region by inviting foreign experts for development and offering special status to groups settling in border areas along the Carpathian mountains (Szűcs 1990:13).²⁷ The 1526 victory of forces representing the Ottoman Empire at the battle of Mohács marked the beginning of a 300 year period in which the territorial integrity of and Hungarian

²⁵ In East Central Europe assertions over whether nations were historic or non historic were based on the idea that some "nationalities" have histories of "nationhood" in the sense that they were "masters of their own destiny in fairly modern times", usually by having had control of a "state". It implies that non historic nations have not played a role in history and have no justification for nationhood and thus, to an independent nation-state (Sugár 1969:23).

²⁶ Here feudal state is meant to mean a Christian kingdom in which control is somewhat territorialized and centralized and primogeniture is established (Hanák 1991:28). It was characterized by a Christian king, A constitution of sorts (the golden Bull), and a feudal diet.

²⁷ There is much contention between Hungarian scholars and Romanian scholars over the extent of the "Romanian" (Dacian) presence in the Carpathian basin at the time of the conquest. Please see Verdery (1983,1991_ for summaries of these debates.

sovereignty over the crown lands of St. Steven was to remain constantly under threat.

With disputes over the Hungarian throne that left a portion of Hungary in Habsburg hands in 1526, and Ottoman occupation of the central part of the kingdom in 1541, a period began in which the territory of the “historic kingdom of Hungary” would come under the spheres of influence of the two Empires and be divided in various politico-bureaucratic configurations. After approximately 150 years the Ottomans were expelled from Hungary, but the price paid was Habsburg domination over the entirety of “historic Hungary”, with Transylvania administered separately from the other lands. Not until the Compromise of 1867, over 300 years later when Hungary became a “partner” in what would then be renamed the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or dual Monarchy, would a Hungarian state again govern the territory of “historic Hungary” (Verdery 1983:182, Hanák 1991).²⁸

The Development of Ethnography, and Folk Music Collection Under Changing Territorial and Demographic Conditions

It was in such a context of constant threat and oppositional status that a “national culture” had emerged from the nation-state making process. The cultural politics of national reform and romanticism continued after the failed 1848 revolution, the following period of repression, and the subsequent partnership in the Dual Monarchy as evidenced by the founding of the Liszt Academy of Music and the opening of the Hungarian Opera House, National Ballet, and the Great Market Hall. Increasingly, especially from the 1880s on, national reform was expressed in Hungary’s participation in international industrial fairs entailing the display of items

²⁸ I adopt the commonly used term “Historic Hungary” to refer to the Crown Lands of St. Steven-covering the territories considered to be under the sovereignty of the Hungarian crown in the year 1000 with the foundation of the Hungarian state. I use the term Greater Hungary to refer to those regions held by the Hungarian state in the period preceding WWI.

considered uniquely Hungarian, and the production of these items for the market. The 1885 national cottage industry exhibition featured “lifelike peasant rooms”, while at the 1896 celebration of the millennium of the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian basin, ethnic villages were “displayed” together with their “inhabitants” in City Park. “The metamorphosis of Matyó embroidery into merchandise”, described by Marta Fügedi (2000), is illustrative of the processes involved. From the turn of century onward, the National Cottage Industry Association (*Országos Háziipari Szövetség*) worked to propagate and popularize the embroidery of the Matyó²⁹, which was featured among Hungarian items at the world’s fair of 1911 in Turin (Fügedi 2000:14). In that same year, archduchess Isabella, the “chief patroness of cottage industrial art”, organized a “Matyó wedding”, in which aristocrats dressed in “Matyó peasant wear” performed at the Isabella ball during carnival season in order “to popularize handicrafts”(Fügedi 2000:15). Local intelligentsia, soon to be followed by merchants, placed orders with peasant women, providing lucrative employment (Fügedi 2000:13). Such engagement with folk forms spanned interests as broad as nation-building, economic development, and entrepreneurialism. The discipline of ethnography was emerging from within this process as well.

As Tamás Hófer has pointed out, in Eastern Europe the role of the ethnographic sciences was to produce the material on which national symbols would be based (Hófer 1980). In Hungary, as elsewhere, ethnographic collection preceded the foundation of a distinct academic field of ethnography.³⁰ The Hungarian

²⁹ The Catholic population of the region around the town of Mezőkövesd-130 kilometers from Budapest. In 1860 a train line was built linking Mezőkövesd to Budapest, making it easily accessible.

³⁰ While the French would use the term ethnology, the Germans used the term ethnography. It is likely that because the Austrians were engaged in the census taking of their population, the statistics-which indeed were *ethno-graphies*-of different “ethnic groups”- came to be known as ethnography.

Academy of Sciences was founded in 1830 “to serve national development and the interests of economic reform” (Pallás Lexikon 1893:233). Beginning in 1832, the Academy undertook the collection and publication of folksongs “with the intention of 1) scientific research and preservation and 2) to serve the formation of a national taste” (Sárosi 1993:188). In 1872 Ethnographic Museum was founded as the Ethnographic Department of the National Museum, and 1889 saw the formation of Hungarian Ethnographic Society, with its journal *Ethnographia* appearing in 1890 (Kósa 1998:33). The first academic department of ethnography in Hungary, however, would not be formed until 1934 at Budapest University (Györffy 2000).

The Hungarian term *néprajz*, ethnography, is at present used interchangeably with the terms ethnology and social anthropology. However, the specificity of the term attests to a particular Central European tradition in the development of this “field”. A brief examination of this history will help to elucidate assumptions lying within these terms as well as about their objects of study and aims. According to Mihály Sárkány, the term ethnography resulted from “an emerging interest in ethnic and cultural differences in Germany in the middle of the 18th century” (Sárkány 2000:1, see also Stagl 1998). In the 1770s, Herder used the term *völkerkunde* in reference to the study of “peoples”. Yet in German this term was used interchangeably with the Latin-based term *ethnologie* – “the study of peoples”, in keeping with the French usage.³¹ In Imperial Austria, from whence Hungarians inherited the term, ethnography was used to refer to data – that is, the *writing* about the peoples, or *volksstamms*, of the Empire. In the Empire, the legal definition of a *volkstamm* – ethnic group – was based on language (Arens

³¹ The term ethnology was coined by the French philosopher Alexandre Chavannes in 1786 (Bitterli 1982:399, Sárkány 2000).

1996:19)³² and was sometimes contrasted with, and sometimes used interchangeably with *nationalität*-nationality. Explaining the disjunction between the term ethnography and its relatives *ethnologie* and anthropology, Sárkány explains that while in “the English-speaking countries, ethnography has taken the meaning of descriptive undertaking...in the Marxist classification of science in the Soviet Union and in the German Democratic Republic, it covered the whole research procedure of description, analysis, and comparison of ethnic, cultural, and social differences” (Sárkány 2000:2).

In the current academic climate, the term ethnography that developed out of the German and Austrian traditions has become assimilated to the terms ethnology and anthropology, as these have become the dominant international idioms. Retaining the word ethnography (*néprajz*), however, may allow us important insights into this discipline’s relationship to nation-building and perhaps into certain popularly held notions about the “peoples” of Hungary as well. For written into the history of Hungarian ethnography – into the term itself – are the tensions inherent between the Hungarian words for nation, nationality, and people.

According to its current website, the establishment of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society (Kósa N.d.) in the late 19th century by a “professor of Germanistics” was linked to three aims, the most far reaching of which

aimed to strengthen “imperial patriotism” of the multilingual Austro-Hungarian Empire by helping its peoples (*népeit*) to learn about each other and so promote closer cultural and emotional ties among them (Kósa N.d.).

For this reason, it is suggested on the website, the society enjoyed the support of court circles in Vienna and of the crown prince himself. The second aim was “the

³² While the “nationalities” of Austria were surveyed in 1850, it appears that it was not until 1880 that a regular census using language as a parameter of nationality began (Arens 1996).

comparative study within the Empire of the peoples of the Hungarian state who also spoke many languages”(Kósa N.d.).³³ The third aim “was for the operation of the Society to strengthen the position of Hungarian national identity, of the Hungarian language and culture which were isolated and without relations in their environment”(Kósa N.d.). The potential for contradictions among the three ideas is glaring, for what these three goals amount to is a project of mapping difference within the Empire meant to result simultaneously in enforcing imperial patriotism *and* in enforcing Hungarian national identity. There is a tension here between linguistic nationalism -with language understood as the basis of *volksgeist*, of the spirit of the people; indeed of the *nation*- and the arrangement of “peoples” within the Empire. Whereas Empires had contained multiple languages, nation-states were to have one national language, and as peoples or nationalities embraced Herderian ideas, the emphasis fell on proving their nation-ness.³⁴

In this same period, the definition of a “people” in terms of language/ethnicity was gradually being adapted to the “scientific” notion of race, espoused by theorists in colonizing states (and indeed, the basis of the French field of anthropology), which would reach its height in Central Europe during the

³³ As the website states: “Around 50% of the population of Hungary at that time belonged to the Hungarian ethnic group while the other 50% was spread among a few larger and a dozen smaller ethnic groups”(Kósa N.d.). Scholars are quick to point to the relationship of religion to ethnic identity in Hungary and the Habsburg Empire. While they did not form very neat boundaries, religious differences were related to national consciousness and nation-building projects. In Hungary, 80% of the population was said to have become Protestant during the reformation, coinciding with Ottoman and Habsburg occupation. Yet by the turn of the 20th century, the majority was Catholic. In Transylvania, Calvinist (and some Catholic) Hungarians and Lutheran Saxons are distinguished from Orthodox Romanians. See Verdery 1983 for a nuanced discussion of religious groups in the Habsburg Empire.

³⁴ Anderson (1984) points to the development of print capitalism and publication in the vernacular as being an important factor in popular imaginings of national community. He also points out that “official nationalisms” involved the “naturalization” of Europe’s dynasties as national (1984:82). He and other scholars of nationalism also points to military conscription as a mechanism in the creation of national consciousness. The complicated military system of the Habsburg empire makes this argument problematic for Hungary. Deák (1990) argues that an Imperial identity was enriched in the officer corps. For other classes, however, there might be some argument to be made about the sense of serving in a foreign Army. Folk songs about the “poor Hungarian lads” going off to serve in the Austrian army stand as one indication of this. See Deák (1990) for a rich discussion of the officer corps.

interwar period. While space does not allow for an in-depth discussion of the breadth of Hungarian terms used to describe a “people” in the 19th century, it is important to recognize the salience of a number of these terms in contemporary Hungarian usage and the historical assumptions behind their meanings. Hungarian ethnography, while developing out of a nation-making exercise, approached its “peoples” in the manner that the Empire had: it studied each group as if distinct; each people – *volk* – had its own language, its own spirit, its own customs. While the state engaged in active attempts at assimilation, ethnographic collection attended to distinct groups. This contradiction is present in the three goals of the Ethnographic Society mentioned above. It can also be seen between the terms *Magyar nép* – the Hungarian people, *Magyar Nemzet* – the Hungarian Nation, and *Magyarország nemzetiségei* – the nationalities of Hungary.

In the early 20th century, new technologies offered opportunities for the documentation and collection of folk culture. According to Eric Hirsch, “folk music science”, or the study of peasant music, was an important tool in establishing the existence of a “folk soul”, or *volksgeist*, that was “authentic, coherent, and persistent” (Hirsch 1997:201-202). Béla Vikár, general secretary of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society and the first in Europe to make use of the phonograph to record folk music, began recording Hungarian music in 1895. Not long afterward, with the support of the Society, composers Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály began collecting – in 1905 and 1906, respectively. With funding provided by Ministry of Culture on the condition that it be made accessible to public, Vikár established a phonogram collection at the Department of Ethnography of the National Museum (Sebő 2001:111). The Hungary that they documented using new technologies was “historic Hungary”, the roughly thousand-year-old politico-territorial entity that

would be dismantled once again a few decades later. As such, the wealth of material left to academic, ethnographic, and folkloristic posterity- the ethnographic record, so to speak- would come to contradict the new territorial definition of Hungary from 1920 onwards.

Designed and enforced by the Allied Powers and happily accepted by neighboring states, the 1920 treaty of Trianon placed two thirds of the territory of what had been Hungary since the 1867 Compromise outside the borders of the new nation state. While this resulted in a political body that more closely resembled a monoethnic nation-state, it resulted also in sizeable Hungarian ethnic minorities in neighboring states and a massive influx of refugees from these regions to “truncated” Hungary in the 1920s. “Between 1918 and 1924, an estimated 426,000 Hungarians left territories ceded to Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Austria” (Mócsy 1983:10). According to István Mócsy, the National Refugee office, established in 1920, had three goals: 1) to unify and centralize aid to all refugees and the distribution of available funds fairly; 2) to assure the collection of accurate data on the magnitude of the refugee problem; 3) to organize refugees into regional cultural and political associations to preserve group cohesion and cultivate loyalty to lost homelands (Mócsy 1983:10). It should come as no surprise that many Hungarians found the break up of the “crown lands of Saint Steven” unjust, or that they continued to think of the “severed” territories as part of Hungary. Trianon was to them the latest in a 300-year series of threats to territorial integrity. Moreover, well before the current borders of Hungary were set, folklorists and ethnographers had amassed a collection of artifacts, musical recordings, and studies reflecting the folk cultures of “greater Hungary”. It is thus that living Hungarians inside and outside the new borders were left with a national identity and territorial relations

that did not correspond with the new borders, while the ethnographic sciences – the suppliers of national symbols – confronted a Hungary quite different in territory and population than that which had been documented.³⁵

In the years after Trianon, the phonographic collection of folk music accelerated. From 1936-44, under auspices of The Academy of Sciences, and later, the Museum of Ethnography, a large number of recordings of folk music were made in the studios of Hungarian Radio under the direction of Béla Bartók, Oszkár Dincser, Zoltán Kodály, and Gyula Ortutay (Kelemen 2000:51).³⁶ In 1936, four experimental records were produced under Bartók's direction. Each record (of which only fifty were produced) was accompanied by transcriptions of the music, lyrics, and background information on collectors and performers, as well as photographs (Sebő 2001:112).³⁷ The transcriptions had been made by playing records slowly enough to reveal information not discernable at the normal speed. In later decades, these materials would “provide[d] listeners with an important guide, one that would enable them both to understand an all but forgotten world of music and make it a part of themselves” (Sebő 2001:112). In 1941, under Ortutay's direction, and with the guidance of Bartók, Kodály, and ethnomusicologist László Lajtha, 107 records were released by the Pátria record company as the Pátria series (Martin 1983:242;

³⁵ Hungary would later annex some of this territory beginning in 1938 by entering into an alliance with the Germans. The annexation of Northern Transylvania was completed by 1940. These territorial gains were lost with the Allied victory. The monoethnicity of the citizenry was further honed after WWII when, under the direction of the Allied Great Powers, population transfers took place between the states of the region (see Balogh 1990).

³⁶ Under the direction of Béla Bartók, Oszkár Dincser, Zoltán Kodály, and Gyula Ortutay (Kelemen 2000:51). Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály are internationally recognized composers. Oszkár Dincser was an ethnographer. Gyula Ortutay, ethnographer, populist, would later be Minister of Culture from 1947 to 1950. In 1957 he became the head secretary of the Hazafias Népfőnt, and in 1967, the director of the Ethnographic Research Group (*Néprajzi Kutató Csoport*) at the Academy of Science.

³⁷ The timing of these endeavors suggests that they may have benefited from the New Spiritual Front (*Új Szellemi Front*) policy introduced by the government in 1934. This policy will be discussed in chapter 2.

Sebő 2001).³⁸ Technical instructions for the reconstruction and performance of these vanishing forms were included. The emergence of later revivals and the forms they would take, then, must be understood not only in relation to the living practices of certain isolated peasant communities, but also to the materials stored according to a rigorous methodology for salvaging disappearing forms and ensuring their playback in the future. Finally, all this was paired with a commitment to public availability.

The fact that pre-Trianon Hungary had been recorded using powerful new recording devices, techniques, and methodological rigor aimed at its reproduction in the future would be a determining factor in the content of the folk revivals to come. These recordings would not only help make it possible to “revive” the customs recorded, but would also become a basis of authenticity.³⁹ Notably, many of the sources of these “authentic” recordings were located outside of truncated Hungary – especially in Transylvania. The commitment to public availability was especially important, as these collections were made in the context of efforts to revive peasant practices and integrate them into the everyday life of all Hungarians in the years after Trianon. To illuminate such efforts, a deeper look at this period is required.

Reviving Folk Dance in “Truncated Hungary”

World War I was a cataclysmic event in East Central Europe. While for centuries Hungary and other “nations” had sought independence, the sudden collapse of the Habsburg Empire and the decisions supported by the victorious Allied Powers to carve its territories into independent (and supposedly homogenous) nation states left contentious results. As a partner in the Empire, Hungary was considered to have

³⁸ While these were not accompanied by the type of documentation that had accompanied the earlier Bartók project, others were later produced in this manner by the Folk Music Research group of the Academy of Sciences formed under Kodály in 1953.

³⁹ A discussion of authenticity will come later in the dissertation, see sections discussing revivals, especially chapter 5.

been an aggressor in the war, and was treated accordingly. The subsequent award of two thirds of “historic Hungary” to neighboring countries had deep and lasting political and economic effects (Kürti 2002:69). As the war neared its end, a short-lived liberal government had given way to a “Republic of Councils” aimed at the dictatorship of the proletariat in 1919. Neither government had been able to stop the occupation of regions of greater Hungary by her neighbors, each attempting to carve their own nation-state from the corpse of the dead Empire.⁴⁰ While Communist rule lasted only about 4 months, it was characterized by “red terror”, giving justification to the counterrevolutionary measures of the next short-lived government. Into the widening vacuum of legitimacy marched the National Army of Admiral Miklós Horthy, marking the beginning of the counterrevolutionary Christian National regime, and affecting its own “white terror” throughout Hungary. Despite concerns about the Horthy faction, it received more international support than the Republic of Councils. This was due partly to fear of the spread of communism and partly because it claimed to represent a broader social spectrum (Mócsy 1983).

By 1920, Horthy had ascended to the position of Regent and would remain so for 25 years. The new governing coalition, with nobles displaced from the neighboring lands represented in far higher proportions than their percentage in society, based its politics on exclusive rule by the “historical classes” and the cry “Justice for Hungary”. Opposed to any far-reaching social reform, the governments of the Horthy era could conveniently point to the “unjust” peace settlement as the source of the social and economic problems of the country. They further pointed to the failure of the liberal and communist efforts that preceded them as proof that

⁴⁰ The infrastructure of industrializing Hungary had been built to fit greater Hungary. Thus, in addition to losing population and territory considered Hungarian by the grace of god, Hungary lost natural resources, major cities and the functionality of the road and rail systems connecting them.

social revolution could not solve the problems the country faced. The governments of the Horthy era ruled with the conviction that only the “historical classes” – the aristocracy, the middle nobility, the land-holding gentry, and the bureaucratic, military officer, and intellectual layers which had developed from within them – should participate in the political sphere, for it was these groups who would assure that the country would remain Christian and National (Borbándi 1989:37).⁴¹

This conviction that the historical classes alone should participate in politics was justified by the idea that the country had not yet reached the point of development for peasants and workers to take part in the affairs of state, and that the bourgeoisie (*polgárság*) should only be allowed to do so within limits (Borbándi 1989:37). Nevertheless, capital and the urban bourgeoisie were, according to Borbándi, “organically built into the counterrevolutionary system and satisfied with the political roles that reached them”(Borbándi 1989:37). It should be noted that in this period the terms “middle class” and “bourgeois” were not interchangeable. The *polgárság* was urban and included merchants, tradesmen, self-employed businessmen, and intellectuals. In the anti-Semitic circles of the bureaucratic/officer class-the so-called middle class (*középosztály*)- the word *polgár* was used as a gloss for Jew. Indeed, a large percentage of this group was Jewish or of Jewish descent (Borbándi 1989:33+48, Mócsy 1983).⁴² In this moment when truncated Hungary was attempting to absorb massive numbers of ethnic Hungarian immigrants from the territories, the tension between social revolution and the defense of near-feudal relations was often expressed in terms of a tension between “Hungarians” and “foreigners”. This is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that despite the territory of

⁴¹ According to Borbándi, the Horthy era use of “National” contrasted it with “International”, and in this way with movements such as communism, liberalism, and freemasonry. These could also be associated with “foreigners” – Germans and Jews especially.

⁴² *Polgár*, derived from the German *burgher*, means bourgeoisie.

the country having been reduced to one third of its former size, the state apparatus remained undiminished thanks to having absorbed the bureaucratic middle class which had fled the neighboring territories (Mócsy 1983:185-186). Not coincidentally, a *numerus clausus* bill⁴³ for Hungarians of the Israelite faith was established in 1920, limiting the percentage of Jewish students permitted to study in the Universities (Braham 1981:30).⁴⁴

At the base of the distinction between the bourgeoisie (*polgárság*) and middle class (*középosztály*) was profession.⁴⁵ Because of persisting feudal relations, the nobility had resisted education needed for bourgeois professions/occupations, preferring instead to work in the “traditional” noble provinces, the military and the state bureaucracy. While the state apparatus retained its massive size, the goal of the *numerus clausus* law was to nurture an ethnically Hungarian bourgeoisie. Even when cooperating with capital, the ruling classes continued to define themselves in opposition to bourgeois forces. At the same time, their power rested on the oppression of the majority of the agrarian population, excluded from the political process and experiencing rapid change under the transformations brought about by the tensions between feudal relations and the processes of capitalization and urbanization.

The New York Stock Exchange crash of 1929 had disastrous effects on Hungary’s economy, precipitating a sudden drop in the price of grain and leading to the collapse of the framework supporting Hungary’s economy. As prices and volume dropped, tax revenues fell, foreign credit sources diminished, short-term loans were

⁴³ “The first major anti-Jewish law in post World War 1 Europe”(Braham 1981:30).

⁴⁴ Jews were not considered to be a nationality/ethnicity and thus were only identifiable bureaucratically if they practiced Judaism, which then made them identifiable as Israelites.

⁴⁵ Chris Hann (2006:48) points out that the term *polgár* means both “bourgeois” and “citizen, another sign of the tensions between feudal and capitalist relations. He also points out that Ferenc Erdei, who we will later encounter as a populist writer and activist, was concerned with the “stymied” bourgeoisification of the rural peasantry (2006:48).

called in, and earnings from grain exports declined. The League of Nations, from whom Hungary sought financial relief, insisted on a rigid austerity program. Unemployment grew rapidly; even government workers lost their jobs or suffered severe pay cuts, and peasants were forced to revert to subsistence farming. As foreign demand diminished, industrial production dropped and businesses bankrupted; as the standard of living became unbearable for many, rightist politics gained increasing legitimacy.

It was in this environment of recent and extensive territorial losses, a firm hold on power by the “historical classes”, and economic depression, that Hungary’s first folk dance revival arose. While the *csárdás* and *verbunkos* had been “invented” by nation makers who freely borrowed from peasant motifs, their invention was not indicative of revival, for revivals “strive to “restore” a [musical] system believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past for the benefit of contemporary society” (Livingston 1999:66). Rather, the “invention” of the *csárdás* and *verbunkos* as society dances reflected new techniques of nation making –and were one example of a centuries old process of mutual influence (*visszahatás*) between social spheres. Viewed from a historical perspective, the dances of the folk and those of “society” in Hungary have always shown strong reciprocal borrowing tendencies (Pesovár 1978, Kaposi 1991, Vitányi 1964). Indeed, according to Iván Vitányi (1964), up until the 20th century, the folk adopted new dances (including the *csárdás* and the *verbunkos*) from the court and assimilated them to local paradigms.⁴⁶ Yet, by the 20th century, however, the new dances began to replace older ones due, in part, to the emergence of dance masters (Vitányi 1964:11). The fact that dance masters, or “dance and courtesy instructors” (*tánc és illem tanárok*), became a widespread phenomenon in

⁴⁶ I mean by this the social dances of the court.

this period illustrates the role of dance as a socially embedded phenomenon; indeed, social dance was considered a means of socialization. In addition to their contribution to society dances, folk dance and folk music served in this period as inspiration for several forms of “high art”, including ballet and opera. But these too were connected to the tradition of invention, rather than of revival.

It appears that tourism may have been an important element in this shift. Zoltán Szabó points out that in Hungary the first ethnographic journal and the first journal on tourism appeared in the same year: 1889. It was not until the interwar period, however, that significant tourism developed, although in parts of Europe – Scandinavia (Lofgren 1999) and Switzerland (Bendix 1989), for example – it had been begun in much earlier. This tourism, centered on ideas about fitness and health, and nature and the outdoors, was at first the pastime of an elite avant-garde (Löfgren 1999, Szabó 1998, Bendix 1989). Gradually, these rural trips began to include interest in folklore as well (Szabó 1998:170). The convergence of interest in folklore and the rise of tourism offered new opportunities for the performance of folk dance and folk music, often connected with regionalism (Bolle-Zemp 1990) and the assertion of local identity (Bendix 1989). In England, folk dance revival took off at the turn of the 20th century with the “revival” of Morris dancing, led by folklorist Cecil Sharp (Vitányi 1964:13). Vitányi (2003) asserts that the movement was stronger in the peripheries- in Scotland, Ireland and Wales – than on English soil. From such international trends emerged the first folk dance revival in Hungary; the “Bouquet of Pearls movement” in 1931.

Journalist Béla Paulini, the key catalyst behind the emergence of the Bouquet of Pearls (*Gyöngyös Bokréta*) movement, had written the text for Zoltán Kodály’s 1926 opera *Háry János*, which was based on Hungarian folk tunes. He

subsequently taught the piece to an “art loving” (*műkedvelő*) peasant group of the village of Csákvár, which performed it in 1929 and later in 1930 under the name of the Hungarian Cultivators’ Theater (*Magyar Földművés Játékszín*) (Vitányi 1964:15, Pálfi 1970:118, 118n). Paulini’s earlier efforts were dwarfed by the successes of the Bouquet of Pearls. Through the formation of the Association of Bouquets (*Bokrétás Szövetség*), Paulini assembled resources from diverse parties to bring groups of provincial folk dancers from villages all over “greater Hungary” to the Budapest stage each year on Saint Steven’s Day, (Pálfi 1970:120). Of the approximately 100 villages registered with the Association, close to one quarter were located in territory outside of “truncated” Hungary (Pálfi 1970:147-150).

The success enjoyed by the Bouquet of Pearls can be attributed to a confluence of forces. The promise of expanded tourism had won the support of the Budapest city council along with a plan for annual celebrations in Budapest on Saint Steven’s Day, which had just recently been designated a national holiday. Inspired by the success of tourism in Italy, Switzerland and Austria, village tourism was developing rapidly in Hungary in the early 1930s (Pálfi 1970:119). Based on the unique qualities of Hungarian culture, such tourism was intimately tied to the development of cottage industry-notably the production of embroidered fabrics that, displayed at world fairs and expos, made specific regions and villages known throughout Europe. With the development of photography and film, certain locations, for example, the village of Boldog, became known for their folk art and charming village life, making them tourist destinations with regularly planned sights such as women fetching water or elaborate wedding celebrations; some even

becoming sets for films.⁴⁷ All this was facilitated by the construction of transportation and communication networks; notably the train system and bus services. As villages became known for their folk art, associations built guesthouses and Houses of Folk Art to accommodate tourists. The formation of Bouquet of Pearl groups served the local tourism industry as much as it did that in Budapest, as groups would perform locally for tourists in addition to traveling to Budapest or other places for festivals. “Middle class” proponents of these tourism-based activities hoped that they would be the answer to the economic woes of the rural poor, while at the same time reinforce and encourage their pride in their own “traditional” provincial culture. Before examining the revival further, let us look at two “tourist towns” of this period, Mezőkövesd and Boldog, both which engaged in the Bouquet of Pearls folk dance revival movement.

The popularizing of “local folk art” and cottage production through fairs and expos, journalism, and the new amateur activity of photography was key to the promotion of village tourism. Photographs taken by Archduchess Isabella, promoter of the Matyó ball, of the wedding performed on the occasion of her visit to the Matyó town of Mezőkövesd were published in the Sunday News (Fügedi 2000:318). According to Fügedi, such attention to the Matyós as the “typical Magyars” sparked regular visits by tourists to the town of Mezőkövesd (Fügedi 2000:319). In 1926, Matyós performed for an audience of 4,000 at the “International Exposition for the Defense of Man” (*Embervédelmi Kiállítás*) in Budapest (Fügedi 2000:319). These events too were covered in the press (Fügedi 2000:321). As the depression took its toll, a council was formed to work on attracting tourism to Mezőkövesd. In 1932 various celebrities and government officials promoted a big event in

⁴⁷ See the archive on the website of the Hungarian Ethnographic Museum referencing the exhibit entitled “Pictures of Boldog”. Boldog served as a set for several films in the 1930s, one a French production.

Mezőkövesd that drew 3,000 visitors in one day (Fügedi 2000:323). By the 1940s, visitors were being hosted in guest houses (*tájház* – literally landscape house) where they were provided with meals and treated to performances, while Matyó women also traveled to spas and seaside resorts to sell their embroidery (Fügedi 2000: 325-326).

The story was quite similar in the town of Boldog, to which the Capital City Council of People's Cultivation (*Székesfővárosi Népművelési Bizottság*) brought a group of 50 tourists in 1931.⁴⁸ The group was provided entertainment, food, and handicrafts for sale (Újváry 1982:67). That same year the town was visited by a group of English and American tourists (Újváry 1982:67). Boldog was visited by the Hungarian radio in 1932, and reported on by papers, while filmmakers also visited the town in search of locations (Újváry 1982:67). Subsequently a number of films were shot there, in which locals were employed as extras. As a result of its popularity, Boldog built a tourist guesthouse (*idegenforgalmi vendégház*). The IBUSZ travel bureau, the sleeper car bureau (*hálókocsi iroda*) and booking office (*menetjegy iroda*) each brought groups to Boldog, which in 1935 finally received money from the National Tourism Council to buy a guesthouse. In 1937 the Ministry of Foreign Trade sponsored a film made in Boldog entitled “Cottage Industry and Folk Art” (Újváry 1982:85). It is perhaps not surprising that both Boldog and Mezőkövesd featured Bouquet of Pearls folkdance ensembles.

Beyond membership fees, the Bouquet of Pearls enjoyed the financial support of the Budapest City Council, the Municipal Tourism Bureau, and the Ministry of Culture. In addition, when concerning those groups in Transylvania and the regions north and south of “truncated” Hungary where ethnic Hungarians lived, the

⁴⁸ Boldog is located 9 kilometers south of Hatvan—approximately 60 kilometers (north)east of Budapest, at the foot of the Mátra mountains.

Bouquet of Pearls received support from the Ministry of Defense. This sponsorship base allowed Paulini to pay his performers and produce a journal, *The Bouquet Journal* (*Bokrétások Lapja*), in which debates over the proper direction of the movement were published. By 1934, the Bouquet of Pearls had won “the exclusive rights to organize a folk group” by the Ministry of Culture (literally: Ministry of Religion and Public Education) (Pálfi 1970:122).⁴⁹ In the words of Imre Romsics, “In order to hinder those outside the association, a meeting was held at the Ministry of Culture in June, 1934, where they agreed to prevent by law any activities of folk art outside the Association” (Romsics 2001:24). The fact that in 1935 members of the Association of Bouquets attended the annual congress of Cecil Sharp’s International Folk Song and Dance Society in London should remind us that the Bouquet of Pearls was part of broader trends in folk dance revival (Vitányi 1964:14). Beyond Hungary, Bouquet groups also toured in Western Europe (Romsics 2001:22-23).

The Bouquet of Pearls had a mutually informing relationship with ethnography, being both championed and policed by ethnographers. István Györfly, the first to teach the discipline on the university level, claimed to have suggested the idea to Paulini himself (Pálfi 1970:120). While Paulini argued that “We should leave the village art for the village, on the one hand to be sensible, and on the other hand for reasons of integrity” (Pálfi 1970:131), in fact, dance material and costumes were quite often embellished upon by the leaders of Bouquet groups as they adapted them for the stage according to their tastes and world views (Romsics 2001:24). By 1936, such activities had come to the attention of Ministry of Religion and Culture, which then placed the movement under the supervision of the

⁴⁹ It is surely not a coincidence that in the same year Prime Minister Gömbös launched the New Spiritual Front, discussed later.

Hungarian Ethnographic Society (Pálfi 1970:125, Romsics 2001:24). Assigned to oversee the “authenticity of dances and costumes”, ethnographers inspected them and checked them against the ethnographic record, often conducting new research to this end. Yet, without any real authority of enforcement, their conclusions had little to no effect on performances (Pálfi 1970:126).

According to György Martin⁵⁰

The Pearly Bouquet Association was an extremely solid, strictly closed peasant movement averse to any kind of urban or intellectual initiative intent on reviving folk tradition. The community of participants of different ages, of different property status and of different social position who met on the stage annually on St Steven’s Day for fourteen years, made the peasantry conscious of their own cultural values (Martin 1988:8, see also Cardaro 1998:107).

However, according to Pálfi, Paulini promoted the movement by personally seeking support from the “the leading social powers of the village”(1970:135). While Pálfi suggests that this did not always mean the intellectual or landowning class, he does indicate that teachers, notaries and priests, especially protestant ones, were typical local Bouquet organizers (1970:135). Indeed, despite Martin’s statement, it appears that rather than a peasant movement, the Gyöngyös Bokréta was centrally organized by the urban elite and locally organized by village intellectuals, usually teachers or clergy members (Romsics 2001:21, Pálfi 1970:135). The examples of the founding of ensembles in two villages, Kalocsa and Boldog, will help flesh out this picture.

In Kalocsa⁵¹, the Bouquet of Pearls group was “founded and operated under the auspices of the Young Farmer’s Association” (Romsics 2001:22), which selected dancers to be members of the group. Romsics writes: “Because of the high price of

⁵⁰ György Martin—folk dancer, ethnographer, folkdance researcher, worked at the Institute for People’s Culture and was very important to the *táncház* movement, as will be seen in chapter 4.

⁵¹ 88 miles south of Budapest, near the contemporary border with Serbia.

folk costumes, only young people from well to do families could afford to dance in the Gyöngyös Bokréta groups”(2001:25). The formation of the Bouquet of Pearls group in the village of Boldog is described in detail by Újváry:

In the community of Boldog, near Hatvan, the folk art movement started in the 1920s. Amidst the oppressive economic situation and unemployment which was crushing the villages too, the chief notary, Jenő Bruckner wished to bring attention to his village by publicizing folk art-precipitating folk costume, embroidery and folk customs-and in this way boosting tourism and wages and at the same time strengthening and protecting (megmenteni) local traditions (Újváry 1982:59).

Bruckner was also responsible for organizing the participation of Boldog residents dressed in folk costume in parades, and helping to promote the village (Újváry 1982:59). In 1930, he managed to acquire from the government the status of “place of folk costume” (*népviseleti hely*) for the village (Újváry 1982:59).⁵²

We must note that Bruckner belonged to the rural/provincial elite. While his bureaucratic position as a notary suggests that he was quite probably of the gentry class, this does not mean that he did not engage in agricultural production, or that he was wealthy. Indeed, we know that the poorest peasants were landless and that large proportions of the nobility had become smallholding peasants who differed from non- nobility only through distinctive consumption habits, exercise and flaunting of citizenship rights, and positions in the state bureaucracy. Indeed, by uniting “rural” against “urban”, the discourse of urban-rural distinction functioned to obscure the oppressive nature of feudal relations that served the interests of the nobility. This situation should remind us to constantly reexamine the words peasant, folk, and village. Nostalgia for these is often one for an agrarian society from within the conditions of rapid urbanization. Yet such a romanticization of the “peasant” and of “village life” glosses over real and oppressive social relations and

⁵² Ujváry (1982) uses this term. I do not know what it entailed. But given what Romsics and Pálfi state about the legal monopoly the Bouquet of Pearls established, we might assume it was connected with the Association.

real class differences in rural Hungary. While developing in a milieu in which the backwards rural was contrasted with the advanced urban (Creed and Ching 1997), such romanticism ascribes order to a past from the perspective of a disordered present (Roseberry 1989:59).

While technically the Bouquet of Pearls existed until 1947, it floundered from the time of Paulini's suicide upon the Soviet occupation of the country. Yet the movement would have lasting effects on both folk culture and folklorism in a number of important ways. First, dance researchers have asserted that there is no question that the Bouquet of Pearls strongly influenced the preservation of folk dance. Folk dance researcher György Martin writes, "wherever the Gyöngyös Bokréta planted its feet, the interest in tradition remained alive for a good period of time"(Martin 1980:108). Second, as others have asserted, it was the Gyöngyös Bokréta that "awakened the different youth organizations (especially the scouts), and contributed to the complex practices of the staged performance of Hungarian dances and customs found today" (Pesovár 2003:3). Further, the Bouquet of Pearls reveals the complex relationship between revival practices and the ethnographic record. Struggling with the authenticity of the Bouquet groups, ethnographers focused heavily on Bouquet villages. It is no coincidence that a number of these villages are the sites of classic studies and ongoing visitation by ethnographers. That is, Bouquet villages are likely to have a living dance tradition and to be visited and documented by ethnographers, the suppliers of national symbols.⁵³

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a survey of the invention of national tradition in late 19th century and early 20th century Hungary as embedded in the nation-state making

⁵³ Examples of Bouquet of Pearl villages also central to *táncház* are Szék, Gyimesközéplak, and Kalotaszentkirály, each the location of long standing dance camps (discussed in chapter 4 and 7).

process. By ending with the Bouquet of Pearls movement of the interwar period, I hope to have illustrated the shift toward revival practices integrating tourism, development, and questions of culture. As we have seen, the conditions in Hungary in the 1930s gave rise to the essentially conservative Bouquet of Pearls movement in which urban and rural elites encouraged villagers to “perform” and preserve their own culture, considered distinct from that of the urban elite. These conditions also gave rise to a movement, discussed in the next chapter, that sought to improve the social conditions of poor peasants or, the “folk”, through dramatic political and social changes. The Bouquet of Pearls movement emphasized tourism and the staged performance of folk dance and folk customs for tourists. It sought to bring revenue to the country and countryside and better the economic conditions of peasants not by changing the social system but by encouraging peasants to take pride in an “authentic” tradition that was theirs alone. As one goal of the Bouquet of Pearls movement was the preservation of folk dance, it thus became involved with issues of ethnographic authenticity. In contrast, the “Populist movement” (*Népi mozgalom*), discussed in the next chapter, pursued the project of peoples/*volk*-national cultivation, seeking to integrate folk culture into the everyday lives of citizens writ large.

The “folk art movement of the youth”, developing in a milieu strongly influenced by this populist movement “differed fundamentally from the Bouquet of Pearls”, for it was made up primarily of students, rather than the peasants who took part in the Bouquet of Pearls (Vitányi 1969:26). Unlike the Bouquet of Pearls, in which peasants were the dancers, the youth movement was made up mostly of urban students who had not been raised with folk songs and folk dance (Vitányi 1964:26). Whereas “the Bouquet of Pearls wanted to preserve the folk tradition within peasant

circles...the youth movement wanted to transform it into the common treasury of the nation”(Vitányi 1969:26). While the Gyöngyös Bokréta fit into the dominant structure, Vitányi argues, the youth movement existed in opposition to it (1964:26).

As with the inventors of the *csárdás*, the “folk art movement of the youth” did not seek to conserve folk art in an unchanged form. They utilized folk art as the basis for their creative activity- to make stage dances and to supplant them and social dances with Hungarian ones (Vitányi 1964: 26). Vitányi states: “authenticity was not especially important” for these populist influenced dancers, because they thought of themselves as the “people” (*nép*) (Vitányi 1964:26). In contrast, Vitányi argues, Paulini felt that peasants should preserve folk culture and artists should produce new art influenced by it (1964:25). The folk art movement of the youth differed from this, as its goal was to build a new society; rather than conserve relations of the past, they sought progress (Vitányi 1964:27). The folk art movement of the youth will be discussed further in the next chapter, contextualized within the utopian/ progressive social program of the populist movement. I will locate this movement in the context of the Hungarian practices of civic cultivation, for, as I hope to make clear, it is only within this context that it can be understood.

CHAPTER 2
What kind of Nation? Civic Cultivation and Folk National Cultivation in the Interwar Period

Culture, notes Terry Eagleton, “is a kind of ethical pedagogy which will fit us for political citizenship by liberating the ideal or collective self buried within each of us, a self which finds supreme representation in the universal realm of the state”(Eagleton 2000:7).⁵⁴ This chapter explores the project of *népi-nemzeti művelődés*—folk/people’s national cultivation—within the process/politics of *művelődés*, what I term civic cultivation, in Hungary during the interwar period. In the introduction, I defined civic cultivation as the process resulting from struggles within civil society concerning the education of the masses toward the practice of citizenship. This project of civic cultivation should be considered to encompass those activities discussed as adult education, moral education, public education, public cultivation, extracurricular education, cultural enlightenment (White 1990), socialization (White 1990, Gellner 1983), aesthetic enlightenment⁵⁵, and aesthetic education⁵⁶, and cannot be limited to what Gellner (1983) writes about as the “educational machine.” Indeed, my choice to employ the term *civic* before the term cultivation is to highlight the historical situations in which such activities arose—specifically, the radically altered political situations in which citizenship was arguably something attainable by all people.

⁵⁴ Eagleton warns that while the verb culture as cultivation was sometimes a synonym for civilization, as the noun culture would evolve into its antonym (Eagleton 2000:9). Like Eagleton, Gellner focuses on the process—in this case of creating “universal culture,” but while Gellner(1983:37), wanting to illustrate how nationalism—the process of “exo-socialization”—links state and culture(1983:38) distinguishes the formal task of education taken on by the state from other forms such as the sports and leisure clubs provided by industrial corporations, I stress the competing claims made within civil society.

⁵⁵This term aesthetic enlightenment, used by Freidrich Schiller in his book On the Aesthetic Enlightenment of Man, nicely sums up “the relation of the turn to the aesthetic and problems of absolutist power (Eagleton 1990:5).

⁵⁶ Also used also by White (1990:75) presumably after a Soviet author.

In the age of European colonialism citizenship was denied or greatly circumscribed for both colonial subjects and domestic working classes, each consigned to the “waiting room” of self government (Chakrabarty 2000). The premodern status assigned to these groups according to “historicist thinking” implied that they were not prepared to act as citizens and thus to take part in political citizenship (Chakrabarty 2000: 8). In Europe this was paralleled by limitations on the franchise according to land ownership and literacy requirements. Given the exclusion of entire populations from citizenship, preoccupation with “the people” and things folk, a central facet of the nation building problematic, appears intimately connected with the assertion of citizenship rights. It is at this juncture of civilization and *kultur*, as they relate to questions of citizenship, but also to the mandate for and the assertion of unique difference in the form of national cultures that I propose we view civic cultivation and the development of a discourse of the inner, the spiritual as a domain of sovereignty in Hungary. Accordingly, I will introduce the populist movement in interwar Hungary as an element in the process of the production of certain kinds of (national) citizens according to the ideas of enlightenment, cultivation, and education, both ethical and aesthetic. First, however, a brief discussion of the Hungarian word *művelődés*- cultivation- is called for.

Exposing its Latin heritage, the root of the English noun “culture” can be discovered in the verb “to cultivate,” derived from the agricultural paradigm. In Hungarian too, a farmer cultivates the land (*földet művel*). While in contemporary English usage we leave the verb “to culture” to the laboratory, using the verbs “to civilize”, “to educate”, or “to socialize” when referring to the act of imparting culture to the people, in Hungarian the idiom of cultivation carries through, resonating with

the meanings of both civilization and *kultur*. The population is to become *művelt*-cultivated; cultured. The state of cultivation-of culture- is *művelődés*, while the act of cultivating is *művelés*. The root *művel* informs such words as *Művelődéspolitiká*-cultural politics/politics of cultivation, *Művelődési Minisztérium*-Ministry of Culture, and *Nemzeti Művelődés*-National Culture. A sophisticated, or cultivated, person is said to be *művelt*. Armed with this etymology, we are now prepared to examine the process of *művelődés* in Hungary

By examining cultivation in the context of party politics and the cultural politics of associative life- in the field of civic cultivation- this chapter elaborates the context in which the populist movement and “folk dance movement of the youth” (Vitányi 1964) arose in the interwar period, further exposing the relationship of citizenship and nation. Building on the discussion of civic cultivation elaborated in the introduction as a contradictory process of citizen making which results in certain cases in a distinction being conceived between an inner/spiritual and an outer/material sphere, I give a brief history of cultivation in late 19th- and early 20th- century Hungary. Following this, I turn to the politics of cultivation in the interwar period, focusing specifically on the rise of the folk/populist movement (*népi mozgalom*) and the associated project of folk national cultivation (*népi-nemzeti művelődés*). The chapter ends with an examination of specific strands of the populist movement and techniques participants employed in pursuing this particular platform of *művelődés* and their diffusion, leading up to a discussion of the lasting opposition between “populists” and “urbanists”. The legacies of these practices and discourses, I will later argue, are essential to understanding the contemporary *táncház* movement.

In Hungary in the first half of the 20th century, access to formal education remained a major distinction between classes, aiding the upper classes in maintaining political exclusivity while at the same time justifying their beliefs about the inferiority of the uncultured lower classes, for whom illiteracy remained the norm. While reading circles emerged as early as the 18th century, it was in the 19th century, especially after the 1867 Compromise that established the Dual Monarchy, that casinos and new associational groups for peasants and bourgeoisie began to multiply (Kovalcsik 2003:16). The half-century of the Dual Monarchy has been termed the “Golden Age” in history books, due to Hungary’s rapid urbanization and industrialization and the rich associational and artistic life that accompanied them. Such changes were centered in Pest, Europe’s fastest growing city in the 1890s (Kósa 1998:131). Among the flourishing new workers’ homes, reading circles, casinos, and clubs were some for which the cultivation of the people (*népművelés*) was the express goal. Education for the people (*népoktatás*) had been made mandatory after the 1867 Compromise (Kovalcsik 2003:404), but because only 48% of those required to attend school actually did in 1870, pressure grew for the development of *népművelés* outside of the schools (Kovalcsik 2003:404). Inspired by approaches toward adult education in France and England, these efforts resulted in increased government support for adult education, libraries, and museums (Kovalcsik 2003:405).⁵⁷

Still, fearing the political organization of the lower classes, most members of the upper classes did not show much support for these activities, nor did the church (Kovalcsik 2003:405). Thus it was, that many of the pedagogical societies (*nevelési egyletek*) formed in the decades after the Compromise focused rather on the assimilation of minorities (Kovalcsik 405-409). As this period was characterized by

⁵⁷ This combination is often grouped in later endeavors at “adult education” as well.

linguistic nationalism, and because nation making was important to any project aimed at sovereignty, language assimilation was embraced as an important goal by the upper classes. Connected to language assimilation was the campaign for the Magyarization of surnames. Jews, many of whom also converted to Christianity in this period, were especially responsive to these policies which were supported first in the press and civil society, and then by the government in the last decades of the 19th century (Fujimovics 2002:1)⁵⁸. Civil associations, such as the Uplands Hungarian Cultural Association (*Felvidéki Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület*) were “dedicated to the spread of the Magyar tongue” among minorities, in this case, Slovaks (Kann and David 1984:382).⁵⁹ The success of Magyarization practices is apparent in the decrease in minority schools in the first decade of the 20th century (Kann and David 1984:418).

Oppositional Politics in the Horthy Era: Political and Spiritual Parties

In the years after WWI, with Hungary now a small relatively homogenous nation-state, the attitude of the ruling classes toward minorities shifted. In the place of assimilation came a nationalist policy of ethnic exclusion (Fujimovics 2002:2).⁶⁰ Such antagonisms were exacerbated by the stock market crash in 1929 and the subsequent depression. As the depression deepened and reagrarization of the population occurred, the agrarian birth rate declined, precipitating a panicked discourse about the demographic decline of Magyars, or death of the nation (*nemzethalál*) and prompting researchers to investigate the “*egyke*” or “one child”

⁵⁸ Since language was the most important marker of nation during this period, there were significant initiatives by the state and upper classes toward assimilation. Certain groups embraced this while others did not, depending partly on access to citizenship and on nation-state aspirations.

⁵⁹ The “*Felvidék*” is a territorial region of historic Hungary, roughly equivalent to present day Slovakia.

⁶⁰ Braham points out that “while the total number of Jews declined to about half its pre-war size” their percentage remained about the same in the total population. With the nation now resembling a much more “homogenous and ethnically integrated state,” he notes, “the Jews lost their importance as statistical recruits to the cause of Magyarism” and became scapegoats (1981:28).

system, believed to be a chief reason for the demographic vulnerability of ethnic Magyars, in contrast to prolific “foreigners” or minorities (Borbándi 1989:64+68, see also Vasáry 1989).⁶¹

Despite the authoritarian nature of the interwar regime, parliament remained to some extent responsive to pressure by opposition parties. Nevertheless, the political nation remained highly circumscribed.⁶² While the limits on expression varied across the different governments of the 25-year regime, the press was subject to censorship throughout. In a manner similar to the form that bourgeois struggles had taken in late 18th century Germany⁶³, class-consciousness was expressed in a literary movement. In interwar Hungary, matters of “politics” were debated in a lively literary scene embodied in journals and coffeehouse gatherings, indeed, in the “inner sphere” of spiritual or intellectual production, rather than in a show of “political power.”

In the West, the significant force of opposition was the left, argues Ivan Vitányi⁶⁴, yet it was peasant-based oppositions that filled this role in the agrarian countries of East Central Europe. Indeed, among the opposition parties in the Horthy era, the strongest was the Smallholders’ Party. At its base were rural landowners -small and middle peasants- later joined by elements of the rural and Budapest bourgeoisie.⁶⁵ Although technically a peasant party, the Smallholders actually represented only a small fraction of the peasantry: those who owned land.

⁶¹ Egyke is the diminutive form of the word for one.

⁶² “The franchise was reduced from 40% (1919) to 22.8% in 1922, and voting was open in the countryside, though this was abolished in the late 1930s” (Cienciala 2002).

⁶³ With which Goethe and Schiller are associated.

⁶⁴ Vitányi, personal communication.

⁶⁵ Based on the ideals of radical bourgeois parties of the turn of the century, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinsky founded the Nemzeti Radikális Párt (National Radical Party) to address land reform, which the radicals believed would both boost industrialization and help the peasantry. While critiquing the anti-Semitism of the far right, it pressed for monopoly capitalism reform with the intention of redistributing privilege from the hands of the Jews into the hands of Christians. The party eventually merged with the Smallholders (Borbándi 1989:58).

As such, while they purported to represent the peasantry, their efforts did not address the plight of the majority of the agrarian population who remained politically unrepresented throughout the Horthy regime. By 1928, Hungary had been dubbed *Három millió koldus országa* –the land of three million paupers,⁶⁶ in reference to this rapidly proletarianizing stratum of manorial servants and their families, agrarian workers, dwarf-holders, renters, and sharecroppers, who made up a third of the population of Hungary, and 67 percent of the peasant population (Borbándi 1989:58). Secondary education was indeed a rare privilege for this group, for large landholders did not encourage the schooling of their servants, believing that “knowledge and culture will ruin them” (Borbándi 1989:63). Indeed, they asserted that “the soul/spirit (*lelke*) of the peasant is the best topsoil for ethical and religious ideals” and that “they shouldn’t strive for knowledge, but rather be respectful and work righteously and diligently”(Borbándi 1989:63). Landless and unrepresented in the political sphere, this class carried the more privileged classes on its shoulders.

Most of the urban bourgeoisie (*polgárság*) were represented by a spectrum of liberal parties. The Social Democratic Party - “the real left of public life”- focused on broadening the franchise, and on achieving the secret ballot and land reform (Borbándi 1989:41). After a period of repression at the beginning of the 1920s, this party was permitted to resume activities, although restrictions compelled the party to refrain from political strikes and to engage in union activities only outside the political sphere (Borbándi 1989:41). The new “pact” thereby constrained the Party’s ability to represent the interests of urban workers in political life; it also deprived the

⁶⁶ Journalist Gyorgy Oláh published a book entitled *Három Míllio Koldus* in 1928. The term was adopted in public debate and literature to refer to the poorest stratum of peasant society (Borbándi 1989:58, Vitányi, personal communication).

Social Democrats of the possibilities of rural agitation (Borbándi 1989: 41). Such conditions assured that in a largely agrarian country rural workers remained unrepresented in political life and that the Social Democrats remained an urban party with little ability to appeal to agrarian and industrial workers together as a single oppressed class.

While the governments of the Horthy era were authoritarian to varying degrees, they differed from the far right parties.⁶⁷ The goal envisioned by the far right was not the defense of the “aristocracy-gentry-bureaucratic triad,” but rather a national socialist “party of the masses,” in which this triad would share power with the bourgeoisie, peasants and workers (Borbándi 1989:26). Their platforms embraced ideas about reconquering the nation and about race (*fűj*). According to Borbándi, this far right opposition appeared to many to be more democratic than the government parties, because they aimed at shared power and “promised to end social immobility and attend to the problems of the workers and the peasantry”(Borbándi 1989:39), who were left out of the political process. By the 1939 elections, the far right Arrow Cross Party (*Nyilaskeresztes Párt*) had entered parliament and was most popular among the lowest strata of the working classes(Lackó1998).⁶⁸

“A sign of the social backwardness of the country,” Borbándi writes, “is that unlike with the urban workers, the agrarian laborers did not have representation for their interests...organizations could not even exist ...it was not even possible to think about founding unions...In peasant demands, the governmentsaw opposition agitation and illegal deeds” (Borbándi 1989:62). It was into this void that

⁶⁷ Embodied in the *Nemzeti Front* -National Front- and the *Hungarista Párt*-Hungarianist Party.

⁶⁸ The party had garnered over 20% of votes in the 1939 elections and had 30 seats in Parliament. When the Germans occupied Hungary, they installed the Arrow Cross as the governing party.

the Populist movement (*népi mozgalom*) stepped. The broad set of practices that made up this movement aimed at addressing the woes of the *nép*-the people/volk/folk- the lowest levels of society- focusing on the urgency of land reform and bringing legitimacy to the project of *népi-nemzeti művelődés*-folk-national cultivation. Wary of formal politics in an authoritarian regime, most of their work was done in the sphere of *művelődéspolitiká*; the politics of cultivation. Yet by demanding the franchise, the redistribution of land, and cultural validation for landless peasants, populists advocated citizenship for the lowest strata of society.

As described in chapter 1, the meaning of the nation had begun to take on the republican connotations during the reforms in the 19th century. This shift had been continuously hindered, however, by entrenched feudal relations jealously guarded by the nobility who touted a “national culture” (*nemzeti művelődés*) invented through borrowing elements from peasants, while continuing to limit political citizenship to their own classes. The dualist era was also characterized by rapid urbanization and capitalization, with Budapest among the fastest growing cities on the continent from 1873 to 1896, its population doubling between 1869 and 1896 (Vörös 1998:1). By 1910, Budapest was the 8th largest city in Europe (Vörös 1998:1). The saying, “Hungarians founded the state and the Germans our cities,” reflected the role of ethnic Germans in the urbanization process (Kürti 2002:41). Further, the liberal policies dominant after the Compromise attracted Jews from other parts of the Empire, who made up a significant proportion of the urban bourgeoisie, as well as the urban proletariat. On the whole, this proletariat derived largely from the landless agricultural classes of the countryside who entered the city as migrant workers, often working as domestic laborers in construction.

Populists focused their attention on the agrarian poor as well as on this new urban layer derived from them, yet they are remembered in Hungarian consciousness for their opposition to urbanists (*urbánusok*); illustrated in their lively debates in literary journals. Some date the *népi-urbánus* debates to the publication of Gyula Illyés' Pusztulás (Ruin) in 1933 (Borbándi 1989:191). Borbándi argues that even earlier than that individuals later associated with the urbanist camp found the assertions of many of those later labeled *népi* to be nationalist and excessive (1989:191). These same “urbanists” were also concerned about “*népi*” assertions about large landowners and capitalists, whom “*népi*” writers considered responsible for the “commercialization of the spirit of urban cultivation” and often glossed as Jewish (Borbándi 1989: 192). Borbándi acknowledges that urbanists were mostly Swabian⁶⁹ or Jewish, but claims that the divide between the two groups was not so clear. It only became apparent, he asserts, between those who were involved in debates organized around the opposition between “Western urban progress” and progress defined around a Hungarian third way between Capitalism and Socialism which would acknowledge Hungary’s agrarian history.⁷⁰ Further, he notes, left leaning *népi* writers tended to have closer association with urbanists (Borbándi 1989:196).

Populist cultural politics were pursued, for the most part, in the realms of literary and associational life in a sea of competing and overlapping projects of cultivation. This breadth of associational life served the pursuit of a spectrum of

⁶⁹Swabian is a blanket term used to indicate German speakers who immigrated to Hungary in the 18th century, in part benefiting from the demographic repopulation and Catholicization projects of the Hapsburgs, led by economists and statisticians. The bourgeoisie also tended to be German speaking (Kürti 2002).

⁷⁰ While one cannot help but see parallels with the German revolutionary nationalists and especially the Russian *narodnyik* movement, their own accounts appear to play down this influence, aligning themselves with Scandinavian movements instead (See, for example, Borbándi 1989:194).

progressive, bourgeois democratic, conservative, nationalist, and fascist goals. Among them were groups “faithful to the regime,” such as many youth groups, patriotic groups and religious groups including the scouts, the KIE (Catholic Youth Association), the *Turul* Association, and the protestant Solo Deo Gloria. It also included those seeking radical change, including left leaning populist influenced groups such as the March Front and the Györffy Kollégium (Kovalcsik 2003:488), some of which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. The unity of the populists, whose political allegiances varied widely, was based on their demand for land reform and their focus on a particular kind of cultivation, *népi-nemzeti művelődés*, pursued and embodied through the practices of numerous and fractured “populist” groups. While it is impossible to cover all populist activities of the era, the following section discusses the rise of the populist writers and their methods of popularizing their program. It then describes a few examples of significant populist activities relevant to the history of *táncház*, specifically those involving practices of folksong, folk dance, and amateur ethnography.

Folk Writers or People’s Writers? Folk Cultivation or People’s Cultivation?

The *Népi Írók*-Populist Writers- belonged to a generation born around the turn of the 20th century who made the peasantry the central theme of their work in the 1930’s and 40’s. Producing both poetry and prose, many of them also wrote what came to be called sociographies of “the people.” A complete chapter of Loránt Czigány’s 1984 book The History of Hungarian Literature: from the Earliest Times to the 1980s is dedicated to the Populist Writers. About them he writes:

their ideological heritage is still active in the capillary system of Hungarian public thinking, their ideas form a part of the Hungarian national consciousness as an alternative to present day ‘official’ ideology-for *népi* writers were primarily a political movement, although their literary output is voluminous, and significant on its own. Yet *népi* writers have never presented a united ideological platform, or

held identical political views, and were only a loosely connected group (Czigány 1984:381).

The Populist Writers also occupy a central place in Gyula Borbándi's 1989 book entitled The Hungarian Populist Movement (A Magyar Népi Mozgalom). From this it is clear that these writers were significant not only for their literary accomplishments, but for their part in what became known as the Populist movement itself. In the face of diverse political views and party affiliations, what bound them together most strongly was their insistent demand for land reform and their attention to the social conditions of the *nép*. They wrote most often about the peasantry, but also about the urban poor, a group comprised largely of agrarian populations forced by their conditions to seek work in the city. According to Borbándi, many of the writers were themselves of peasant origin (1989:132).⁷¹ Those who labeled these writers *népi* originally sought to distinguish them from those they considered *népies*- folksy- writers (Borbándi 1989:133). While the use of folkloristic elements might have qualified a writer's work as *népies*, claims Borbándi, this writer "still could not be considered *népi*, because he did not tie his representations and images of the village to a demand for the transformation of society and held themselves distant from 'radical political movements'" (1989:133).⁷²

It is not the distinction between *népi* and *népies* that remains widespread and salient today, however, but rather that between the *népi* and *urbánus* (often read as Jewish). The opposition is important in political and literary discourse today; having returned with renewed intensity in the 1980's. Although many reduce the difference

⁷¹ I have not seen concrete evidence that the majority of them were peasants, although many of them were born in the provinces. Given the class relations of the time, it might be reasonable to assume that they came from the layer of the impoverished nobility who were indeed peasants, yet enjoyed certain privileges of citizenship. Certainly the general belief is that they were of peasant origin.

⁷² Borbándi insists that style alone was surely not enough to make one *népi* or *urbánus* (Borbándi 1989: 195).

between the *urbánus* and *népi* worldviews to one between Jewish and Hungarian—or between a universalizing Europe-centered liberal-leftism and a Central Europe centric populism—the diversity within the *népi* camp was much broader than this implies (Lackó 1998:25). Indeed, perhaps the most important thing to note about the *népi-urbánus* debate is that both of its poles occupied an oppositional stance during the Horthy regime. They were two models for progress offered as alternatives to the conservative Christian National approach of the government.

Employing different literary styles, Populist Writers were united by their focus on the *nép*—the lowest and largely rural stratum of society. United by such goals, Populist Writers disagreed amongst themselves over whether the movement should remain a spiritual/intellectual movement, or whether it should enter politics proper. According to Borbándi, those arguing against forming a political party did not want to steal support from the existing oppositional parties. Further, they asserted that it was their responsibility to bring the spirit of the movement to “every social and political frame” (Borbándi 1989:255-256). Implicit in this argument is the idea that entering into the formal politics of the day meant compromise. Indeed, the conundrum of the Social Democratic Party suggests that this was so. Populist Writer Géza Féja concluded in his article entitled “The March Front,” “the movement should remain an intellectual movement—a sociological and literary movement guiding the world view- because in today’s politics things would only become stagnant” (Féja, in Borbándi 1989:257).⁷³ For populists then, opposition was not simply a political matter; on the contrary, they opposed engaging in the formal field of politics of a corrupt regime, working primarily in the spiritual, or inner, sphere.

⁷³ Féja was one of the organizers of the March Front and a NÉKOSZ activist.

Whether for practical or ideological reasons,⁷⁴ populists' attention to the spiritual, or inner, sphere set a precedent for a particular type of cultural politics—seen not only as oppositional to, but also outside of, the political sphere. It also meant that the common platform of the populist writers, land reform, remained abstracted from its implementation in formal politics. Indeed, while Vitányi asserts that most of the populist writers were connected with either the Social Democratic or the Communist party, a number of them sympathized with the far right. Given the political breadth of the writers, an overarching populist political party appeared impossible. Nevertheless, a political party did emerge from this group in 1939, guided by its left leaning wing.⁷⁵

In the mid 1930s the government introduced an initiative called The New Spiritual Front (*Új Szellemi Front*) in an attempt to enlist intellectuals, especially the influential Populist Writers, but also well known artists such as Bartók and Kodály, to its cause by “uniting nationalist efforts.” In 1935, Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös⁷⁶ met with a number of the writers, asserting that his reform-minded government needed to adopt the values of the intelligentsia (Borbándi 1989:172). Although accounts suggest that the writers vehemently proclaimed their demands for land reform while at the meeting, in the following weeks newspapers were filled with allegations that they had sold out to the government. Nevertheless, “the government’s stance toward them did not change, as the later trials and persecutions attest”(Borbándi 1989:174). Indeed, by 1937 the writers were more and more

⁷⁴ Renwick 2006 examines practices of “ethical civil society” engaged in by the opposition during the socialist period. He considers its conception as a practical or absolute stance in relation to the development of “political society” in the postsocialist period.

⁷⁵ Called the National Peasant Party, it took up the platform of land reform on the political level. (In 1944 its status would shift from an oppositional party to a member in the ruling coalition). This party will be discussed later.

consistently persecuted by the authorities and a number of them were tried in an attempt to censor their work (Borbándi 1989:294-296).

Until this point, I have focused on the small yet influential group of Populist Writers. These writers, however, did not limit their project(s) to literary works. Their strength lay in the way they were able to move other people to act on populist ideals. But how widespread were their ideals and actions? Who made up the bulk of the Populist movement? How did they work to achieve their goals? After a brief discussion of *népi-nemzeti művelődés*, I go on to elucidate particular strands of the movement.

In order to understand the populist contribution to *művelődés*, it is important to examine the etymologies of the words *nép* and *nemzet*. The term *Nemzeti Művelődés* is translated most often as National culture. As we have seen, the peculiar history of Hungarian nation-state making has served to make it a term with contradictory meanings. While *Nemzet* points to nation in the modern republican sense, there remains a tension in this word between ethnic nation and civic nation. Contradictions in the meaning of the word *nép* are apparent as well. *Nép* can be translated as volk, people, or folk. Indeed, the ways in which these terms can be employed within and between different languages reflect the breadth with which the word *nép* is employed in Hungarian. As such, what one understands as the *nép* can vary from meaning an ethnic folk, to meaning “the people” as in popular non-elite social classes. Similarly, in its adjectival form, *népi-* of or like the *nép-* can vary from meaning folk, as in “folk architecture” or “folk art” or populist, as in the Populist movement. While the Communists employed the term *nép* to mean “the people”,

they never succeeded in wresting it from its ethnic or agrarian connotations.⁷⁷ For this reason, I wish from this point on to use the terms *nép* and *népi*, rather than translating them, allowing the reader to experience the constant challenges produced by this tension first hand.

The term *népi-nemzeti művelődés* was employed by populists as a critique of both the content and domain of *nemzeti művelődés*.⁷⁸ This critique suggested that Hungarian national culture should be informed by the traditions and practices of the *nép*, rather than through the wholesale adoption of “western culture.” It also suggested that the *nép* should be the source of national cultivation, rather than the Christian National class derived from the feudal *natio*. In his 1939 book Folk Tradition and National Cultivation (*Néphagyomány és Nemzeti Művelődés*), István Györffy, known today as the father of Hungarian ethnography, defines *nép* as “the nation’s lower social stratum.”⁷⁹ After defining it as such, Györffy continues: “In a wider sense, however, *nép* is every ‘herd’ that has not turned into a nation... Nevertheless, in a rarer sense, we understand nation in it” (Györffy 1993:8). Györffy’s definitions illustrate quite clearly that the word *nép* can be understood, and employed, in contradictory ways.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ In the 1950s ethnographer Gyula Ortutay, Minister of Education and Religion, “redefined” *nép*, which had both the German meaning of Volk and the French meaning of people, asking “anthropologists to restrict its usage to the working people” (Sárkány 2005:89). While this may have “extend[ed] the scope of anthropology to include the working class” (Sárkány 2005:89), it did little to diminish the salience of the other meanings. Indeed, other trends continued to “give succour to those who were determined to explain cultural differences in terms of ethnic differences” (Sárkány 2005:90).

⁷⁸ I use *népi-nemzeti* rather than *népi-nemzeti* in some cases where sources have done the same. I have come across no sources that make a distinction between these usages.

⁷⁹ Györffy was the first to teach Ethnography the university level in 1926 (in the faculty of Geography thanks to his friend Pál Teleki) and would head the first department of Ethnography at Pázmány university in 1934 (Györffy 2000). He was a pioneer and supporter of the village research movement, discussed later in the chapter.

⁸⁰ While it is true that most people in the lower stratum of society were of the agricultural classes (although many were in fact working as servants in the cities and in cottage industry by this time), it is rare that we find the word *nép* or *népi* referring to the urban working classes or “gypsies”-to take two examples. This is because *nép* retains a meaning of “people” as in “the nation” in an ethnic sense. It is worth noting, however, that ethnic minorities in Hungary are not called ‘*népek*’, but rather *nemzetiségek* - nationalities(used the way ethnicity would be used by many).(In the early 20th century another term used

According to Vitányi, a *nép-nemzeti* approach had been central to the efforts of the Social Democrats, for whom *nép* meant the lowest stratum of society.⁸¹ But for populists, for whom the plight of the “3 million beggars” was the central concern, *nép* was often a gloss for the ethnic sense of “the people,” which to some meant rural Hungarians subjected to an urbanizing process to the benefit of “Jews” and “foreigners”. This was at root the distinction between the understandings of the term *nép* by *népi* and *urbánus* actors. While for urbanists, many of whom were Social Democrats, the idea of *nép-nemzet* meant a modern citizenship-based nation in which the *nép*—“the people” of multiple ethnicities—would be protected by the achievements of labor agitation, for many populists, the *nép-nemzet* idea hinged upon the notion of a third way, a “garden Hungary” that could be achieved through land reform and through which the *nép*—“the folk”— would be protected from the urbanization associated with capitalism and the decay of rural values. The two approaches sometimes overlapped, for example, in their converging emphasis on the franchise and on land reform, yet the differences in how they defined the *nép* and how they viewed “progress” for Hungary are significant. Social Democrats sought unionization, land reform and the franchise for proletarians in what they saw as a necessarily industrializing country; populists sought land reform and promoted *népi* culture as a tool for the enrichment of a specifically Hungarian and agrarian culture (or cultivation). Through this they hoped not only to preserve the agrarian base of Hungarian culture, but its economy as well.

was *népfáj-race*). While I found that in common parlance *nép* was always used to speak of the folk (with ethnic meaning built in), the Socialists and Communists adopted *nép* as ‘the people’; those oppressed by the class structure (perhaps capitalizing on its resonance). For example the newspaper of the Social Democratic party-founded in the 1870s- was called *Népszava*- Voice of the People.

⁸¹ Vitányi pointed out to me that it was the Social Democratic Party of Hungary rather than the Hungarian Social Democratic Party.

In the Horthy era, the term *nép*—whether volk or people—was a term employed in oppositional critique; it was not a discourse emanating from those in control of the government, which employed a discourse of the Nation. Indeed, although they employed the term differently and offered different solutions, each group sought to distinguish itself from the elite bureaucratic official politics of the day, embracing those oppressed by the regime. Despite having espoused a particular notion of *nép-nemzeti művelődés*, the Social Democrats are remembered not as populist or “of the people”, but as *urbánus* in their orientation, indeed, as the opposite of *népi*.

Pursuing Népi Művelődés

If the goal of populists was to popularize a particular kind of *népi* cultivation, in what ways was it pursued in practice? In this section I follow a few threads of the Populist movement as they intertwine yet remain distinct enough to name. These particular instances were selected because of their importance to the development of *táncház*, as discussed later. As the main glue that held populists together was the plight of the “3 million beggars,” ethnographers, sociologists and village researchers were a significant force in the movement. The terms “populist writer,” “ethnographer,” “sociographer” and “village researcher” have been used interchangeably to refer to many populists. The populist movement would have remained quite small and insignificant, however, if it had not involved the youth.

László Kürti states:

In European societies, ideas about controlling and monitoring children and youth are rooted in Christian beliefs and values. Beginning with the modernist period, however, regimes on both the right and the left took it upon themselves to control and monitor young people. Central to the tenets of these controlling regimes was the belief that the youth had been corrupted by the previous regime(2002:113).

The youth were an important focus of the politics of cultivation, for it was the youth that promised a hopeful future, while at the same time looming as an unruly threat. The activities encouraging *nép-nemzeti művelődés* among the youth existed in a broader field of youth-targeted activities, including the paramilitary training group Levente that, according to Hirsch, attracted mainly working class and peasant youth (1997:207).⁸² Many *népi* activities were conducted in a somewhat clandestine manner within organizations that were in no way *népi* oriented. That is, the *népi* trend affected the approaches of individuals and small groups within these larger organizations. Further, as Hirsch asserts, government and populist interests converged in some activities, especially in the late 1930s and during the war, reflecting both *népi* commitment to affect the entire political spectrum and the government's efforts to harness intellectual influence. First, I describe the field of activities that took place in the “village research movement”. I then go on to discuss the *regös cserkészzet*—caroling boy scouts, *NEKOSZ*—the movement to found “Peoples Colleges,” and the March Front, a political mobilization.

The Populist Writers developed their particular style by visiting villages and describing the conditions they saw.⁸³ They engaged in and encouraged others to pursue what came to be called village research (*falujárás, falukutatás*). Village researchers encouraged youths to join them in visiting villages and familiarizing themselves with rural life. Their actions were aimed at transforming the social system in a more equitable way, for, upon visiting villages urbanites were to witness the desperate conditions of the lowest social layers, while also experiencing the beauty of folk culture and making personal ties with the *nép*. In these activities,

⁸² Kürti notes the proliferation of political youth organizations in Hungary from 1945 to 1949 (2002:84, 84n).

⁸³ See Czigány for a discussion of literary styles. As the book attests, the significance of the *népi írók* in Hungarian literary history should not be underemphasized.

research and cultivation were combined. Masses of youths visited villages with the help of multiple organizations, some formed expressly around this idea.

According to Borbándi, already in 1923, Dezső Szabó “first spurred the youth to become familiar with the life relations of the peasantry”(1989:203). While Szabó himself was a right-leaning and anti-Semitic writer who related both capitalism and socialism to “the Israelites,” it would be unwise to reduce the entire village research movement to these views (Borbándi 1989:203; Czigány 1984:2).⁸⁴ Indeed, disparate groups engaged in village research. The Miklos Bartha Association, a reform club that by 1932 had taken on a National Socialist character, took its inspiration from the activities of the Sarló scout movement in Czechoslovakia. From 1928 to 1933 the ethnic Hungarian participants of the Sarló scouts engaged in activities that would later become institutionalized in the *regős* scouts (Borbándi 1989: 112).

By 1931, the Sarló had become overtly leftist (Borbándi 1989:113). By contrast, in 1930 the Miklós Bartha Association published a pamphlet entitled “Out to the Village,” in which it suggested “Hungarian culture could only become real culture if it rejects its foreign bases” (Borbándi 1989:204). Social Democratic poet József Attila also called for village research, suggesting that the youth must not teach the *nép*, but rather learn from it (Borbándi 1989:204). Internationally acclaimed composer and folk music researcher Zoltán Kodály suggested that collection by village researchers should be broken into three approaches: the racial and national question, ethnographic collection (*néptani néprajzi gyűjtes*), and cultural (*művelődési*) and social studies. In his view, youths in the scouts and other associations should organize smaller groups and begin their village examination

⁸⁴ Czigány suggests that Szabó was a precursor to the Populist writers, and indeed, he is a bit older (Czigány 1984:2).

activities in select villages (Borbándi 1989:205). Populist poet Gyula Illyés proposed that, on the model of the German wandering students, the youth should go among the people and record sociological data from what they saw (Borbándi: 205). Students also conducted research under the auspices of István Györfly's Institute of Hungarian Studies (*Magyarságtudományi Intézet*) and the Young Hungarian Sociographical Workgroup (*Fiatal Magyarság Szociográfiai Munkaközösség*) founded by Populist Writer Zoltán Szabó. Still other research groups developed in the Pro Christo Student House, built in 1934 with help from the YMCA for Protestant youths, and in the Eötvös Kollégium (Borbándi 1989:207). By 1938, the government too had joined the crowd, founding the National Regional and Folk Research Center (*Országos Táj es Népkutató Központ*).⁸⁵ The youth, mainly students, who participated in such activities were primarily of the middle classes, many from rural backgrounds. Their motivations, like those of their sponsors, were diverse. Nevertheless, they were unified by such activities and practices, as well as by the belief that familiarity with the culture and travesties of the *nép* was important for Hungarian cultivation.

The Boy Scouts, adapted in Hungary as it had been internationally from Baden Powell's English model,⁸⁶ also provided important sites of populist activity. Efforts at starting scouts activities date to the first decade of the 20th century, with the translation of parts of Baden Powell's Scouting For Boys (Vitányi 1964:29,

⁸⁵ Count Pál Teleki, Prime Minister from 1920-1922 and again from 1939-1941, who taught political geography at the Economics University (Borbándi 1989:207) was also the "head scout" of the Boy Scouts. While he was responsible for the founding of the National Regional and Folk Research Center in 1938 (Borbándi 1989:238), under the direction of his good friend Györfly, the Center produced an exhibition on land ownership which showed the absolute need for land reform. A political embarrassment for the government, Teleki had the exhibit closed down (Borbándi 1989:238).

⁸⁶ While Baden Powell is associated most strongly with the Boy Scouts he founded in Britain, it is wise to note that he based the Boy Scouts on the paramilitary boy's group that he created in Africa during the Boer war (Tyle 2003).

Gergély 1989:20). The Hungarian Scouts Association was not fully centralized and its member groups encompassed many tendencies. According to Vitányi, the general movement served reactionary goals: “to raise youths in every layer of society susceptible to serving the goals of the ruling classes” (1964:29).⁸⁷ Certainly, the scouts were comprised mainly of “Christian urban middle class boys”(Hirsch 1997:207). However, in the early 1930s, the wandering, or caroling scouts (*regös cserkész*) movement developed within the Boy Scouts, mainly among the Protestant members of the KIE/YMCA (Vitányi 1964, 31). In these groups, Vitányi suggests, working class youths were represented in higher numbers (1964: 31).

Taking its name from the word *regölés*, caroling/wandering, the movement adopted many of the practices familiar to the village research movement. Yet unlike the college aged youths embodying the village research movement, these scouts groups, made up of school-aged youths, were dedicated mainly to collecting folk songs and folk dances.⁸⁸ *Regös* activities consisted of visiting villages and learning material from villagers as well as performing this material for various audiences. Further, *regös* scouts taught folk songs and dances to villagers “who no longer possessed them” (Vitányi 1964:30). The tasks of the *regös* scouts then, included not only collecting folk practices, learning them and incorporating them into their own lives, but also spreading and popularizing them among both rural and urban populations (Vitányi 1964:31, Hirsch 1997:208). *Regös* scouts emphasized collective activities, such as singing together, through which “the experience of recognition and sense of commonality” (Hirsch 1997:209), so important to the *népi-nemzeti* approach, was honed. According to Vitányi (1964:32), the *regös* scouts were not

⁸⁷ For a general history of the scouts movement in Hungary, see Gergély (1989).

⁸⁸ Hirsch (1997) uses the word ethnography to represent what he calls the “regölés program” within the scouts. Because it has no etymological connection to the Hungarian word ethnography but is derived from the word for a folk practice akin to caroling, I choose to use the terms caroling or wandering.

simply interested in self-cultivation (*onművelés*), but in affecting society. With them the “daily good deed” of the Boy Scout became a socialization (*nevelési*) program to know the Hungarian *nép*, Hungarian society, and together with it universal culture and art too. “At its center was the question of who is Magyar, what is Magyar” (Vitányi 1964:32).

Such goals were embedded in *regös* practices themselves. To earn rank, *regös* scouts needed to learn 50 required and 50 chosen folk songs, 3 folk tales, 2 folk ballads, and 5 verses/poems for performance in villages, 5 campfire, and 5 open space games, a *regös* performance piece, and to have taken part in 5 village ethnographic collections (*regölés*). Further if a youth was from the city, he had to have spent at least one day participating in the work of a peasant family (Vitányi 1964:32). The list of guest speakers at *regös* camps includes such populist luminaries as Ferenc Erdei, Péter Veres, Imre Somogyi, the “father of ethnography” István Györfly, and Sándor Karácsony, *népi* pedagogue and publisher of a number of books of folk songs (Vitányi 1964:29).⁸⁹

By the 1940’s, writes Vitányi, these youths had become incorporated into the *népi* movement, and no longer needed the scouts movement. Yet it was their experience in the *regös* scouts, he asserts, that guided many (himself included) down the *népi* path. In other words, the *regös* scouts produced a generation of youths who practiced folk dance and folk songs not simply as staged performance, but as part of a project of singing and dancing together collectively—of performing community—employing the techniques of *népi-nemzeti művelődés*. “There is no

⁸⁹ Lawyer, agrarian economist and populist sociographer Ferenc Erdei was a leader of the March Front and later a Peasant Party politician and NÉKOSZ activist (Kardos 1977:494). Populist Writer Péter Veres was a Peasant Party politician. Sculptor and agrarian expert Somogyi was an important actor in the organizing of the Györfly Kollégium, and later a Peasant Party Politician (Kardos 504). Sándor Karácsony was active in the NÉKOSZ movement (Kardos 1977:499).

doubt,” writes Vitányi, “that they were the first to create a movement out of folk dance, which then outgrew them” (1964:33). Indeed, it was in the *regös* scouts that the first generations of prewar folk dancers began their dance careers (Vitányi 1964:33) and many of the folk dancers and choreographers in later performing folkdance groups came from the *regös* generation.⁹⁰

By 1939, Hirsch asserts, *regölés* practices had “received Prime Minister Pál Teleki’s support to mount an aggressive campaign for ethnography related activities” (Hirsch 1997:208, Gergély 1989:220)⁹¹. Arguing that the program was “intended to foster territorial identification,” Hirsch points out, “after 1940, major excursions were organized into territories recently occupied by the Hungarian military” (1997: 200+ 208). Collection activities were by that time overseen by the Museum of Ethnography and the National Regional and Folk Research Center, with the government deciding the “where and when of *regölés* undertakings” (Hirsch 1997:208). Thus, while Vitányi suggests that the *regös* scouts were a kind of counter movement within the scouts, it appears that by the early 1940’s, *regölés* was enjoying the support of the government. By 1941, folk singing had come to dominate over the urban popular songs at campfires (Hirsch 1997 208). In this we can see the influential spread of populist ideologies and practices, as well as their use toward different ends by different groups in different moments.

The most overtly political of populist efforts before the Peasant Party was founded in 1939, the March Front, resulted from the broad popularity that the work of the Populist Writers had achieved amongst college students and young

⁹⁰ These include Elemér Muharay, István Molnár, Miklos Rábai, Iván Vitányi, Sándor Timár, Martin György, and the Pesovár brothers (Vitányi 1964:33, Timár, personal communication).

⁹¹ Teleki, who was responsible for ethnography being taught in the university, was also ‘chief scout’ in 1922-1923, and Prime Minister in 1921 and again from 1939-1941. He was a consistent sponsor of the scouts.

intellectuals (Borbándi 1989: 247). According to Populist Writer Imre Kovács,⁹² the March Front was an attempt to give a name to the movement emerging from the influence of the Populist Writers (Borbándi 1989: 247). On March 15th, 1936, a group representing the “March Front” presented a list of demands authored by Populist Writers on the steps of the National Museum in Budapest. By choosing this date, the anniversary of the eruption of the 1848 Revolution in Hungary, and this place, the very steps where poet Sándor Petőfi stood to announce the Revolution and call the people to arms, the March Front shrouded itself in symbolic significance. On that day, Kovács read aloud the document listing twelve points emphasizing the franchise (*szabadságjogok*), land reform, People’s Colleges, village seminars (*faluszemináriumok*), the brotherhood of the peoples of the Danube basin, and cooperation between workers, peasants and intellectuals (Borbándi 248:250).⁹³

The March Front brought progressive youth together to agitate toward democratic ends, for in 1936 both *népi* and communist students hoped to use the celebration of the March 15th national holiday to their ends (Borbándi 1989: 249). Indeed, the March Front appears to have been the result of an alliance between these groups, themselves not mutually exclusive. From the spring of 1937 until the spring of 1938, several thousand youths inspired by the March Front organized and participated in literary evenings, lectures and conferences, especially during months when university classes were in session. While the Front was supported by the National Association of Hungarian University and College Students (MEFHOSZ) (Borbándi 1989:258), events were attended not only by students, but by many peasants as well (Borbándi 1989:257-258). The government made efforts to

⁹² A founding member of the Peasant Party.

⁹³ Imre Kovács, one of the younger writers, author of *The Silent Revolution*, had himself begun his village research career at the Village Research Workgroup of the Pro Christo Student House. He was later a Peasant Party politician, and editor of its journal .

discourage the movement, just as it attempted to suppress the far right movement. Student groups in other college towns connected with the Budapest March youth and the illegal Communist Party nevertheless continued to meet and organize events. As time went by, elements of these groups would continue to be united in the underground antifascist and anti-German resistance movement. Government persecution of the Writers in this period was quite probably a response to their connections with and obvious influence on the Front. While a number of journals openly supported the goals of the Front, government sponsored papers and Catholic Church publications vigorously attacked them (Borbándi 1989:254). One Member of Parliament countered their allegations, stating that “It is not true that three million peasants have no possibilities in life,” and Horthy himself announced that they had not forgotten how to “clean our home and nation” of “anarchic elements”(Borbándi 1989:254).

The March Front movement lost its momentum, partly, it seems, because of dominant views among populists that it was in the spiritual (*szellemi*) sphere, not the political sphere, in which their activities should take place (Borbándi 1989:256). Indeed, Kovács argued that rather than an organized movement or political party, the march front was a “community of feeling,” made up of those who “read the populist writers, ran journals, appeared at lectures and took part in some functions”(Borbándi 1989:257). With increasing difficulties getting permits for their activities and increasing censorship, the movement was faced with the choice of becoming a political party or fading away. In 1939, with Germany now Hungary’s next door neighbor, far right parties fared well in local elections (Borbándi

1989:321), and a circle of populist writers⁹⁴ and their agrarian supporters formed the national peasant party, which remained, like the communist party, illegal until 1945(Borbándi1989: 326). Not all populist writers agreed with the formation of the party. Many argued that there was no way that a single party could represent the *népi* movement, which, they claimed, was a spiritual, not a political, movement (Borbándi 1989:325). In 1944 the party joined the Magyar Front, which unified the parties of the resistance (Borbándi 1989:326). This would soon open the way for the party's shift from an oppositional status to that of member in the ruling coalition of the interwar period from which one party communist rule would emerge (Borbándi 1989:344).

The youths who created and sustained NÉKOSZ- the National Association of *Népi* Colleges- have been called the Bright Winds generation.⁹⁵ The first People's College (*Népi Kollégium*) was founded in 1940 with the sponsorship of the Turul Association, a nationalist student association that developed a left strand from 1938-41⁹⁶. This first College, Bolyai Kollégium, was intended to provide student housing for secondary and university students of peasant/rural origin (Kardos 1977:25). According to Kardos, when the leftists lost power within the Association, it withdrew its support from the *Kollégium* (Kardos 1977:492). Having parted with the *Turul* Association in 1942, the *Kollégium* took the name of ethnographer István Györfly who, by some accounts, had been the original inspiration for such a project (Borbándi 1989:315). As with this first *Kollégium*, the broader movement to build *Népi Kollegiumok* aimed at providing housing for students of peasant/rural origin

⁹⁴ Imre Kovács, Pál Szabó, Ferenc Erdei, Ferenc Farkás, Péter Veres (Borbándi 1989: 323-326).

⁹⁵ *Fényes Szelek*-translated as Sparkling Winds- is the title of a film by internationally acclaimed filmmaker Míklós Jancsó. Jancsó himself was a NÉKOSZ activist, and he uses this film to critique the authoritarian socialist practices of the 1950s (See Fényes Szelek 2007).

⁹⁶ The Turul, a bird of prey, is an oft used symbol in Hungarian nation-making projects.

who came to the city to study. It was not until after the war that the movement reached its full force with the founding of NÉKOSZ. Strongly characterized by peasant romanticism, the movement shared many convictions with the *népi* writers. “Collegers” participated in protests focused on the agrarian question and social democracy, alongside peasants and working class youths. Clearly the *Kollegiumok* were not just places where student went to sleep at night, but functioned as sites of socialization and politicization. Among other activities, residents of the Colleges engaged in village research and organized lectures, inviting Populist Writers, local luminaries, and those from abroad (Kardos 1977:44).⁹⁷

Collegers were key actors in the broader “folk art movement of the youth”, and participated in folk dance groups inside and outside the framework of NÉKOSZ. Having learned to folk dance and to sing folk songs in the *regős* scouts, many continued their activities in this new environment. While performing at events, such groups also functioned as clubs, as sites of association. A telling example is the group that formed around Elemér Muharay. According to Vitányi, while his NÉKOSZ ensemble only came into being in 1946, the history of the Muharay ensemble really began in 1940. In 1939, Muharay was still running the Fóti Faluszínpad (Village Theater of Fót), but after it was shut down by the government (*tiltozott*), he turned his attention to the youth (Vitányi 1993:32). In 1942 he became director of the art ensemble of the Levente (*Levente Központi Művészegyüttes*), a compulsory paramilitary organization,⁹⁸ whose task was to prepare boys aged 13-21 for military service while socializing them according to the counterrevolutionary values of Horthyism (Kardos 1977:490; Vitányi 1993:33). Vitányi (1993:35) writes

⁹⁷ Such institutions may be important sites of citizen making. Indeed, both Chakrabarty (2000) and Chatterjee (1993) have pointed to these “dorms”, or colleges as important sites of socialization.

⁹⁸ The Levente functioned from 1921 to 1944.

that Muharay was willing to take his chances, even though the Army was attempting to coopt this oppositional movement to its own ends. For various reasons the ensemble basically disappeared in 1944, but the leftist circle that had formed around Muharay stayed together working in the interest of the resistance (Vitányi 1964:62). Indeed, despite its host organization, this tight circle of folk dancing youths (former Levente ensemble dancers) engaged in debates over the meaning of democracy and the role of folk art in society, and acted as a cell in the underground anti-Nazi resistance movement. Muharay's circle included individuals who would become well known public figures, such as filmmaker Míklos Jancsó, aesthete and cultural manager Iván Vitányi, and painter and pedagogue Pál Jonás.⁹⁹ Another of Muharay's students organized the dance group of the Györffy Kollégium (Vitányi 1964:70). When the NÉKOSZ ensemble was founded in 1946 with Muharay at the helm, it drew the top figures of the folk dance movement (Vitányi 1964:70).

By 1946, over 50 colleges were functioning, responsible for "rais[ing] 10,000 democratically minded and self sufficient residents"(Kardos 1977:18).¹⁰⁰ while the first colleges in the interwar period were associated with the national peasant party, other parties in the governing coalition, as well as right leaning factions within the peasant party, attempted to steer the movement in other directions (Aczél 1977:8). After attempting to influence NÉKOSZ from within, some parties founded their own Kollegia (Aczél 1977:9). Although students in the movement had played an important role in the opposition to the Germans and the local Arrow Cross Party, and despite the fact that it was a stronghold of local communists, NÉKOSZ and all the colleges were broken up along with most other institutions in 1949, as the Communist Party took control from within the coalition through coercive measures.

⁴⁵ The term Kardos uses is *nevel*, or raise, as in raising or socializing a child.

¹⁰⁰ In 1947 alone, the 100 Colleges hosted 6,000 students (Kardos 1977:451).

The decision to put an end to the colleges was justified by the political council of the Hungarian Worker's Party because of NÉKOSZ' association with László Rajk, an important local communist figure who had just then been arrested, tried, and hanged as a "Trotskyite pest" (Kardos 1977:456).

Conclusion: the Legacy of the Népi Movement

This chapter has examined how nation and civil society are imbricated in the process of Hungarian state formation by contextualizing the Populist movement in the broader context of civic cultivation. I have shown how the interaction of feudal, ethnic and civic visions of the nation resulted in particular constellations of cultivating projects. Further, I have considered how the tension between spiritual/intellectual and political/material, or the inner and outer spheres, led to these projects being conceptualized and pursued in different manners, refracting differently in different moments of Hungarian nation-state making. What is clear is that in such projects of national cultivation, and perhaps most particularly in *népi-nemzeti* cultivation, the distinction between a universalizing civilization and a difference producing *Kultur* falls away; indeed, both are produced through this process.

The geopolitical conditions that threatened the long-awaited and only briefly gained territorial integrity and political independence of the crown lands of Saint Steven had strong effects on the way that the nation would be conceived and on the goals and activities of institutions of national culture. The denial of citizenship to the agrarian population in a largely agrarian country and the nationalist rhetoric of the ruling classes combined to encourage the particular populist and nationalist tendencies found in interwar Hungary. The project of *népi-nemzeti* cultivation helped to produce a generation of Hungarians with particular attitudes toward the

nép and its role in the formation of a peculiarly Hungarian cultivation. Further, the institutions and practices that emerged from this project had, as will be shown in later chapters, important effects on the so called *népi* movement that developed in the socialist context. As we have seen, the practices of folk dance that arose from the *népi* movement differed from those of the Bouquet of Pearls in significant ways. The populists did not see folk dance as something that should belong to the peasantry only, but rather as something that all members of Hungarian society should enjoy and from which they could derive cultivation. Further, considering themselves members of the *nép*, they believed that they were free to author new dances, to build or renew national culture. They learned “traditional” dances, yet also authored new ones. As such, this *népi* movement was progressive: its participants sought to change society for the better rather than to preserve it in unchanged form. The practices engaged in by the *népi* movement left a complex legacy, shaping later practices of folk dance and folk song revival and amateur and professional ethnography, as well as conceptions of the relationship of such practices to cultivation. They affected the use of the terms *nép* and *népi*, and the notion of the purity of the inner sphere and its oppositional value.

Although Social Democrats had pushed for land reform, the vacuum left by the severe circumscription of their activities appears to have been so successfully filled by populists that it is generally forgotten that they advocated overlapping projects. With this forgotten, it becomes easy to accept the neat populist-urbanite opposition that has reappeared to haunt contemporary Hungarian political rhetoric and everyday speech. Indeed, while the *Népi* movement advocated land reform and a certain vision of progress, it is for its peasant romanticism that it is remembered today. With the oppression of the Christian National regime well forgotten,

overcome by the more acute and recent memories of Communist oppression, urbanists and populists have become the primary opposition. As the words peasant, or villager, may function as a gloss for rural without differentiating between middle landowner, impoverished nobility, landless peasant, or uprooted urban domestic servant, their use may serve to romanticize an agrarian past without attending to the extreme class differences that were prevalent. The governments of the Horthy regime consistently ignored the plight of the “three million beggars,” while catering to the enormous bureaucratic military class, the majority of whom were nobility. However, because anxieties about urbanization were often felt as nostalgia for a lost rural society, for which the territorial losses of World War I and the rise of capitalist relations could be blamed, the irredentist rhetoric of the Christian National Horthy regime was powerful and unifying. The term *nemzeti*, national, came to be associated with this rhetoric (Borbándi 1989:34).

Contemporary views often conflate the Christian National approach of the Horthy governments with the *népi* approach which had been oppositional to it, blending them together in an anti-urbanist discourse. Indeed, because “peasant origin” can be claimed by anyone with an agrarian past, and the distinction between large landowners, landless peasants, nobility, and serf can be obscured in this term; it is often difficult to ascertain what kinds of “peasant” origin most Populist Writers and the residents of the People’s Colleges might have had. While I find Hirsch’s assumption that they represented the same interests as the government problematic, the large bulk of populists certainly derived mainly from ethnically Magyar and Christian backgrounds. Given that they were intellectuals, and given the difficulty poor peasants would have had achieving higher education, we can assume that most did not come from the lowest classes. However, to assert that they represented the

same interests as the government obscures the fact that, regardless of their own class background, they were concerned with the conditions of those who were oppressed by the counterrevolutionary policies of the government and advocated land reform on their behalf.

It remains an important fact that, while the distinction between *népi* and *népies* has fallen by the wayside, the *népi-urbánus* distinction is alive and well, having been revived in the 1980s. Because populists worked to reveal the desperate conditions of the agrarian classes, nostalgia for peasant traditions was in many cases tempered by an understanding of the role of feudal relations peasant misery. By contrast, the late socialist and contemporary understanding of *népi* is divorced from the social politics of land reform or progress, and is indeed often ethnicized and romanticized. The distillation of the *népi-urbánus* divide may be attributed to three things. First, in order to enter party politics proper, the Social Democratic party had to agree to cease agitation in the country-side as a condition of its legalization in the 1920s. This resulted in an opposition between the Social Democrats representing urban issues and those parties or political forces which were representing the peasantry. Second, the Social Democrats were considered to be responsible for the rise of the Communists in 1918 and again in 1948.¹⁰¹ Finally, while the *urbánus* group is associated with a political party, The Social Democratic Party of Hungary, that more or less represented their views, populists are quite often remembered as being “pure” of politics, as having acted primarily in the spiritual, or inner, sphere. Populists derive legitimacy from this. despite the fact that the National Peasant Party developed from their ranks in 1939, and was even a member of the coalition

¹⁰¹ Indeed, not only were the Socialists unable to achieve land reform during their brief time in power, their goals were to keep the large estates requisitioned from the magnates and church intact, in order to maintain industrial agricultural production (see Mocsy 1983).

that is understood to have facilitated the Communist rise to power. Thus, while the Populist Writers embodied a spectrum of political stances that stood in opposition to certain policies of the Horthy regime and focused on land reform, their legacy is mainly remembered through the still active opposition of *népi* to *urbánus*, a distinction most notable in the cultural politics of *nép-nemzeti művelődés*. The range of positions encompassed in the *népi* movement is occluded by this distinction.

Ferenc Fejtő, an *urbánus* writer of the 1930's, wrote

The point was that the populists wanted to stick to their strategy of agrarian reform through thick and thin, while we Westernizers were convinced that what Hungary first needed was democracy, and that the land issue could only be solved when the Hungarian people were mature enough for democracy. We laid emphasis on liberties, democracy and the fullness of human rights. But ideological differences meant little to the Populists, what counted were successful tactics (Fejtű 2001:7).

For Fejtő, it was their indifference to ideology that allowed some of the Populist Writers to find their way into the fascist Arrow Cross party while others collaborated with the Communists. Borbándi, too, writes: “Indeed ideology is missing, but the writers did not produce ideologies. They rather exposed (*vetették fel*) burning social questions and threw them into the public consciousness in a really pragmatic mode”(Borbándi 1989:179).

By the end of the war, the government had incorporated *népi* technologies to Christian National ends. After the war, however, not only were *népi* practices diffused throughout society, but *népi* efforts were institutionalized in NÉKOSZ and the National Peasant Party. A member of the resistance (the Hungarian Front) during the war, The National Peasant Party coalesced with the Communist Party, The Social Democratic Party, the Civic Democratic Party, and the Smallholders Party in The Hungarian National Independence Front, formed in 1944. While the overwhelming majority of votes in the 1945 elections were for the Smallholder's

Party, the Communist Party was able play “a decisive role” through this coalition (Hanák 1991:214).¹⁰² The Communists further engaged in a series of purgings and delegitimations, aided by the merging of their party with the Social Democratic Party in 1948 (Hanák 1991:216). Despite having received only a small proportion of the votes, the National Peasant Party secured the Ministry of Public Works (Veres, later Darvas), the Ministry of Defense (Veres), and the Ministry of Agriculture (Erdei) (Borbándi 1989: 445-447). While the Party would soon be dissolved along with other parties, and NÉKOSZ as well, the fact that many Populists had been left-leaning meant that a number of them still continued to occupy positions of influence during the Stalinist era; others suffered various levels of persecution. Indeed, István Deák challenges the commonly held view of the Populist Writers as oppressed by the Communists, arguing that they were actually favored by the Party leadership (1999:56). He suggests that because they were not Jews, they were seen as “likely to serve as a bridge between the Party leadership and the people”(Deák 1999:56). There is no doubt that, while formal institutions of the populists were dispersed in 1948, populist influence lived on. We must attend to the persistence of certain techniques, ideological content, and oppositions while attending to their refraction in later historical moments, employed by different projects in changing political economic circumstances.

CHAPTER 3

Socialist Cultural Management? Civic Cultivation and Associational Life in Socialist Hungary

In her book on urban change in postsocialist Budapest, Judit Bodnár writes:

Every epoch has its own type of building that indicates the symbolic and financial preferences of their age. The preindustrial epoch found its form of expression in the temple, the church, the palace, the agora, or the city hall; hotels and restaurants are the incarnations of symbolic power today.¹⁰³

She then expands upon this list, stating: "*the characteristic contribution of state socialism came in the form of party headquarters, prefab housing estates and 'houses of culture'*" (emphasis mine) (Bodnár 2001:92).¹⁰⁴ In her penetrating study of the transformations in relations between public and private, Bodnár finds houses of culture important enough to mention as symbols of power. Because of her focus on the postsocialist period, however, she does not analyze their significance as public places as she does with what she sees as their postsocialist correlate—the shopping mall. Houses of culture were indeed widespread in the Socialist countries of Eastern Europe and in Hungary as well, where they continue to function at present with the aid of state mandated municipal/ local funding. Numbers alone attest to their importance (The Council of Europe listed 3,661 in Hungary in 2004), yet scant attention has been turned to their role in cultural life and their relationships to specific activities. In this chapter I demonstrate that during the socialist period, houses of culture, being much more than *symbols* of power, were significant sites of cultural activity in the everyday lives of Hungarians.

¹⁰³ Bodnár is paraphrasing Charles Jencks with the first list; she then expands upon it with state socialist examples.

¹⁰⁴ She continues: "Post-socialism's symbolic building, then, could be the office building in the inner city and the multifunctional service center, known as the shopping mall, on the outskirts and in the inner suburbs" (Bodnár 2001:92).

As Siegelbaum writes, houses of culture were product[s] of Socialist “reimagining of sociability” (Siegelbaum 1999:78), yet contrary to the vision of socialism as a totalitarian system, far from all of the activities taking place inside them were designed by the centralized bureaucracy or party. Given their position as sites of important cultural events and activities, an assessment of the houses of culture and how they functioned is perhaps crucial to understanding cultural management¹⁰⁵ and cultural politics in all Eastern European countries during the socialist period. This chapter examines the network of culture houses and the associated Institute for Peoples’ Culture¹⁰⁶ to gain insight into the little explored world of cultural management and its relationship to cultural politics and associational life in socialist Hungary. This step is crucial background for approaching the development of *táncház*. In particular, an examination of the interaction of houses of culture with forms of association gets at a key element in my examination of *táncház*—the question of intersubjectivity. The voluntary activities characteristic of socialist Hungary, the ideologies informing them, and the spaces designed to promote them are necessary parts of the answer. Indeed, as Kohn writes in her book about “Houses of the People” in Italy, “Physical spaces mark off a context in which certain attributes are intensified and others are diminished”(Kohn 2003:156).

Because the houses of culture were intended to be and in fact were central to associational activities in socialist Hungary, yet were also important in earlier periods as well, the chapter begins with a discussion of the historical precursors to

¹⁰⁵ Cultural Management has most typically been used to talk about capitalist systems. However, I find the term applicable to the socialist case, as do others (Siegelbaum 1999).

¹⁰⁶ While the literal translation of the *Népm velési Intézet* is Institute for Peoples’ Cultivation, convention has it that Hungarians have used Culture in its English translation, rather than Cultivation, while People’s has been dropped in the post-socialist period, thus making it the Institute for Culture.

the socialist houses of culture, including the workers' homes of the labor movement, the folk high schools founded by church organizations, and the People's Colleges designed as dormitories for rural university students. By taking this historical view, I orient the houses of culture within a tradition of related activities, associational spaces and institutions within local and European practices of civic cultivation, dispelling the idea that there was no continuity between the pre-socialist and socialist periods. The chapter then describes the development of the socialist system of culture houses and the Institute for Culture, examining their roles, the contexts in which they functioned, and, importantly, the changing relationships of these cultural institutions with the state and market across the socialist period. I then turn to a discussion of the privileged place of amateur art in Hungarian ideas about voluntarism, which had important effects on policy and the development of certain kinds of associational activities. Finally, the chapter explores the relationship of the houses of culture to various cultural initiatives, focusing on the baby boom youth culture of the 1960s and 1970s. In this chapter I hope to elucidate the role of socialist cultural management in creating and structuring spaces for association that gave rise in often unexpected ways to cultural activities, including *táncház*.

Institutions of Civic Cultivation and Houses of Culture Before 1948

Resulting from struggles over citizenship in the 19th century civil sphere, houses of culture appeared in myriad forms. As we have seen, the last decades of the century, often referred to as Hungary's "Golden Age," was a time of rapid industrialization and urban growth. With urban living quarters appallingly cramped, social life took place in an array of public places, such as casinos and coffeehouses, pubs and inns, organized roughly along class lines. Houses of culture appeared in this broader context of associative life in the city. The formation of

such institutions was strongly influenced by observations Hungarian reformers had made during their travels to Western Europe, where struggles over citizenship and the education, or cultivation, of the masses had resulted in the proliferation of adult education and university extension programs, public museums and libraries, and “Houses of the People.”¹⁰⁷ Different groups in civil society fought for education/cultivation in accord with the political and social ideals they espoused, in particular their different ideals of citizenship and ideas of what it meant to be cultivated. While some fought for social reform, others sought to maintain the status quo. In both cases, the cultivation of the masses was to aid their cause. The leftist oppositions, the short lived Republic of Councils, and the Communist Party that took power in the 1940’s all placed emphasis on the right to cultivation. This chapter examines the relationship of associative life to the spaces and institutions dedicated to this endeavor.

While since the 1860s primary education was technically compulsory, poor access to primary schools combined with widespread poverty and the rigid class system meant that higher education was inaccessible to most. It was in the space of civil society, then, that signs of the battle over civic cultivation were abundant. In the years after the 1867 Compromise, the Hungarian government responded to social pressure and began to provide funding for *szabadoktatási intézmények*—institutions of free education, many of which were aimed at providing secondary school education for adults (Kovalcsik 2003:550). Nevertheless, according to White, “until 1919 cultural enlightenment mostly remained the concern of individuals and

¹⁰⁷What I term houses of culture following Hungarian usage are roughly analogous with what were termed Houses of the People in Belgium, Italy, and some other places. See Kohn (2003) for an in depth examination of the Italian case.

non-state organizations”(1990: 58).¹⁰⁸ Further, Kovalcsik suggests that courses offered by the government were only attended by unorganized workers, chiefly rail workers, who were not permitted by the government to organize (2003:550). A number of civic cultivation efforts focused on achieving primary education for these populations, while others focused on preparing them for university and supporting them while there. Other efforts focused on extracurricular education in the forms of colleges, courses teaching particular skills, occasional lectures, or reading circles.

Tied closely to the Social Democratic party and the labor movement, the first workers’ homes (*munkásotthonok*) were founded in 1907. In addition to serving as union headquarters, housing the offices of the leadership and treasury, these facilities housed libraries and hosted continuing education courses, “art-loving activities,” and social dances, among other activities (Kovalcsik 2003:507-514).¹⁰⁹ Soon after, resulting from the compromise between the reform goals of the Social Democrats and capital, the factory management also began to support the building of workers’ homes (Kovalcsik 2003:510). By 1911, a workers’ home cooperative (*szövetkezet*) was established, which defined the legal status of these institutions and assured the social and material bases for their perpetuation (Kovalcsik 2003:510). Quite soon thereafter, resulting from what Kovalcsik has described as “the struggle over the free time of workers” (2003:531), similar institutions were initiated by other political parties, religious organizations, and the government itself. In 1908, the Ministry of Culture (literally the Ministry of Religion and Public Education-*Vallás and Közoktatásügyi*) offered sponsorship for houses of public education/cultivation

¹⁰⁸ White translates the terms *nevelés* and *művelődés* as cultural enlightenment, as she does the Russian *vospitanie* and Polish *wychowanie* (1990:6). She translates *népm velés* as “cultural work for and among the people”, paralleling it with the Russian “kul’turnomassovaia rabota”(1990:26). Following its Hungarian etymology, I translate *művelődés* as cultivation.

¹⁰⁹ In Italy and Belgium, such activities as adult education and university extension programs and libraries were united within the walls of ‘Houses of the People’ (Kohn 2003). It is interesting to note what appears to be a greater emphasis on amateur art activities in the Hungarian case.

(*közművelődési házak*) to be built in a number of cities across Hungary. These government sponsored “homes,” according to Kovalcsik, were intended to elevate the individual into a higher polity and “initiate their participation in the nation” (*nemzeti gondolkodás részeseive avatják*)(2003:551).

In the countryside, most political parties did not last long, and the legitimacy of the Social Democrats was tenuous, partly due to their emphasis on suffrage above all other issues (Kovalcsik 2003:361). Rather, it was the myriad associations (*egyesületek*) that were central in the organization of political life, expressing, as they did, “the societal closedness and the opposition of individual strata”(Kovalcsik 2003:366). New associations functioned among other older forms of associative life such as religious and agricultural celebrations and gatherings in pubs and at markets, which maintained a significant presence in social life (Kovalcsik 2003:369). Much extracurricular educational activity came under the rubric of church organs, some hoping to counter the influence of progressive civic cultivation activities. Beyond the sprinkling of workers’ homes, reading circles and clubs appear to have been common (Kovalcsik 2003:366). Although later than this period, surveys conducted in 1921 and 1937 “indicate[d] that there existed reading or farmers’ clubs in every second community,” although these were not distributed evenly across the country (White 1990: 58). While it is difficult to assert how many “houses of culture” existed in Dualist-era Hungary, it is quite clear that the civic cultivation process in the first decades of the 20th century resulted in new forms and sites of associative life, houses of culture significant among them.

At the end of World War I, the short-lived Republic of Councils pursued education and cultivation vigorously (White 1990: 58). In 1919, “every party and association was dismantled (*feloszlott*), whether by its own accord or due to a law”

(Kovalcsik 2003:435). Another law nationalized the “non-state” and “state” institutions for socialization and education (*nevelési* and *oktatási intézetek*)(Kovalcsik 2003:444). The “*művelődés politika*” of the Communists focused on free schooling for all in order to “eliminate the difference between the learned and unlearned worker”, and “the situation in which ‘*műveltség*’ is a privilege” (Kovalcsik 2003:443-444). The Communists also attempted to eliminate counterrevolutionary activities by the control or elimination of independent associations. With the victory of the counterrevolutionary Horthy regime, restrictions were put on many institutions and associations, especially leftist ones, and “state-*művelődés*,” aimed at blocking the spread of revolutionary ideas, was initiated (Kovalcsik 2003:462-556). Efforts were made to coerce liberal (understood as Jewish) and petit bourgeois institutions as well as ultra-right university movements into inactivity (Kovalcsik 2003:462). Many organizations, open and clandestine, were formed by conservatives and refugees from the recently lost territories with the intention of preserving a sense of national crisis and feeding irredentism through the “ultranationalistic reeducation of the country, and especially of the youth” (Mocsy 1983:165). Indeed, it was in this period that a focus on the socialization of youth appears to have developed.

In the early years of the Horthy regime, Minister of Culture Kuno Klebelsberg (himself a count from Transylvania) oversaw educational reforms toward the goal of counterrevolutionary socialization, including the expansion of houses of culture (Kovalcsik 462+556). Kürti notes that in the Klebelsberg era, schoolchildren began the day with irredentist slogans, such as “No, No, Never!”(Kürti 2002:70). Interestingly, *művelődés* experts whom I interviewed pointed to Klebelsberg when asked about the origins of the Hungarian houses of

culture. Indeed, the effort by Klebelsburg appears to have been the first extensive government project involving houses of culture.

The issue of establishing houses of the people and houses of culture was the order of the day for the period and they were championed equally by both “state *népművelés*” and the political opposition, although not according to the same goals (Kovalcsik 2003:557). Demonstrating the spectrum of interests behind the construction of houses of culture in the 1920s, Kürti writes:

For radical workers, the Worker’s Home—originally built in 1920, although for some time even earlier workers and union organizers had been actively engaged in building a cultural centre—was a site of political and cultural activities. It was an important centre of grassroots activity organized and conducted by the workers themselves...Exhibits, workers’ choir and brass bands, nature rambles, readers’ and writers’ clubs, theaters, youth clubs and anti alcohol campaigns counted among its many activities, while other, more political efforts included organizing strikes and enabling the local cell of the illegal Communist Party to operate within its confines (Kürti 2002:74).

He compares the Workers’ Home with the Cultural Center in the same town:

Whereas the Worker’s Home was a cultural and political institution uniting progressive youth of the left, the Cultural Centre was created to unite Christian, fascist and conservative groups of the right, signaling the division of youth along political lines. And there were signs on the horizon that neofascist and extreme right religious circles were slowly gaining the upper hand (Kürti 2002:74).

Kürti’s assertion that right wing circles were gaining the upper hand in this period is corroborated by Mocsy’s discussion of the powerful networks of right wing secret societies, including the clandestine Association of the *Etelköz* (*Etelközi Szövetség*), which, along with the Hungarian National Defense League (*MOVE*), a legal organization, occupied the lodges of the still outlawed freemasons. Individuals connected to *MOVE*, “the principal political organization of military officers, which was originally brought to life to aid the refugee officers,” organized secretarial schools for wives and daughters of the intelligentsia (Mocsy 1983:181). *Gömbös* would later boast that it had been the “first fascist organization in Europe”(Mocsy

1983:162). Nevertheless, there were many institutions during this period which, while perhaps not revolutionary, were aimed at reform. Among these were the *Népfűiskolák*—Folk high schools established in the 1930s. Inspired by the Danish Folk school movement, by the English and Swiss settlement movements, and German ideas about the Volk, founders of the schools wished to provide education to the agricultural population—which still lacked practical access to education (Kovalcsik 2003:558).¹¹⁰ Resulting from church initiatives, the majority of folk high schools were accommodated in church buildings. Tóth argues that while Catholic organizations tended to support the political status quo of which their church was a beneficiary, Calvinists tended to be more closely associated with popular radicalism (Tóth 1986:220).¹¹¹ Indeed, according to Tóth, despite the Catholic majority in Hungary, it was Calvinists who initiated the folk high school movement and founded the majority of the schools. In his study of the folk school movement, Tóth states:

Contemporary cultural policy, pursuing the educational ideals of conservative-Christian nationalism, lay great emphasis on making its influence felt in the most populous section, i.e. the village population. The most serious challenge and thus potential alternative to the monopoly of this nation-centred conservative ideology was due to the fact that the progressive popular trend of their age treated national problems most radically as social issues (Tóth 1986:221).

For Tóth, radical intentions were behind the folk high schools. He admits, however, that a spectrum of ideologies is could be found among their management. While the need for land reform was a common sentiment, only the more radical schools taught

¹¹⁰ It is interesting that none of my sources point to the Russian *narodnyik* movement. This is perhaps due to an overemphasis on Western influences, on the one hand, and the association of the *narodnyiks* with terrorism, on the other.

¹¹¹ Note the similarity to the scouts in this sense. The Aristocracy and traditionally pro-Habsburg camps were Catholic (less so in Transylvania), while the middle class tended to be Protestant. The poorest of the poor tended to be Catholic, with many converting to evangelical sects. The Catholic Church stood to lose much of its wealth with any radical land reform.

modern agricultural methods and exposed students to banned texts (1986:221). The schools formed a coalition that sought government financial support yet demanded a “full degree of internal freedom”(Tóth 1986:223). The government, however, was able to secure a supervisory role, as licenses based on the approval of curricula were required for schools to open (Tóth 1986:223).

Dissolving Bourgeois and Feudal Institutions, Building Socialist Culture: The Institute for People's Culture

The brief period after World War II, lasting from 1945 until 1948 and known as the coalition period, witnessed a robust associative life focused around civic cultivation and extracurricular education. An important example, discussed extensively in chapter 2, was the People's College Movement, which in its short lifespan came to manage 160 colleges and socialize ten thousand students (Aczél 1977:8, Kardos 1977:26, Borbándi 1989:316).

In this period, political parties also built their own cultural centers (*kulturközpontok*)(Vitányi 1993). Associational life was in full swing, with new organizations springing up out of the ruins of the war. Yet, as the coalition gave way to Communist Party control, many individuals and projects were purged, and by 1949, most cultural institutions had been dissolved by the Communist administration. At this time, according to Striker:

The term 'people's education' ¹¹²was introduced with all its paternalistic overtones, and the wide spectrum of self-educational programmes which flourished during the brief post-war coalition period was for the most part dissolved and 'limited to the amateur artistic movement and the dissemination of knowledge' (Vitányi in Striker 1983).

¹¹² The term *népművelés*—literally “cultivation of the people”—is translated here by Striker as “people’s education.” It is the prefix “people” that is new at this time.. I prefer to use the terms “civic cultivation” or “extra-curricular/adult education” to emphasize the historical and Western European humanist dimensions of the terms and practices, of which White’s “Soviet type” “cultural enlightenment” is but one historical phase. As is made clear in earlier chapters, the terms *közművelődés*, *szabadművelődés*, and *művelődés* were already in use. I prefer to maintain this continuity by using the word cultivation.

Notably, sports clubs and folk dance troupes were among those groups not dissolved, but put under the authority of the unions. It appears that such activities were not considered “ideological,” while, due to their popularity, they may have been considered apt tools for recruitment. The Socialist administration made every effort to consolidate rule by dissolving previously existing “bourgeois or feudal” institutions, replacing them with socialist institutions for adult education. Among the “new” institutions intended to serve this end was the Institute of Folk Art, later the Institute for Peoples’ Culture.

Having been founded in 1946 by *Népi* Writers Gyula Illyés and László Németh with the support of the council for free cultivation/adult education (Szabadművelődési Tanács),¹¹³ the Institute of *Népi* Cultivation (*Népi* Művelődési Intézet) was dismantled in 1948 along with most other cultural institutions (Vitányi 1993:22). According to Katalin Polgár (1994:7), “the same institution” was reopened in 1951 as the Institute of Folk Art (*Népművészeti Intézet*) under the authority of the newly formed Ministry of People’s Culture (*Népművelési Minisztérium*), supposedly following the model of the Soviet House of Folk Artists (*Népi Alkotások Háza*).¹¹⁴ According to Polgár, the task of the Institute was to provide existing groups of artists a new institutional home, given that these groups had been formed “within the counter-revolutionary institutions/conditions of the

¹¹³ Which functioned under the authority of the Szabadművelődési Osztály (Department of Free Cultivation/Adult Education) of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education.

¹¹⁴ The Russian National House of Folk Arts of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, founded in 1915, is a State cultural institution with its head office in Moscow and 89 branches in all administrative regions. It is a head methodological institution in the structure of the federal Ministry of Culture dealing with folklore and amateur activities in arts and the main coordinator for artistic activities, information, publications and international exchanges in Russia. Its major goals are 1)Support and encouragement of amateur artistic activities, traditional culture and national folklore 2)Methodological assistance, organizational and PR support for 89 regional centers of folk and amateur arts in all administrative regions 3)Collection and registration of traditional and amateur forms and spaces 4)Foundation and development of traditional festivals, contests and exhibitions 5)Organization of international cultural exchanges (WIPO 2002). Carol Silverman (1983) writes of the Bulgarian Center for Amateur Arts (*Centura za Hudozestvana Samodejnost*), which directed the activities of amateur groups that performed folk music and dances, as well as rituals at festivals (1983:57). Buchanan (2006:134) writes on the “Central House for Folk Creativity”, founded in 1954.

earlier period”(Polgár K 1994:7). Even though these groups subsequently found “shelter” in the trade unions, the need for new institutions remained (Polgár K 1994:7). The role of the Institute would change significantly over the years, but the tasks set out in the founding decree as summarized by Polgár were decisive:

- 1) To aid in shaping the artistic direction of the movement spreading in the unions, mass institutions and culture houses.
- 2) Sponsorship of the activities of cultural production in the unions and mass institutions and the publication of a trade journal of the mass movement.
- 3) Recruiting cultural groups into the work of ethnographic collection and making the material available to the institutions of the ethnographic discipline while also assuring that the reworked material was returned to the cultural mass movement in appropriate form
- 4) Catalyzing the production of new folk songs and mass dances
- 5) The search for and support of new artistic talents from among the working people and further training of leaders of the cultural mass movement
- 6) To aid official artists to participate in the work of the cultural mass movement (Polgár K 1994:13).

One duty of the Institute was to house the Hungarian State Folk Dance Ensemble, brought into being at the same time on the model of the Soviet Moisejev Ensemble.¹¹⁵ The Institute was to serve the ensemble by gathering ethnographic material from which it could draw for its choreographies. The experts working there were meant to serve the folk dance movement in general, including the several hundred amateur folk dance groups “modeled on the highly successful Soviet folk ensembles”(Halmos 2000:35-36).¹¹⁶

By the time of Stalin’s death in 1953, orders had come from the Party for a more focused fight against counterrevolutionary ideology, help in the further

¹¹⁵ Formed in the 1930s by Igor Moiseyev, a principal dancer and choreographer for the Bolshoi Ballet, the ensemble performed balleticized versions of the folk and ethnic dances collected in the many regions of the Soviet Union.

¹¹⁶ See Silverman (1983:57-58) for the Bulgarian parallel. While she asserts that the government “created ensembles” I prefer to see new ensembles as emerging from the interaction between dancers and the state, as my informants suggested that old groups took on new names and that dancers/choreographers approached unions (or the firms they were attached to) in pursuit of chances to found dance ensembles.

training of workers, help with institutions of *népművelés*, a deepening of the institution's connection with the masses, and help in legitimizing the economy (Polgár K 1994:23). In light of these developments, Katalin Polgár suggests, the emphasis on folk art (*népművészet*) gave way to an emphasis on *népművelés*—people's education/cultivation, which now became the institute's main goal (Polgár K 1994:23). Indeed, by 1955, the role of the Institute had expanded to include working with village libraries, building houses of culture, and the organization of competitions; yet, according to Erika Gyarmati, its main occupation remained folk art (Gyarmati 1994:12).¹¹⁷ In Hajnalka Polgár's view, because the groups the Institute dealt with were given no voice in its work, employees of the Institute were able to develop it along a *nép-nemzeti* path (Polgár 1994: 10).

This *nép-nemzeti* orientation of the Institute is significant, as toward the end of the coalition years and during the first few years of Communist rule, non-communists and many 'local leftists', including a number of populists, had been purged from positions of influence and replaced by so-called "foreign," or urbanite communists.¹¹⁸ This term foreign referred to both those Hungarians who had been living in the Soviet Union and had returned to participate in the new Socialist regime at this time, and to Jewish Communists (many of whom were also returnees). In any case, such "foreigners" were considered to be loyal to the Soviets and to espouse Soviet and "urban" models of socialist progress, rather than the locally salient models of socialism or left populism. In this context, the Institute remained a

¹¹⁷ In addition to creating performances, agitation pamphlets and publications (*agitációs m sorf zeteket, kiadványok*), exhibitions, and giving courses within the Institute, in summer arts colonies, and in unions and councils, Gyarmati writes, it also conducted ethnographic collection and produced ethnographic studies. In five years time, 12,000 songs, 500 collections of local dance material, 250 films of local dance material, and 4,200 song and dance based children's games were produced (Gyarmati 1994:15).

¹¹⁸ These "foreigners" included communist Hungarians who had fled the Horthy era white terror. Some went to the USSR, others to Austria and other places. Their orientation toward socialism differed from that of local Hungarian leftists, for example leftist populists.

populist stronghold. Indeed, confused by why the Communists would have supported a populist effort (and one that had been initiated by right-leaning, not even leftist populists), I inquired about this in interviews. A number of people suggested that the populists and other non-communist leftists had been tucked away in marginal cultural jobs such as those at the Institute. How un-influential the Institute was, however, depends on how we view it.

During the 1956 revolution, the revolutionary council formed at the Institute released a statement on the party's handling of culture and art, suggesting that research, not party dictates, was what was required for the creation of a public culture that could be grasped by the people (Polgár K 1994:33-35). Interestingly, they argued that the distinction between artist and *népművelő*—cultivator/educator of the people—needed to be dissolved (Polgár K 1994:33-35). The Institute's director from 1950-1956, Jenő Széll, was a significant player in “revolutionary” Minister Imre Nagy's cabinet, and held a directing position at the revolutionary Free Kossuth Radio. In the months and years following the Revolution purges were made within the Institute. Some, including Széll, were sent to prison and new management was appointed (Polgár K 1994:42-43, Gyarmati 1994:16).¹¹⁹

In 1957, now under the authority of the new Ministry of Cultural Affairs (*Művelődésügyi Minisztérium*), formed by joining the old Ministry of People's Culture (*Népművelési*) and the Ministry of Education (*Oktatási*) (Gyarmati 1994:16), the name of the Institute was changed to the Institute for People's Culture (*Népművelési Intézet*), the departments within it being rearranged to meet the requirements of new directives yet again. Attention to folk art was gradually cut back as more attention was directed toward extracurricular *népművelés* and the

¹¹⁹ After serving a sentence, Széll was “tucked away” as an archivist/librarian at the National Library. In 1986 he wrote a book on the *táncház* movement.

organization of festivals and anniversaries (Gyarmati 1994:18-19). At this time two major sections were defined: the Arts section –under which fell the theater, fine arts, folk decorative arts, dance, and music departments- and the Scientific section-under which came the departments of *népm\veléstudomány* (the science of people’s cultivation), ethnography, and methodology (Gyarmati 1994:18-19). By 1958, sponsorship was being further directed away from the arts departments and into the training of nursery school teachers and teachers. The *népm\veléstudományi* and methodology departments were combined to become the department of theory and methodology, while a separate department of education was also formed, responsible, among other things, for the further training of culture house workers. An “occupational circle” (*szakkör*) department was also formed to deal with “circles and voluntary movements” (Gyarmati 1994:24). By 1959, all but the dance and music departments had been placed under the department of theory and methodology, and in this period, many people working on folk art were dismissed from their positions.¹²⁰ According to György Martin, who was an employee at the time, “the only department that remained untouched” by the transformations, and the only organization that gave direction (*irányító szerve*) to the folk art movement in the tradition of the *Népművészeti Intézet* was the dance department (Martin 1981:42). In 1964, the dance department was also dissolved, forcing the Institute’s folk art achievements even further into the background. At this time, according to Halmos, ethnographic collections and collecting work were transferred to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Martin 1981:44). Halmos told me in an interview that:

¹²⁰ Including Elemér Muharay, Jolán Borbély, ethnographer and teacher (as well as Martin’s wife), and István Almássy, ethnographer.

After the 1956 revolution Széll was imprisoned and they dissolved the group (the folk department *neposztaly*)... It was then that Kodály invited Martin to do dance research.

It appears that this move marked the formation of the Folk dance Research Group at the Academy of Sciences, headed by Zoltán Kodály, and an associated shift from cultivation focused setting to one emphasizing research (Martin 1981: 43).¹²¹ I will turn to further transformations within the Institute later in the chapter, after an examination of the system of culture houses.

Culture Houses: Amateur Art and Leisure Time Activities in Socialist Hungary

From 1948 on, houses of culture were considered important tools in the project of building socialism, although it was not until the 1970s that the subsidized construction of culture houses led to their real proliferation across the country (Kuti, Marshall and Nyilas 1986:182). Until the early 1980s, writes Striker, "the network of culture houses and cultural centers provided cheap or even free cultural services for the general public in Hungary"(1989a: 6). Functioning on a meager budget, they offered courses and hosted art clubs, film screenings, theater performances, exhibitions, discos and more. Under the logic of state socialism, the houses of culture were not expected to make a profit. Classified as "surplus interested" by the Ministry of Finance, these institutions needed only to submit a yearly report stating the amount of subsidy remaining after their expenses for any fiscal year (Striker 1989a:6). As we might expect in an economy of shortage, houses of culture spent all the money they received in order to avoid cuts to their budgets in subsequent years.¹²²

¹²¹He names Ervin Pesovár and Muharay specifically.

¹²² For a discussion of the economies of shortage, see Kornai (1992). For its relationship to cultural production, see Verdery (1996).

In her examination of houses of culture in the USSR, Poland and Hungary, Anne White states:

In the party apparatus, cultural enlightenment, as a component of ideological work, falls within the remit of propaganda or agitprop departments, and, it would seem, to some extent also of culture departments, where these exist (White 1990:102).

However, White also suggests that, due in part to the “overinvolvement” of party committees “in economic matters at the expense of ideological work,” party involvement in cultural affairs was often minimal (White 1990:103). She writes that there appeared to be a “curious lack of coordination between party and state administrations” (White 1990:104). As the following sections show, the complexity of culture house governance appears to have precluded tight coordination. Indeed, from the start, different houses of culture variously came under the authority of the party, state, enterprises and corresponding trade unions, and youth league, in different combinations. With the decentralization in Hungary after 1968, the administration of the local or municipal council-governments became responsible for most houses of culture. These local governments were embedded in a tiered hierarchy that built upwards from settlement, to *járás*,¹²³ to county, to the central administration, assuring great variation. As White’s data suggest, the level of communication between houses of culture and local councils also varied greatly across institutions (White 1990:110).

Beyond the regionally supervised houses of culture, state-owned enterprises also funded culture centers and club spaces, using the cultural fund they were required to provide for employees (Kuti, Marschall, and Nyilas, 1986:180). In Hungary, trade union representatives held full-time positions at the larger enterprises, and among their duties was the management of cultural activities. Host

¹²³ An administrative unit between settlement and county.

enterprises funded club activities expressly for employees, and only a small percentage of these were open to the public. With time, however, more would open their doors for specific “public” events. Run by enterprises and their related unions, these houses of culture did not fall under the supervision of the local councils nor under that of the local party branch.¹²⁴ Further, Striker comments:

From the companies’ point of view they were rather insignificant—the company leaders, including the party and the trade union officials, looked after and worried about the workers’ behaviour during the working hours, not in their leisure time”.¹²⁵

These enterprises also provided “club spaces” (*klubhelyiségek*) for club activities, many intended for the youth, which came under the management of KISZ, the Communist Youth League. According to Striker, the KISZ committees of the companies tended to be quite weak and young workers often took a condescending attitude toward them. Universities also hosted clubs intended for their students, run by the KISZ committees of the Universities. These too suffered problems of legitimacy. However, by the late 1960s things had taken a turn. Youth clubs were proliferating in these spaces without direct party supervision; the “club movement” had taken off. Under the direct supervision of KISZ, the youth arm of the party, these club spaces were less closely monitored than the houses of culture, which were required to file an annual report to the council, which held financial authority over them. Before elaborating on what has been referred to as the “club movement” further, it is necessary to turn to a discussion of the role of amateur art in socialist cultural management.

The role of the houses of culture in socialist era Hungary can best be understood with attention to the special role that amateur artistic activity was

¹²⁴ See Siegelbaum (1999) for a discussion of this type of club in the Soviet Union.

¹²⁵ Striker, personal communication.

understood to play in extracurricular or “voluntary education”—civic cultivation. By the time that the Communist party took power, a strong focus on amateur art had already developed in the sphere of Hungarian civic cultivation. Amateur art, considered an important *művelődési* –cultural, or cultivating exercise, can be defined, in contrast to “professional art”, as art engaged in for purposes other than earning a living.¹²⁶ In the civic cultivation and extracurricular education movements that spread across Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries, amateur art was considered an important part of associative life and civil society.¹²⁷ In Hungary, the broad popularity of choir movements and the “popular theater” (*népszínház*) in the interwar period suggests that not only was amateur art employed in civic cultivation, but also that amateur art activities were indeed effective means for attracting people to workers’ homes and other such spaces (Kovalcsik 2003:510), thus playing an important role in political recruitment and socialization. The testimonies cited by Kovalcsik in his book *The Halls of Culture* suggest that it was often this kind of cultural activity, rather than libraries or explicitly political activities, that drew young workers toward the social democratic movement. It was, in Kovalcsik’s view, the experience of community resulting from these activities that attracted them (517-519). The emphasis on the community-making qualities of amateur art did not disappear during the years of socialism. Indeed, White writes that during the socialist period “most cultural enlightenment was heavily oriented towards amateur

¹²⁶ White cites one description of amateur arts: “amateur arts are a mighty instrument for the political socialization of the population...The force of this type of art lies in its mass scale (1990: 70).

¹²⁷ It is interesting that while NGOs and government bodies alike point to the need for cultural policy to nurture amateur arts activities, and assume their positive effects, such as active citizenship, they rarely point to the source of such ideas. Striker suggested to me that as folk arts had become abstracted from their original context they were re-categorized as amateur art. He points out that choirs required no money and, because of traditions of collective singing, easily attracted participants. Amateur art, therefore, appears helpful at producing /reproducing collectives.

arts” (1990:70). Socialist theorists stressed the role of art in political socialization, and the role of socialism in broadening the provenance of art. White writes:

Lenin believed that art could and should be used for propaganda, and that cultural enlightenment—primarily the literacy campaign—was a vehicle for political socialization and the extension of Bolshevik power. However, he did not equate art with propaganda (White 1990:18).

Socialist theorists also stressed the democratization of art, which thus far had been the “privilege” of the elite. White writes: “through art, Lukács believed, the individual could experience unity with the species...aesthetic education and access to art must therefore be provided for everyone” (White 1990: 12). “Public access to art” might have been achieved simply through education about high art coupled with access to museums. So why, one wonders, was amateur art promoted? Along with other civic cultivation movements, the socialist project stressed community-making. White, highlighting the emphasis that socialist “cultural enlightenment” places on mass socialization, lists its important characteristics:

In addition to accessibility, other special features include: 1) the fact that the activities are usually *collective*; 2) its largely voluntary nature (since Stalin’s death; 3) the emphasis on the desirability of active participation rather than passive spectating (White 1990:26).

The amateur arts, especially those done collectively, such as folk dance and choir singing, meet these all of these criteria.¹²⁸ Indeed, this approach to socialization stresses that it is achieved most effectively through participation. Within this paradigm, amateur art is considered a kind of voluntary activity—an important aspect in associative life and citizen-making, or civic cultivation. Illustrative of the socialist approach of dialectical practice (praxis) is the following passage in Lenin’s “the Task of the Youth Leagues”, in which he writes:

¹²⁸ See also Buchanon (2006:133) on this issue.

You must train yourselves to be Communists. It is the task of the youth league to organize its practical activities in such a way that by learning, organizing, uniting and fighting, its members shall train both themselves and all those who look to it for leadership; it should train Communists. The entire purpose of training, educating and teaching should be to imbue them with communist ethics (1975:667).

As Vitányi argues, the connection of voluntary activity and art in this kind of socialization can only be understood if we step back from the bourgeois definition of art to examine its role in community cohesiveness, as did the utopian socialists (1971:244).¹²⁹

The conviction that amateur art is an important and valid form of voluntary activity was so established in the Hungarian sphere of cultivation, that at a series of seminars on voluntary organizations in Hungary and the Netherlands held in the mid- to late-1980s, Katalin Fábry and Pal Soós asserted that Hungarian adult educators and socio-cultural experts question whether it is feasible to consider amateur artistic activity separately from the “problematique of voluntaryism.” To them, the amateur artistic movement, its historical traditions, evolutionary trends, fluctuations and prevailing forms are “the par excellence manifestation of voluntaryism”(1986:67). Moreover, Fábry and Soós propose, although without any explanation, that it is likely that "amateur artistic activity does not play such a primary, dominant, part in adult education and socio-cultural animation of the Netherlands and of Western Europe in general as it does in the East Central European countries" (Fábry and Sóos 1986:67). And yet, in the broader European tradition, the role of amateur art has also been touted, as references to it by many NGOs focused on civil society indicate. Sándor Striker has attempted to periodize amateur art activities during the socialist period. I turn now to a discussion of his periodization of the relationship of “art oriented voluntary activities” to state and

¹²⁹ The question of the relation of folk art to bourgeois art and communism will be taken up again later.

market in order to examine the ways in which the cultural function of amateur art activities, folk dance among them, changed over the socialist period.

The Changing Roles of Amateur Art in the Socialist Period

Concerned with the function of “voluntary education” as public communication, Striker distinguishes phases of "art oriented voluntary activities" in socialist Hungary. The main context for the activities he discusses is the house of culture. He divides the socialist period into two main phases, each made up of distinguishable periods. The first phase was one of centralized initiatives and included both "the period of overwhelmingly central initiatives" lasting from 1948 to approximately 1958, and the period of movements initiated by the television, which lasted from 1958-1964. The second phase, that of group initiatives, began with a period lasting from 1964-1972 in which "the initiative of amateur artistic activities switched to the hands of groups." The next period in this phase began around 1980, and was characterized at first by the formation of associations, followed by what Striker characterizes as a market-coop oriented period. Striker demonstrates that across these periods, the centralized paradigm, in which groups had communication only with the center, was slowly replaced by one in which groups were able to communicate directly with each other as well as with the center. This process was aided, in part, by personal connections. In the first paradigm, "all cultural ventures within a centrally controlled social arena are fully dependent on state provisions"(Striker 1989a: 4). In such a situation it should come as no surprise, he argues, that people strove to make direct connections through movements and associations (1989a:4). With no access to the centrally controlled resources, and deprived of the opportunities of communal communication, informal person-to-person contacts were the only ways of "attaining changes without the risk of

appearing rebellious" (Striker 1989:4). As Striker demonstrates, the way in which associative life expressed itself across these periods is clearly connected with economic conditions. Pointing to the New Economic Mechanism introduced in 1968, and to the economic crisis of the 1970s (Striker 1989a, 6), he shows that state subsidies for culture, as well as for medical and social care, were cut due to the crisis and the "failure of the primary productive sphere of the economy at solving the problems"(Striker 1989a:6). Further, by the early 1970s, the institutions of the system were faced with the difficulties of absorbing a policy-induced baby boom generation,¹³⁰ just then coming of age (Striker 1987:102).¹³¹

Due to these changing conditions, the "relationship between hierarchy and culture" was transforming. Cultural producers, now encouraged to become entrepreneurial and to rely less on state funding, responded by standing up for "more political freedom and for artistic and financial independence" (Striker 1989a:7). Around 1983, Striker tells us, the Ministries of Finance and Culture "'gave the opportunity' to certain cultural institutions to become 'mixed interest' institutions"(1989a:7), simultaneously decreasing their funding and encouraging profit-oriented activities. In this context, the house of culture began to take on an entrepreneurial role. "Automatically," writes Striker, "activities requiring financial support [became] of less importance," while institutions became more sensitive to the requests of consumers (1989a:7). One of the important effects of the financial crisis was the grueling 13-hour workday of the average Hungarian, widely evident by 1987

¹³⁰ The birthrate increased 15% in the years between 1953 and 1957 due to pronatalist policies pursued by the then Minister of Health and Welfare, Anna Ratkó. This generation was dubbed "the Ratkó generation" (Striker 1987:102).

¹³¹ While Striker does not specifically mention the connection, the coming of age of this generation coincides with the growth of the second economy, which might be seen as a kind of escape valve that absorbed what might have otherwise been a disruptive force.

(Striker 1989a: 7). Resulting from these factors, Striker argues, central planning had less of an effect on the direction of cultural institutions.

Voluntary educational and other leisure time activities began at this point to develop along two lines. The first involved the financial needs of participants, with coursework focused on teaching skills needed for second economy or new entrepreneurial activities, while the second involved political activities targeting contemporary issues, examples of which were local cable television shows, including news programs, and “town protection” associations which sought control over the built environment (1989a:7, 1987:240-241). During this same period, notes Striker, amateur art activity reached a low point. He notes, however, that folk dance was an exception, as it continued to draw large numbers throughout the 1980s. The fact that *táncház* remained popular at a time when leisure activities were becoming either more income-related or more overtly political hints at its special role in society. I will now examine each phase in more detail.

In the first phase, lasting until around 1964, socialist rule was imposed on society, and initiatives were organized by “the Movement,” and thus, by the activists acting according to the ideology of the “one and only party”(Striker 1987:235).

Striker writes:

The most expressively supported amateur artistic activities were the movement-and folk choirs and on-stage folkdance. These activities were intended to transmit the message of liberated feelings, freedom and participation, as expressed later by one of the choir-composers at the time: ‘the musical task and role of the new generation is to transform musical education—which had been reserved for circles of the privileged before—into public property and to enrich, deepen and wide (sic) the great achievements. To create a collective!’ (Bardos, 1969, quoted in Striker 1987:233).¹³²

¹³² While Striker is quoting Bardos, it is interesting to note the tension between their interpretations: Bardos stresses creating a collective, while Striker stresses showing a message.

At that same time, the system of culture houses was introduced, with their programs designed by the center and “executed by visiting activists” (Striker 1987:235). The introduction of television broadcasts in the 1950s provided a new medium for the movement. Televisions, unavailable in most homes, were found in the houses of culture—“in well-locked glass-windowed boxes” (Striker 1987:235). From 1958 onwards, the public could view programs transmitted by Hungarian Television in these locations. This period also saw the establishment of houses of culture as sites of social activities, such as weddings.

The second period of this phase of centralized initiatives, lasting until around 1964, was characterized, according to Striker, by “amateur art-oriented movements initiated by the Hungarian Television and other institutions” (1987:236). He points in particular to the *Ki Mit Tud?* (Who Can Do What?) a television program introduced in 1962. Organized in subsequent years as a competition among amateur and semi-professional performers, the show's message, writes Striker, “was to show the talents of the young generation the capability and participation of those brought up by the system” (1987:236). These initiatives would lead into the next period, as they were organized in later years as open competitions. Competitions for *Ki Mit Tud?* and its folk category, *Repülj Páva* (*Fly Peacock*) were held in local culture houses, with finals broadcast on television. Finalists were judged by two juries: the professional jury, which awarded the prize, and the audience, who could vote on their preferences.¹³³ When I asked cultural manager Iván Vitányi in an interview about *Ki Mit Tud* and *Repülj Páva*, he suggested that the popularity of such shows derived from the fact that the audience was encouraged to vote for their favorite acts. “The only vote that people were permitted to cast,” this vote meant that

Hungarians were allowed—at least symbolically—to participate in shaping the direction in which cultural life would develop. Beyond representing the glory of socialist culture, television competitions like *Ki Mit Tud?* served not only to scout new talent and to produce famous public figures to feed the rapidly growing entertainment industry, but also to keep an eye on cultural currents in the population and opinions about them. In the socialist parlance of the day, strongly manifested currents were called “movements.” “Movements” would dominate the next phase; that of group initiatives.

Characterizing the beginning of the second phase as one in which “the initiative of amateur artistic activities switched into the hands of groups,” Striker provides four examples: music, film, theater, and folklore. Among the most significant activities—and certainly an important precursor to *táncház*—were those connected to “beat music,” or rock and roll. Striker notes that in 1964 alone, nearly 3,000 guitars were sold in Hungary, and by the end of that year, 250 “beat groups” were performing in Budapest alone (1987:236). Film became a significant medium as well. The works of the French New Wave, Italian neo-realists, and Soviet greats were shown along with those of Hungarian filmmakers at the club spaces of the universities and enterprises, while some clubs even hosted amateur moviemaking . While according to Striker, amateur theater, in the form of village “art appreciation” activities (such as popular theater, *népszínmű*), had been quite popular during the first phase (Striker 1987:238), the spread of full-time employment, the rise of television, and very likely its association with the party, eroded the adult participation upon which it had once thrived (1987:238). As participation shifted to other social strata and generations, the content and style of the plays changed,

influenced, he writes, by the 1968 political movements in Western Europe (1987:238).

Finally, folklore, which had been important in the earlier phase in the form of state supported professional and amateur folkdance troupes, went through important transformations. In folkdance as in contemporary theater, participants came down from the stage and the audience became participants. The *Népművészet Ifjú Mestere* (Young Master of Folk Art) award was introduced in 1970, and in 1973, the Young Folk Artists' Studio was founded to bring together youth interested in renewing folk art on the basis of the traditions of material and spiritual culture (*tárgyi és szellemi kultur*)(Young Folk Artists' Studio Archive). Three main activities of the Studio were to be collection (*feltárolás*), creation (*tárgyalkotás*), and public cultivation activities (*közművelési akciók*). Members were to take part in ethnographic collection, attend lectures and exhibits, and read literature of the profession/field. Using the techniques learned, they were to engage in reconstruction work. Their most important goal was to “produce useable and beautiful products: playgrounds, furniture, dishes, tablecloths, clothing and toys, and to show these at national and international exhibitions” (Young Folk Artists' Studio Archive). Finally, they were to hold demonstrations at exhibitions during which children and adults would have a chance to learn and try out these simple techniques. Frequent exercises were also to be held at schools and culture houses, mostly aimed at children. Members would also produce publications and records (Young Folk Artists' Studio Archive). While the staged folk dance popular in the earlier phase continued, a “revolution” was taking place in the teaching and choreography of folk dance in these groups. Reflecting these changes, the first *táncház* was held in 1972, marking an expansion of folk dance from staged

performance to social dance. This was quickly followed by events aimed at including not only performers, but the general public as well.

While centralized initiatives around the television may have given these movements their start, this period was characterized by strained relations between youth (the baby-boom generation was coming of age) and the post-Stalinist administration, which was struggling to maintain legitimacy by distancing itself from Stalinism, promoting consumerism, and embracing a new cultural policy represented by Kádár's statement that "those who are not against us are with us."¹³⁴ Associated with "cultural czar" György Aczél, what were commonly referred to as the "three t's": *türt* (tolerated), *támogatott* (sponsored) and *tiltott* (forbidden), now characterized cultural politics.¹³⁵ Once a cultural current was labeled a "movement," efforts were made to enlist the movement in the task of socialist cultivation.

The next period arose somewhere around 1980, connected, according to Striker, with the price crisis of 1979. In his words: "The shift had been made from a period of movements to a period of associations"(Striker 1987:240). Leisure time diminished as individuals focused on more financially important activities. Yet Striker points out that while voluntary activities decreased as a whole, more official associations were formed between 1980 and 1982 than in the preceding two decades. Associations were oriented around professions or activities, in contrast with the generational grouping of "movements" seen in the earlier phase (Striker 1987:240).¹³⁶ By 1982, culture houses were expected to produce ten percent of their annual budget.

¹³⁴ See Fonyódi 2003 for a discussion of these clashes.

¹³⁵ Aczél was a member of the Party Central Committee and the first vice minister of *M vel dés (első helyetese)* (Fonyódi 2003: 20). See Fonyódi (2003: 81) for further discussion of Aczél.

¹³⁶ In 1981 a new law on associational freedoms (*Egyesülési Szabadság Törvény*) was passed, making a broader array of associations legal.

It appears that as state involvement and funding decreased, people stepped in to define, demand and create leisure time activities (Striker 1987:241).

In the last period, as local elections were established in 1985, communication took the form of direct political expression, focusing on the expression and representation of interests of the community (1987b: 241).¹³⁷ The professionalization that began in the previous period was taken further as economic concerns heightened, finding expression in the production of video and community cable television, as well as town protection activities (1987: 241). This was reflected as well in the increase of courses for driver's licenses and computer skills in culture houses. In this "market or co-operative oriented period" (in which Striker was writing), amateurs and professionals sought new ways to cooperate/associate in order to professionalize—and to assure themselves a living. In this phase, says Striker, "the medium of art becomes yet another means of livelihood" (1987b: 242). It is interesting to note that in this period, even as folk art activities were becoming professionalized, *táncház* remains an exception. *Táncház* activities, which have little economic utility beyond creating a marketable skill set for a small proportion of participants, are not expressly political in the representational sense of the other politically oriented activities developing at the time. Having elucidated these important changes in the sphere of cultural management and association, I now return to the rise of spontaneous youth culture in the culture houses in the second period. By examining the beat, or rock and roll movement, I illustrate the results of such processes while also familiarizing the reader with an important precedent for *táncház*.

¹³⁷Striker points to a telling example: The theater which hosted the first meeting of the oppositional Magyar Democratic Forum (MDF), later to become a political party, was threatened by government agencies for having hosted a subversive meeting. It successfully argued that it hosted the event out of financial necessity (1989:10).

Youth Movements and Changing Relations with Central Authority

It was towards the end of the first period that the conditions needed for *táncház* to arise began to ripen, as centralized initiatives began to be overtaken by group initiatives. By the mid 1960s, the “club movements,” in particular the “beat movement” and the “theater movement” had taken off (Striker 1987:238). Club spaces for youth had been financed by enterprises and universities since the 1950s, but, associated with the Party, they had suffered a lack of legitimacy. Inhibited by top down organizing, clubs had not been embraced by the workers, leaving club spaces and related cultural initiatives—necessarily funded—underutilized, if not empty. In the 1960s however, youth began to use these spaces to congregate and pursue their own interests. On their own initiative, they approached cultural managers, in many cases relying on personal connections, to start clubs, many of them music clubs. While in the beginning of this period, club spaces were well funded, the entrepreneurial phase set off by the New Economic Mechanism was about to restructure the way that cultural institutions functioned. “Originally these clubs served for the workers or students, but the owners¹³⁸ were interested in raising money for their clubs, therefore they made them public...” (Striker 1987b: 236). The result was that houses of culture opened their doors to a broader range of activities.

By this time, in addition to giving direction to the network of culture houses, the Institute for People’s Culture had begun to conduct studies of the houses of culture and club spaces, and the activities taking place within them. Researchers were avidly studying the youth movements and debates raged in journals and during meetings over their significance and quality. Were they Socialist? Imperialist? Nationalist? Should activities be forbidden? How could such activities be utilized

¹³⁸ He means here the enterprises and their associated trade unions.

toward socialist cultivation? The goals laid out for the Institute in 1966 were as follows:

- 1) to fight against counterrevolutionary imperialist and bourgeois currents of thought
 - 2) deal with questions about the spread of socialist democracy
 - 3) address questions about the politics of the church and religious criticism
 - 1) the face-lift of the values of the youth and questions of extracurricular education
- (Gyarmati 1994:54).¹³⁹

Tension was apparent between youth and authorities as long hair and the artistic quality of beat music became issues of contention and youths were accused of “hooliganism.” The club movements represented significant change in the cultural sphere because, even as they occurred in “public” spaces, the forms and content of events were often more in the control of participating youths than of the central authorities. The “beat generation” had successfully utilized personal connections and gaps in party control and cultural management to create “beat clubs” in the club spaces of the enterprises and universities. While the law on gathering (*gyülekezési törvény*) dictated the number of individuals allowed to gather, and technically club members were to be registered, control was inconsistent. Indeed, one club founder told me how easy it had been to start his folk club: “What surprised me most was how open the KISZ people were to such a spontaneous initiative.” Indeed, many clubs were open to the general public.

As the clubs grew, the “club movement” was identified, and efforts were made to manage its direction, including the introduction of *klubvezető* (club leader) courses at the Institute. Clubs fell into a nebulous category of cultural institutions not directly under the Party’s central committee (*Központi Bizottság*), leading this

¹³⁹ If this list seems unclear, it is because I have translated it from its Hungarian articulation, equally unclear.

committee to criticize the only “authority” over the clubs, the Communist Youth League, KISZ, for failing to provide the appropriate goals and assure appropriate content and frameworks, without which the “desire for community could bring unsocialist characteristics into being” (minutes of the party Central Committee, cited in Fonyódi 2003:25). From the start, the goal of the government represented by the Committee on Agitation and Propaganda of the Party’s Cultural Committee, had been to incorporate youth movements into the communist youth movement, represented by its official organ, KISZ.¹⁴⁰ KISZ, through its sponsorship of clubs, was expected to maintain and strengthen their socialist content and to aid in the formation of a Marxist world view (Fonyódi 2003:25). Fonyódi quotes from the notes of the 8th KISZ congress:

An important level of active cultivation is also the art-liking movement. A characteristic form of the spontaneous initiatives of the youth are beat, *táncház* and the urban folk music movement. We need to employ these movements that activate the large masses of youth to our ends. We should use the popularity of the beat movement when we organize social and political activities to move the larger masses and at the same time we must endeavor to activate the crowds of youths who are attracted to these groups toward *művelődés* of more ambitious standards. In this interest we must expand the framework and conditions of training for youths playing in the beat bands (Fonyódi 2003:25).

This quote reveals the complex dynamics of cooperation and opposition in cultural management and associative life in the socialist period. Beat bands and fans indeed collaborated with official channels in a number of ways. Beyond performing at culture houses or clubs, bands entered into relationships with a host of institutions including the *Országos Rendező Iroda* (ORI)—the National Events Office—in order to perform at festivals and to produce records (Fonyódi 2003:65+158), or with *Országos Szórakoztatói Központ* (OSZK)—the Nationals

¹⁴⁰ KISZ(Kommunista Ifjúság Szövetsége) actually only came into being in 1957. It replaced DISZ (Demokrátikus Ifjúsági Szövetsége), which had had the same role. (DISZ seems to be derived from MADISZ, the Association of Hungarian Democratic Youths, formed during the coalition).

Entertainment Center—which qualified people to perform in any public arena, but did not arrange shows or tours. The ORI was concerned with, among other things, assuring “quality” and “appropriate text.” In order to perform in public places, bands had to be in possession of a permit of operation (*működési engedély*). On the same occasion that the permit was granted, the fee that the artist or group was allowed to charge was determined by the granting bureau (OSZK or ORI). Yet Fonyódi writes that in 1969, only 45% of the surveyed bands had such a permit. While he does not explain how bands without permits managed to perform, his data suggests that they played at clubs and culture houses without permits. Indeed, it appears that in the beginning, beat bands had no relationship with the ORI, because they performed in KISZ clubs. Permits of operation, required for any band performing in a “public place,” were not required in these clubs, which were designed to encourage activities of collective amateur art. This was also true of amateur jazz and dance band festivals organized in culture houses (Fonyódi 2003:47), as well as the dance song festivals on the television.

The above discussion reveals what appears to be a tension between the nurturing of amateur art activities and the rise of an entertainment industry, likely connected with the baby boom and the rise of a second economy. Yet, while the beat movement seems to correlate with the rise of such an industry, the musicians were still subject to ostracism as hooligans. To be a beat musician was still to occupy a shady space and, as Fonyódi points out, the identification cards of beat musicians listed them without a workplace—a crime in the socialist period (2003:66).

thus the representatives of beat, notwithstanding greater and strengthening popularity, got neither self sufficiency nor independence; the representatives could only reach the public and earning possibilities if they adopted, complied with the games rules dictated ‘from above’, if they ‘gave to the collective’ the popularity and fans they had earned with their own strength (Fonyódi 2003:66+67).

Indeed, in the second phase, as theater came down off the stage and art out of the galleries, youths not only took advantage of existing structures—the club spaces and culture houses—but were also active in creating new ones, often asking for government permission and money, and insisting on institutional support.

In the 1970s, the Institute for Culture went through further transformations. According to Harangi László (interviewed by Gyarmati 1994: 68), the period from 1971-1980 was characterized by a turn away from “unambiguous socialization of world view and unidirectional public cultivation” (*egyértelmű világnézet neveléssel és egy célirányos közművelődéssel*) towards the solving of particular problems; for example, the cultivation (*művelődés*) of workers and youth. In 1970, a meeting was called between similar institutions of socialist countries and evaluations were made of the Institute, increasingly concerned to engage the mass media, given that with these tools, *művelődés* could spread more quickly and reach broader circles (Gyarmati 1994:47). It should not be seen as coincidental that the *Ki Mit Tud* and *Repülj Páva* television competitions had been introduced just prior to this period. Indeed, in 1970, among the basic tasks set by the Institute was to produce a *művelődési* program on television (Gyarmati 1994:56).

Iván Vitányi, who had been a populist activist in the 1940s and a member of the NÉKOSZ folk dance troupe under Muharay, became director of the Institute in 1972. His appointment strengthened the *népi* emphasis at the Institute. By 1974, Vitányi was writing about the *táncház*, seeing it as successful at doing what his generation had failed to do (Vitányi 1974). While the *táncház* held special significance for populists in the civic cultivation world, it signaled “narodnyizmus”,

or nationalism, to many.¹⁴¹ Vitányi engaged in debates with these skeptics, arguing a *népi*, or Bartókian line. He was a key player in a transformation in cultural policy from the notion of *népművelés* to *közművelődés*. White writes:

népművelés lives on in popular usage, but in the 1970s it was officially replaced by the word *közművelődés*, which means public (not popular) participation in culture and is an intransitive and reflexive noun: suggesting that cultural enlightenment is voluntary, not imposed, and that the system is a democratic one” (White 1999:27).

In 1976, the *közművelődési* law was passed, inspired in part, claims Striker, by research revealing the widespread disuse of culture houses and the rise of numbers of televisions in private homes. The notion of *özművelődés* underscored the idea that the public must be active in its own cultivation. Reflecting this change, in 1986 the Institute was altered again and became the National Center for Public Cultivation, or OKK (*Országos Közművelődési Központ*), one of its roles being to advise the houses of culture on how to produce income.¹⁴² Within this institution was the *Népművelési Intézet* and a new Institute of Cultural Research (*Művelődéskutató*), “which would use the tools of sociology to examine the status of national művelődés” (Polgár H 1994: i).

Conclusion

It should be apparent that, especially in the later periods laid out by Striker, activities taking place in houses of culture and in club spaces cannot simply be defined as official culture. However, we would be wise to consider whether they were not central to the development of a particular kind of socialist cultivation in Hungary. Indeed, since the establishment of the system of culture houses, the regime had succeeded in naturalizing/legitimizing the culture house and the club as public

¹⁴¹ The *narodnyiks* (literally “going to the people”) was a social movement that began in late-19th century Russia that advocated land redistribution in favor of the peasantry. Socialist in orientation, they believed that the capitalist phase could be skipped altogether, and socialism could be based on local peasant forms.

¹⁴² Striker, personal communication.

places for the use of the public. The younger generations, feeling entitled to state support for the activities they deemed important, used these spaces to pursue cultural activities and initiate new ones, making them not only for, but by the people. At first, the club spaces, under the not very effective control of KISZ, served this purpose. Then, as market mechanisms were introduced into the economy, individuals and groups began to have more control over the initiation of activities in culture houses. Yet the culture houses, because they were the spaces in which most cultural activities were held, contributed to the maintenance of a degree of centralization. Indeed, it is often commented that culture houses—at least in theory—could be easy sites of surveillance.

Throughout the 1950s, and much of the 1960s, houses of culture and clubs supported by the Party suffered from a crisis of legitimacy. Those that attended did so because of ideological conviction, because attendance was compulsory, or because a desired service was offered—television, soccer, a space for a wedding, etc. While legitimacy remained a problem, a new trend emerged in the late 1960s, in which youths began using club spaces for their own entertainment. The emergence of such autonomous initiatives was possible partly because of the numerous funded and underused spaces that enterprises and universities were required to fund. However, even when the state cut back on funding, autonomous initiatives spread, as the entrepreneurialism the houses of culture were required to engage in encouraged public input. Thus, we can detect a shift in the late socialist period toward a broadening of cultural content, with activities no longer determined from the top down, but emerging from an undulating field of popular initiatives

intersecting with state cultural managers.¹⁴³ The coining of the term *közművelődés* indicates that such a pattern affected the approaches adopted by the administration of cultural management, itself influenced by the economic reforms. Amidst entertainment activities, and skill improvement projects, the struggle over civic cultivation continued. Further, many cultural managers, *népi* activists included, worked to foil the centralized approach of the Communist Party, some remaining dedicated to socialist or communist, indeed, democratic ideals. They worked within the system to bring *művelődés* to the people.

The patterns that emerged in the world of cultivation across the socialist period are helpful in discerning both the precedents for *táncház* and the specificities of *táncház*'s rise and continuing popularity. Among these are the continuities in practices of *népi* cultivation, socialist ideas about cultivation and related patterns of funding for culture, and decentralization, entrepreneurialization and the rise of a market for entertainment, or leisure activities, perhaps not separable from the rise of the second economy. Yet, the *táncház* outlier status is also telling. As Striker notes, during the period when group initiatives became biased toward economic necessity and political representation, *táncház* remained popular. Indeed, many point to the 1980s as the heyday of *táncház*. We must see the rise of *táncház* as a peculiarly socialist phenomenon—the result of a particular kind of Hungarian socialist civil sphere where certain forms of association were encouraged and where other forms were allowed or tolerated. As one informant told me, *táncház* was

a movement which was not a movement because it had no written set of ideas or you know things like that. And you know the dancehouse movement was the right

¹⁴³ While focusing on different factors, White argues that the USSR, Poland and Hungary each showed a pattern in which houses of culture pulled “increasingly away from Stalinist forms of *political* socialization and highly politicized leisure, towards new forms of cultural enlightenment which use the arts and adult education to attack *social* problems(1990:68), often by favoring “pure entertainment or non-political hobbies, the revival of national traditions or the adoption of Western fashions”(1990:69).

answer to a totalitarian system because it was an amorphous and no informal activity which was not could not be caught in the legal terms of that system. So no one actually did anything against the actual law of the 70s and the 80s within the dancehouse movement. They did not form an association...

But beyond that, the system of cultural management was actually adapting to moments such as the beat movement and *táncház*. This relationship will be further revealed in the next chapter, which describes the development of the *táncház* in the 1970s and 1980s.

CHAPTER 4

The *Táncház* Revolution; Reviving Folk Dance As Social Dance

This chapter describes the rise of the *táncház* revival in the 1970s and its development throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. Beginning with a description of the first *táncház* event and the conditions that led to it, I then examine the *táncház* in its early years, discussing important individuals and activities, as well as the relationship of *táncház* to the Institute for Culture. I further discuss studies of and discourses surrounding the *táncház*, including comparisons with other movements and the meager demographic information available. I then turn to examples of the institutionalization of *táncház* activities and the creation of formal organizations; specifically the establishment of summer folk dance camps; the annual *Táncház* Meeting (*Táncház*találkozó); the *Táncház* Chamber; and its legal successor the *Táncház* Guild. Finally I discuss the emergence of Heritage House (*Hagyományok Háza*) from the Institute for Culture as an independent institution dedicated to folk dance and folk music.

The first Budapest *táncház* was held in 1972, hosted by the choreographer of the Bihari Ensemble, Ferenc Novák, and attended by dancers and choreographers from four amateur dance troupes (Halmos 2000:37). Modeled after dances, or balls, traditionally organized by adolescents in the Transylvanian village of Szék, this event was the first attempt by the performing folk dancers to engage in Hungarian folk dance as social dance, rather than as staged choreography or competition.

Striker writes:

Although the location was somehow different from that of the original dancehouses, traditional folk customs were precisely kept, e.g. a bottle of brandy

was provided, and even the paraffin fee was collected, guests were welcomed at the entrance, etc (Striker 1987a: 112).

Given the dance's great success, participants decided to proceed with subsequent events open to the general public. At these later events, dance lessons were given throughout the evening, encouraging newcomers to learn the dances and to participate (Halmos, 2000, 37).

The “*tánc ház* revolution” represented a movement away from the “artificial” choreography that had dominated the performing folk dance troupes in the preceding decades. In their search for authentic folk forms, or the “pure source” (*tiszta forrás*)¹⁴⁴, to refresh and replace the dominant choreographed repertoires, these choreographers came to recognize how dances were embedded in the social event. Due to their “ethnographic research”(or village visiting), they had come to appreciate both the beauty and function of social dance, of folk dance in everyday life—a form quite different than that practiced in the performance-oriented environment of the ensembles. In response to the interest of members of the troupes in coming together in a casual social context, Novák and the others organized the first Budapest *tánc ház*. Folk dance researcher (ethnochoreologist) György Martin had in particular encouraged them to organize a social event based on the Transylvanian *tánc ház*, but their efforts were also enthusiastically supported by ethnographers, writers, actors, performers and other intellectuals, quite a few connected with the Institute for Culture (Juhász and Szabó year: 11; Halmos 1973: 146).¹⁴⁵ As Juhász and Szabó put it:

¹⁴⁴ This term, “pure source”, is attributed to Novák (Maác 1980:92).

¹⁴⁵ Juhász and Szabó mention writer Sándor Csoóri, folk song collector Zoltán Kallós, ethnographer Bertalan Andrásfalvy, folk dance researcher/ethnographer Pesovár Ferenc, and ethnographer Arpád Együd (Juhász and Szabó N. d.:11n).

because the political power needed the representative activities of the folk dance ensembles, it tolerated the ‘next to and under’ self organizing and developing activities of the cultural public life of the dancehouses (N. d. :11).

As we have seen in chapter 3, cultural managers also encouraged “next to and under self organizing” activities (Juhász and Szabó year). Nevertheless, it is unwise to adopt a simple picture of cooptation for, as Striker argued in one interview, there was little that could be co-opted. At *tánc ház* there was

no program so to say. How could they launch a political program? How could they influence it? They could sponsor it and that’s it...so the difference between the dancehouse and lets say the beat bands is that there is an audience rather than an activity that you participate together in... it had no extra political content that could be controlled...because you know if you were a classical dancer to have a show you needed a permit but this was an amateur thing!

There is no doubt that there were intellectuals and cultural managers, many connected with *népi* activities and ideologies, who genuinely supported *tánc ház*, and they struggled for its validation with those who disapproved of it. Indeed, as some scholars have suggested, the relationship between “popular culture” and “official culture” under socialism was articulated by cultural managers “in a process of acculturation” (Siegelbaum 1999:85, Robin 1990).

The musicians that accompanied the dance at the first *tánc ház*, Béla Halmos and Ferenc Sebő, had met in the symphony of the Technical University, where they were both students of architecture (Halmos 1973:145, Sebő 1973:147). Sebő had experimented with accompanying poems by József Attila and *Népi* Colleger and “populist” poet László Nagy on guitar, performing at “Pop Island” in 1968 and 1969. He had also composed music for avant-garde theater.¹⁴⁶ Halmos, whose father was a researcher of folk architecture associated with the village researchers, had grown up singing folk songs with his family. In 1969, he became a household name

¹⁴⁶ József Attila was a social democratic poet of the interwar years who was sympathetic to the populists. László Nagy is considered to be a *népi* poet of the socialist era.

as “the guitar boy”, due to his placing in the top ten in the *Repülj Páva* (Fly Peacock) television competition-the folk music category of *Ki Mit Tud?* (Who Can Do What?) (Halmos 1973:145, Striker 1987a: 107, Frigyesi 1996:60). The two performed together as a duo in the *Repülj Páva* competition that same year, singing folk songs of the Carpathian basin while accompanying them on guitar (Frigyesi 1996:72, Halmos). Although they did not place in this competition, a chain of events had been set into action nevertheless.

Both musicians had been influenced by the musical environment brought about by the beat movement, and were experimenting with “new” musical forms. Their interest in singing folk songs had been peaked when, at an international camp for architecture students, visiting Greek students had sung folk songs together, to guitar accompaniment. According to Halmos, the collective singing impressed the duo, inspiring them to set local folk songs to guitar, creating their own repertoire for the competition. Meanwhile, having seen Sebő hit his *citera*¹⁴⁷ with the bow while accompanying a theater performance, ethnomusicologist Béla Vikár asked him whether he was familiar with the *ütőgardon*, an instrument used in Gyimes, Transylvania, played by hitting the strings with the bow (Sebő 1983:74, Frigyesi 1996: 61). The leap to playing Hungarian folk music on such “traditional instruments” came once György Martin and ethnomusicologist Lajos Vargyas offered Sebő and Halmos the opportunity to hear the recordings in their collections at the Academy of Sciences (Sebő 1973:148). Seeking “new” sources, and not wanting “to spend time on reinventing what already has been known and used for hundreds of years”, the young musicians gladly accepted access to the recorded legacy of Hungarian folk music (Sebő1983:74). Sebő in fact found that the exotic

¹⁴⁷ A *citera* (zither) is a stringed instrument of which the dulcimer is one type.

quality of the music was in tune with his avant-garde sensibility. He said of the first time he heard Hungarian folk music: “it was a totally strange situation- as if it were Tahitian folk music. We had never heard anything like it before”(1976:189).

Martin also introduced the musicians to the choreographers, resulting in the duo’s appointment as accompanists for the rehearsals of the Bartók Ensemble (Martin 1981). This was an important step toward the development of the social dance trend, because the revival of social dance required musicians familiar with the paradigm of village social dances. Musicians needed to be familiar with dance suites and to be sensitive to the needs of dancers.¹⁴⁸ For the musicians, Judith Frigyesi argues, this did not mean a turn away from the avant garde, for “It turned out that the most authentic performing style sounded the most modern; it was ‘stronger’ and more attractive even than modernized versions that included electric instruments”(Frigyesi 1996:66). Further, this reuniting of dance and music in a social context, so crucial to the *táncház* revolution, was in itself an aesthetic element attractive to the musicians. Frigyesi writes:

One important consequence of this “tradition-oriented” attitude was that it regarded instrumental folk music as it really was- that is, as functional music, as entertainment. This was not primarily an ideological decision but something that came from practice; the musicians of the movement learned this style in function and found the best context for it also in its function-that is, as an accompaniment to dance (Frigyesi 1996:67).

The dancers at the first Budapest *táncház* arrived along a very different trajectory than the musicians. The “folk dance” scene in Hungary had been comprised until then of 4 official ensembles in Budapest and many amateur ensembles around the country, “modeled on the highly successful Soviet folk ensembles”(Halmos 2000:35-36). By the 1960s, the festival system which provided

¹⁴⁸ Dance suites, or cycles, are sets of dances in a particular order. They will be discussed more in chapter 5.

the main venues for the performance of folk dance had “stabilized”(Maácz 1980:71). Festivals were coordinated with a system of awards that determined the reputation of the ensembles (Maácz 1980:73). László Maácz argues that on the one hand this system had become so didactic that competitions were often held before an empty house for the purpose of judgments and awards only (1980:73), yet, on the other, that by the 1970s, folk dance was also beginning to connect more closely with the expanding tourism industry (1980:74). Because they were often better able to adapt to these circumstances than the official ensembles were, the amateur ensembles generated the “most exciting innovation” (Maácz 1980:75-77). Indeed, it appears that such ensembles were compelled to innovate because of the prize awarding competitions and festivals that had developed in the amateur sphere (Vadási 2001:89). They also tended to be smaller and more cost efficient. The revival of instrumental dance music provided new opportunities for innovation, which the Bartók Ensemble, for one, embraced (Martin 1981:45, Széll 1986).

Thus, while this type of folk dance was dying out as a village social event in Hungary, it had become a widespread performing art and a thriving amateur pastime, involving both professionals and amateurs. As troupes were funded by the government, performers gained the possibility of traveling within the country as well as abroad- indeed, outside the “Socialist Bloc” as well. Since passports for travel to foreign destinations were hard to come by, and many people did not have the means to travel, this was considered a highly valued opportunity, as many performers pointed out to me. Not only did folk dance provide an opportunity to see the world, but it was also an opportunity to see other “cultures” performed in a particular context of representation, usually festivals. A set of social practices emerged, resulting from selective tradition making that emphasized certain forms and

contexts. Much like sports teams, ensembles competed against each other for prizes or reputation, or in the contexts of “friendly internationalism” in which they represented Hungary. Whereas festivals provided opportunities for representation, *táncház* allowed one for participation, related to the context of urban leisure activities on the one hand, and amateur ethnography and village visiting, on the other.

Up to this point, ensembles had performed choreographies based not only on the abstraction of folk dance from the instrumental music needed for its social practice, but also from the practice of singing folk songs. In the interwar period, both the choir movement and populists had encouraged collective singing. In this same period, composer, ethnomusicologist, and patron of the choir movement Zoltán Kodály devised his pedagogical method for teaching folk songs. In this approach, the importance of the folk song in modern life “was thought to be embedded in the rules of its form, tonality and rhythm”, leading to an emphasis on the “melodic essence” of the song, and its isolation from instrumental music (Frigyesi 1996:65). With the Kodály method, which was introduced into the Hungarian school system in the 1950’s, folk songs were abstracted from their musical and social contexts for the purposes of pedagogy, socialization; cultivation. In this act of abstraction, argues Striker, Kodály “failed to realize that a collective is more of an indirect result of a regular activity executed by a group of people, than a final goal which determines the activity itself”(Striker 1987a: 105). Further, writes Halmos,

Folk singing was made a compulsory part of the school curriculum; a child would either learn the folk songs the same way he learned algebra or would come to hate them as something shoved down his throat (Halmos 2000:37).

The emphasis on collecting songs inherited from Kodály also resulted, according to ethnomusicologist István Pávai, in the neglect of instrumental music. Further, due to technologies and methods of collecting, not to mention such biases, folk dances recorded on silent film were separated from music and song, and instrumental music was collected without record of its relationship to dances. *Táncház* practices re-aggregated these elements of the social dance that had been isolated from each other. At *táncház*, participants had the opportunity to “reunite” the text and melodies learned in school with dance and instrumental music in the context of the social dance. With this, the revival shifted towards authenticity, yet with an emphasis on function—the community-making qualities of the social dance.

The Spread of Táncház: Researching and Managing the Movement

Choreographer Sándor Timár and folk dance researcher György Martin had danced together with the influential choreographer István Molnár, first in the official SZÓT Ensemble run by the National Council of Trade Unions (*Szakszövetségek Országos Tanács*), shut down in 1954 because its massive size made it too costly (folkMAGazin 2004: 38), and later in its successor, the Budapest Ensemble. Molnár, a modern dancer by training, had been the first to collect folk dance methodically using film, earning his status as “the first Hungarian folk dance expert” (Vitányi 1964:48).¹⁴⁹ Molnár’s dancers, many whom had begun their folk dance careers in the scouts, collected new material, taught folk dance, and even

¹⁴⁹ Molnár began as a gymnast in his native Transylvania. After pursuing expressionist “modern” dance in Paris, he “adopted the Bartók program”—the idea that that further development of folkdance depended on its collection upon his return to Hungary in 1939, collecting on silent film (Vitányi 1974:48). A romantic and *melymagyarista* like László Németh (Vitányi 1974:49), he led the Szent Imre Kollégium *népi együttes* (Vitányi 1974:52). In 1940 he worked as teacher at KALOT *népfőiskola*, a Catholic and right leaning “folk high school” (Vitányi 1974:51) while at the same time leading the folk dance ensemble of the Györfly kollégium, generally characterized as left leaning. He was the dance leader in Levente Együttes under Muharay (Vitányi 1974:61). A group derived from this went to Weimar and toured Scandinavia with Molnár in 1942, while Muharay took the other half to Florence (Vitányi 1974:51, FolkMAGazin 2004:38).

worked as guest choreographers with rural dance ensembles (folkMAGazin 2004:38). When Timár went on to lead the amateur Bartók Ensemble, he began developing a training program specifically for the movements found in folk dance, inspired by what he had observed in the movements of the dancers in a “tradition keeping” (*hagyományőrző*) ensemble that had performed alongside his at a festival (folkMAGazin 2004: 40).¹⁵⁰ It was then that he recognized how “distorted” the dances in Molnár’s style appeared next to the dances of those who “spoke their own dance language”(folkMAGazin 2004:40).

Martin, in the meantime, had found his home in dance research; working first at the Institute and later at the Folk Dance Research Group (*Néptánckutatói Osztály*) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Magyar Szemle 1997). One of his jobs at the Institute had been to teach the dance material to choreographers. To his disappointment, however, choreographers were only interested in learning isolated motifs, not entire dances. In an interview, Timár explained to me that he and Martin expected this division of labor to be highly fruitful for the folk dance movement, and that *táncház* was its result. Ferenc Novák, who had moved to Budapest after the war from his native Transylvania (*Székelyföld*) to finish school, danced together with Timár and Martin in Molnár’s Budapest Ensemble. In 1954, Novák founded the Bihari Ensemble, and in 1958 he began his studies in ethnography (Bihari János Táncegyüttes 2006), under the auspices of which he produced his study on the role of dance in the social life of Szék (Martin 1982).

In Budapest, what had begun as a closed party for members of dance troupes grew within a short period into a popular pastime, spreading to the provincial cities

¹⁵⁰ Tradition keeping” (*hagyományőrző*) ensembles, although also amateur, are distinguished (by informants) from other amateur ensembles in that they are supposedly made up of locals, villagers who are thought to be carrying on local traditions.

as quickly as new folk bands could become competent (Halmos 2000:38). Key to its success was the decision by the musicians and the Bartók Ensemble to hold more events open to the public and to build dance instruction into the event itself.¹⁵¹ Sebő describes his sentiments after the first *táncház*:

Based on the experiences I had already had, I began to recognize that if this form of entertainment was capable of bringing together these otherwise oppositional ensembles, then it couldn't be bad. Quite clearly, the dancers are having a great time, and I felt that we have to give the possibility to the people who came in off the streets to try it out, to feel good (1976:191).

Sebő, who had “never in [his] life seen such folksy carrying on (*népieskedés*),” felt that it would only be interesting to be involved with the *táncház* if “it were not merely acting like people from Szék (*Székieskedés*) or a closed club for folk dancers; if it were that kind of urban form of entertainment whose doors stood open for everyone” (1976:191).

To this end, organizers agreed on the following points: 1) to open the doors to the public 2) to develop a “common language”, or a uniform dance suite, and 3) to work on the development of institutionalized musical instruction (Sebő 1976:191).

Soon thereafter, the Sebő Club began functioning in the Kassák House of Culture (*Művelődési Ház*), and in 1973 a weekly *táncház* also began to function at the Capital City House of Culture (Maács 1980 84).¹⁵² The Sebő Club was not strictly a *táncház*, but included *táncház* style folk dancing on its program alongside poetry readings, screenings of ethnographic films, and occasional demonstrations by villagers (Striker 1987a:113). When the Sebő duo was invited to Japan for half a

¹⁵¹ I did not speak with Novák, but according to some accounts Novák feared reprisals against what would be conceived as nationalist activities if they opened up to the public.

¹⁵² The Capital City House of Culture, or FMH (*Fővárosi Művelődési Ház*) was run by SZOT (the National Council of Trade Unions).

year, another band (named Muzsikás, “Musician”) was formed to take their place.¹⁵³ The Muzsikás *tánc ház* began functioning in 1974 (Halmos 2000:58). As bands proliferated, each sought to establish its own *tánc ház* for, as one *tánc ház* musician pointed out to me, “because playing for dancers is the purpose of such a band, the only way to improve is to play for dancers”. Martin also wrote that it was musicians who “realized quickly that it is not possible to do this well without dance, and that inasmuch as they constantly move together, it develops with the dance...”(1981: 45).

The proliferation of bands and dancehouses also served to enlarge the repertoire beyond the dances of Szék, as each band sought to explore new territory and dancers were eager to learn new dances (Halmos 2000:38). The implementation of a “*Tánc ház* Director” course for *tánc ház* bands in 1976 by the Institute for Culture further aided this rapid proliferation of *tánc ház* “clubs” (NI Hirado 24, Halmos 2000:38). Indeed, by the mid to late 1980s, informants recall, it was possible to visit a different *tánc ház* in Budapest every day of the week. Why did people go to the *tánc ház*? In the words of Ferenc Sebő, “The experience of authentic folk music and dance in the city as compared to the hackneyed labour movement songs and the stage repertory was revelatory for musicians and the public alike”(Sebő 1998:36).

Further, as another participant told me:

right now there are multiple choices for each individual ...in the 1970’s it was the only opportunity to meet with your contemporaries with the lights switched on... I was myself. I could sing, I could dance, I could meet people with whom I shared something in common and that was important. And it was a meeting place that was contrary to the disco ... the discos were dark and you were dancing with someone you could hardly see...and couldn’t talk to

¹⁵³ This band would be arguably the best known Hungarian folk music band on the World Music circuit. Its singer Márta Sebestyén became well known for her singing on the soundtrack of the film *The English Patient*.

As we have seen in chapter 3, studies were conducted at the Institute for Culture both to investigate the characteristics of new movements and to facilitate their development. Under the supervision of Iván Vitányi, himself a former dancer in the Muharay Ensemble, researchers at the Institute produced a number of studies on the Beat and *Táncház* Movements. But the role of the Institute did not stop there: not only did the Institute sponsor *táncház* by offering the “*Táncház* Leader” courses mentioned above, but it also published the journal of the Sebő Club: *With a Whistle, With a Drum (Síppal, Dobbal)*, and continued to provide advice and resources for dancers, musicians and culture house workers.

Studies of the *táncház* compared it with earlier revivals and youth movements. In her 1978 article entitled *The Táncház*, Mária Sági asserted that discipline was what distinguished the *táncház* from both the Beat Movement and the folk art movement of the Coalition period (as represented by the Muharay dancers). The fact that *táncház* goers were required to learn dances and dance suites in relationship to the music made the environment of a *táncház* quite different than that of the “Disco”¹⁵⁴ or the Beat gatherings, where individuals danced as they pleased. She argued that the discipline practiced in *táncház* appeared to be a perfect point on the spectrum between community and self-expression.¹⁵⁵ *Táncház* goers expressed this as well, albeit in a less academic way. In the words of one *táncház* goer, quoted by Sági:

After having been to *táncház* I could not go [to the disco] to dance. It would seem completely ridiculous. In the disco they flop around, if they must. But in *táncház*

¹⁵⁴ A social event characterized by “light popular music”, or dance club (see Frigyesi 1996:55).

¹⁵⁵ While she does not refer to it, it is probably no coincidence that this view echoes György Martin’s research on improvisation.

they feel like they are not just standing there and doing it but that they know something, and in this way I appreciate myself (Sági 1978: 74).

Vitányi, whose work entitled *Studies on the History of the Hungarian Folk Dance Movement I-II* had been published in 1964, wrote that he hadn't seen anything like *táncház* since the Coalition period, yet noted that while those in Muharay's troupe had wanted both to perform and to bring folk dance into everyday life, they had largely failed at the second task. The conditions necessary for *táncház* to emerge had not yet ripened in the Coalition period, he asserted, for when his generation had tried to activate such a movement, the appropriate musical developments had not yet occurred (Vitányi 1972:15). Further, he argued, the collections made in Szék had not been available to his generation. Therefore, while the Muharay Ensemble formed a band and wanted to do what the *táncház* bands do, he argued, "it didn't work" (Vitányi 2003).

The state of musical pedagogy in socialist Hungary indeed appears to have contributed to the conditions needed for dance house bands to emerge. Sebő and Halmos are examples of this development. Sebő had gone to a music high school, where he played in the symphony. Later, as a student at the Technical University, he had played in the university symphony, where he met Halmos (Siklos 1977:21). Halmos too studied music in his school years- albeit not at a music high school- playing in chamber orchestras and symphonies. The fact that such a musically adept generation was available for such activities resulted partly from the music education policies instituted in the previous two decades under the influence of Zoltán Kodály. In addition to his interest in folk music, Kodály had been an active promoter of the chorus movement in the interwar period. His experiences and aspirations had led him to develop the above noted Kodály Method, adopted in Hungarian schools

during the Socialist period. It appears that Kodály's *művelődési* program left a strong mark on the musical preparedness of the *táncház* generation (Sebő 1993:57). For even though the Kodály Method was mainly aimed at singing, Kodály himself is said to have inspired the development of comprehensive music education in Hungary. This background provides insight into the musical preparedness with which *táncház* musicians embraced their task, as well as the ease with which young *táncház* goers engaged in singing folk songs.

Indeed, while informants described their begrudging participation in singing folk songs at school, others suggested that their broad knowledge of folk songs made it easier for them to engage in collective singing once in the *táncház* context; they knew many of the songs, even if only paired with simplified melodies. This system of musical pedagogy had also produced a generation of well-trained musicians who were not necessarily expecting to become professionals, for the aim was “not to train professional musicians, but to give music-loving youngsters a real understanding of music” (Friss 1966:133). Ironically, as the “official” system faced increasing difficulty in absorbing the baby boom generation (Striker 1987:103), musically trained young people seized upon “unofficial” opportunities to engage in “semiprofessional” musical careers. Indeed, many, including Sebő and Halmos, earned a part of their income from playing music and from *táncház* related activities.

But such developments were not limited to music. Some who wrote on the *táncház* pointed to the fact that Hungarian society was not yet in a position for such a revival to emerge in the 1940's and 1950's. As Sági writes about the Muharay generation,

who had time in the middle of land reform, rebuilding and organizing People's Colleges (*népi kollégiumok*) to take a month to learn a dance motif or to practice

for a year so that a sound similar to that of peasant musicians would strike out from the viola (*brácsa*)?(Sági 1978:71).¹⁵⁶

Further, as Martin notes, by the 1970's Hungarian society had become more uniform, allowing collectors to meet with an openness and readiness that had not existed in the past (Budai 1974:109). According to Frigyesi, in contrast with earlier generations, *táncház* revivalists had an intimate relationship with informants. To them, "musicians are not informants whom one may record and then store the material in an archive; rather, they regard them as partners and masters"(Frigyesi 1996:70). Martin further points out that the choreographies that developed in the 1940s and the following decades resulted from the fact that little was known about the structural qualities of Hungarian folk dance. By the 1970's, in contrast, the collections necessary for the revival had been amassed in a usable way; ample material had been collected and analyzed by researchers, a project which Martin himself was intimately involved with (Martin 1974:64; Budai 1974: 109). Finally, in 1970s Hungary, youths had ample leisure time to engage in such activities, as well as opportunities to travel, if in many cases only to neighboring countries. Indeed, because both folk ensembles and researchers received government funding, some of these activities even benefited from government aid. The travel expenses of folk ensembles were usually paid, and the Institute funded some collection efforts as well. Because the Hungary's economy was relatively stronger, Transylvania was a cheap destination for Hungarians, and convenient, too, because it did not require knowledge of a foreign language.

¹⁵⁶ The *brácsa* is a folk contra fiddle, or viola. It is one of the essential instruments for the most popular *táncház* dance music, along with the *hegedő* (violin) and the *bőgő*, a folk version of a stand up bass, which is a bowed rhythm instrument

In her 1977 study *Táncház in the Kassák Club*; Sági examined the demographic of *táncház* goers, discovering from this case study of the Sebő Club that the age of participants ranged from 16 to 35, with the majority (58%) hovering between 19-24(Sági 1977:2). While the majority of participants were elites or intellectuals, she found that a significant numbers of workers, and even more children of workers, were participating as well. The average number of attendees on a given night was 74, half of whom reported attending other *táncház*es on other nights of the week. This study conducted in the 1970s informs the assumption by *táncház* goers to this day that *táncház* is primarily the activity of intellectuals and youths.¹⁵⁷ Yet, as Szabó writes, by the 1980's, *táncház* could be “considered an avant garde ‘közművelési’ activity... meeting the demand of larger masses of people” (Szabó 1998:173). Anecdotes suggest that by the mid 1980s *táncház*es may have been one of the most actively attended popular culture leisure activities in Budapest, available every night of the week. *Táncház* goers report that by the mid 1980s it was possible to attend a different *táncház* each night of the week, each with its own crowd of regulars.

Many of these characteristics fit into the general trend of youth movements connected with folk music and folk dance in Europe and the United States (Slobin 1996 5). Owe Ronström (1997) writes that European folk revival movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s stemmed from the processes of urbanization, centralization, and modernization. He points to a number of contributing factors, including rapid population growth after WWII and the rapid expansion of the world economy in the 1950s, leading to migration into the cities. The children of this

¹⁵⁷ In East Central Europe the term intellectual is applied to all those who are university educated (Frigyesi 1996).

migrant generation had little experience of the countryside, no experience of war, and less insecurity about the future (Ronström 1997:39). The postwar period was marked by social engineering projects aimed at the creation of the “new man” and the development of new technologies, the experience of which “came to divorce this generation from the preceding ones” (1997:39). Connected to these changes was the possibility to cultivate music in new ways with new recording and playback technologies. The growing gap between old and new, or “tradition” and “modernity” meant that the lives of the generation born in the 1950s were radically different from those of generations past. However, Ronström points out, before being completely “abandoned”, the earlier lifestyles had been “well documented and transformed into cultural heritage,” preserved by museums and experts (1997:39).

In the 1960s, the economy expanded even further and college students flooded the cities. These youth tended to have both spending power and leisure time, making it harder for the state to retain centralized control. Changes in media policy brought original folk recordings to the airwaves, and youths began to use this “new” resource to distance themselves from their parents’ generation. The music scene arising from these conditions was by no means limited to folk, but it pursued interesting new sounds and methods, among them, those of folk music. As Ronström suggests, with a focus on process, not product, these movements turned away from the big grand performances, flags, and parades of the earlier generation, and towards amateur ethnographic research, and the development of “alternative lifestyles” and amateur activities (1997:40). Such activities led to a different understanding of folk culture and tradition as creative process, requiring participants to “develop a better understanding of how this creative process worked” (Ronström 1997:40). According to Ronström, revivalists recognized that “music and

dance...was only a part of a much larger context". He does not explore, however, the relationship of folk art as process to community building, as discussed below.

At the beginning, we were immediately preoccupied with what folk art is about; that it creates community and spreads the basis of cultured recreation (*szórakozás*) and awakens the demand for more and better too (Sebő 1976: 5).

In their work on beat and *táncház*, both Vitányi and Sági pointed to the important role art played in pre capitalist societies, in which art was an everyday community form (Vitányi 1974, Sági 1978). Referring to (Austrian born) German socialist composer Hans Eisler, Sági distinguished the enjoyment of music in pre-bourgeois society from that in bourgeois society by its relationship to discipline. Asserting that music of a socialist society should turn back to discipline, she argued that self-expression without discipline "necessarily becomes merely an object of enjoyment" (Sági 1978:73). Indeed, already in 1971, in a book entitled The Second Promethean Revolution; Principles and Paths, Vitányi had argued that in pre pre bourgeois political economies, theme, content, form, and material (substance) had not been separate, but rather, made up an "untroubled naive whole" (1971:251). Indeed, wrote Vitányi, the societal function of art in "that perfectly different world system had the emotional and meaningful (*érzelmi* and *értelmi*) affect of helping to orient people in that world"(1971:252). In the capitalist system, he argues, art is taken from its community context, and community (*közösség*) is replaced by audiences (*közönségek*). With this process, the two forms of art: the art for arts sake of the initiated and the kitsch of the masses become more and more differentiated (1971:253).

As is clear, these people were not just studying and theorizing, but doing so from the perspective of socialist cultural managers toward the end of building a socialist society. Another writer asserted that only on "the basis of folk art is a

radical break from the petite bourgeois (*nyárspolgári*, “philistine”) commercial, capitalist culture of kitsch possible” (Szalay 1974:54). In 1974, Vitányi argued that

Socialist cultural politics (*művelődéspolitiká*) cannot relax into this kind of separation of the everyday of communities and art. Rather, *művelődés* wishes to provide that kind of structure in which art with an active and creative character gets a place in the life of the everyday” (1974:11).

This emphasis on the relationship of folk art to community should be an important element in any analysis of *táncház*, and will be further elaborated upon in the next chapter.

While critics feared that the movement was inspired by or might encourage nationalism, supporters, while agreeing that there had been a relationship between folk art revival and nationalism in the past, claimed that the new trend should be seen in the tradition of Bartók and Kodály. It reflected, they argued, the serious research of folk forms and their integration into modern life, and was protected from straying towards nationalism by its “robust socialist conception” (Kósa 1974:42, see also Vargyas 1974: 47-48). Vitányi suggested that it was essential to socialist cultivation (*közművelődés*) that urbanists (*urbánusok*) and populists (*népiek*) learn to hold hands in the manner exemplified by Bartók (Vitányi 1974:10). This required, in his estimation, “not more and better culture, but different shape and structure” (1974:10).

Articles pointed to the role of members of the Sebő ensemble as cultivators (*népművelők*) in contrast to that of the members of beat bands as stars (Sebő 1976a: 188). One interviewer of Sebő described their activities as a “particular apparatus of cultivation” with the goal of “spreading folk music and folk dance not on the stage but in everyday life” (Sebő 1976a: 192). “It was clear from the beginning”, writes Striker, “that this initiative is more than a leisure time activity: it had a cultural-

educational mission as well”(1987:113). Vitányi, arguing that nationalism should not be considered the main content of the “folklore new wave”, warned that while they had missed the boat on utilizing the “mobilizing power” of the Beat movement, they still had the opportunity to align the new movement to the developing system of *közművelődés* (Vitányi 1972:15).

By 1976, plans had been finalized within the Institute’s department of pedagogy (*Oktatási Osztály*) for a “*Tánc ház* Leader” course to be taught with the goal of “strengthening community spirit with the patriotic and people’s (*háza i, népi*) character of today’s living everyday dance language and music” (NI Hirado). Timár, Sebő and Halmos were appointed chief instructors. For those holding a performance permit the program lasted for two years and for those without, for three. Meetings took place every third weekend, with one and two-week intensive summer training camps scattered throughout the year. From the late 1970s onward, training for musicians and dance instructors was regular but “only on the peripheries of the official education system”(Halmos 2000:38), organized usually as summer camps or workshops “primarily under the auspices of cultural centers and dance ensembles”(Halmos, 2000, 38). The result of the 1976-1978 training course for *tánc ház* musicians and dance instructors run by the Institute “ was an upsurge of *tánc ház* founding in provincial towns, and several more established in Budapest as well (Halmos 2000:38).

With this, the repertoire of dances also began to expand. “The dances of Hungary’s minority nationalities-Romanian, South Slav, and Gypsy dances-had been taught from the very first. Before long, independent ethnic dancehouses were being set up Southern Slav, Greek, Bulgarian, and other dance suites (Halmos 2000:38). In other words, while “ethnic dances”, or the dances of the “nationalities”

first appeared as elements within *táncház*es, separate events began to develop around the dances of particular ethnicities; foremost among them Greek and Southern Slav.¹⁵⁸

As might be expected, *táncház* events were primarily held in culture houses, “generally managed by the members of the orchestra and dancing instructors”, who “sign the written contracts with the state-run cultural centers”(Halmos 2000: 34). The fees, says Halmos, do not cover the expenses, which means that “the operation of practically every *táncház* depends on state subsidies”(Halmos 2000: 34).

Beyond a few examples, Juhász and Szabó argue, scientific interest in the *táncház* theme had practically disappeared by the mid 1980s (Juhász and Szabó N.d.:10). Serious studies on folk dance and folk music abound, aided by the professionalization of the *táncház* generation, and there are many papers published on the *táncház* yearly. Yet Juhász and Szabó are right in the sense that the systematic sociological study of the character of *táncház* as a movement has been replaced by studies focused on specific elements of the revival—its aesthetic aspects (Frigyesi 1996), its relationship to tourism (Szabó 1998), its status as a phenomenon of folklorism (Juhász and Szabó N.d., Striker 1987), its rise and general precursors (Halmos 1994:2000), the spread of Transylvanian dances and the *táncház* technique to the United States (Cardaro 1998), membership in a dance group as a community of practice (Langman 2003), and the gendered implications of dancing specific ethnic dances (Hooker 2005). The majority of these studies have been produced by

¹⁵⁸ So-called Southern Slavs have traditionally lived within the territory of the Hungarian state. Many more live in the territory of Greater Hungary, which included Croatia and parts of Serbia and Slovenia. Further, some had relocated to the Budapest area during the Turkish occupation between the 15th–17th centuries. There has been a small Greek presence in Hungary dating to the 16th century. However, a large influx of Greeks came to settle in Hungary after the Greek civil war between 1948 and 1950.

participants, whether Hungarian or from abroad.¹⁵⁹ Studies based on surveys distributed at the annual Dancehouse Meeting (discussed below) have also appeared in *FolkMAGazin*, a quarterly published by the *Táncház* Foundation, yet it is questionable how representative those who attend this meeting are of that population that regularly engages in *táncház* activities.

Transylvania: the Táncház Mecca

While the primary location of *táncház* clubs was and remains in Budapest, with some also in provincial cities, the movement cannot be understood without an examination of the rural regions that provided the “pure source” for dances and dance cycles. As a result of historical conditions and the geography of uneven development, and partly in response to ethnic repression, ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania had preserved folk traditions to a greater degree than had those in “truncated Hungary”. As described above, the *táncház* revival did not only find musical and dance influences, but also culturo-aesthetic influences in the dance culture of Szék; they adopted the social form of the *táncház*. The relatively high living standards in Hungary at the time provided many with the opportunity for Eastern bloc tourism, including the possibility to travel to Transylvania to experience “living folk culture”. Following in the footsteps of the researchers, musicians and dancers visited villages in the Hungarian countryside and in Transylvania. The desire to learn from “living masters” in “authentic places” resulted in patterns of village ethno-tourism, most notably to Transylvania, where visitors became acquainted with the Hungarian-speaking minority in what was, of

¹⁵⁹ *Táncház* is a well known revival movement, and has been a model for revivalists across the world. As its forms (both Hungarian folk dance and the pedagogical methods) have spread, so has interest in it. Not only do people (ethnic Hungarian and other) in North America, Japan and Western Europe participate in *táncház* activities at home, but they also participate in *táncház* activities in Hungary and Transylvania in increasing numbers.

course, another country: neighboring Romania. During this period, the ethnic Hungarians and Hungarian-speaking Roma who hosted participants of the *táncház* risked punishment for their wholehearted welcome of Hungarian nationals in their homes, an act technically illegal under the nationalist policies of the Ceausescu regime that ended in 1989 (Ronay 1992, Szabó 1998:175). *Táncház* musicians visiting Transylvania believed that “this music can be learned only in practice and only from the musicians who still play it”(Frigyesi 1996:70).

Because of the Roma’s long established professional niche as musicians, the majority of the musical “masters” of this musical form in Transylvania were Roma.¹⁶⁰ This placed Roma, a universally oppressed group in the region, in an interesting position vis-à-vis the Hungarian “nation”—as well as with their *táncház* “students”: as guardians of the national musical tradition (Bartók 1976, Hooker 2005). As understudies to Roma “masters”, *táncház* musicians became quite intimate with them in the process. As one of the early *táncház* musicians related, fiddler “Ádám István told his children to treat me as their brother. He adopted me as his own son”. Frigyesi notes the novelty of this relationship. Rather than treating the musicians as informants as had been done in the past, revivalists approached village musicians as masters. By the 1970’s the urban-rural divide which had plagued Bartók and Kodály in their collection efforts had been diminished to the extent that “the musicians of Szék accepted the long haired hooligan-looking students from Budapest without any problem”(Frigyesi 1996:70). Yet this novelty did not just reflect a relationship between urban and rural people, but between Hungarians and Roma.

¹⁶⁰ Roma is the plural for the “Gypsy” word for (male) human. It has been used by those who choose to avoid using the word “gypsy” and its equivalents, due to their negative connotation. *Táncház* goers and the Roma with whom they work use the Hungarian variant of “Gypsy”, *Cigány*, rejected by more politically active Roma as a derogatory term.

This was not the first time Roma and national music had been connected in the Hungarian culture area. Importantly, Roma, or *Cigányok* (gypsies), as they refer to themselves and revivalists refer to them, were and are associated with the romantic popular Hungarian “folk music”, or “*Magyar nóta*” and associated genres, originating in the nation making projects of the gentry in the 19th century, considered by revivalists to be inauthentic.¹⁶¹ In fact, the two are so associated that the orchestras playing the contemporary music influenced by *Magyar nóta* and the popular dance repertoires of *csárdás* and *verbunkos* are referred to as “gypsy bands” (*cigányzenekarok*) (Frigyesi 1996:70; Frigyesi 1994:268).¹⁶² Further, a discourse had already developed by the early part of the 20th century about the manner in which entrepreneurial Roma had displaced Hungarian village musicians, considered naturally more authentic (Frigyesi 1996:70, Bartók 1947).

While the large majority of musical “masters” were Roma, there were also significant numbers of ethnic Hungarian musical masters as well. In contrast with the repertoires of paid musicians, which were often broad enough to serve three ethnic communities, most of the dancing “masters” from whom revivalists learned were familiar exclusively with the local dances of their respective villages, quite often limited to a single ethnic community¹⁶³, the exception being those who had danced in performing groups. Therefore, “Hungarian” dances were associated with

¹⁶¹ These songs are generally distinguished from “folk music” by scholars and revivalists as new style songs, as opposed to the earlier pentatonic songs that are older in origin. While there is a general attitude in the *táncház* that old style songs are more authentic, late night (drunken) collective singing often includes *Magyar nóta* songs, an indication of their “folk song” status. Indeed, as Frigyesi writes: “in the 19th and 20th centuries, there were probably very few Hungarians who did not know dozens of these songs...” (1994: 272).

¹⁶² Such orchestras accompanied performing ensembles until the 1970s, when the *táncház* band was added as a supplementary element, first, for rehearsal, and then for performances.

¹⁶³ *Táncház* goers told me that in mixed ethnic villages, people learned the dances of the other groups, in order to celebrate together at events. The ethnographic record indeed shows patterns of cross borrowing. In general, though, it appears that each group tends to be familiar only with their own “ethnic” dances.

“Hungarian” informants, “Romanian” dances with “Romanians”, Gypsy dances with “Gypsies”, and so on.¹⁶⁴ Researchers and revivalists collected music and dances not only of ethnic Hungarians, but also of these other ethnic groups, resulting in a body of scholarly literature examining the borrowing and diffusion of forms between groups, and in the appearance of ethnic dances (Romanian, “Gypsy”) in the regional dance suites of the revival. Nevertheless, while working with Roma and collecting Slavic, Romanian and Jewish songs and dances in addition to “Hungarian” ones, *táncház* developed and maintained a national(ist) emphasis. Not only has most of its energy focused on ethnic Hungarian music and dance, but its focus on classification has also served to fix distinctions between ethnic versions of dances.

The social form and name of the *táncház* had been borrowed in the 1970’s from the traditions of the town of Szék (Sic, in Romanian), located in central Transylvania not far from the city of Cluj (in Hungarian, Kolozsvár), the largest Transylvanian city. The prominence of Szék in *táncház* was partly due to the ethnographic record: there was a rich tradition of collection in Szék. Kodály had commented on Szék to ethnomusicologist László Lajtha in the 1940’s, saying, “In a place where such beautiful and unique embroidery lives to this day, there must be interesting music too” (Martin 1981:241). In seeming response, Lajtha’s most important and far reaching work (including the notation and publication of the music) would be on the musical traditions of this town. Music of Szék had been

¹⁶⁴ I want to highlight the different conditions of music and dance collection here and their relationship to authenticity. I do not want to play down the cultural interaction of ethnic groups in the Carpathian basin. However, while researchers have done comparative work showing borrowing, *táncház* goers tend to understand them as different and discrete. The actual conditions in different villages show different patterns of sociality between groups. For example, in Gyímes, Roma are not completely segregated from the social life of Hungarians, while in many places they are. In Szék, for example, Gypsies told me that they would not consider dancing Hungarian dances; that they had their own. Although there is a trend among contemporary revivalists to dance “gypsy dances”, I have never seen an ethnic Hungarian Transylvanian villager dance one.

included in the ambitious Pátria record series, produced in the 1940's (Martin 2001:32); Szék had also hosted a Bouquet of Pearls dance group, organized by the local pastor, which performed yearly in Budapest from 1941 to 1943. The village research activities of the interwar period and the emigration of students from Cluj to Budapest after the war further resulted in dances from Szék appearing in the repertoires of the NÉKOSZ Ensemble, the Muharay Ensemble, and the scouts groups, as well as in the works of Miklos Rábai, the first choreographer of the Hungarian State Folk Ensemble. György Martin, responsible for introducing the *táncház* musicians and dancers and encouraging them to pursue social dance, had also researched the dances of Szék, writing: “there is no place in the Hungarian culture area where music and dance traditions have been collected in this quantitude”...(1981:248).

Such ample collection was due to the particular “living” status of folk dance traditions in Szék. The town of Szék (Székváros), as the locals refer to it, had been a free royal town due to its location near a salt flat. According to Martin, “after it’s blossoming as an agrarian town, time stood still” (Martin 1981:248). There, “in the middle of the 20th century the “old organization of community dance life was thriving” and was only beginning to be replaced by the “new style”, making it an important source for historians of dance (Martin 1981:248). Ferenc Novák, the choreographer responsible for organizing the first Budapest *táncház*, also conducted research in Szék. His thesis for his degree in ethnography at Eötvös Loránd University was entitled: “The Role of Dance in the Social Life of Szék” (Martin 1981:276). As choreographer of the Bihari Ensemble, he was in a perfect position to

teach the dances to the group.¹⁶⁵ Finally, Sándor Timár, choreographer of the Bartók Ensemble, whose knowledge of the dances of Szék had come mostly from silent films, had begun to invite villagers from Szék whom he encountered on the street to dance at rehearsals, in order to facilitate the dancers' understanding of the dance (Siklos 1977:15, FolkMAGazin 2004:40).¹⁶⁶ This was facilitated by the fact that until the 1970s, people from Szék continued to wear folk costume in everyday life. On the streets of Budapest, their attire made them recognizable to those in the know not just as “peasants” or “villagers”, but as people from Szék. Martin suggests that the town's participation in the Bouquet of Pearls contributed to the local appreciation of tradition and high regard that dancers and musicians were held in (Martin 2001:32). It is worth recalling Martin's statement quoted in chapter 1 asserting that villages with Bouquet of Pearls groups tended to preserve their folk dance traditions (1980:108).

The fact that the dance steps of Szék are “more archaic” and the “form of the dance is simpler, more regulated and communal than elsewhere” (Martin 1981:249) made them ideal for the spread of folk dance among “non-dancers” in the *táncház*. These dances made a good starting point for the original *táncház* population because they were easy to learn. Further, if the youths were to find not just musical, but culturo-aesthetic influences in the dance culture of Szék, this meant paying close attention to the function of dance within the social event as well as to the role of the dance event in society. Martin, like Vitányi, emphasized the community making aspects of *táncház*, a goal towards which revivalists attempted to preserve as much context as possible. “The principle of the directors of the dance houses was that

¹⁶⁵ The Bihari ensemble was the ensemble of the VDSZ, the Union of Workers in Mixed industry, Energy industry and Related professions.

¹⁶⁶ The Bartók ensemble was the ensemble of the Ironworker's union.

there had to be a reason for those dance cycles as they existed in villages and one should at least try out whether they work in the modern context”(Frigyesi 1996:68). But as Szabó points out, second only to the “tradition faithful” activities characterizing *táncház* were those that stressed active participation and cooperation (Szabó 1998:173). One might say that it was the participatory aspect of the social dance tradition that seemed to be the most attractive to the participants.

Thus began the trips by *táncház* participants to the Transylvanian countryside inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, a romantic agrarian environment increasingly endangered not only by urbanization and modernization, but also by the nation making politics of the Romanian administration. As village life was transformed by labor migration, state imposed demographic policies, secularization, and modernization, traditional settings and ritual cycles to which folk dance events were central were diminishing (See Kligman 1988). Among the traditions under threat was the *táncház*¹⁶⁷, and dance events similar to it, until then widespread throughout the region. What made these dances distinct from dance events attached to occasions such as weddings and funerals, was their express association with unmarried youths (Halmos 2000:30). Organized by eligible bachelors, the *táncház* served the purpose of dancing together with eligible girls, encouraging courtship and locally appropriate sociability; dance was at the forefront. Indeed, “A married man who wanted to dance had to wait for a holiday, a wedding or a ball; for him, *táncház* was off limits”(Halmos 2000:31). What had been a Transylvanian activity for village youth became the model of sociability for the urban youth revival in Hungary. The *táncház* context was an ideal environment for courtship, and the first *táncház* generation was made up of a similar age group.

¹⁶⁷ In Szék, the word *táncház* referred to the dance event itself, as well as the place where it was held.

Perhaps the most important factor for *táncház* tourism was the fact that the popular arts of Transylvanian villages, dance included, had been maintained into the 1970s, not entirely unchanged, but in “living form” (Halmos 2000:36). Villagers had continued to engage in folk dance as part of their everyday lives, rather than as a staged event. Beyond villages like Szék, where dance continued to be a vital element in village sociality, dance events sprung up in the cities of Romania where migrant ethnic Hungarian villagers could meet and socialize. Martin tells of the dances held by domestic and agricultural workers from Szék in Cluj, the regional capital (1982:1). “Dressed in their distinctive folk costume the people from Szék gathered to sing and dance in the main square of Kolozsvár (Cluj)” and in other places as well (Martin 2001:32; see also Martin 1982: 1). Further, just as in Hungary, Romania had its Soviet style performing troupes. Beyond the sporadic participation of some Hungarian groups in nationwide Romanian folk festivals¹⁶⁸, the ethnic Hungarian autonomous region, which existed until 1968, featured its own dance ensemble.¹⁶⁹

Ethnic Hungarian musicologists in Romania also engaged in research and collection, some under János Jagamas, a student of Kodály’s teaching at Cluj University. Transylvanian ethnographers worked with those from Hungary even when the Romanian government began to take a more explicitly nationalist stance under Ceausescu, although informants suggested that this collaboration became more difficult beginning in the early 1970’s. Indeed, an important resource for folk songs among *táncház* goers was a collection by Transylvanian teacher and ethnomusicologist Zoltán Kallos, who, according to one *táncház* goer, drew huge

¹⁶⁸ Material from Szék did not have a large role in this environment, although Martin cites a few examples (1982:76n).

¹⁶⁹ Formed, according to István Pávai, to appease the Hungarians in the light of the oppression of political expressions after 1956.

crowds upon his visits to Hungary in the 1970's.¹⁷⁰ Transylvanian Hungarians point out that they had their own “*táncház* movement”, developing parallel to and in relation with the Hungarian *táncház*, but subject to the specificities of conditions in Romania.¹⁷¹ Unlike the Hungarian one, they claim, the Transylvanian movement was not “rootless”, for the “urban layer in Transylvania was very thin”; just about everyone had relatives in a village. Beyond the migrant workers holding dances, and student intellectuals holding “*táncház*es” in the cities, a young rural layer in Transylvania also embraced the trend, donning folk costumes that had been abandoned and turning to their elders for material and inspiration.

In the 1970s and 1980s most trips by *táncház* participants were made informally. While the Institute provided some support for collection trips, the majority of *táncház* goers took advantage of networks of acquaintances and the famous hospitality of Transylvanian villagers. They joined them at weddings, christenings, and *táncház*es, bringing them gifts of treasured goods such as coffee, sugar, and clothing in appreciation, and buying folk crafts and folk costume in a mutually supportive relationship. Some visitors quite consciously purchased goods from Transylvanians in order to help relieve their desperate economic situation; their conspicuous use of such goods simultaneously marked buyers as supporters of this cause. Meanwhile, the questionable legality of their visits, combined with their feeling that Hungarians, in particular, faced discrimination, deepened visitors sense of adventure and pursuit of justice.

¹⁷⁰ As has been mentioned, folk song was widespread in Hungary due to the Kodály method. Nevertheless, *táncház* goers pointed to the appearance of the Kallos volume as having an important effect on their exposure to folk songs.

¹⁷¹ This movement deserves a dissertation to itself and I cannot possibly do justice to it here. I will only refer to it insofar as it helps to elucidate the Hungarian *táncház*. Please see Pávai (2001) for an introduction to this theme.

The Institutionalization of Táncház: Camps, the Táncház Meeting, the Táncház Guild, and Heritage House

In the 1980s several forms of institutionalization of *táncház* occurred which appear quite important. The first was the folk dance camp and the second was the establishment of the yearly *Táncház Meeting (Táncháztalálkozó)*. The *Táncház Chamber* was formed in 1987 as the organizational body behind the *Táncház Meeting*. Each of these would set important organizational or institutional precedents. Finally, in 2001, “the National Institution of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage”, Heritage House, emerged from within the Institute for Culture (by then, the *Magyar Művelődési Intézet*) to become an independent state funded institution. It continues to share a building with the Institute.

As we have glimpsed already, there was a tradition of training camps in socialist Hungary to which the international architecture camp that Sebő and Halmos had attended belonged.¹⁷² In the early 1970s, the Young Folk Artists’ Studio (*Fiatal Népművészetek Stúdiója*) began to organize young folk artists’ camps with the help of the Institute. Some even featured *táncház* bands, including music and dance as branches of folk art. In 1975 the first Kassák Klub camp was organized by the Sebő Ensemble, in which participants surveyed folk architecture while staying at a campground in the Tokaj region. The second “Sebő camp”, which had about 34 participants, was held in 1976 in the Zirc-Bákony region, where they surveyed water mills for the ethnographic museum. Further, the Pioneers (*Úttörők*), the youngest section of the Young Communists (itself based on the scouts), organized camps around folk art with the involvement of The Young Folk Artists’ Studio, Timár and

¹⁷² The role of camps in socialist cultural politics is yet to be examined from a broad perspective. Please see Kürti (2002) for a discussion of KISZ camps, and Trencsényi (1984) for one of pioneer camps..

the Bartók Ensemble, the Sebő-Halmos duo and folk singer Laura Faragó (Trencsényi 1985:7). The first camp of the *Táncház* Leader course organized by the Institute from 1976-1978, was in held in Abaújszántó; the second, in Székesfehérvár. The first dance teaching camp took place in 1981 (hosted by the Jászberény folk ensemble) in Jászberény, where a camp is still held annually.¹⁷³

In 1983, according to the accounts of those in attendance, the Téka Ensemble, along with a group of folk artists and *táncház* goers, decided to go camping together in Zala county, just east of lake Balaton. Members of Téka explained to me that because there was no place they could play late into the night, they decided “to go to a place where they could play for a week straight without getting kicked out”. This “camping trip” has been called in retrospect the first Téka camp; an annual camp that lasted for 21 consecutive years. In 1985 the Téka ensemble won the permission and sponsorship of the local council of the village of Nagykálló¹⁷⁴ to have a camp at a site where architecture students would build structures designed by *népi* architect Imre Makovecz.¹⁷⁵ While most accounts suggest that the first camp was a casual gathering of friends, according to band members, permissions with the local council were arranged by one of the artists. Significantly, although none mentioned it in reference to these camps, members of Téka had been trained at the 1976 *Táncház* Leader camp in Abaújszántó, thus making them “qualified” to run *táncház* events.

In their heyday, band members reported, 1200 people came for the one-week camp. In the early 1990’s, “the camp” applied for and received sponsorship for three

¹⁷³ According to informants, a camp was also held in Gyimes Transylvania in 1980, and again a few years later.

¹⁷⁴ Nagykálló is approximately 280 km northwest of Budapest.

¹⁷⁵ Imre Makovecz is the best known of the “*népi* architects” that emerged in this period, associated with the general folk revival.

years from the Soros Foundation, which at that time was funding cultural initiatives in the post-socialist countries. Nevertheless, according to band members, while money was being made by the local council of Nagykálló from these annual camps, it was not being reinvested into the campground or into the events, creating problems with the camp itself. After seventeen years (1985-1999), the Téka camp left Nagykálló. The band continued to host camps elsewhere, however, for another two years, deploying money from various foundations to buy land for this purpose. While Téka no longer hosts a dance and crafts camp, the band still hosts a music camp for school children from Transylvania. Meanwhile, at the Nagykálló campsite, there is still an annual *táncház* and craft camp (referred to by participants even now as “the Téka camp”) every year, hosted by bands other than Téka.

The Téka camps can be seen as a precedent for the summer *táncház* camps that began to flourish around 1990, after the “regime change”, the majority in Transylvania. What had been ad hoc tourism to Transylvania in the 1970s and 1980’s became institutionalized in camps by the 1990’s, “where those interested can learn from the best informants to sing and dance in an organized environment” (Szabó 1998:177). Beyond dance instruction, camps often have musical and folk song instruction, as well as nightly *mulatságs* (parties) at which visitors may dance to live accompaniment, both often provided by famous Gypsy fiddlers. Many also feature folk craft activities. Unlike the Téka camp, however, camps in Transylvania are explicitly tied to place. The camps focus, more or less, on the authenticity of the places in which they are held, with the music, song and dance of that village and region taking precedent. Local “informants”, often quite elderly, are invited to perform for the visitors and help teach them the dances and songs, while well-known

regional fiddlers or entire bands provide musical instruction. These camps will be discussed in much more detail in the next chapter.

The first *Tánc háztalálkozó* (*Tánc ház Meeting*) was organized in 1982 as part of the Budapest Spring Festival, which has functioned annually since 1981. By the mid to late 1990s, the *Tánc háztalálkozó* was drawing 25-30 thousand people annually (Juhász and Szabó N.d.:174). Different in nature than the individual *tánc ház*es, where participatory dance is primary, at this spectacle, consumption and viewing take precedent.¹⁷⁶ The *Tánc ház Meeting*, at which new crafts created by “masters” are sold alongside used folk costume and folk items, draws a large number of people who are not regular participants at the *tánc ház*es. Since its emergence, the *Tánc háztalálkozó* has been the main source of sociological data on the *tánc ház* movement.

The *Tánc ház Chamber* was founded in 1987. According to István Berán,

The need for joining together emerged chiefly from among musicians, primarily because of the Dancehouse Meeting. There were a few dancers, but only those strictly tied to the *Tánc ház*-dance teachers who effectively teach in the *tánc ház*.

Berán, *tánc ház* musician, editor of FolkMAGazin, and a member of the *Tánc ház Guild*'s board of directors, explained that from 1982 to 1987 the *Tánc ház Meeting* had been organized by different institutions (*szervezetek*). The Chamber was founded to fulfill the task of organizing it in a successful and consistent manner. In 1990, the Chamber became the *Tánc ház Guild*. According to Erika Bákonyi, “the mission of the Guild is to organize events, publications, collection efforts, and educational activities in collaboration with its members and in cooperation with other institutions and organizations”(Bákonyi 2001:54). It is responsible for organizing the “National *Tánc ház Festival and Crafts Fair*”(*Tánc háztalálkozó*, or

¹⁷⁶ There are *tánc ház*es within the event, however.

Dancehouse Meeting).¹⁷⁷ Further, it has organized the annual fall National *Tánc ház* Season Opener, which “is generally attended by 1800-2000 participants” since 1990, and the Budapest Folk Festival since 1993 (Bákonyi 2001:55). The Guild also released a series of CD’s entitled New Living Folk Music, edited by a member of Téka, in 1996. The majority of the performers featured on these CDs are revivalists (Bákonyi 2001:55). Further, the Guild works closely with the *Tánc ház* Foundation, which, with the sometime sponsorship of the Institute, the Association of Folk Art Societies, the Elemér Muharay Folk Art Society (Bákonyi 2001:56) as well as of the National Culture Fund and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, has published the quarterly FolkMAGazin since it was established in 1993 (Bákonyi 2001:56).

During my fieldwork, I was the guest of Heritage House (*Hagyományok Háza*-literally House of Traditions). Located in the building that still sports the sign “*Népművelési Intézet*”, Heritage House was established in 2001 as the “National Institution of the Ministry of Heritage”. In 2006, this Ministry was rejoined with the Ministry of Education, and again renamed “The Ministry of Education and Culture”.¹⁷⁸

Sebő expressed to me in an interview that the idea behind the establishment of Heritage House was to create a national institution funded by the state, dedicated to the “mother tongue” of sound and movement. He explained that Heritage House

¹⁷⁷ Sponsors change with time. When Bákonyi published her article in 2001, it worked in cooperation with the Örökség Children’s Society for Folk Art, the György Martin Folk Dance Association, the Elemér Muharay Folk Art Society, the Hungarian Institute for Culture, the Association of Folk Art Societies, the Folklore Society of Slovakian Hungarians, The Gáspár Heltai Foundation of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), and the Vajdaság (Voivodina region, Serbia) Center for Hungarian Culture (Bákonyi 2001:54).

¹⁷⁸ What people colloquially call the Ministry of Culture has changed names many times over the years. The first such ministry was the *Vallás es Közoktatási Minisztérium* (Ministry of Religion and Culture-1848-49, 1867-1951). In 1974, two separate ministries existed: the *Oktatási Minisztérium* (Ministry of Education-1974) and the *Kulturális Minisztérium* (Ministry of Culture-1974). The *Művelődési Minisztérium* (Ministry of Culture/Cultivation) was founded in 1980. In 1990 it became the *Művelődési és Közoktatási Minisztérium* (Ministry of Culture/Cultivation and Public Education).

was conceived to be a state institution, on the basis that Hungary “is indeed a nation state” (*nemzet állam*). The idea for Heritage House, he said, was modeled on the 19th century establishment of national institutions such as the National Theater, during which time theater began to be performed in Hungarian according to language based nation building. Communication, Sebő pointed out referring to Kodály, is more than language. It includes song, dance, movement, and speech. Nevertheless, he explained, when the national institutions were established, music and dance were left out of the picture.¹⁷⁹ Founders conceived Heritage House as the remedy for this lacuna.

Heritage House was thus designed to research and provide services involving the “higher levels of language”: music and dance. It was important to the founders, Sebő told me, that this be a state funded institution; that the state consider it important enough to grant it that status. While like the Hungarian Institute for Culture (*Magyar Művelődési Intézet*), Heritage House is intended to serve the purpose of Hungarian *művelődés*, Sebő stressed that Heritage House must be separate, for in the past this kind of project had been subordinated to the approaches embraced by the Institute. *Hagyományok Háza* has three different layers, says Sebő: the state folkdance ensemble; the archives; and the task of “*közművelés*”, or service to the community and “public relations”. Musician and ethnomusicologist László Kelemen, a participant in the Transylvanian *táncház* movement of the 1970s, is the director of the institution, while Sebő is creative director of the State Folkdance Ensemble. Heritage House also houses the Martin Media Library, a constantly enriched collection of documents on folk dance both

¹⁷⁹ This is an interesting view, because the Hungarian Opera and Ballet, occupied with music and dance respectively were founded in this period. Their emphasis on Hungarianness reflects a different “civilizational” impetus in nation-making, in which the universal form of ballet or opera was to be produced in Hungarian.

written and video-based with (the late) György Martin's own library as its core, and the *Tánc ház Archivum*, an archive of materials about the *tánc ház* movement, run by Béla Halmos.

The institutional split that produced Heritage House as distinct from The Hungarian Institute for Culture (*Magyar Művelődési Intézet*) illustrates the diversion of two different approaches toward culture: one which attends to cultivation and the other to heritage, or tradition.¹⁸⁰ The relationship between these two notions of culture is in flux, as the periodic changes in the name and content of the “Ministry of Culture” reflects.¹⁸¹ People at Heritage House were not eager to speak to me frankly about the relationship between Heritage House and the Institute. It was clear that there was some tension between the institutions, not surprising given the meagerness of state support and the inevitable competition for funding and space. But I suspect that the competing approaches toward culture and their associated emphases were quite important to this tension. Heritage House representatives spoke to me as if the need for its establishment as a separate institution was self evident. When I suggested that it was a pity to disconnect folk art from *művelődés*, they argued that they had always been separate, and that folk art had always been marginalized in the context of the Institute. Yet, as we saw in chapter 3, this relationship has been in flux within the Institute alone. If anything, the separation and ideological alienation of the two institutions points to a new constellation of relationships between cultural

¹⁸⁰ During my fieldwork there was some anticipation of moving HH to a new building being erected behind the recently built National Theater. I was told that it was unlikely that HH would relocate to this building, because while the original plan had been that HH would have its own space, by then it appeared that it would have to share the performance space with the philharmonic. There were questions too about money. Some claimed this was a matter of party politics, while others claimed it was not. They all implied that it had to do with the politics of urban development. One Hagyományok Háza manager told me that it had originally been agreed that while a company would be hired to take care of services, the space itself would be their own. Under the “new regime” (MSZP and SZDSZ coalition), they were then told that they would have to rent the space itself. This would be an impossible situation, he told me, because the only way Heritage House would be able to pay expenses is if it could rent the space out for money, as it does now.

¹⁸¹ According to Sándor Striker, Hungary adopted the Ministry of Heritage model from England.

elements under current conditions. Examining the missions of the two institutes may be shed light on this trend.

As mentioned in chapter 3, The National Center for Public Cultivation (*Országos Közművelődési Központ-OKK*) was formed in 1986, according to the notion that the *művelődési* structure was needed to encourage democratic consensus and mutual tolerance in a state that that was changing from a dictatorial party state to a democratic rights based state (*Népművelés* 1989:45). Within the OKK functioned the *Népművelési Intézet*, along with a new Cultural Research Institute (*Művelődéskutató Intézet*), which employed the tools of sociology to examine the status of national *művelődés*, and the Methodological Institute (*Módszertani Intézet*), whose main tasks were: 1)Community development (*közösségfejlesztés*), in which the department of culture houses would encourage “citizen activities” (*állampolgári aktivitást*); 2)Reform and *művelődés*; and 3)The revival of the Folk high school movement (*Népfőiskolai mozgalom*-see chapter 3) by the establishment of the Hungarian Society of Folk High Schools (*Magyar Népfőiskolai Társaság*), in 1988 (Polgár H 1994 i).

In 1992, the OKK was replaced by the *Magyar Művelődési Intézet* (henceforth MMI).¹⁸² The law bringing the MMI into existence states:

the Magyar Művelődési Intézet was founded with the goal that the institute analyze the cultural activities taking place in the community, townships, associations, social establishments, cultural institutions (*művelődési intézményekben*); to develop programs to spread the conditions for community culture (*közösségi művelődés*); to sponsor new cultural initiatives (*művelődési kezdeményezéseket*), such as the folk art which is an organic part of universal art, the creative perpetuation of the living cultural traditions of Hungarians and nationalities living in our home (a *magyarság és a Házankban élő nemzetiségek kulturális hagyományainak alkotó tovaábbvitélet*), the transmission of the cultural values of the Hungarians living over the borders and of neighboring countries and

¹⁸² This happened during the tenure of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, whose Minister of Culture was ethnographer Bertalan Andrásfalvy.

cooperation with their cultural institutions and organizations(a határainkon kívül élő magyarság és a szomsédos országok kulturális értékeinek közvetítését, közművelődési intézményeinek, szervezeteinek együttműködését)(Magyar Kulturális Minisztériuma 1992: 225).¹⁸³

The current website (2006) for the MMI describes its mission in the English language as promoting “the continuous development of the organizational framework and contents of community education and community arts”, facilitating the “modernization of community education duties by some peculiar professional instruments”; and contributing to the investigation of “characteristics of cultural life and community education, the presentation and publication of different contexts and interconnections, and the promotion of the professionalism of national and local decision-making processes through organizing and performing research” (Magyar Művelődési Intézet N.d.)

Unlike the MMI, *Hagyományok Háza* has no publicly stated mission statement on its website, but stresses that *Hagyományok Háza* is a service center with three units that employ different tools all dedicated to folk culture (*népi kultúra*), and addressing a broad audience interested in tradition as well as professionals. Three units are outlined: the State ensemble; the László Lajtha “folklore documentation Center, which makes text and audiovisual materials available to the public; and the Folk art methodology studio (*népművészeti módszertani studio*), which sponsors civil and professional organizations and the organization of events, engages in outreach to marketing and educational services, and broadens international connections in the folk art professions (Hagyományok Háza N.d.).

¹⁸³ Peter Halász, who became the director in 1992, had worked as independent ethnographer and for the *Magyar Néprajzi Társaság* (Hungarian Ethnographic Society).

Key words for the contemporary MMI then, are community education and community arts, while for Heritage House they are folk tradition, folk culture and folk art. While it may be assumed that folk art serves the goals stated by the MMI, (and we find it stating such in earlier statements before the split) *Hagyományok Háza* does not state community building as its goal, and the MMI rarely points to folk culture as a source of community building. Indeed, in 2006, the approaches of the two institutions seem to completely diverge. I will take up reasons for such a diversion in chapter 7 and the conclusion.

Conclusion

Táncház practices arose in 1970s Hungary from a convergence of interest in folk music and dance crucial for reviving the social dance event. Further, they connected youth with practices much like those of the village researchers of the interwar period, with Transylvania emerging as the most important site for a number of reasons. These initiatives were supported by researchers and cultural managers sympathetic with the *táncház* movement, who stressed that its participatory elements were productive of community and in line with socialist consciousness. As spontaneous as the *táncház* appeared, its conditions had been nurtured by these researchers and cultural managers, many of whom had been connected with the populist activities of the interwar and coalition periods, and by widespread music education in Hungary's schools.

As we have seen, the *táncház* movement emerged through the interaction between youth movements and projects concerning the performance and preservation of folk forms, as well as projects of cultivation that occupied various positions vis-à-vis the "liberalizing" Hungarian state within international conditions promoting a turn toward folk revival. Youths in beat bands, "young folk artists",

and *táncház* participants interacted with a state-funded yet decentralized system of cultural management that encompassed professional and amateur ensembles; ethnographic, ethnomusicological and dance research efforts, and television competitions and festivals.. Although activities were in some respects spontaneous, the role of the Institute for Culture illustrates mutually informing links between state cultural management and spontaneous activities. Initial participants of beat and *táncház* bands had their first taste of publicity in the state run Who Can Do What? and Fly Peacock competitions, while folk dancers had functioned mainly in the world of festivals and competitions. All derived support from state institutions that provided, among other things, the naturalized spaces of cultural activity and association: culture houses and clubs. Youths responded to the “manufactured” programs of socialist planning, or perhaps simply the discontents of urban life, in creative ways, with the materials and in the contexts available to them, producing the beat movement, and later, the *táncház*, while cultural managers tried to steer these initiatives or at least legitimize them. Two things that distinguished *táncház* from the beat were that *táncház* took participation further, blurring lines between performer and audience, thus creating a participant base much more involved than beat “fans”, and that it was connected with place; *táncház* sought authenticity in locally based practices.¹⁸⁴ While these innovations were reactions to the Beat and to conditions of late socialism, it was not the first time that Transylvania had loomed large in the quest for authenticity. Indeed, we see important continuities in the practices of amateur ethnography and village visiting, as well as in the focus on

¹⁸⁴ Before the rise of *táncház*, beat musicians set folk songs to rock music, possibly opening up the way for its popularity among beat fans.

Transylvania. As before, this authenticity was combined with an emphasis on justice (this will be taken up later).

The Beat movement and the *Táncház* movement were studied by the Institute of Culture, which made recommendations for sponsorship based on ideals and realities of socialist socialization. Indeed, negotiation was not only made between some abstract state and organized and reified movements, but between actors and factions of actors, many in cultural management. In this way resources and contexts become available to youth movements through the state, just as state approaches were also subject to change in reaction to these movements.

It would be unwise to regard either Beat Movement or the *Táncház* as top down state projects, or as strongholds of the Party. Yet the particular characteristics of the movements make them, I would argue, socialist movements. They were the products of the convergence of international trends and the specific conditions and discourses of late Hungarian socialism; notably the discourses of community-making and of *művelődés*. Further, while institutions such as the Institute made it their task to support those movements that could be used or harnessed toward the end of socialist cultivation, this did not necessarily mean they did so “in the interest of the socialist state”. As Alexei Yurchak has pointed out,

For many, ‘socialism’ as a system of human values and as an everyday reality of ‘normal life’...was not necessarily equivalent to ‘the state’ or ‘ideology’; indeed, living socialism to them often meant something quite different from the official interpretations provided by state rhetoric (2006:8).

Writing about Soviet cultural managers, Lewis H. Siegelbaum asserts that “most clubs endeavored to perpetuate the enlightenment functions of the pre-Revolutionary societies; others sought to promote a revolution in daily life...and encourage the creative self expression...of workers...”(1999:79). Indeed, Vitányi, a

committed socialist, suggested to me that his job had been to nurture civil society. In his 1993 book, he wrote of a pact he and some of his *népi* friends, fresh out of the resistance movement, made during the Coalition period. As they saw the Communist Party slowly wresting control from the coalition, they agreed to engage in the “April Front”(1993).¹⁸⁵ Indexing the March Front, they agreed to continue to work towards democracy in Hungary.

When cultural managers professed their interest in building socialist society, and when youths spoke of *művelődés* or community building, they may have been engaging in what Alexei Yurchak has called the “normalization of language” in the case of the Soviet Union. Yurchak shows how “with increasing emphasis on the replication of form, what meanings or functions concrete texts and slogans had was becoming increasingly unpredictable; meaning was sliding in unprecedented directions”(2006:53). Rather than seeing the experience of socialism in binary terms, Yurchak shows how it is better to consider the reproduction/employment of authoritative discourse as resulting in a growing gap between the performative and constative dimensions of the speech act (2006:93). Yet even this opposition, Yurchak shows, is not a pro-socialist anti-socialist one. He accounts the experience of one Komsomol secretary, who:

came to believe that many basic socialist values that he thought were important- education, professional work, social welfare, a collectivist ethic-were enabled by bureaucratic rules and that some forms of the Komsomol work had to be repeated just at the level of the ritual although others had to be performed with a particular focus on meaning(2006:93).

The institutionalization of *táncház* reflects the political economic period in which it developed. It is clear that the state provided a particular environment for associative activities both consistent and inconsistent with the stated ideology of late

¹⁸⁵ The logic behind the name was that April comes after March: The April Front followed the March Front and continued its fight for democracy.

Hungarian socialism that “all that are not against us are with us”. Not only did key participants in movements emerge from state run competitions, but state run culture houses were also key locations for movement activities. In addition, in the case of the *táncház*, resources were requested and received from state institutions in the form of courses for folk music and dance instructors, and the establishment of summer camps. The flexibility of the system of cultural management also reflects the rise of the idea of *közművelés*, a notion of civil society based on mutual input by managers and the public; the cultural and economic thrusts of the tourism and entertainment industries; and the decrease in state funding and concurrent emphasis on entrepreneurialism. Even as the state was rolling back aid for culture and relying on entrepreneurialism in the cultural sphere, this generation continued to develop a strong expectation that state resources for culture should be available. This expectation did not disappear after 1989, even as other sources became available. Indeed, as Halmos wrote in 2000: “practically every *táncház* depends on state subsidies” (2000:34).

The continued functioning of *táncház*es in houses of culture (to which local councils are required to provide financial support) in the current era is one such instance, the establishment of Heritage House is another. Heritage House’s status as an independent institution further reflects the sustained historical development of “the Institute” with all its continuities and discontinuities since 1946. The language employed and the goals set by Heritage House indicate a move away from the formal institutions of *művelődés/közművelődés*/community arts and a partnering with initiatives focused on Heritage and tradition. This is partly the result of a different attitude or approach toward *művelődés* by those involved in *táncház* management. When I asked members of the Téka ensemble if their camp

emphasized *népművelés*, I was told “sure but through example, not by blabbering”. When discussing this divergence in more detail in chapter 7 and the conclusion, I will argue that this disaggregation of approaches to culture and the turn toward Heritage have important consequences. Having covered the rise of *táncház* and its institutionalization, in the next chapter I will examine the process of collective memory production through which a *táncház* “framework of sense” is formed under changing political and economic conditions.

CHAPTER 5

Folk Dance as Mother Tongue: The Production of Collective Memory

But from what comes the elevated role of folk art? It would be a misunderstanding to think that it is only because it is Hungarian and to place the important momentum of... national culture at the spine of the whole conception. The significance of folk art is more important and more essential than this. In its original form folk art is a community art; an organic part of the everyday life of one or another community that practices it actively in a creative and transformative way ...”(Vitányi 1974a:11).

With this statement, written in defense of the infant *táncház* in the 1970s, cultural manager Iván Vitányi demonstrates his concern with the community making qualities of *táncház*. As a form of folk art, he argues, *táncház* has the potential for building community, and thus, to contribute to the building of socialist culture. Indeed, Vitányi, noting that folk art has become an elemental part of the public cultivation-közműveltség of the Hungarian people’s democracy (*népi demokrácia*) argues that the most ancient function of folk art is that which most elementally connects with the life of communities “in as much as its form is determined by the practice of a long line of generations” (1974a:10). It is this community building potential of *táncház* and the contradictory definitions of community that are explored in this chapter. In this chapter I examine how a *táncház* community comes to be constructed and how it comes to conceive of itself and act as a community.¹⁸⁶ I focus on the tensions between ideas about an essentialized ethnic community and a constructed community created through association, tensions not dissimilar to those uncovered in the term *nép*. Stressing the associative aspects of the *táncház* environment, of *táncház* as social, or sociable,

¹⁸⁶ While *táncház* continues to be closely connected to the staged performance of folk dance by troupes both professional and amateur, my concern here is the public of *táncház* event goers.

activity, I explore the production of collective memory through the relationship between form, or material practices and political economic contexts over time.

I begin by introducing the theoretical orientation toward collective memory that underlies the remainder of this dissertation. I then discuss the relationship of form and material practices to the production of “alternative frameworks of sense”(Melucci 1988). While I point to the mutually informing relationship between the framework of sense produced through *táncház* practices and political economic circumstances in the production of collective memory, this chapter focuses on form and material practices within *táncház* and of its public of practitioners. It is in the next two chapters where the relationship of the political and economic spheres to the production of collective memory will be further illustrated. After establishing the relationship of association and form to the production of alternative frameworks of sense, I turn to a discussion of the Hungarian notion and practice of ‘folk dance as mother tongue’, a central element of the *táncház* framework of sense. The remainder of the chapter then focuses on specific practices of *táncház* goers, especially those engaged in during *táncház* events in order to get at their relationship to collective memory. I show how collective memory is made accessible by “attaching it to something concrete, something fixed and permanent...”(Basso 1996:64) through spatial practices and dance.

Since the 1970’s *táncház* has been frequently referred to as a movement. Nevertheless, interviews have revealed that participants are apprehensive about the use of this term to describe their activities. Noting its use by the socialist administration in reference to those political movements instigated and maintained by the Party itself, such as the “workers movement” or the “youth movement”, they suggest that the term represents a centralized and political initiative. Further,

arguing that it is simply the love of folk dance and folk music that brings them together, participants insist that there is no ideological thread that unifies them. Despite this, I find evidence that *táncház* participants, united by activities and practices promoting the perpetuation of ‘folk tradition’ in everyday life, share ideas about the nation and citizenship, upon which they act in their private and public lives.

Theorists have defined social movements in a number of manners, some focusing on rational action and the strategic use of mobilization (Tilly 1978, Tarrow 1988) and others on identity formation (Pizzorno 1985, Touraine 1985 1988). While recognizing that *táncház* has had effects on public policy, I emphasize *táncház*’s status as a movement in the sense that it is both transformative and transforming in a process of state formation (see Tilly 1984). This requires not only looking past “communities” and “movements” as mystified things to examining the process of their production, but also looking past the notion that the effects of “non utilitarian” social movements are reducible to the production of identity alone. My view that association is a form of collective action is elaborated below.

Lamenting the conceptual fragility and overuse of the term “movement” in explaining the “social nature of collective action”, Alberto Melucci suggests that in a number of social movements what collective actors have achieved is “to practice ‘alternative definitions of sense’ by creating “meanings and definitions of identity which contrast with the increasing determination of individual and collective life by impersonal technocratic power” (Melucci 1988:247). Indeed, he argues, it is the networks made of those who share such “frameworks of sense” that make mobilizations possible, “rendering them visible in a punctual manner at moments when confrontations with public policy emerge” (1988:248). Yet, Melucci writes,

“within these networks there is an experimentation with and direct practice of alternative frameworks of sense, in consequence of a personal commitment which is submerged and almost invisible”(1988:248). I suggest that a *táncház* framework of sense is produced in the associative space of *táncház* events, through the practices of dance, etiquette and sociable conversation, and that this may congeal into a fragile and contradictory “community of sense” in moments of collective action beyond participation in the social event.¹⁸⁷ I connect this process with the practice of what I term “folk dance as mother tongue”: the mastering of the paradigm of folk dance as social dance and its use in everyday life . A crucial element of mastering this paradigm is familiarity with dance suites associated with particular places. I will discuss this term in detail later in this chapter.

While contemporary studies of associational life tend to stress the formal aspects such as membership in or goals of such associations, or on access to group resources (Putnam, Portes and Landoff), I focus on the social aspect of association, the gathering of individuals in physical space, as a key site of the production of alternative frameworks of sense. This aspect of association was noted by Georg Simmel, who asserted that the importance of associational life can not be reduced to special interests pursued. “Above and beyond their special content”, he argues, such associations satisfy “an impulse to ‘sociability’”(1910:127). Simmel suggests that in “society” (*gesellschaft*)¹⁸⁸, where people associate without an expressed common interest or agenda, but rather for the purposes of sociability, form becomes paramount. It is good form, or tact, he argues, that allows for “meaning and

¹⁸⁷ Melucci (1988) used the phrases framework of sense and community of sense interchangeably. In this work I use framework of sense to represent the common set of senses and sensibilities discussed in this chapter, while I reserve “community of sense” for those moments in which this network of *táncház* goes can be seen to congeal into a community in relation to the formal political process. These moments will come into focus more clearly in the following two chapters.

¹⁸⁸ It is important that the German word he uses here-*gesellschaft*- has the meaning of both society and party.

stability”, and the “mutual self-definition, interaction of the elements, through which unity is made”(Simmel 1910:129). Indeed, for such association to be possible at all, a sense of tact, an adherence to ‘good form’, must be observed. If, as Simmel asserts, in the absence of a shared ideology or agenda beyond the social event itself, form is what holds “society” together in an associative environment, the adherence to form appears to be key in the production of frameworks of sense. Believing sociability to be the “play form of association”, from which “nothing but the satisfaction of the impulse to sociability-although with a resonance to be left over-is to be gained”(1910:130), Simmel does not explore how adherence to form may contribute to the behavior of the individual once outside the sociable event, that is, its role in socialization. Yet if shared form in associational contexts contributes to the production of a framework of sense, and frameworks of sense “make mobilizations possible”(Melucci 1988:248), then further consideration of their production allows us to consider just this.

Beyond institutional change and the selection of new elites, Melucci argues that a third measurable effect of the practice of alternative frameworks of sense is cultural innovation: “the production of models of behavior and social relationships that enter into everyday life and the market, modifying the functioning of the social order by means of changes in language, sexual customs, affective relationships, dress, and eating habits”(1988:249).¹⁸⁹ The practice of ‘folkdance as mother tongue’ among *táncház* goers may be considered one such innovation. As we have seen, unlike in earlier revivals that focused on staged performance, *táncház* goers engage

¹⁸⁹ While Melucci does not expand on his use of the word “sense”, this example allows us to see a relationship between what Hirschkind calls senses, or “capacities of aesthetic appreciation”, and sensibility, “states of moral attunement, or being” which may structure such sensory experiences (Hirschkind 2001:624). I take the term sense to bear a tension, thus, between aesthetic, or direct sensory experience, and the “sense” one makes of it. This (and Hirschkind’s contribution) will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

in folk dance as social dance. At *táncház* events, participants adhere to a number of explicit and implicit rules of tact, or “good form”. While there is no formal institution that controls them, manners governing gender roles, dance forms and language use are generally agreed upon and practiced with “tact”. However, while these “good manners” are learned within the context of *táncház*, they cannot be explained without reference to things outside it, for these forms are modeled after those practiced in the village social dance contexts that inspired *táncház* in the 1970s. Rather than in choreographed dances divorced from social context or by “free dancing” without adherence to the appropriate idiom, *táncház* goes engage in this social activity according to custom. It is from the context of the everyday life of peasant or village communities from which good manners in *táncház* are thought to be derived, and the form that these individual dances, dance cycles and events, or material practices, take that gives *táncház* its authenticity. It is because *táncház* practices adhere to such forms that it can claim to be traditional; to be authentic; to be heir to a living tradition.

The manner in which the forms of tact within *táncház* interact with things outside of it to play a role in the socialization informing a framework of sense can be apprehended through attention to the dialectical process of collective memory production as theorized by Maurice Halbwachs. Distinguishing collective memory from historical memory and history, as “the active past that forms our identities”, he located its production among groups (Olick and Robbins 1998:111). Groups, argues Halbwachs, maintain memories not by “directly reproducing” the past, but rather, by producing a picture of it (1992:101). Arguing that this picture of the past is produced through the interaction of an institutionally preserved practice and the circumstances of the present, he accounts for change in collective memory through

time. Halbwachs distinguishes between rites, which consist of a body of gestures, words, and liturgical objects established in material form, and the beliefs used to interpret these rites” (1992:116).¹⁹⁰ He points to the way that the meanings of these “rites” have changed over time, writing, “as meanings of forms and formulas become partially forgotten, they have to be interpreted”(1992: 117). In this view, while the stability of material forms and institutional practices over time gives collective memory an appearance of unbroken continuity, the changing interpretation of these forms renews its contemporary relevance.¹⁹¹ The form of material practices within *táncház*, of dance, music, and manners, is an important element in the construction of a collective memory shared by participants. Equally important, however, are the political economic contexts in which the forms of *táncház* have functioned, and from which meaning and relevance is derived.

If collective memory is reproduced in part as a response to contemporary conditions, then its analysis requires an examination of circumstances external to *táncház*, yet within which it “remembers”. Not only are the forms institutionalized in *táncház* based on interpretation informed by particular notions of revival and tradition that foreground particular forms, but the interpretation of these forms continues to respond to current circumstances. Indeed, while the associative environment of *táncház* is highly dependent on the adherence to good form, it is the site of conversations informed by the political economic environment. Further, as we have seen in chapter 3, not only are forms of association historically determined,

¹⁹⁰ After Halbwachs, I take collective memory to be the result of the relationship of “sets of mnemonic practices”(Olick and Robbins 1998:112) institutionalized within groups and the broader political and economic context which affects their interpretation over time. Interpretations are contested, and emerge from a “field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history”(Olick and Robbins 1998:126).

but they also have mutually determining relationship with state forms (Gramsci 1971, Yudice 2003).¹⁹²

In interviews, many key *tánc ház* actors described *tánc ház* as a community: as a “virtual community” which comes together at certain moments (like the Dancehouse Meeting); as a “virtual circle...which is not definable but rather a feeling-if a person says now that they are, ‘I am a *tánc ház* goer (*tánc ház as*)’”. This shared framework of sense, I argue, extends to the ways in which people act outside of the *tánc ház* setting. For, this associative event is also a socializing event in which concrete material practices can be noted. Relying on linguistic theory, Juliet Langman points to the socializing aspect of the participation in a folk-dancing public, speaking of a folk dance group as a “community of practice”(2003).¹⁹³ Yet, despite contemporary emphasis on constructivism in the social sciences, community continues to be understood by many, including *tánc ház* participants at moments, as primordial, as always already there (Creed 2006). That is, while *tánc ház* participants voluntarily participate in *tánc ház* as a leisure activity, many find “evidence” of the Hungarianness of participants in that act. Indeed, much like language in the age of linguistic nationalism, the practice of “folk dance as mother tongue” is seen as a manifestation of Hungarianness even as it is seen as a tool for cultivating Hungarianness.¹⁹⁴

Margaret Kohn has articulated problems with the distinctions made between communalism (or, she notes, *gemeinschaft*), and association. She notes that while

¹⁹² See chapter 3 of Yudice, (2003:especially pages 95-97) for a discussion of neoliberal “management” of civil society and the particular role civil society plays in “assuring stability along with transformation”.

¹⁹³ While Langman examines a sole Hungarian folkdance troupe in Slovakia, she does so by examining it as a space of sociality and socialization and not simply of performance.

¹⁹⁴ For an interesting critique of the use of the term “ethnic community”, see Glick-Schiller at el, who are concerned with developing a “conceptual framework for the study of migration, settlement, and transborder connection that is not dependent on the ethnic group as either the unit of analysis or sole object of study”(2006:613).

“communalism” is thought to be “based on organic bonds developed gradually over long periods of time in a given locality”, association is thought to be the “product of deliberate choice; an aggregation of autonomous individuals who choose to pursue some joint end”(2003:140). The idea of association, she argues, relies on the centrality of the notion of the self-interested individual, while the communalist subject is “defined to some extent by the community of which they are a part”(2003:141). Seeking to find a better description of the kind of community produced through activities of “municipalism”, Kohn contrasts both conceptions with the Greek conception of *homonoia*-“unanimity or likemindedness”. She argues that “unlike communalism, *homonoia* does not assume an organic unity created through a shared history”, but rather a unity created “through a political project”(2003:140). Adopting the concept of *homonoia*, she argues that the shared world of the municipality is “not passively inherited but actively (re) created through practices of citizenship”(2003:140). *Népi* movement(s), including *táncház* can be seen as practicing *homonoia* in Kohn’s conceptualization, for they are formed through practices of citizenship. Yet, formed around the notion of the *nép* in its dual sense, *népi* movements are informed by ideas about community and common history. Thus, while we may see them as produced through *homonoia*, through shared practices of citizenship, historical inquiry suggests tensions within *népi* movements between associational and communitarian conceptualizations of Hungarianness.

Slavoj Žižek points to a similar tension in the oppositional “civil society” of late socialism and its development in the postsocialist period. In socialist Europe, Žižek suggests, the democratic opposition united all “antitotalitarian” elements under the sign of “civil society” in its fight against the “Communist power”. Unity

in opposition, he argues, obscured the manner in which the same words were used to refer to “two fundamentally different languages, to two different worlds”(1993:211). This split, which he argues is now reflected politically, is basically between conceptions of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*. Žizek argues that the same conceptualization of Communism as a foreign or alien element in opposition to the organic body of the nation (*gemeinschaft*) has been applied to Capitalism in recent years, as its crucial features are seen as foreign. Oppositional attitudes vis-à-vis the state in the postsocialist period continue to be formulated according to this opposition, for the view of Communism from a perspective of *gemeinschaft* contributed to a “desire...for capitalism without the ‘alienated’ civil society, without the formal-external relations between individuals”(1993: 211). Further, as we have seen, Communist ideology and language itself stressed community, often converging with historical patterns of speaking about community and cultivation. Cultural managers often justified the value of cultural initiatives by arguing that they were community making.

In *táncház*, talk of community demonstrates tension or slippage in its meaning as the village community, the revivalist community, and an essentialized ethnic Hungarian community. Even for Vitányi, who looks forward in the piece quoted above to the creation of a socialist community, the model community that informs the shape of folk art appears to already exist. Indeed, for him, it is the passing down through generations that gives folk art its community quality or, we might say, its authenticity. How the authenticity of form or material practices is derived has important implications for collective memory. Is it that it derives from a community, from a peasant community, or from an ethnic Hungarian community that makes it authentic? Is it because it sustains an already existing community or

creates a community that makes it valuable? To consider how a community created through practice comes to see itself as a manifestation of a preexisting primordial or ethnic community, and to see such activities as evidence of their belonging to it, it is helpful to examine the assumptions behind the mother tongue approach and behind the revival of social dance, and their relationship to socialization. Let us review the ways in which the idea of mother tongue has been employed in relation to Hungarian folk music and dance and their revival.

Making Folk Art Part of Everyday Life; Genealogies of Folkdance as Mother Tongue

It is the name of internationally acclaimed composer Zoltán Kodály that is most widely associated with the notion of “music as mother tongue”, due to the international popularity and application of his pedagogical method. Kodály believed that folk songs should be used to teach children basic familiarity with music, and thus, should form an integral part of the school curriculum. Folk songs reduced to basic tones form the basis of what has become known as the Kodály method. Kodály appears to have made use of the concept of mother tongue in two ways. First, “Kodály wanted to make the folk song the mother tongue that is the natural musical expression closest to the child”(Dobszay 1972:24). Second, Kodály asserted that just as the child learns his mother tongue before learning foreign languages, so the child should learn the folk songs of his native language first (Choksy 1999:2). It is the first use of the mother tongue concept that is found among proponents of the Kodály method. While Dobszay asserts that Kodály’s insistence on folk songs in the mother tongue was because they had “national and aesthetic value”, it appears that both emphases on mother tongue attributed to Kodály point to questions of ‘fluency’; the folk song is meant to help the child become fluent in musical practice. Because the child becomes familiar with his/her own language first, songs in their

own language will facilitate this. Nevertheless, given the context within which Kodály developed his method, it is indeed likely that he saw “national value” in Hungarian children learning specifically Hungarian folksongs.

Kodály’s contemporary, Béla Bartók, also an internationally acclaimed composer, used the phrase “peasant music as mother tongue”, writing:

in this case, the composer has completely absorbed the idiom of peasant music which has become his mother tongue. He masters it as completely as a poet masters his mother tongue (Bartók 1976:343-344).

Bartók’s statement was in part a challenge to the romantic tradition of adopting elements of folk music in a half hazard manner, without an understanding of the paradigm from which they had been adopted. His emphasis on ethnomusicology, as with Kodály’s, stemmed in part from his commitment to absorbing peasant music as idiom, rather than borrowing motifs in a superficial manner. Indeed, Bartók expressed that he “became possessed of “the music language of peasantry as a ‘mother’ tongue so that it could be used as a natural means of expression”(Bartók, in Suchoff 1961:4)¹⁹⁵. The emphasis on making folk music a “natural means of expression” is the basis of the “Bartókian idiom” (*Bartóki mód*) writes Benjamin Suchoff, but the “Bartókian idiom” is also used to express the use of the peasant idiom to create new and modern artworks.

Kodály and Bartók were not the only Hungarians who made use of the mother tongue metaphor in the interwar period. In 1939, just as Hungary began to annex, with the help of Germany, a chunk of the neighboring territory forfeited nearly twenty years before at the end of World War I, István Györffy, “the father of Hungarian ethnography” published a book entitled Folk Tradition and National Cultivation. This book dedicated to the perpetuation of folk forms (including folk

¹⁹⁵ The original Bartók quote can be found in his lecture notes at the Béla Bartók archives 30 East 72nd St New York, NY.

dance) reads as a manual. Originally written as a memo to the Ministry of Religion and Education, the text prescribes a program for Folk National Cultivation (*Népi-Nemzeti Művelődés*); suggesting ways in which the cultural patrimony of the rural classes (who in his understanding are the most Hungarian strata) can be made that of all Hungarians through the incorporation of forms of *népi* culture into everyday life. Further, in 1940, in praise of the Bouquet of Pearls, Györffy's good friend Prime Minister (and political geographer) Pál Teleki was quoted by the Voice of Tradition (*A Hagyomány Szava*), saying

I have approached my allies...our greatest task is that we keep the Hungarian spirit (*lelki*) in this nation, that we teach it to think in Hungarian. Not to wander the world as a beggar (*koldus*), but rather to go on its own legs, to speak Hungarian, to sing in Hungarian, to dance in Hungarian. Because one who does that also thinks in Hungarian (Teleki in Pálfi 1970:124).

Each of the men above, of course, was acting in the cultural context in which the practices of the *Népi* movement discussed in chapter 2 had become influential. Abstracted from the particular class oriented program of the populists, the message to “speak” the “mother tongue” was “universalized” across political, ethical, and aesthetic projects.¹⁹⁶ We can see similarities in the approaches espoused by *népi* activists such as Elemér Muharay, the leaders of *regös* scouts groups; and of Györffy; with their emphasis on the cultural validation of the agrarian classes; of Teleki, who represented the Christian National government and was named “chief scout” by the scouts association (Gergély 1989:51); and of Gyula Gömbös, the prime minister who introduced the New Spiritual Front. Nevertheless, to collapse, as Eric Hirsch (1997) does, the various approaches under the term “Folk Nationalists” is not a simple misapprehension; it obscures the process in which such technologies

¹⁹⁶ While Györffy had been responsible for a controversial 1938 exhibit entitled The Situation of Landownership in Hungary, Teleki, then Minister of Culture, shut it down after complaints, claiming that the organizers had reached the limits of scientific fact and mixed it with politics (Borbándi 1989:239). Here their words exhibit a generalization of the approach spanning these differences.

experienced a general diffusion and were employed toward Christian National ends by the late 1930's and 1940s, and indeed, adopted by all political parties during the coalition period (Vitányi 1993). The idea of mother tongue continues to be influential in approaches toward folk dance.

During fieldwork, I encountered the use of the “mother tongue” idiom numerous times. In the summer of 2004, the host of a folk dance camp in Transylvania stressed the relationship between folk song and mother tongue. My host located folk song as one element of a broader mother tongue of Hungarian culture. To the (mostly Hungarian) crowd gathered before him to learn folk songs, he stressed that it is not enough for them to speak the Hungarian language. They must, he contended, seek to learn the mother tongue of Hungarian culture, of which folk song is a vital part. It is perhaps not surprising that this usage would be found in Transylvania, where linguistic and cultural assimilation has been felt as an onslaught by those interested in the preservation of Hungarianness. Although since 1989 the ethnic Hungarian population has managed to establish schools and has achieved political representation, the decrease in numbers of Hungarian speakers has led to widespread fear of assimilation, reflecting some real tendencies (Tamás, 2004). Further, the founders of Heritage House based their argument for the establishment of a state institution in terms of mother tongue. Pointing to the establishment of Hungarian language institutions during the period of 19th century linguistic nationalism, Sebő explained to me that the mother tongues of music and dance had been overlooked. Heritage House was conceived to rectify the situation; to provide a state funded institutional recognition and emphasis on these neglected elements of the Hungarian “mother tongue”. Finally, I encountered use of the

mother tongue idiom in reference to folk dance in a 1999 book entitled In the Language of Folk Dance, written by *táncász* pioneer Sándor Timár. He writes:

it is a basic human right that every child should learn his mother's spoken tongue. We must make this same right appropriate as it pertains to games and dance for our children (1999:5).

Stating his “confidence that similar to our language, our mother tongue is also found in dance”, Timár goes on to argue that one should learn the dances of his/her own place of birth before learning those of other localities.¹⁹⁷ Stressing the importance of such a mother tongue as (birth) right, he writes:

Surely it would be a surprise if the one year old child of an English speaking mother would learn Chinese first, because it is really interesting, has special music, or because many people speak it(1999:7).

In these last examples, we witness the expression of an essentialized notion of culture and the mobilization of discourse of the “right to culture”.¹⁹⁸ Here mother tongue is utilized both as a way to speak of familiarity with a paradigm as in language use, and to stress the essential relationship of a “mother tongue”, or culture, to a particular group.

Timár is a household name among *táncász* participants because of his important role in the aesthetic revolution that brought about *táncász*. At a time when staged folk dance was comprised of choreographies composed by artists mostly ignorant of the complexities of village dance practices, Timár and his contemporaries were instrumental in creating a methodology crucial to the advent of the *táncász* paradigm. Influenced by the ethnographic work of peers and by their own trips to Transylvania, they came to recognize that the dances from which their elders had borrowed specific motifs had a coherence of their own, much like

¹⁹⁷ Timár expressed to me that ideally Hungarians should not be learning Transylvanian dances. but those of the region each is born in. His statements assumed that a person is “from” the place in which he/she is born, as well as that one has only one “mother tongue”.

¹⁹⁸ A shift in discourses around the “right to culture” will be taken up in chapters 6 and 7.

language. Further, they recognized that while the coherence of these dances was based on limited sets of motifs, the order and style of these motifs could and should be improvised on by the experienced, or “fluent” dancer.

This “discovery” influenced Timár and others of his generation not only in their choreographic style, but also in the way in which they taught folk dance. With this new method, dancers were expected to build up a “vocabulary” of basic motifs of particular dances. Once the basic motifs of a given dance were mastered, dancers were encouraged to improvise within this set, each dancer devising his own unique style in the process.¹⁹⁹ It was only when one had built up such a vocabulary that one was considered capable of applying these motifs to choreography. This approach has obvious parallels in the approaches of Bartók and Kodály to folk music, and it is no coincidence that they are often cited as the source of this approach. In this view, folk dance is not a source of abstractable motifs, but an entire idiom that requires familiarity, much in the way that language does. Indeed, Timár writes:

The improvised dances should be taught in the manner that spoken language is taught. First we devise words and word combinations, and later sentences, according to the rules of the language learned. At first we say or ask simple sentences, later we compose longer and more complicated sentences in response to our thoughts. This happens in the case of dance as well (1999:17).

As we have seen, this generation sought to adopt folk dance as a social form. Rather than simply competing with other performing groups on stage, these youths wanted to get together and dance as the villagers they had learned from did. This required learning the idiom of social dance, for borrowed ‘words’ or abstracted motifs would not suffice to this end. As the pool of *táncász* participants broadened to include the general public, the same method was used to instruct non-performative dancers too. Accordingly, with few exceptions, *táncász*es almost

¹⁹⁹ I have written “his” here quite purposefully. In Hungarian folkdance, improvisation is almost completely in the realm of the male dancers

always begin with a teaching period, during which instructors (usually working as a male-female pair) teach the basic motifs of dances featured that evening, in preparation for their use in the rule bound but improvisational context of the social dance. This emphasis on the public ness of folk art; on the responsibility and passion to make ‘the mother tongue of folk dance’ available to the wider Hungarian public as a part of everyday life was not new in the 1970s. Indeed, in his book explicitly intended as a manual for teaching folk dance, Timár quotes directly from Györfy’s 1939 text:

If we only teach dance traditions to the *nép* and in villages then we will not get very far with it. In this way we will only get the “Bokréta” which entertains the middle class. If the *népi* dance tradition is to become an element of our national *művelődés*, then we must make it universal (*általános*). We must teach it in Budapest too from the nursery school to the colleges of Acting and Physical Education (Györfy in Timár 1999:12)

The mother tongue paradigm may be pursued with different goals in mind, often with different attention to the results. Nevertheless, we may say that they are all attempts to influence the collective memory of Hungarians through the perpetuation of form, in this case forms related to the sensorium. In all cases, there is an assumption that participation contributes to Hungarianness, yet little examination of what that means, beyond “form”. The acceptance that the perpetuation and universalization of such forms is beneficial for all regardless of ideological concerns deemphasizes any serious consideration of the results or consequences. If we take Halbwachs seriously, we must not limit the investigation of collective memory production to the perpetuation of form. We must examine both its institutional context and the changing ways in which form—in this case, folkdance as mother tongue—is interpreted, for this clearly will have an effect on the character of the related framework of sense. Both the intentions and the results

of such projects depend much on the contemporary political economy, international trends, and related discourses, even while they are often obscured by the insistence on form.

Tamara E. Livingston defines music revivals as social movements “which strive to ‘restore’ a musical system believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past for the benefit of contemporary society”(1999:66). Her definition is appropriate for *táncház* with a slight revision: *táncház* is a social movement seeking to “restore” a system in which music and dance are codependent.²⁰⁰ Revival usually involves the abstraction of “naturalized” everyday practices into those self-consciously designed according to the goals and conceptual framework of revivalists. While a “core of revivalists feel such a strong connection with the revival tradition that they take it upon themselves to ‘rescue’ it...what they actually do is create a new ethos, [musical] style and aesthetic in accordance to revivalist ideology and personal preferences”(Livingston 1999:70, see also Rosenberg 1993) Indeed, revival involves the isolation of a part of everyday life from the context in which it was developed.²⁰¹ In earlier stages of Hungarian folk dance revival, this was illustrated in the abstraction of motifs from dances and dances from dance events, as when “folk dances” were choreographed for staged performance. It is also demonstrated in the isolation of the dance event from the occasion providing its context, from the festive occasions of weddings, christenings, or village balls, a characteristic *táncház* shares with earlier revivals.

Such events have been approached by anthropologists through the framework of ritual; often explained as the manifestation or expression, and consolidation or reaffirmation of the unity of a community or society (Gluckman

²⁰⁰ This is significant in that it is the dance event that serves to broaden the participatory public.

1965, Turner 1995).²⁰² Seeing the dance and dance event as media, I ask along with Toby Volkman (1990), what happens when it is abstracted from the community in which it developed, and incorporated into different spatiotemporal logics, and thus, differently constituted publics (see Caton 1990). Volkman describes the process of objectification of “indigenous media” resulting from their selection as “tourist objects” and “development” through processes of dislocation, decontextualization, disassembly, replacement, reconstitution, reproduction, and interpretation” (Volkman 1990:92). Discussing the traditional “ancestor house”, “effigy” and “rituals” of Toraja, Indonesia, Volkman shows how these media which had had communicative functions within a system of integrated religion and custom have been abstracted to represent “Toraja identity” and to be easily packagable for tourists. While they are packaged as “traditional”, the communicative content of these media has been transformed through historical processes including the colonial delineation of the religious from the customary (and their related valuation), the “nationalization” of Indonesia, and the turn towards tourism as a tool for economic development. Volkman recognizes these “objects” as media that functioned within a small group with a shared interpretive framework. As with ritual, so other “indigenous media” have the power to broadcast or communicate, often through bodily practices, and Volkman considers what occurs when these media—these communicative technologies—are abstracted as objects. While the goal of some supporters of the revival may have been to consolidate or create community, revivalists have said little about how their own interpretive framework differs from

²⁰² But unlike the majority of cases studied by those focusing on ritual, who take the community as given, or the villages from which *tánchez* adopted its practices, in the case of the *tánchez* revival, there was no preexisting community. The urban folk dance scene is comprised of a voluntary association of individuals. It is only over the last three decades that any *tánchez* community can be said to have developed. Because of this history the need to examine the content of community becomes even more apparent.

that of “villagers”, or about the significance of that difference.²⁰³ The broadening of the communicative medium of dance and the dance event from a village to a “national” *táncház* community has effects on the interpretation of form (and thus on socialization). In the following section I examine the continuity of forms related to the dance event while paying careful attention to their interpretation, asking what happens when a communicative technology is abstracted according to revivalist ideologies focused on the perpetuation of authentic Hungarian practices.

Arising from within revivalist currents already extant, *táncház* revived the social dance event by bringing folk dance off the stage and modeling dance events after those of living villagers, aided by documentation and accounts of the past. While the *táncház* revival restored the dance event as a coherent whole, *táncház* events were held in the context of urban leisure activities rather than those of Transylvanian villagers, past or present. While *táncház* adopted certain “authentic” forms—notably, the internal coherence of distinct dances, the coherence of the dance cycle, and the interdependent relationship of music and dance—the revivalist context has nevertheless required a transformation of the dance event. Indeed, if we expect, as Halbwachs urges us to, that the interpretation of material forms is likely to change over time, we must also recognize that interpretation according to any given revivalist ideology will determine which forms will be adopted or how forms will be arranged. Such a process is captured by what Raymond Williams (1966) has termed selective tradition. Selective tradition preserves those aspects of tradition that correspond with values of the period, while also rejecting much of the living culture of which it was part.

²⁰³ Kligman (1988:260) discusses the difference in meaning of folk traditions for “the state” and for villagers in the case of Romania.

As in any revival, in *táncház*, certain forms have been institutionalized through practice and convention that are based on, but not identical to, those imitated. Nevertheless, this imitation is the source of authenticity, as it is understood as the practice of tradition rather than the “invention of tradition”, understood by *táncház* goers as the haphazard borrowing of motives seen in *Magyar nóta* or in the staged folk dances of the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, it is the faithful practice of traditional forms that demarcates *táncház* from earlier revivals. It is the apparent similarity between how things are done in *táncház* and how they are done in the villages that becomes the source of its authenticity. As Livingston points out, “reliance upon informants or historical sources in formulating the revival tradition’s repertoire, stylistic features, and history” is a feature of revivals (1999:71). Thought of as “traditional” by participants, the changes that have come about through adaptation of the forms to the revivalist context are often obscured, partly a function of this relationship between authority and authenticity. Another characteristic pointed to by Livingston is the “tendency of revivalist discourse to collapse time and space in service to a ‘new authenticity’ defined by the belief in the practice’s timelessness, unbroken historical continuity and purity of expression” (Livingston 1999:69, see also Bohlman 1988). The following sections look at specific practices engaged in by participants in the *táncház* setting, which tie form—the practice of folkdance as mother tongue—with interpretation. I focus particularly on dance/music forms, etiquette, conversation, and place-based tourism. Using the well-examined example of gender relations in the dance to illustrate the relationship of dance event practices and socialization, I will point to what other kinds of socialization may be at hand, particularly as connected to place.

Spatiotemporal Forms: Material Practices in Táncház

Táncház events are structured around dance cycles, or suites: relatively fixed sets of dances in a certain order that coordinate with a musical suite. In the *táncház* revival, each cycle is adopted from a particular village or region. Once the band begins to play, experienced *táncház* goers are both aware of and authorial of what dance “should” and will follow. This is because upon hearing the music, dancers are able to determine from which village or region it originates, and are thus able to author dances within the genre of that locale. Familiarity with such a broad vocabulary of regional dance forms is peculiar to revivalists, as villagers (even now) tend to know only local dances (Halmos 2000: 31). For *táncház* participants, then, a “national” patrimony is available from which specific regional variants of what they express to be “Hungarian dance” can be identified. Indeed, each dance cycle is associated with a particular place on the map of greater Hungary, only 1/3 of which territory lies within the borders of present day Hungary. The fact that an overwhelming percentage of the dances /dance cycles encountered in *táncház* today are Transylvanian in origin²⁰⁴ has important implications for collective memory, as we shall see.

Reflecting the geography of uneven development, the majority of communities engaging in Hungarian folk dance as social dance in the 1970s were located in Transylvania. Further, as we have seen, the combination of *népi* and Christian National practices and ideologies in the period of the Second World War made Transylvania the focus of collection and authenticity, leading researchers and revivalists to look there. The process of “nationalization” of local traditions, mostly from Transylvania, produced three results: First, it associates Hungarian culture

²⁰⁴ Here I mean among “Magyar” *táncház*es, which themselves make up the majority of ‘*táncház*es’ in Hungary.

with Transylvanian villages. Second, it has abstracted each “local tradition” into the category “Hungarian” and widened their practice to all Hungarians. Third, it has cemented the identification of specific dances with specific villages or regions; which themselves have become the sources of authenticity. This process is reflected in the fact that in contrast to urban *táncház* participants who dance the full breadth of “Hungarian” dances, Transylvanian villagers are encouraged to engage in local dances as tradition keepers (*hagyományőrzők*) rather than dancing the broader repertoire of “Hungarian” dances, as do revivalists. Further, the revival of village practices in *táncház* serves to make folk dance static, or timeless (see Livingston 1999:69). Because revival has stopped the clock, it is not the current practices of the “folk” that are the source of “folk culture”, but rather, the practices of the parents and grandparents of rural folk, captured on film, sound recordings and photographs, or in the accounts and practices of ethnographers and revivalists. While studies show that the dances of the villages of the Carpathian basin are the result of the sediment of history, reflecting waves of European dance fashions (Martin 1968; Pesovár 1980), authenticity is located in the dancers captured on silent film shot in the 1940s and the contemporary practices that correspond with these. It is the experts that emerged from and the participants in *táncház* who are now the police of authenticity, as village tradition is considered adulterated and fractured. Indeed, while still identified as the source, villagers are no longer considered capable of judging authenticity and therefore properly guarding this tradition. Indeed, while both researchers and *táncház* goers will note that historical change and the integration of European dances led to the unique forms known as “Hungarian folk dance”, *táncház* goers nevertheless tend to speak of the dances and music as ancient

and immutable, and to consider contemporary changes inauthentic; to be introducing impurities.²⁰⁵

Here we see a tension between living and static forms, as the authentic living form is now in the hands of revivalists while the daily practices of many villagers are judged inauthentic.²⁰⁶ This is reflected in the attitude toward musicianship as well. While in the first years of the revival, *táncház* musicians relied on village musicians, a large majority of whom were Roma, to teach them to play, during fieldwork I heard the sentiment expressed that as the older generation of Roma dies out, it is revivalists, rather than village Roma who play more authentically. As Lynn Hooker points out in reference to a camp in Transylvania, “the Romani musicians who were the star attraction were both honored as the ‘guardians’ of instrumental music traditions, and policed carefully as potential agents of pollution, lest they introduce elements of newer popular styles”(2005:56).

At one camp that I visited in Transylvania, the tension between historical process and revivalist notions of authenticity was made apparent when on one evening, a Wednesday, a band with different instrumentation and style than a “traditional folk ensemble” was featured in the main dance space. The instrumentation and playing style of this band is generally associated with what is referred to as *lakodalmas*, or “wedding music”. The music performed covers a range of popular music (and is far more widespread in rural regions than is the folk music adopted by *táncház*), but is not classified as folk music (*népzene*) (Lang 1996: 78). On that evening, the dance floor was packed with local villagers. *Táncház* guests expressed their disgruntlement as they searched for “authentic folk ensembles” in the

²⁰⁵ Another variation I encountered says that Hungarian folk dance reflects the ideal small-scale capitalist society that developed in Hungary in which a balance is maintained between individual expression and group belonging.

²⁰⁶ This marks, perhaps, one divergence in the “frameworks of sense” between villagers and revivalists.

smaller arenas. These revivalists were disturbed that this “wedding music” was center stage at a camp dedicated to folk music (*népzene*) and dance (*néptánc*); which they had come quite explicitly to experience. In an interview, the organizer of camp justified his reasons for holding this event. Expressing that because the camps are meant to expose visitors to the life of the villager (*falusi ember*), he had decided not to displace the usual Wednesday night event on account of the camp. If visitors were truly interested in the life of the villagers, he argued, they should be exposed to their current lifestyle, including their contemporary dance culture. He noted that the locals use traditional dance motifs to dance to this *lakodalmas* music.²⁰⁷

While many *táncász* goers are of the conviction that neither music nor dances should change; the forefronting of certain forms and practices over others has effects as well. Revivalists adhere to a “mother tongue” model that attends to innovations within a genre. “Innovations” are often made by revivalist dancers based on their close study of ethnographic films, on motives taught to them by instructors who have done so, or, if they are lucky, on primary collection among informants.²⁰⁸ Responding to my questions about if and how *táncász* has changed, some long time goers (non performers) volunteered that the dances have become much more sophisticated. This was, they suggested, a function of the thirty years of development of *táncász*, during which research has been done, data codified and made available, and dancers (and musicians) have become more and more expert. While some felt the dancing had become too complicated, emphasizing performance at the expense of mutual enjoyment, others suggested that the dynamism provided by sophisticated dancers was needed to stir others to action.

²⁰⁷This attitude was not a common one among camp organizers, nor was such blatant divergence from the accepted “authentic”.

²⁰⁸ Some dancers told me that original ethnographic research is prerequisite for getting into the State ensemble.

Of course, such developments in the sophistication of the dance derives partly from the presence of professional (as well as amateur) folk dancers who have advanced training in folk dance. It also reflects the proliferation of bands and teachers (usually professional dancers who are supplementing their income, are in teacher training, or teach out of dedication to the movement), *tánc házes*, and camps, and the concomitant availability of instruction in increasingly specialized regional suites and motifs. In contrast to the growing expertise of *tánc ház* goers, there is frequent “adulteration” present in the repertoires of the “informants” (*adat közlők*). For example, visiting “informants” at one Budapest dancehouse in 2004 included the Charleston in their village suite. Further, fewer and fewer young villagers learn or engage in folk dance in the social dance context, learning to dance in performative groups, if they have interest (Szabó 1998:177). While historically, dance motifs in specific villages would have evolved with the gradual introduction of innovations by those who had traveled (serving in the army or laboring elsewhere, for example) and by the activities of dance instructors, increasingly “expert” revivalists contribute to the notion of absolute distinctions between specific villages (or regions).

It is no coincidence that in the early 20th century dance teachers were quite often called dance and etiquette teachers, for across Europe society dances were a key site for learning and performing proper etiquette. Indeed, Simmel’s discussion could just as easily be an analysis of a ballroom “society” as that of a salon. As Pesovár points out, “together with the dances the peasants adopted a few of the rules of bourgeois etiquette” (1978:24). Vitányi (1964:11) claims that the spread of dance teachers in the 20th century contributed to the “decay of folk dance”, as old dances were replaced with new ones. Yet researchers have shown the mutual influence of

court and urban dances with peasant dances over centuries (Pesovár 1978, Kaposi 1991). Vitányi (1964) writes that until the 20th century, the folk adopted new dances from the court and assimilated them to local paradigms.²⁰⁹ By the 20th century, however, the new dances began to replace older ones due, in part, to the emergence of dance masters (Vitányi 1964:11). The fact that dance masters, or “dance and courtesy instructors” (*tánc és illem tanárok*), became a widespread phenomenon in this period illustrates the role of dance as a socially embedded phenomenon; indeed, that social dance was considered a means of socialization. The forms of etiquette enforced in the Hungarian village dance event are the result of this mutual influence over time. It is often said by *táncház* goers that Hungarian folk dance is a form reflecting an ideal level of bourgeoisification in which the individual is given expression within the confines of community. That is, individuals are allowed expression, but only within limits. Among mannerisms related to etiquette, gendered characteristics of dances and dance event are perhaps the most noticeable. In her study of dance events in a town in northern Greece, Jane Cowan reveals “how gender ideas and relations of everyday life are actively embodied and explored in festive performance”(1990:4). At *táncház* events, asking a partner to dance is considered a male role, and it was only among groups of good friends that I observed women breaking with this custom and asking male friends to dance. Further, once on the dance floor, the man is responsible for leading the dance. It is at his discretion that transitions from one motif to another are made. Indeed, it is at his discretion that rule-governed improvisation (expressing his individuality) will

²⁰⁹ I mean by this the social dances of the court.

come about. The woman must be aware of how to respond to the man's lead in order to anticipate the transitions.²¹⁰

Along with these gendered roles, *táncház* did not import the local function of the *táncház* in which these gender roles were embedded. In Szék, the Transylvanian town upon whose "*táncház*" the dancehouses of the revival are based, the word *táncház* referred to both courtship dance events (balls or dances) for adolescents and to the places in which they were held (Halmos 2000:30). At these dances organized by and for adolescent youths, only unwed youths typically danced, although they did so under the watch of the entire village community.²¹¹ As Cowan writes: "dancing bodies are at the center of scrutiny and simultaneously are the medium of experience" (1990:5), and indeed, informants account their experiences of dancing under the watchful eye of various family members, each expecting particular qualities (Magyar Televizio N.d.). Although by virtue of having been a youth movement in the 1970's, the *táncház* revival initially retained the atmosphere of an environment for youths, the age range at present presents a different picture. As Béla Halmos wrote in 2000,

the average age of those frequenting *táncház* in Hungary today happens to be the same as of those attending the traditional Transylvanian *táncház*, but within the movement, there is no age or marital-status restriction on attendance. The *táncház* movement welcomes anyone interested in folk music or folk dancing (Halmos 2000:34).

During the periods that I attended *táncház* events, I encountered a broad age range of participants (roughly 16-60). The average age depended on the particular *táncház*

²¹⁰ There are Men's solo dances, and women's chain dances, yet the repertoire in *táncház* is comprised mostly of couple dances (Hooker 2005).

²¹¹ Indeed, until the advent of staged dance in the mid 20th century, it appears that it was quite uncommon, and likely inappropriate, for married adults to dance with anyone except his/her spouse (and remained so except for among performers).

(weekly event), as each tended to attract its own regular crowd.²¹² Nevertheless the contemporary *tánc ház* cannot be described as a youth movement. Further, many who participate are married. While the particular role in the lives of adolescents has not been retained, this does not mean that *tánc ház* has lost its socializing qualities.

The literature on the *tánc ház* revival does not mention it, yet the *tánc ház* continues to be a sexually charged atmosphere; a “courtship” environment. I learned this initially by my participation in the dance event. In an upsetting but revealing incident, I learned that there are certain implicit rules about with whom to dance. One evening I had danced with a man to whom I had been introduced in the past by another *tánc ház* goer. I enjoyed the dance, as he was very skilled and led me adeptly through a dance with which I was not familiar. A few days later, at another *tánc ház* event, a woman confronted me about having danced with this man, exclaiming that because he was fighting with his wife, I had been inappropriate by dancing with him.²¹³ It is perhaps telling that the only *tánc ház* goers that expressed discomfort with the gender relations were foreigners.²¹⁴ An ethnic Hungarian woman raised in England told me that the gender roles in *tánc ház* annoyed her, while an

²¹² Because of the decentralized nature of the *tánc ház* and the specificities of each weekly event, it is quite difficult to represent its participants statistically. It is important to note that the participant base is constantly in flux. We find people who have been actively involved in *tánc ház* since the start (in most cases musicians or performative dancers), those who are of that generation but have only recently become involved, and many who returned after years of absence. There is a constant influx of young people as well; some children of the first generation, who grew up in *tánc ház* circles, and others who were inspired by other sources. Many youths who are in ensembles, while they do not frequent *tánc házes*, go to the camps

²¹³ Indeed, spontaneous comments during interviews revealed similar views about the sexual nature of the dance: In one interview, a Transylvanian Hungarian who currently lives in Australia and has taken up folk dancing in the last few years told me that she had been confronted a number of times with the assumption that, as a woman traveling alone to folk dance camps, she must be looking for sexual adventure. The fact that she was married did not discourage this view. In another interview, responding to my question about why he no longer frequents *tánc ház*, one man stated: “I don’t want to dance with just anyone anymore, I mean its practically having sex”.

²¹⁴ I do not mean to argue that no Hungarians would be made uncomfortable in this setting, but only that the Hungarians who attend *tánc ház* did not express discomfort to me, reflecting, perhaps the underrepresentation of “liberals and leftists”. Because foreigners are often introduced to the dances abroad and are ignorant of the local political discourses (most don’t speak Hungarian), they are less likely to reflect the divide I describe in chapter 6. Indeed we often find foreigners who are left leaning in *tánc ház*. In general when faced with such expression these foreigners did not *tánc ház*, seeing it as the sentiment of isolated individuals.

American woman was frustrated that men would refuse to be led, even when she knew the footwork better. While perhaps not explicitly intended to, gender roles in *táncház* point to expectations about gender roles outside of *táncház*. Another example may help to illustrate this connection. At one camp, I danced late at night with a man who had drunk quite a bit of alcohol. He insisted on talking me through each step of the dance, while becoming frustrated that I was not responsive enough to his lead. After the dance was over, he lectured me about how in the dance the man was in control and that I must do what he says in order to learn this better. He then suggested that women like me do not know our place in the gendered order, implying that the gender roles in the dance were a model for how the genders should relate. While this example is the most explicit, many *táncház* goers, male and female, stressed to me not only the complementary gender roles in the dance, but in life. Some defended the female dance part against feminist allegations, claiming that it is interesting and fun. Others stressed that both on the dance floor and in life, gender roles should be complimentary, not interchangeable. The idea that women should not be “careerists” was particularly stressed. Indeed, women shied away from terms describing themselves as independent or strong, not wanting to be confused with “feminists” or “careerists”. Cowan (1990) argues that in the context of the dance event, gender roles are not just enacted, but also contested, revealing that there is not a simple unidirectional influence. Nevertheless, the recognition of the relationship between the associative dance event and gender socialization opens up a space to consider in what other ways the dance event and the mother tongue paradigm may be connected with socialization.

Dance events are characterized by heightened physical and emotive states. Alcohol features prominently at *táncház* events, especially among men, many of

whom have adopted the “traditional” (male) village practice of brandy drinking.²¹⁵ In the *táncház* revival this was not always the case, for, as many longtime participants pointed out, unlike the current era, during the socialist period alcohol had not been permitted in the houses of culture, where most *táncház*es took place. Nevertheless, the role of drinking brandy was considered a ritual related to village sociality, as illustrated in its use in greeting guests at the first *táncház* (Striker 1987:112). Even without alcohol, however, the dances themselves are conducive to “emotive states”. Dancing involves an acceleration of heartbeat, increased perspiration, a certain degree of dizziness (for the woman), and intimate physical contact. Dance cycles are punctuated with dances of different tempos and gendered participant bases. Solo dances-are for men only²¹⁶, others are for couples, and a few are group dances. Further, some are slow dances, while others are marked by their quick tempo. Dancers may often accompany slower dances with song.²¹⁷

The main body of dances, couple dances, involves intimate contact between partners. Skilled dancing requires that dancers coordinate rhythmically with each other and with the music. The musicians are watching the dancers as well, quickening, slowing down, or ornamenting the music in order to facilitate the dance. While in the case of solo dances, men show their prowess to spectators, in couple dances, much of their skill is focused on “dancing” (*táncoltat*) their partners. A good male dancer entertains the woman by leading her with precision and providing her

²¹⁵ See Fél and Hófer (1969) for a discussion of brandy drinking among men and “áldomás” in Hungarian villages. For a recent discussion of Hungarian wine drinking practices and gender, see Darvas (2003). See also Cowan (1990) for an investigation into commensality and gender socialization.

²¹⁶ There are women’s dances as well, although these are not solo dances, but rather circle dances. While many people are familiar with these dances, I saw them practiced in *táncház* settings only very rarely. This contrasts with the ubiquitous presence of the male dances. Women have taken to learning the men’s solo dances in the instructional period. They do not, however, perform the dance in front of the band once the *táncház* begins. This would violate the “traditional” gendered etiquette of the event. See Hooker 2005 for a similar account.

with the opportunity to engage in interesting steps, perhaps most notably the turn (*forгатás*). Turns, often done several times in succession, can be a somewhat dizzying experience. An element of the man's skill is located in his ability to determine how much of this is enjoyable for the woman, and when enough is enough, in order create a balance between comfort and excitement in the dance. The motifs of the dance allow men to build rest periods into the dance, during which footwork is simpler and heartbeat may slow. These rest periods are also opportunities for conversation. Slow dances, which may be occupied with song, also provide a prolonged opportunity for conversation. One camp-goer reported that she had been told that a particular slow dance is colloquially called "the baby maker", because of the intimacy promoted.²¹⁸

The relative straightforwardness of the relationship between good form within the dance and gendered etiquette (socialization) allows us to imagine that good form in the dance event may be connected to other kinds of socialization, particularly relating to place, for, despite the contradictory and varied views expressed within *táncház* (discussed later), *táncház* practices involve participants in a relationship with specific places, mostly in Transylvania. I have emphasized the physicality of the dance for important reasons, for heightened physical states have been shown to be tied to emotions (Schachter and Singer 1962). Indeed, studies show the human tendency to relate heightened physical states with emotions, such as "love" (Dutton and Aron 1974). Such work on the "misattribution of arousal" (Schachter and Singer 1962), suggests that we consider the relationship between heightened physical states and emotions in *táncház*; that is, to consider how visceral experience is connected to belief. Heightened physical states in the dance may

²¹⁸ This campgoer was from the United States and not of Hungarian origin. She did not speak Hungarian.

reinforce emotions about Hungarianness through a kind of patriotism, or love of territory. In her discussion of an East German border town, Daphne Berdahl has pointed to the manner in which a sense of *heimat* is reinforced through the practices of singing “Eichsfeld” songs and through pilgrimage, which contribute to the “construction of a meaningful landscape”, and thus, to the construction and maintenance of local identities (Berdahl 1999:82). In the case of *táncház*, such place-oriented technologies originating in local places have been “nationalized” and connected with practices of tourism not unlike pilgrimage.²¹⁹ While the communicative system in village dance may have coordinated with appropriate village sociality perhaps primarily with regard to gender roles, *táncház* forms of tact cannot be reduced to this alone, for *táncház* practices connect etiquette and Hungarianness to particular places.

Despite the transplantation of *táncház* to the youth club environment, the model emulated was one adopted from the village, the icon being events in Szék and other villages. Many participants visited villages, especially in Transylvania, conducting “ethnographic research”, seeing for themselves first hand “how it is done”. A central practice of *táncház*, therefore, is spending time in villages, especially those in Transylvania. Longtime *táncház* goers accounted to me their sense of adventure highlighted by the semi-forbidden status of such trips and the experience of arriving in a village with only the name of an acquaintance of a friend of a friend; and of relying on the famous hospitality of Transylvanian villagers. They also spoke of how they helped these “oppressed” people by sharing in their pride (Ronay 1992). Contemporary revivalists encounter an infrastructure that has evolved across 30 years of *táncház* tourism. These practices related to place are

²¹⁹ See Crain (1992) for a discussion of pilgrimage and its relationship to place, and Dubisch 1990 for the relationship of pilgrimage and national symbols.

important in the production of particular notions of Hungarianness and authenticity related to territory. All dances are connected with place, as each is associated with a particular village (or region) on a map of greater Hungary. But because a high percentage of the *táncház* repertoire is Transylvanian and most *táncház* tourism is focused there, these practices are foremost connected with Transylvania. Indeed, it can be said that one learns the geography of greater Hungary, with special emphasis on Transylvania, through participation in the *táncház*. Even if one does not visit Transylvania, he/she learns a geography of Transylvania through a vocabulary of folk dances. This is quite often reinforced by actual visits.²²⁰

Transylvanian villages and the practices of their inhabitants stand as icons of moral order. Yet interpretations among *táncház* goers of the kind of moral order the Transylvanian village represents varies. Transylvanian villages, like the dances themselves, can represent small-scale agrarian entrepreneurialism (a perfect balance between the collective and the individual, as the dances themselves are understood), or an idealized and unproblematized precapitalist rural economy. Many, seeing folk art as a kind of vessel of ancient practices, consider Transylvanian villagers to have preserved the knowledge, indeed, the wisdom, of the ancient Hungarians who arrived in the Carpathian basin in the 9th century. Finally, Transylvania represents the unity of the crown lands of St Steven and thus the heroic past of the Hungarians as rulers of an empire, rather than the losers of history. The ways in which contemporary discourses meet with *táncház* is reflected in conversations and language use. Just as collective dancing and singing in the village or in *táncház* may be said to produce a “conscience collective”, so verbal practices amongst *táncház* goers represent a form of “collective representation” (Durkheim 1912).

²²⁰ Debates continue between various factions over whether individual *táncház*es should only focus on one village or region, and whether the music and dances of other regions should be engaged in at village camps.

Song and Conversation: Language in Táncház

Beyond songs sung during slow dances and the late night (drunken) collective (male) singing, song also breaks out, for example, on birthdays when *táncház* goers sing “Zsuzsa’s greeting”, exhibiting the shared repertoire of *táncház* goers, reinforced and broadened relative to the amount of time an individual spends in *táncház* environments.²²¹ Mostly of the “old style”, these songs introduce the themes of love, agrarian hardship, and sometimes specifically Hungarian hardship.²²² Conversations introduce contemporary themes into the *táncház*. While folk song instruction takes place on the dance floor during breaks between dance lessons or dance suites longtime goers often form small groups around tables, where they sit and talk (indeed, some never get around to dancing). Conversations engaged in at *táncház* events are an important in relating past and present in the construction of collective memory. While the forms of dance and music offer what appears to be unadulterated past, conversations reflect the present through the dominant issues that arise, their urgency, and their discursive features. Often revealing quite different views than those expressed in interviews, such spontaneous conversations in *táncház* provided an important ethnographic source for this study. These observations were made during my fieldwork in 1994 and 1995, and thus reflect a particular moment in *táncház*, the context of which will be discussed in detail in the next two chapters.

I was often told by participants that *táncház* provides a neutral environment in which people do not engage in “talking about politics” (*nem politizálnak*). Indeed,

²²¹ Singing lessons are often part of *táncház*es, usually occurring in the break between dance suites. Camps usually feature singing as well.

²²² These songs are often about the “poor Hungarian lads” taken away to serve in the Austrian army. A standing army was instituted in the early 18th century and the *verbunk*, a male solo dance, takes its name from the *Werbung Kommando*, and its coercive recruitment practices -often involving dance and alcohol (Lányi et al 1983).

they stressed that *táncház* is a cultural pastime free of politics. Like Simmel, they believe that in sociable environments conversation is not subordinate to its content. Yet if collective memory is produced through the interaction of institutionalized practices and historical context, then we must see conversation as an important conduit for the way contemporary conditions inform meaning in the *táncház*.

During my time in *táncház* environments, I found that certain “political” themes came up quite consistently. Casual talk often included critical comments about “liberals”, “Communists”, and Jews, usually in binary opposition to Hungarians and implicitly, *táncház* goers. Perhaps the most revealing discussion I had about this was in an interview with a student of anthropology. She described the difference between her own reaction to anti-Semitic expression (*zsidózás*) in *táncház* and that of her friend, a French woman of Hungarian Jewish origin who had come to Hungary to discover her roots. While the student told me that she did not consider herself a “normal” *táncház* goer: “a good Christian *táncház* goer who wants Transylvania back”, she was nevertheless shocked at the discomfort her French friend experienced “when the boys started singing ‘stinky Jewish trader’ or one of those songs”. Her testimony was telling in terms of a difference she perceived in the worldviews of “liberal-leftists” and “*táncház* goers”. While she herself did not have negative things to say about “liberals”, her description of her friend was telling: “well she’s French (laughs), this person who belongs on the social-left who is researching her Jewish identity-she was terribly sensitive to these things”.

Another telling example was a conversation about Hungarian literature. When one *táncház* goer suggested that the writer Kodolányi²²³ was representative of great Hungarian literature, another insisted that he couldn’t be, because he was a

²²³ Among other themes, Kodolányi wrote about the one child system (*egyke*), discussed above.

Jew. I asked whether someone's being Jewish disqualified them from representing Hungarian culture. Yes, he told me, because they have different values. Another added that Jews represent a more liberal strand than Hungarian in general. Yet another stated that the Communist party had been made up of Jews.²²⁴ I also encountered a conflation of Israelis and Jews. For example, when one dancer told me that the "Jews are buying up Budapest", I asked if they were Hungarian Jews or foreign Jews, he responded that there was no difference between the two.²²⁵ Conflation of liberalism with Jews was also quite common, as when on numerous occasions people suggested that voting for the "liberal" party (Alliance of Free Democrats) or protesting nationalist comments were indications of a person's Jewishness. Others made reference to the misuse of city finances by the "liberal" mayor of Budapest and the erasure or censure of national symbols (and on the other hand, protection of Jewish symbols) by his party. In this way, "liberals", Jews and "Communists" (and through both continuity and association, we will see, Socialists too) came to be conflated, while they all stood in opposition to Hungarian.

The content of Hungarianness was another topic frequently discussed in *táncház*. One issue that arose frequently was the question of granting citizenship to ethnic Hungarians "across the borders", an issue upon which citizens voted in a referendum just two months before I finished fieldwork. While some participants told me that opponents of dual citizenship did exist within *táncház* circles, I did not meet anyone who admitted to voting no. In fact, unlike many people I knew outside of *táncház*, who chose to not vote at all in hopes that the results would be nullified

²²⁴ In another situation, one musician asked me why at age 35 I had no children. He warned me that if "the whites" continued to act the way I did in the US, "the blacks" would overtake us. "Don't listen to the Jews when they say you don't need children", he said.

²²⁵ Another person suggested to me that one of the founders of Heritage House is a Jew, and that he secured his job through Jewish connections. He emphasized that this person's liberal leanings were evidence of this. Another told me that this person's socialist era connections in KISZ (The Communist Youth League) indicated his Jewishness as well.

by reducing the number of voters below the threshold required, *táncház* goers insisted that this was an issue that could not be ignored. Indeed, some suggested to me that not voting was the equivalent to voting no. (The referendum will be discussed in detail in chapter 7). Also frequent in *táncház* were conversations about “ancient Hungarians” (*ősmagyarság*). Indeed, many *táncház* goers are self termed ethnographers (*néprajzosok*) or “researchers of Hungarians” (*magyarság kutatók*); terms they used to refer to both amateurs and professionals. In these conversations I frequently encountered alternative histories of and essentializing expressions about Hungarians and other ethnic groups.

At one camp in Transylvania, a man who referred to himself as an independent “researcher of Hungarians” explained to me that “Hungarian culture is the oldest culture in Europe”, and that the wisdom of the Hungarians is the wisdom of Jesus, because, he claimed, the Hungarians are descended from the Sumerians. Another suggested that I read a certain part of the Bible, where the correspondence with Hungarian folk culture is so obvious that it is impossible to overlook. Such assertions about the Christian provenance of Hungarian folk culture were often tied with ideas about Jews. One musician suggested to me “if the Jews had not nailed Jesus to the cross, there would not have been a Holocaust”. Another man told me “history shows that the Jews were punished. Thus, they must have done something to deserve it”. Such critiques extended to the so called “Latin”, or Roman-Catholic, culture and church as well. One man referred to mainstream Hungarians as the “*Latin Magyarság*”, or Romanized Hungarians, asserting that Hungary has been subject to the corrupting cultural current of Roman/Jewish (read urbanist) imperialism since the reign of king Matthias the second half of the 15th century, while others argued that the pagans oppressed by the Christian rulers in the 11th

century were in fact the true Christians.²²⁶ What makes someone Magyar, in many informants' opinions, is the practice of Hungarianness encapsulated first and foremost in language.²²⁷ The view that the specificities of Hungarian language embody a superior spirituality was popular. A self proclaimed shaman who began attending *táncház* in order to familiarize himself with Hungarian culture after he had been "enlightened by god" explained to me the importance of language in the preservation of a uniquely Hungarian Christianity, asserting that Hungarian is the most sacred language spoken by an ethnic group since the fall of Babel. He and others argued that the grammatical structure of Hungarian proved its sacredness.

Táncház goers often referred to the work of art historian Gábor Pap as the source of such ideas. One *táncház* goer told me he was pursuing a PhD in *Magyarság* at the private University of the Philosophical Society of Miskolc, where Pap is a faculty member. Others expressed to me the desire to study with him, and I noticed flyers for this program at *táncház* events. Some suggested that this department was more legitimate than the "official" departments of ethnography, which they considered to be compromised by their continued functioning under the Communists as well as their by "foreign" worldview. Pap's work is concerned with the ancient sources of Hungarian folk art. He argues that the Hungarians, who he suggests brought the crown to the Carpathian basin with them at the time of the conquest, were descended from the Scythians, and that the symbols of the crown can

²²⁶ I should note that this does not mean that there were not Catholic participants. Although many were not church-goers, many participants considered themselves Christian, sometimes specifically Catholic. This critique cannot be seen so much as a Protestant critique, than as a "subaltern" critique, the notion being that Hungarians were already Christian before contact with the "Church", and that the Roman church brought with it colonizing ideologies and practices.

²²⁷ Some even suggested to me that as a Hungarian speaker, I could be "Hungarian" in that sense. This of course contradicted the idea of an absolute distinction between Hungarians and others, Hungarian Jews, for example. Others, claiming that the Hungarian grammatical structure allows for advanced thought, noted famous Hungarian intellectuals-many Jewish-as examples. Some people contradicted themselves, arguing at one moment that anyone can be "Hungarian" (and thus have access to this spirituality) because of language use, and at another that Jews, by embracing Jewishness, were rejecting their Hungarianness.

only be understood according to the a “Manichean Christian”²²⁸ point of view; not by that of the “big church”, whether Byzantine or Roman (1999:554). Pap’s account supports the view that Hungarian culture has been colonized by the Latin culture, exhibited in its relationship to Christianity and the church. In this understanding of Hungarian pagan practices, the folk arts, dance and music included, preserve a particular form of Christianity to which only Hungarians have access through their folk culture. Indeed, in this view of Hungarian folk culture, form, whether it be motifs found in embroidery, music, dance or language, is understood to preserve something not only ancient, but ethical. It is said to preserve, codified in folk art, a way of life that is the key to full spirituality and goodness.

Connected to such arguments about the Hungarian language is the belief that the current academic categorization of Hungarian as a Finno-Ugric language was invented and perpetuated by “foreigners” (first German speakers and later Communists) in whose interest it was to break down Hungarian national identity and claim their territory by “proving” that the Hungarians who conquered the Carpathian basin were primitive tribal latecomers, rather than descendents of the Sumerians or, as Pap claims, that group which in practice held all of Europe under its military control grip(1999:557), the Huns. Indeed, some participants suggested to me that the official field of ethnography was wedded to power and could not be trusted.

An ethnographer with whom I spoke told me that none of these views were representative of *táncház* goers, and that such extremists were harmless and needed to be gracefully tolerated. Indeed, these views are not representative of all *táncház* goers. Yet, not only were these views voiced often by *táncház* goers, I rarely heard

²²⁸ He actually argues that Manichean ideas are a distorted form of the teachings of the apostles Andrew and Philip, who spread “Scythian wisdom”(1999:554).

anyone challenge such views in the *táncház* setting. Indeed, such ideas circulate in the *táncház* setting with only occasional challenge. When, based on the fact that I rarely heard anyone contest them, I suggested that such opinions were common to most *táncház* participants, I was told that while not all agreed, to offer one's disagreement would be *politizálás*, or “talking about politics”; an activity that they felt was inappropriate in social environments like *táncház*. While *politizálás* was deemed inappropriate, the themes discussed above were not considered to be off limits. Rather, challenges to these views were identified as *politizálás*, as if the challenge itself made the issue political.²²⁹ While most informants I interviewed do not agree with my interpretation, on the basis of my participant observation in *táncház* settings, I view *táncház* as a *space of tolerance toward such expression on the basis that it went uncontested most of the time*. These tropes all work towards defining Hungarianness either by associating Hungarians with something or distinguishing Hungarians from others through binary opposition. They connect Transylvania with Hungarianness by locating it as a treasury of ancient practices and a site of an idealized moral economy of the past. They oppose Hungarians with “liberals” and Jews (and through association, Communists and Socialists). Adherence to good form keeps argument about the details to a minimum, allowing a certain kind of consensus to emerge, aided, perhaps, by emotive states.

Conclusion: The Spectrum of Community-Produced or Expressed?

While the next two chapters will help elucidate the broader context for the conversations described above, I want to stress here the relationship of form, conversation, and emotive states. In this chapter I have suggested that there is a link between form and material practices and the internalization or practice of

²²⁹ Some people told me that this was the problem with the Jews: instead of pursuing consensus, they pursued difference.

particular values, which reinforces a framework of sense and “mutual definition” amongst practitioners. Crucial to this argument are my own experiences within the *táncház* setting. From the time I began as a novice *táncház* goer, I have undergone a transformation. While at first the music meant nothing to me except for “Hungarian music”, now, upon hearing it, my body responds with visceral knowledge of the corresponding dance. I respond by summoning up not simply the associated dance, but the name of a region or village from which it originates. I associate these dances with my trips to Transylvania and even to particular villages.

Through this process I experience rural Transylvania as source of Hungarianness, of Hungarian folk culture. Indeed, much as Bruce Chatwin describes Australian aborigines “singing up the land”(Chatwin 1987)²³⁰, through the practice of folk dance as mother tongue, *táncház* goers conjure up an idyllic pastan image of an idealized Hungarian agrarian community located in Transylvania. As Keith Basso writes of Apache stories about geographical places, “narratives transformed its referent from a geographical site into something resembling a theater, a natural stage upon the land...where significant moral dramas unfolded in the past (1996:66). Transylvania is not simply the site of historical events, but also a geographical placeholder for an imagined past. While each individual may interpret the connections differently,²³¹ drawing on the multiple and often contradictory elements available, it does not require great leap to feel that there is something special or peculiar about Hungarians, about Transylvania, about their connection. Indeed, given the conversations I have encountered in *táncház* and the visceral experiences I have had with “Hungarian” dance and music and Transylvanian

²³⁰ While Chatwin was a travel writer, and no anthropologist, and indeed has been criticized for fabricating, his discussion of “singing up the land” vividly grasps the relationship of song/dance and phenomenological memory.

²³¹ While he does not dwell on it, Basso (1996) notes this too.

villages, it is not difficult to emote a sympathy for things Hungarian; for simple peasants; for lost glory, for a history of oppression, for a rich expressive culture, for a way of life that is “disappearing” through urbanization, modernization, globalization, ethnic assimilation. It is hard, indeed, for me not to think of ethnic Hungarian Transylvanians as Hungarians. I was not alone when I lapsed from time to time in saying “here in Hungary”, when standing in a Transylvanian village.

As Livingston has argued about revivals, “the purpose of the movement is twofold: 1) to serve as a cultural opposition and as an alternative to mainstream culture, and 2) to improve existing culture through values based on historical value and authenticity expressed by revivalists”(1999:68). This is consistent with the statements of *táncász* goers, for while they state that *táncász* is simply a pastime, they also assert that it will contribute to wellbeing of Hungarians, that it is a resource for community making, that it is an important tool for *művelődés*; indeed, a tool to be used against an impending globalization. That is, while they claim that *táncász* is not a movement, but a leisure time activity, they also see it as an ethical practice connected to Hungarianness. As Livingston points out, “networks of individuals that form social movements are distinguished from other groups commonly studied by anthropologists” due to their fluidity of membership, ideological focus and impermanence (see also Winthrop 1991), and revivals are further characterized by their non territoriality and bringing together of people who might not have met except for their revivalist activities (1999 72). To “create a sense of community”, she tells us, revivalists produce magazines, journals, recordings and radio stations to tie people dispersed in space, “while festivals and competitions bring people closer together”(1999:73). It is there that revivalists “actively learn and

experience the revivalist ethos and aesthetic code at work and socialize among other ‘insiders’”(1999:73).

Anthropologists have long attended to this question of community by drawing upon the insights of Emile Durkheim. While as with most approaches to ritual, Durkheim’s notion of a self regulating realm does not deal well with change, his notion of “conscience collective”, collective effervescence, points to something visceral, emotional. Borrowing from psychoanalysis (specifically from the work of Jacques Lacan) Slavoj Zizek argues that “the national Thing” exists as long as members of the community believe in it; it is literally an effect of this belief in itself”(1993:202). But he suggests that it is enjoyment, “materialized in a set of social practices and transmitted though a set of national myths that structure these practices” that provides its ontological consistency (1993:202). Anthropologist Charles Hirschkind has also attended to “the relation between sensory experiences and traditional practices...from the perspective of a cultural practice through which the perpetual capacities of the subject are honed and, thus, through which the world these capacities inhabit is brought into being, rendered perceptible”(2001; 623, 624). Hirschkind argues that the practice of listening to sermons on cassette tapes among Muslims in Egypt as a “practice of ethical self-discipline”, contributes to how practitioners “hone an ethically responsive sensorium; the requisite sensibilities that they see as enabling them to live as devout Muslims in a world increasingly ordered by secular rationalities”(2001:624). Hirschkind is emphatic that this linkage between listening and sense is not simply “established metaphorically, but also through discipline, the training and inculcation of sensory habits”, including bodily dispositions (2001:628). Hirschkind’s intervention allows us to connect folk dance as

another tongue to frameworks of sense—sense and sensibility— by examining how disciplinary practices may inform emotions and judgments.

Just as Hirschkind's listeners may learn, beyond the moral lessons of the sermons, “the ethical habits and the organization of sensory and motor skills necessary for inhabiting the world in a manner considered to be appropriate for Muslims, so *táncász* goers learn those appropriate for a certain kind of *Hungarianness* through the practice of a place-based folk dance as mother tongue. Transylvanian villages and Hungarianness are tied together by disciplined practices of folk dance as mother tongue, which includes dance event etiquette, and place-based tourism. Yet how these connections are understood and what they mean, vary historically in relationship to the political economic context. With Halbwachs' attention to the dialectic of form and meaning in mind, it is now time to examine the greater political economic processes that have contributed to the emphasis on the essentialized ethnonational “community” I witnessed in contemporary *táncász* circles.

CHAPTER 6
Socialist State Formation, the Rise of *Táncáz*, and the Origins of the Post Socialist Cultural Turn

As I argued in chapter 5, collective memory is formed through the interaction of form and material practices, on the one hand, and political economic circumstances informing their interpretation, on the other. I suggested that associational activities, even when uninformed by a unified ideology or agenda, may tie individuals together through the practice of “good form”, producing a shared framework of sense. Frameworks of sense are by no means limited to the sociable moments in which they are produced, nor can they be reduced simply to expressions of alternative identities, for they are also rendered visible in moments of public or political action. This relationship with the political sphere is revealed at moments in which collective memory appears to have relevance to the political context in such a way that, despite contestation and change, a “community of sense” congeals in action. Stressing this aspect of collective memory, Walter Benjamin wrote:

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it “the way it really was”. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger...The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers (1969:255).²³²

If collective memory is reproduced in part as a response to contemporary “dangers”, then their apprehension requires an examination of circumstances external to *táncáz* yet within which it “remembers” and of such “moments of danger”, when interaction with the political sphere is made visible. How this interaction takes place or is made visible may vary, I demonstrate, in relation to the particular relationships

²³² He further writes: “the same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it”(1969:255).

between the political and economic, state and society. While “moments of danger” may represent the “shock experience” that Benjamin believed was required to reawaken critical memory, the results may be far from the revolutionary ones which he hoped for. This chapter examines political and economic circumstances in the Socialist period in order to reveal the mutual influence between *táncház* and the political process, and to illuminate why ethnonationalist sentiment has become palpable in *táncház* today. While the relationship between *táncház* and the political sphere may not always be obvious, I argue that we can apprehend it in “moments of danger”, discussed in this chapter and the next.

The chapter begins with a discussion of what has been identified as a “cultural turn” associated with the “post socialist condition” (Fraser 1997), and some of the processes that may have contributed to its local articulation. By examining the fluxing relationship between society and the state, I show that this “cultural turn” in Hungary, while associated with the “post socialist condition”, has roots in the late socialist period. In order to do this, the discussion turns back in time to 1956 to reveal transformations in socialist cultural politics and the shifting relationship between *népi* movements and the political sphere in the socialist era. I show that in contrast to the earlier *népi* movement, *táncház* did not engage in the formal political process directly, confining its activities instead to the cultural, or expressive, sphere. Yet I also reveal a complex relationship between *táncház* and the political sphere – notably in the “political manifestations” related to Hungarian minorities in neighboring counties framed in the language of human rights – our first moment of danger, and the changing economic sphere, especially the increase of tourism and related professionalization due to the liberalization of the economy.

Culture Talk and the Cultural Turn: the Obscuration of the Social?

Where the focus of many so-called rightist parties in Europe has shifted to fear of immigrants, especially of Muslims (Bunzl 2005), the Hungarian right remains primarily focused on “internal enemies” – Jews and Gypsies, on ethnic Hungarians in the neighboring states, and on the neo-imperialist encroachment of globalization represented by the EU, the IMF, international investors, and NGOs. This apparent difference may obscure similarities between these approaches, for both show signs of what Verena Stolke argues is a cultural fundamentalism which “emphasizes differences of cultural heritage and their incommensurability”(1995:4). She points out that this “heightened sense of primordial identity, cultural difference and exclusiveness” which takes xenophobia to be part of human nature serves to make immigrants scapegoats for socioeconomic problems. The achievement of political and civic citizenship in the neoliberal period has come at the price of social citizenship. Yet, rejecting materialist explanations, many Hungarians see the growing differentiation between social strata not as a function of the economic system, but as evidence of conflict between incommensurable cultures.

The conditions brought about by neoliberal economic policies seem implicated in the spread of communitarian logics, among them, populist ethnonationalism, worldwide (Stolke 1995). As dispossession and the roll back of social citizenship are realized around the globe, recourse to ethnonationalist reasoning appears to be on the rise. It is telling, perhaps, that some *táncház* goers (and one Heritage House employee) pointed explicitly to Samuel Huntington, whose book *the Clash of Civilizations* was available in Hungarian translation at vendors’ booths at some *táncház* venues. In his 1993 Foreign Affairs article with the same

title²³³ Huntington asserts that while “nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs...the principal conflicts will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future”(1993:1).

Huntington’s essentializing and dehistoricized proscription phrased as a description or prediction appears self-evident to many, not least to Hungarian folk revivalists. While fluxing generations of *táncház* goers have participated for many reasons in the years since the revival began in the 1970s, an ethnonationalist sentiment is palpable in their gatherings today. Most participants are not radical rightists, tending to vote center right instead, yet they tend to share essentializing views about culture and ethnicity, expressed not least in their disparaging views toward “liberals”; as we have seen, the idea that liberals are actually Jews is widespread. Most revivalists that I met quite vocally support citizenship for Hungarians over the borders and voted accordingly in a 2004 referendum on the issue (discussed in detail in the next chapter). How can we explain this turn toward culture?

Dissent during the late socialist years was often formulated around the logic of the nation. Katherine Verdery has examined how the “overwhelming presence of the master-symbol ‘nation’ in Romania’s political space limits what opposition intellectuals and politicians can do with symbols like ‘civil society’, ‘democracy’ and ‘Europe’” She concludes that the monopolization of institutional forces and the symbol of the nation “compels all other political actors in Romania to ‘nationalize’ their political instruments-and in doing so, to strengthen ‘nation’ as a political symbol even further”(1996:129). In the postsocialist period, “ethnonationalism”,

²³³ Offered, by the way, as a free promotional download when I visited the journal’s website in 2005 and 2006).

most famously in the case of the former Yugoslavia, has become a much-noted force in the region. While popular journalism has tended to explain this “rise of ethnonationalism” as a return to atavistic antagonisms stemming from the disappearance of the totalitarian state, such explanations ignore the way in which political processes have helped to enforce, if not produce, the idea of the ethnation (Hayden 1996). Anthropologists have pointed to processes that construct ethnicity, and their relationship to the idea of self-determination (Hayden 1996, King 1997), while philosopher Slavoj Žižek suggests that “the more that the logic of Capital becomes universal, the more its opposite will assume features of “irrational fundamentalism”, for the “supposedly neutral liberal-democratic framework produces nationalist ‘closure’ as its inherent opposite” (1993:220).

At the same time, liberal democracy cannot be universalized, Žižek argues, producing, as it does, haves and have-nots. As such, it opens up a space for negative judgment of itself in the form of fundamentalism (Žižek 1993:220). In the postsocialist environment in which the dominance of a market economy and the rapid breakdown of the welfare state under the sign of liberal democracy have been accompanied by deepening inequality, Hungarian rightists point to “liberals” as the source of contemporary problems in Hungary. Indeed, to many rightists, through their successful adaptation to the market, advocacy for minority rights and the suppression of nationalistic expression²³⁴, alliance with Socialists, and their supposed Jewishness, “liberals”, demonstrate their *un-Hungarianness*.²³⁵ This so-called “rise of

²³⁴ One *táncház* goer pointed out to me that the “liberals” had fought against having the national symbol on identification cards. It appears that under the MDF tenure, SZDSZ had opposed the version of the Hungarian coat of arms with St Steven’s crown, favoring the “republican version” adopted during the 1848 revolution that features a laurel wreath in the place of the crown. It should be noted that in the same period a play in sounds became popular on the right in which ZSDSZ, which sounds like the word for Jew (*zsidó*), was substituted for SZDSZ.

²³⁵ Renwick (2006) points out that one of the supposed characteristics of “ethical civil society” in the late socialism was its relationship to consensus. “It viewed ‘internal differences’ pejoratively” and sought to

ethnonationalism” is not unconnected to what others have identified as an “advancing tide of populism” in the region (Krastev 2006). It is perhaps no coincidence that local scholars often use terms such as “national populist” (Kis 1995) or “nationalist populist”(Zizek 1993) to describe what popular western journalists refer to as “the right”. As we have already seen, the plural meanings of words such as *nép* and, for example, its “Yugoslav” (and Russian) equivalent *narod*, referring to people or *volk*, elude English speakers, as do regional histories of agrarian populism, too often collapsed into a narrative emphasizing the recent socialist past.²³⁶

Noting a general rise of populism in Europe, including attempts by establishment parties to recapture such themes and messages, Ivan Krastev points to central Europe as “the capital of the new populism” (Krastev 2006). He suggests that populists have risen to power connected with anticorruption movements. While liberals introduced an anti-corruption discourse in many parts of postsocialist society, he claims, popular understanding of corruption has diverged from that of liberals. First, Krastev argues, while liberals perceive corruption as an institutional issue requiring more transparency and institutional reforms, in the eyes of the public, corruption is a moral issue which requires honest politicians. Second, while liberals regard anti-corruption discourse as being about fairness, for the public it is a

suppress them, “whereas political society sees them as normal”(2006:303). Citing Staniszak, Cohen and Arato (1994 59 66) also recognize this tendency, which they see as the result of the polarization of state and society in these systems and as having a continued effect (in populism, for example). Indeed, *táncász* goes often blamed Jews for wanting to be different, rather than “being Hungarian”. It is true that the late socialist and postsocialist periods have seen an accelerated renaissance of Judaism among those of Jewish descent, many of whom were not raised as Jewish, either out of post Shoa fear, the Communist party’s anti religious thrust, or because of the secularist tendencies of their parents. See András Kovács (1994)for discussion of Jewish revival.

²³⁶ In this dissertation I employ the terms right and left as they have been used conventionally in Europe. However, as I have argued elsewhere (Taylor 2006), there is good reason to interrogate such usages. Please see the literature discussing integralism, such as Murer (2005) and Gingrich (2006). Further, some Hungarian intellectuals pointed out to me that they preferred the term conservative for those parties on “the right”, pointing out that these parties emphasize conservation of the social state.

discourse about growing social inequality. Third, while liberals tend to believe that corruption derives from a too powerful and large state, and accordingly advocate rapid privatization and a downscaling of the state, a majority of people believe that the power of the market is to blame, and thus favor “revision of the most scandalous privatization deals”(Krastev 2006). Finally, while liberals use anti-corruption discourse to legitimize capitalism, the “conspiracy-minded majority” see in it the opportunity to delegitimize capitalism “without the risk of being accused of communism”(Krastev 2006).

Krastev’s observations may contribute to a general theory about the rise of populism in Central Europe. He does not attend to the specificities that reinforce populist discourses, however, nor their continuity with the socialist, or even pre socialist, periods. Moreover, although characteristics specific to East Central Europe are helpful in explaining the “rise of ethnonationalism” there, many other scholars (Jameson 1992, Fraser 1997, Mamdani 2005) have brought our attention to a much more geographically diffuse “cultural turn” rising in parallel with the fall of socialism, perhaps even defining the “post socialist condition”(Fraser 1997). Mahmoud Mamdani (2005), for example, points to the “rapid politicizing” of the term culture arising from the discursive vacuum left at the end of the cold war. Having become a dominant framework for “thinking and speaking-or not-about politics... culture talk assumes that every culture has a tangible essence that defines it, and it then explains politics as a consequence of that essence” (Mamdani 2005:17). Rather than materialist explanations that examine the role of the economy or the state, argues Mamdani, the use of culture to explain political events such as 9/11 is becoming ubiquitous. Not surprisingly, he notes the popularity of Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” discourse.

Perhaps we should not be surprised that culture talk is becoming dominant as the socialist paradigm is losing its hold, just as “the melting away of opposing global forces and hard territorial boundaries after the Cold War has fostered a triumphant neoliberalism as the single source of any agenda for social change and development”(Kalb 2002:321). Indeed, the rise of culture talk has paralleled the diminishment of the social state as a viable political opportunity and the concomitant withering away of the emphasis on social citizenship. This has consequences for the ways in which political issues are articulated. While, as we have seen, *népi* movements have always focused in the cultural sphere, the circumscription of the sphere of politics under socialism, the conception of a “sovereign” space of the people, the nation, or *gesellschaft* as outside of Communism (and later Capitalism), and the more geographically diffuse “cultural turn” associated with the broader postsocialist condition can be said to have influenced *táncház*’s further “retreat” into the cultural sphere-into “expressive culture”. The following discussion of the Revolution of 1956 will help to elucidate a shift in the political field, which led to a focus on rights for Hungarians over the borders among populists after the Revolution, and a further shift into the cultural domain with *táncház*. I then examine *táncház* in the context of a liberalizing economic sphere, in which culture came to have increasing economic value and informed political expression, sometimes even dissent. These conditions contributed to the emergence of the “moment of danger” in 1988-89.

The Revolution of 1956 and its Aftermath

The Revolution of 1956 plays an important role in the collective memory of contemporary Hungarians. Its story is a multifaceted one, contested to this day, for, in any revolutionary situation, as Karl Marx (1991) so aptly illustrated, the

coalitions and individuals involved do not represent one coherent view.²³⁷

Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the brief period of intense unrest now referred to as the Revolution was spurred by the “forced retirement” of Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his expulsion from the Party due to his reformist policies. In the days of the Revolution, when Nagy reassumed the position of Prime Minister, symbols of Hungarianness, especially those referencing the 1848 Revolution, appeared in abundance. Demands were made for the creation of democracy, national sovereignty, the establishment of workers councils, and the cessation of the collectivization of agricultural production (Hanák 1991:217). Workers councils, young intellectuals, and students played important roles in the revolutionary events.

The idea espoused by many today that Nagy was a counterrevolutionary or intended to put an end to communism in Hungary is problematic. Nagy was a reformist of the post-Stalinist era, and his reforms presaged those made under his successor János Kádár, who took power once the Soviet army had crushed the Revolution with military might. Many of the demands of the various factions that supported Nagy adhered to “communist” ideals, such as giving more direct power to the workers, yet they also emphasized justice for the agrarian population. Yet, many people understood the Revolution to be one against a foreign power occupying Hungary, and indeed an important demand was that Soviet troops take leave. This is important to note, because the Revolution is often interpreted as one that pitted “true Hungarians”, against “foreigners” – Soviets and Jews.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, many local leftists were purged from spheres of influence in favor of those Hungarians

²³⁷ As I write this in 2006, the year of the 50th anniversary of the revolution, political parties continue the struggle to define their relationship to this event, and popular discourses circulate about what it “really was”.

who supported a Soviet “urbanist” line, many of whom had been educated in the USSR and returned to Hungary only after Communist power had been secured. Nagy himself was one such “Muscovite” communist; yet, he differed from many of the others in significant ways. Unlike many “urbanist” Muscovites, Nagy came from a rural background, sympathized with agricultural workers, and “gravitated towards those who held nationalist and pro-peasant views”(Granville 2001:11). Further, he was a gentile, while many of the others were Jews (Granville 1990:11). With this set of oppositions in play, Nagy, while still a Muscovite and dedicated to Marxism-Leninism, can be made to fit the role of “real Hungarian” resisting “foreign” and “urban” impositions. The Revolution may thus be easily inserted into a narrative of *népi* versus *urbánus* or Hungarian versus foreigner in which Nagy is cast as a real, even populist, Hungarian.

During the Revolution, populists resurfaced in the political sphere in a number of ways. Not only were they the main force behind the Petőfi Circle, the debate club (named after 1848 revolutionary poet Sándor Petőfi) that hosted public debates criticizing the regime in the period leading up to the Revolution²³⁸, but populists also reestablished the Peasant Party (as the Petőfi Party). *Népi* writers produced a large body of critical work in which demands corresponding with those of the French revolution were articulated, “but without equating liberty with big capital or equality with centralized state power” (Borbándi 1989: 471). The journal

²³⁸ NÉKOSZ collegers were well represented on the board of the Petőfi Circle, the debate club of the Association of Democratic Youths (DISZ), authorized in 1956. Supported by the Writers Union, whose president was none other than *népi* writer and former Peasant Party politician Péter Veres, the circle became increasingly open in its criticism of the regime headed by former prime minister Mátyás Rákóczi, who had returned to the post when Nagy was dismissed. When students from the Technical University read aloud their demands, representatives of the Writers Union added their own, including that NÉKOSZ be reestablished and that democratic practices be restored (Ötvös 1989:71).

Free Word (*Szabad Szó*), also reestablished at that time, circulated these ideas.

István Deák writes:

The populists were enthusiastic about the Revolution but because they were generally more interested in public welfare than in the elusive concept of freedom, they were among the first to warn, during the Revolution, against dismantling the welfare state created by the Communist system” (1999:56).

Borbándi does not believe any of the writers were against Socialism. Rather, he writes, “the debate was around whether our socialism should be the faithful copy of our patrons or to the adaptation of universal principles to the nature of Hungarians and their economic situation” (1989:474).

Power shifts were noticeable in populist circles in the revolutionary days, with those perceived as “complicit” in the regime replaced in positions of power by those with more credibility (Borbándi 1989:465).²³⁹ Despite their “oppositional” status, however, “not a single populist writer was imprisoned either under Rákosi or under Kádár” (Deák 1999:56). After the Revolution, most of the writers signed the manifesto “protesting the UN’s condemnation of the suppression of the October Revolution”, despite the fact that the Writers Association, headed by populists, had “launched the country’s last appeal to the free world for assistance” (Deák 1999:57).²⁴⁰ The line between “sides” was as blurry and as fractured as ever and the image of the Revolution and the populist role in it was fraught with contradiction. In general, however, populists retained a kind of legitimacy derived from their

²³⁹ While Ferenc Erdei put out the call to reestablish the party and indeed played a role in the administration of Nagy’s council of ministers (Borbándi 1989:467), many in *népi* circles also accused Erdei (Minister of Agriculture during the coalition), József Darvas (Minister of Public Works during the coalition), and Péter Veres, (Minister of Public Works and of Defense during the coalition), of “selling out the party and the *népi* idea (*eszme*) and joining the Communists” (Borbándi 1989:468). Yet, according to Borbándi, “the only *népi* writer that we find” among the chief players when the actions broke out on October 23” was Veres (1989:465).

²⁴⁰ Deák points out that in recognition of *népi* support of communism, János Kádár’s post revolutionary regime “hastened to honor László Nemeth”, one of the most famous populist writers, with the prestigious Kossuth award despite the fact that “before 1945, Nemeth was a militant anti-Bolshevik and, in his own peculiar way, a strong anti-Semite” (Deák 1999:56).

“oppositional” status. But the Revolution set off a broader set of transformations not limited to populist politics, yet which can be said to have influenced the form “populist” politics would take in its aftermath.

The Revolution sparked changes in Romanian minority policy toward ethnic Hungarians (Chen 2003:184).²⁴¹ As the class system extant in Transylvania under Hungarian rule had been particularly harsh to ethnic Romanians, so Romanian rule after 1920 (and again after the Hungarian annexation of parts of Transylvania during WWII) had resulted in discrimination against ethnic Hungarians. Yet, in the 1950s, seeing “traditional Romanian nationalism as largely detrimental to the Leninist cause”, Communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej attempted to weaken the Orthodox church and introduced new minority policies, including the establishment of a Magyar Autonomous Region in the central part of the country in 1952 (Chen 2003:183).²⁴² The aftermath of the 1956 Hungarian revolution marked a shift to policies aimed at assimilating the Hungarian minority through “Romanianization of the party, the closing of Hungarian schools, and the merging of the Hungarian Bolyai University with the Romanian Babes University” (Chen 2003:184). By 1960, the boundaries of the autonomous region were redrawn, decreasing the proportion of ethnic Hungarians from 77 to 62 percent (Chen 2003:184, Connor 1984:237). According to Chen,

Gheorghiu-Dej’s assimilationist minority policy was in large part triggered by the Hungarian revolution and the fear that it might produce undesirable ideological effects on ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania and other parts of the country and therefore threaten the Leninist regime (2003:184).

²⁴¹ Romania strongly supported Soviet military intervention to quell the revolution in Hungary (Chen 2003).

²⁴² While this showed “a certain amount of tolerance for the needs and wishes of ethnic minorities”, Chen argues, it did not represent a consistent commitment to the regional autonomy of minority ethnic groups, for other “concentrations of minorities were not given administrative autonomy”(Chen 2003:183).

Starting in 1969 under the rule of Gheorghiu-Dej's successor Nicolai Ceaucescu, minority policy shifted even more drastically toward assimilation. "Ceaucescu refused to recognize the Hungarians and other minorities as belonging to other nations, claiming that they were all part of the Romanian nation" (Chen 2003:192). A 1968 territorial reorganization act eliminating the autonomous region entirely was followed by demographic policies designed at diluting the concentration of ethnic minorities through forced dispersion and "the immigration of large numbers of Romanians, many of them nationalist, into formerly compact areas of minority residence" (Chen 2003:192). History books omitted the role of minorities in Romanian history, and Hungarian language schools and media broadcasts were practically eliminated (Chen 2003:183+192).

Meanwhile, by the mid 1960s, citizens in Hungary were experiencing the beginning of a post 1956 "thaw" on the limits to cultural production kicked off by János Kádár's famous 1961 announcement that "those who are not against us are with us" (Hanák 1991:218). By the late 1960s a cultural policy of the "Three T's", distinguishing "forbidden", "tolerated" and "sponsored" domains, had been introduced²⁴³, and the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) had gone into effect, leading to the limited decentralization of production and support of market mechanisms discussed above. This marked the beginning of the consumption-based strategy of legitimation for which Kádár would become famous. While the tendency of socialist systems to overproduce intellectuals provided for a potential class of dissidents (Verdery 1995:87+88), the introduction of a market for culture independent from central planning, combined with the coming of age of the baby boom generation, led to unexpected variations in cultural production. Nevertheless,

²⁴³ Forbidden-*Tiltott*, Tolerated-*Tűrt* and Sponsored-*Támogatott*.

although self-censorship, or a “process of compromise and self adjustment” was part of the game that cultural producers played (Haraszti 1983:70), in 1973, “under pressure of the Soviets”, the Hungarian government cracked down on dissident groups (Szelényi et al 1995:703). In the course of the crackdown, Kádár is said to have “wisely decided to take oppressive measures only against a small group of highly visible philosophers and sociologists”(Szelényi et al 1995 703), leaving others alone. Despite this, the populist writers who spoke up during this period “restricted their activity to trying to persuade the government and the Party to speak up for the rights of the Hungarian minorities”(Deák 1999:59). This marks a subtle shift from the emphasis on the rights of Hungarian citizens to those of Hungarian culture bearers. This shift will become more clear when I discuss the first “moment of danger”.

The increase of tourism and the development of a related industry in the 1970s (Maácz 1981:74) was another phenomenon related to the economic reforms and corresponding “thaw” that came in the aftermath of the Revolution. Maácz writes that in Hungary the relationship of folkdance to tourism became visible by the 1970s(1981:74). While they were first limited to official ensembles, by the 1970s, the growing opportunities related to the tourist trade were available to the amateur ensembles as well (Maácz 1981:74).²⁴⁴ Like the houses of culture, by the 1970s folk dance troupes were required to produce their own income in order to pay for expenses as the state withdrew its full support (Maácz 1981:75). As ensembles focused more and more on presenting Hungarian “dance folklore” to foreigners in Hungary as well as to audiences abroad, disputes developed over the authenticity of the productions (Maácz 1980:76).

²⁴⁴ Not only did they perform more often for tourists in Hungary, but they also toured more abroad, a process which simultaneously made tourists out of the performers.

It might at first glance seem that *táncház*, a social dance phenomenon, would not have not connected with such tourism, yet, as we have seen in chapter 4, innovations in the amateur ensembles were directly related to the rise of *táncház* as a social form, while the rise of *táncház* had direct results on both choreography and dance pedagogy. Further, as we have seen, it was in this same period that authenticity-based folk dance tourism to Transylvania by Hungarians began. In this nexus of practices related to tourism, we are able to see the complex relationship between the performative and social forms, for folk dance practices were abstracted for a universal code for performance, on the one hand, and tied to particular places, on the other. As Maácz writes, “national consciousness” and “internationalism” are paired in *táncház*es, where the dances of the neighboring peoples are integrated into the repertoire (Maácz 1980:87). This points to a tension between the two models of culture – *kultur* and civilization – previously discussed. To illuminate how this cultural turn is also related to international trends not limited to socialism, it is necessary to examine the “places of recognition” (Sylvain 2005) which signal the relationship of Hungarian folk revivals to international trends.

Folk Dance Revival, Standardized Representation, and “Places of Recognition” on the International Stage

By no means isolated from the international world of folk dance performance and competition (Vitányi 1964, Romsics 2001), the first Hungarian folk dance revival emerged in the aftermath of the 1929 New York Stock Exchange crash and subsequent worldwide depression. Béla Paulini, the founder of the Pearly Bouquet, had studied fine arts in Munich in 1913-1915 (Pálfi 1987:118n), for example, while István Molnár became one of the most influential folk dance choreographers only upon his 1939 return to Hungary from the “expressionist art world in Paris”

(Vitányi 1964:48).²⁴⁵ Hungarian folk revivalists and Populist Writers who had spent time in Germany, France, and elsewhere had met with modernist trends abroad, while others were exposed to such trends at home.²⁴⁶ Folk dance performances were also integrated into international festival circuits. Groups representing the Pearly Bouquet appeared abroad throughout the 1930s (Romsics 2001), those derived from the NÉKOSZ ensemble did so throughout the 1940s (Vitányi 1964:51)²⁴⁷, while Hungarian scouts performed at international Boy Scouts jamborees.

Such competitive internationalism performed on stage by representatives of “nations” was encouraged within a framework of friendly internationalism not exclusive to folk dance, but encompassing other activities, most notably, sports competitions such as the Olympic Games. Just as participation in Expositions such as the Worlds Fair had encouraged crafts production associated with place, such events resulted from a complex of interests and occurred in a context of increasing commodification. This “modernist” performance or competition based national representation in the international context in the first half of the 20th century reflects the standardization processes of modern nation state making (Anderson 1984).²⁴⁸ Yet, it also represents the use of culture as a means of income. In the 1930s, the worldwide depression urged populations and national states to pursue new sources of income, one such example being tourism.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ Other influential populists, including Illyés and Muharay, had also spent significant time abroad.

²⁴⁶ It is interesting to note that Bartók was commissioned by the Turkish state to modernize the musical notation system (Stokes 1992:50).

²⁴⁷ In 1935 members of the Association of Bouquets attended the annual congress of Cecil Sharp’s International Folk Song and Dance Society in London (Vitányi 1964:14). Bouquet groups also toured in Western Europe (Romsics 2001: 22-23). In 1942 Molnár went to Weimar and toured Scandinavia with half the troupe while Muharay took the other half to Florence (Vitányi 1964:51).

²⁴⁹ Indeed, across the globe tourism appears to have an intimate relationship with economic booms and busts, its relationship with representation, cultivation, and association combined in varying ways. We might consider it relation to Harvey’s (1989) “space-time compression”.

While at the same time nation-building, national pride and tourism all required uniqueness, standardized exchangeability for staged performance required that folk customs be abstracted from everyday life to become commensurable and exchangeable units, whether intended for performance at festivals, or for a timely program for visiting tourists.²⁵⁰ As Toby Alice Volkman (1990) has shown, media may become objects in the process of tourism. This transformation can be understood as part of the process of modernist commodification. In the case of folk art, this “rupture of action and object”(Lampland 1991:461) originates in part in the 19th century objectification of art from the process of its production, which emphasized code over performance (Firth 1997:116). Any narrow focus on representation, therefore, threatens to obscure how the process of folk art production or its standardized performance is constitutive.

The standardization of cultural practices may have multiple consequences. Linguistic anthropologists have discussed the impulse toward standardization of languages as connected with nation making, and with a language ideology that Susan Gal calls “Herderian-standardizing”(2007). As we have already seen, Herder “posited a unity among language, national essence, and territory”(Gal 2007:164). Gal shows that language standardization in the Herderian paradigm tends to focus on distinguishing between concrete, named, and often national, groups. Such standardization, necessary for bureaucratic management, functions to obscure language practices outside the standardized form from the view of administrative institutions. The standardizing impulse in language policy and its vicissitudes illustrate how standardization, necessary both for exchangeability and for

²⁵⁰ Kligman too points to this process when she notes that “segments of rituals” are brought to the stage, along with dances, songs, and instrumental music (1988:259).

bureaucratic rational management, may determine “places of recognition” (Li 2001, Sylvain 2005),²⁵¹ in this case, the “national identity” of folk dances.²⁵²

In the 1950s Hungarian folk dance was firmly established within the lines of this international trend of representation on stage, with the socialist administration formally adopting a Stalinist approach to folk revival, characterized by large (in the words of some, “grandiose”) state ensembles and by folk dance performances at most public celebrations (Lane 1981, Kligman 1988, Hera 2004, Maácz 1980). Alongside the official ensembles existed a system of amateur and “tradition keeping” (*hagyományörző*) ensembles also benefiting from forms of state funding. Folk dance ensembles performed on holidays and at festivals within Hungary, and also toured within and beyond the socialist world, representing the Hungarian Republic. Despite the “iron curtain”, performances were by no means limited to festivals in COMECON countries (Lane 1981, Kligman 1988). Indeed, participating in an ensemble, especially in the later years of Hungarian socialism, often meant the opportunity to travel within the country or to other countries near or far. Participants, many of whom asserted to me that the opportunity to travel was a major factor in their participation, met with representatives and representations of other nations within the bounds of friendly internationalism primarily at folk festivals, where they engaged in the commensurable and exchangeable form of staged folk dance.

²⁵¹ As “groups” strive to fit into “places of recognition”, identity expectations are placed on them by the state, NGOs, the international donor community (Sylvain 2005:357), and tourist preferences. As In her discussion of “places of recognition” Tania Murray Li builds on Roseberry’s assertion that “the forms and languages of protest or resistance *must* adopt the forms and languages of domination in order to be registered and heard”(1996:365). Indeed, that a common discursive framework is produced through the establishment of legitimate forms of procedure which may not produce consent but rather “prescribed forms for expressing both acceptance and dissent” (Roseberry 1996:363). Building also on Hall (1996) Li suggests that if governmental power (Foucault 1991) is concentrated in “the state”, it is also concentrated in organizations with “state functions”, such as NGO’s (2001:651).

The fact that the institutional center for folk dance in the socialist years was the Institute for People's Culture is telling, for it suggests that representation may not be the only *raison d'être* for supporting folk dance. As we have seen in chapter 3, in both the local Hungarian populist paradigm and in Soviet socialist theory, folk art and folk artists were considered to play a role in cultivation or "enlightenment". As such, folk dance ensembles in this period were intended to serve the purposes of national (and socialist international) representation and of the cultivation of socialist youth through forms of association (folk dance, like sports). Discussing the case of socialist Romania, Kligman points to the contradictions in both theory and policy. She notes that the administration devised new rituals intended to have pedagogical results, even as it saw peasant traditions as purely representative and symbolic. Unlike the new socialist traditions, regarded as "both constitutive and reflective of socialist ideology and practice", peasant traditions were regarded as artifacts; seen as having "symbolic but not instrumental, value vis- a-vis the ongoing experience of social actors"(Kligman 1988: 259). This illustrates not only shifting and contradictory emphases on representation and cultivation, but also shifts the sites focused on (and obscured) for the application of such technologies in any given moment.

With the rise of the *táncház* in the 1970s, the domain of the folk dance revival was widened beyond staged performance to include social dance. While the (re)turn to social dance and the broad popularity resulting from this shift distinguishes *táncház* from earlier revivals and marks a shift towards cultivation²⁵³ the social dance environment of folk dance associated with *táncház* remained symbiotic with the staged performance of folk dance. Indeed, the instructors in *táncház*es are quite

²⁵³ There were attempts in the 1950s -attached to the term dancing people (*táncoló nép*)—to bring folk dance choreographies to the ballroom floor (Maász 1981:84, Kaposi 1991).

often professional dancers who are seeking extra income, are in teacher training, or are retired; *táncház* and the performing groups have shared pedagogical practices. Amateur ensembles and *táncház*es have been rich sources for recruitment to the professional ensembles, while those who join ensembles may subsequently begin attending *táncház*es. While on the one hand performative “Hungarian folk dance” represents Hungary on the international and national stage, and makes performers both representatives of the Hungarian “nation” and tourists—mainly to folk dance events, folk dance as social dance may have a cultivating effect in a number of ways relating to Hungarianness, including its relationship to place.²⁵⁴ This relationship is complex. Beyond encouraging Hungarians to participate in “uniquely Hungarian practices” as part of their everyday lives, *táncház* practices have respatialized folk dances and stopped the clock – they have helped fix folk dances in relation to time and space while broadening their practices both geographically and numerically – through a complicated process in which the relationship between “students” and “masters” has been reversed. It is now *táncház* experts that determine authenticity, rather than local practitioners. As we have seen, the (re)turn to social dance was understood by participants as a returning to the original context and function of folk dance. It was modeled after community participation, the sociable practices of living villagers, rather than being based on performers and spectators. Yet as with the Bouquet of Pearls and regös scouts movements, among *táncház* practices are those aimed explicitly at encouraging rural folk to preserve and to revive “local dance traditions”; at the reproduction of “traditional” practices amongst ethnic Hungarians in rural Transylvania. While stylistic authenticity is determined by experts on the basis of past place-based collection, the relationship of place and

²⁵⁴ That is, it connects Hungarianness with specific places and their histories.

living practices must be reinforced for the practice to retain its authenticity. This relationship integrates well with international trends related to “heritage”.²⁵⁵ This raises questions about the relationship between internationalist trends and the production of “nations”(discussed later).

Before *táncház*, there was some effort by the socialist administration to reward “authentic” folk art as the introduction of the Master of Folk Art (*Népművészet Mestere*) award in 1953 indicates. The ministerial resolution to establish the award states:

the title shall be awarded once a year on August 20 by the council of ministers upon nomination by the Minister of Public Education based on recommendations from the Institute of folk arts and the association of Hungarian Artists and Craftspeople(European Folklore Institute 2001:9)

Those awarded were given a one-time honorarium and guaranteed a pension. (European Folklore Institute 2001). Similar awards were adopted by Romania and other socialist countries, by Japan in the 1950s, South Korea in the 1960s, the Philippines in the 1970s, Thailand in the 1980s, and France in the 1990s (Gombos 2001). They have since been unified under the term Living Human Treasures connected to the 1989 UNESCO recommendations for the protection of traditional cultures and folklore (Gombos 2001).

In 1970, the title of Young Master of Folk Art (*Népművészet Ifjú Mestere*) was introduced, followed by the foundation of the Studio of Young Folk Artists (*Fiatal Népművészetek Stúdiója*) from its recipients in 1973, reflecting the processes, discussed in chapter 3, from which *táncház* too developed. While the first reward

²⁵⁵ Most notably, in later years, it has been institutionalized in UNESCO requirements for the safeguarding of (intangible) cultural heritage (UNESCO 2006a): “Proposed cultural expressions and spaces should be a living cultural tradition, demonstrate human creative genius, be a means of affirming the cultural identity of the communities concerned or be at risk of destruction or of disappearing. The candidature files must also include a sound action plan for revitalisation, safeguarding and promotion as awarding recognition of cultural spaces and expressions as Masterpieces does not constitute protection as such” (UNESCO 2006a).

aimed at reinforcing the value of folk art among “traditional practitioners” of folk arts; peasant dancers, for example, this second award was aimed at the creation of new art in a folk art paradigm by nontraditional practitioners, and was awarded to those “Folk artists” under the age of 35 interested in “renewing folk art on the basis of the traditions of material (*targyi*) and spiritual (*szellemi*) culture” (Young Folk Artists’ Studio Archive).

This cohort was at the forefront of the professionalization of folk artists in the 1980s and 1990s, discussed in chapter 4. Changes in the economy requiring that leisure time be spent on economically viable activities and associations paralleled the increase in tourism, and hence, increased linkages with internationalist standardization. The establishment of the annual *Táncház* Meeting, held within the confines of the Budapest Spring Festival and featuring amateur and “tradition keeping” ensembles, *táncház* events, and folk crafts, represents the acceleration of these processes (and shows the connection of this professionalization to tourism) in the late socialist period.²⁵⁶ After 1989 the proliferation of camps supported with private, NGO, and state funds is notable. Further, the number of *táncház*es has grown, some outside the culture houses.²⁵⁷ While this does not mean that there is a simple calculus of value, growing populations are dependent on folk art, folk music, and folk dance production as a source of income. As *táncház*es themselves do not bring much money for professionals, it is rather the production of staged events (at home or on tour), and of purchaseable recordings (cassettes, CDs), research, or

²⁵⁶ Currently the Budapest Spring Festival, and the Dancehouse Meeting within it, is sponsored both by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry for Local and Regional Development

²⁵⁷ While the law requires that the local council provide a determined sum to the houses of culture, they would be unable to function with the proceeds from entrepreneurial activities. Although older *táncház* goers complained about the expense of the entrance fee, entrance fees are low relative to those of private venues. Younger people tended to complain about the aesthetic (or lack thereof) of the houses of culture, preferring private venues.

teaching (either to ensembles or in institutionalized settings) that provide income for these professionals.²⁵⁸

Táncház and the Transylvania Protests of 1988

The increased significance of tourism from the 1970s onward was itself part of a broader trend by no means limited to Hungary (Bendix 1989:144).²⁵⁹ Indeed, it was in the 1970s that UNESCO adopted the World Heritage Convention, seeking to protect cultural heritage and encourage tourism. By the 1980s UNESCO's emphasis on heritage as a inway for tourism and economic development had broadened to include the notion of intangible heritage, i.e.: cultural practices. Interestingly, those promoting intangible heritage sought to sustain cultural practices based on cosmopolitan values articulated around human cultural diversity and human rights, conceived now as cultural rights (see Cowan et al 2001). This convergence allows us to spy the connection of *táncház* and *népi* activism with the political process. Indeed, the language of human rights was employed by Hungarians in the 1980s to address the woes of the ethnic minorities in Transylvania.

As we have seen in previous chapters, the turn toward social dance in Budapest in the 1970s was connected to the ethnographic trips made by those inspired by the social dance practices of Transylvanian villagers. For later *táncház* participants, such trips to Transylvania became de rigueur, functioning, according to Szabó, as a kind of status symbol (1998:175). It is noteworthy that just as the Ceausescu regime initiated stricter measures against Hungarian expressions of national identity, making it more difficult for Hungarians to visit Transylvania or

²⁵⁸ In more recent years, opportunities have arisen for positions of management for the revival, (for example within the Institute's descendent, Heritage House), as well as points of liason with the NGO networks clustered around heritage, (for example, CIOFF, the International Council of Organizations for Folklore Festivals and Folk Art).

²⁵⁹ International social scientific interest in tourism was also increasing, marked by the publication of the first journal devoted to studying tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, in 1973 (Bendix 1989:144).

conduct work on ethnic Hungarian themes, *táncház* and associated tourism began to emerge. As late as 1969, researchers “were able to record the complete set of contemporary dances of Szék on film, with soundtrack included, with the cooperation of researchers from the Romanian Academy of Sciences” (Martin 1982:76). Yet, according to numerous *táncház* participants, by the early 1970s it was much harder for Hungarians to do research, as the law forbade ethnic Hungarians to host Hungarian guests overnight, and even speaking Hungarian was considered risky by some. Forbidden to host Hungarians, villagers risked punishment for their hospitality (Szabo 1998:175). Hungarians visiting ethnic Hungarian villages in 1970s Transylvania, although rarely subject to it themselves, were privy to stories about repression, such as those recounted by musicians in the 1991 film Beyond The Forest about their experiences with the security apparatus due to having hosted Hungarians (Rónai 1991). Perhaps unsurprisingly, *táncház* participants came to see this in a national light. To them, ethnic Hungarians were being repressed for helping Hungarians to preserve their culture.

But *táncház* participants came to see this as the fault not only of “the Romanians”, but also of the Communist governments of both countries; the Romanian government being the most nationalist in the Bloc, the Hungarian government playing an internationalist role and suppressing nationalist sentiment. Both governments had pursued modernization projects resulting in the uprooting of rural lifestyles and the exploitation of rural labor. Further, as one *táncház* goer recounted to me, it appeared evident that the security apparatuses of the two countries were in collusion. Discussion of Transylvania and its significant minority was virtually absent from school curricula in socialist Hungary as well as in Romania (Gal 1991:448). Yet, through *táncház* practices- music/dance,

conversation and song, and tourism- participants entered into a visceral relationship with the geography and people of Transylvania. For them, *táncház* became a history lesson of sorts, although just what they understood the content of that lesson to be, varied.

By the late 1980s Hungarians had taken to the streets of Budapest in the largest protests since 1956²⁶⁰ to pressure the government into opposing the village destruction or “systematization” program in Romania, believed to be targeting ethnically Hungarian villages (New York Times 1988a). Inspired by a letter written by concerned Romanian intellectuals and the 1986 issue of the *Radio Free Europe Research Report* on the continuing destruction of Romania's cities, members of the East European Anthropology group of the American Anthropological Association sent a letter to president Ceausescu, stating:

the wholesale transformations in Romanian urban and now rural communities represents an unprecedented assault on culture and history, let alone daily life” and noting “the plans for "remodeling" Romania's historic Transylvanian cities represents yet another incursion on the unique history and life-ways of Transylvania's German and Magyar-populations (Kideckel 1986).

By 1989 Human Rights Watch had published a report entitled *Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Hungarians of Romania*; and the American Anthropological Association had issued a resolution against the village destruction programs in Romania (AAA 8; Anthropology of East Europe Review 1989). The protesters employed the language of human rights, calling on Romanians to “fulfill human rights obligations to minority groups that are guaranteed in various international forums”(New York Times 1988:A8). Hungary officially issued a complaint against Romania claiming the plan was “aimed at the weakening of the identity of national

²⁶⁰ June 28, 1988. In this same period there were also protests calling for a public burial of Imre Nagy. One of the more visible proponents was Viktor Orbán (New York Times 1988c:A6). In September 1988 a large protest organized around environmental concerns took place as well (Harper 2005:223).

minorities”(NYT 1988:A8). According to Chen, the resettlement, or “systematization”, policy introduced in 1988 “would very likely have resulted in the destruction of historic majority-Hungarian villages and the forcible resettlement of their populations”(Chen 2003:192).

While *táncház* was not organizationally responsible for these protests, it had certainly contributed to the public’s knowledge about the plight of ethnic Hungarians in Romania and to the notion that their own government was “un-Hungarian” in its suppression of the relevant information. Articulating the nation in such a way, *táncház* was seen and felt as oppositional to many, perhaps contributing to its popularity. Some connections between the two “movements” were quite transparent. For example, the son of “neopopulist”²⁶¹ writer and president of the Young Folk Artist’s Studio Sándor Csoóri, Sándor Csoóri Junior, was a founding member of one of the first *táncház* bands, the Muzsikás Ensemble. Csoóri senior, a well-known public figure, was among the initiators of a 1988 “Hungarian Declaration of Solidarity with the Rumanian People”²⁶², which voiced concern not only for Hungarian minorities but for all Romanians (Hungarian Press of Transylvania 1988).²⁶³ Other activists and dissidents also frequented *táncház* events.²⁶⁴

The Hungarian government responded to popular pressure not only by tolerating the protests, but also by granting asylum to refugees from Transylvania. The influx of ethnic Hungarian refugees was visible in Budapest, where women from

²⁶¹ I adopt the convention of Ervin Brody to speak of a younger generation of so called “*népi*” writers as “neopopulist” to distinguish them from those *népi* writers who were active in the interwar period. While Brody labels Csoóri and his generation of writers “neopopulists” to distinguish them and their approach from the earlier generation, these writers have linked themselves with the earlier generation of populist writers, and have occasionally received their mentorship (Brody 1996:6).

²⁶² He was also the president of the Young folk Artists’ Studio, discussed above.

²⁶³ Most specifically, the forward to a 1983 book (*Kutyaszorító*) by (Czecho) Slovakian ethnic Hungarian (later to be politician) Miklos Duray about the fate of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia.

Transylvanian villages gathered in public squares selling hand made pieces (often prepared as part of the extensive dowries they traditionally brought with them into the new household formed by marriage). At the end of the 1980s, thousands of refugees entered Hungary and “by mid-1991 more than 50,000 refugees from Romania had entered Hungary” (Fullerton 1996, see also Kurti 2002:219-221). Illustrating the relation of *táncház* to the affairs of ethnic Hungarian Romanians, a *táncház* organized around the dance culture of a Hungarian speaking minority in Romania (and the only Hungarian minority with a presence in Romania outside of Transylvania), the Csángó, became very popular in the early 1990s when large numbers of Csángó youth arrived as refugees after the “revolution” in the spring of 1990 (Sándor 2002: 83-84).²⁶⁵

In the late 1980s, the *népi -urbánus* opposition was noted to have been reasserted with new rigor in the literary sphere. According to Ervin Brody, it reappeared in 1987, with the publication of poem by (Jewish) writer Gyorgy Spiro in the journal *World in Motion (Mozgó Világ)* (Brody 1995:3). In this poem, Spiro attacked “deep Hungarians”, asserting that they are not the only ones who “know Hungarian” (Brody 1995:4). In 1990, Sándor Csoóri, famous for his critiques of the injustices of socialism against the rural population, and who as a human rights advocate for minorities, had been considered sympathetic to Jews,²⁶⁶ suggested in an essay in the biweekly *Trust (Hitel)* that the “possibility of spiritual and intellectual link between Jews and Hungarians” had ended at the time of the Hungarian Soviet

²⁶⁵ Since 1997, a “Csángó ball” has been organized annually. Its aim, according to Sándor (2002), is “to call the attention of the general public to the traditional culture and life of this ethnic minority in Moldavia”(2002:84). Resulting from such efforts, she claims, more attention has been afforded to the issue in the media, a government office dealing with the Csángó has been established, and the Council of Europe has adopted a recommendation on language rights for Csángó in Romania (Sándor 2002:84, see also Council of Europe 2002).

²⁶⁶ Indeed, both Csoóri and Csurka faced sanction by the state for their activism.

Republic of 1919 (Brody 1995:10). But we are getting ahead of ourselves here, for the 1990s are already “the postsocialist period”. Let us briefly examine the regime change that represents the “transition” from socialism.

Conclusion

The “end of socialism” in Hungary came through what Hungarians refer to as the “regime change” (*rendszerváltás*), a process that János Kis (1995) suggests was neither reform nor revolution, for it interrupted the continuity of legitimacy, but did not effect the continuity of legality. While the Communist parliament passed the laws necessary for free elections to take place, this was done within a vacuum of legitimacy. Further, he points out, the terms of the elections were the results of bargains between parliament (or the party apparatus controlling it) and various opposition parties differentially influential with the party and virtually unknown to the general populace. This picture is further complicated by the assertion by Szelényi et al (1995) that the nature of the Hungarian transition was greatly determined by the “liberal approach toward party membership” during the late socialist period, which allowed non-Communist experts to have prominent positions in management.²⁶⁷ By the early 1980s, this new technocracy, led by the managers of large enterprises, had successfully placed the idea of property reform on the party agenda, leading eventually to what would be a renegotiation of property rights (Szelényi et al 1995:703). By 1989, the new technocracy was able to “complete the transformation of property relations,” from which many among this stratum benefited personally (Szelényi et al 1995 703-704). While there is ample evidence of the staying power of elites, especially in the economic sphere, a circulation of elites has also been apparent, especially in the political sphere, where, notably in the first

²⁶⁷ In this case *ÁnonücommunistÁ* means that they did not need to be party members, and they advocated property reforms not aligned with Communist ideals of property ownership.

years of “transition”, legitimacy was based on anti communist credentials, or “moral capital” (Verdery 1996:104, Szelényi et al 1995:705).

It is not to be taken lightly, however, that a number of the richest individuals in Hungary managed to achieve such status through their administrative closeness to the privatization process, an indication of the functioning of “political capitalism” and “financial clientelism”, facilitated through social networks (King 2001). Indeed, in the last decade, despite the legitimacy that has accrued to those who can claim to have been oppositional under the socialist regime, revamped socialist parties have enjoyed electoral success cross the formerly socialist regions (Creed 1995). In the Hungarian case, the Socialist party is the only party to have led Parliament more than once since the regime change. This has had effects on the way in which the *népi* critique has been mobilized. After some concluding remarks, I turn to the conditions in post socialist Hungary in chapter 7.

Theorists of the “cultural turn” point to the roll back of the welfare state and the concomitant recourse to culture to solve the problems traditionally considered the responsibility of the state. It is not surprising, then, that they would attend to a “post socialist condition” in two senses: that of the countries of East Central Europe following the demise of State socialism, and the general “post socialist condition” in which the rollback of the welfare state has been naturalized as the answer to the economic problems and has a primary strategy associated with neo-liberalism. This chapter has detected origins of this cultural turn, however, in the socialist period, showing the relationship of cultural movements such as *táncház* to a complex of economic and political conditions which encouraged its exclusively “apolitical”, or “spiritual” – or might we say cultural – approach.

The origins of the *táncház* can be found in part in the liberalization of the economy in the late socialist period and the resultant acceleration of tourism and professionalization of folk artists. Further, the circumscription of political expression and the “thaw” in cultural expression encouraged protest to take the form of cultural arguments like those articulated around the plight of ethnic minorities in Transylvania. Just as something called “national folk dance” had fit into an internationalist “place of recognition”, so arguments formulated in the language of human rights fit into a “place of recognition” encouraged by supranational NGOs. While in the cosmopolitan viewpoint of such organizations, human rights protect basic freedoms including those of cultural expression, conceived as recognition of cultural diversity, the application to the human rights argument also had the potential to combine with the construction of *gesellschaft*- the nation or ethnonation – in opposition to socialism, or, as we will see, any cosmopolitanism. Each of these processes can be seen as a reflection of the increased importance of “culture talk” and “cultural fundamentalism”.

It may be helpful to review the relationship of *népi* movements to the question of citizenship, which will be a central lens of the analysis in chapter 7. Reflecting state formation, definitions of and practices of citizenship vary in their emphases. Understanding a shift in understandings of citizenship through a lens of culture talk may help us understand the relationship of *népi* movements, and *táncház* specifically, to the political sphere. Let us first recall the period in which the opposition between urbanists and populists first arose. In opposition to both the narrow Christian National approach of the government and the internationalist and Social Democratic approach of urbanists, populists pursued people’s national cultivation; embarking on projects encouraging the use of agrarian cultural practices

as the basis of uniquely Hungarian cultivation; championing the agrarian *volk* as the source of Hungarianness. Such efforts were wedded, however, with those aiming at land reform and a broadening of the franchise meant to benefit the agrarian majority: the “people” in a classed, but also an ethnic sense. Later, during the socialist period, where social citizenship was guaranteed (albeit differentially), the focus of *táncház*, the organizational descendent of such populist efforts, turned to the plight of Hungarians in Transylvania who both as peasants and ethnic Hungarians faced discrimination by the Romanian state (Kligman 1988). The legacies of populist practices and Christian National irredentism had combined to make Transylvania the hotbed of authenticity, while advocacy for Hungarians in Romania, as opposed to a number of issues in Hungary itself, was tolerated by the Hungarian state by the late 1980s. Indeed, “Hungarians acknowledged pointedly that some similar demands were appropriate in their own country, but could not be so publicly expressed” (New York Times 1988b).

Exercising civil citizenship, populists in the interwar period as well as *táncház* in the late socialist period pressured what they conceived as an *un-Hungarian* government to act more Hungarian. In the first period they did so to advocate cultural, social and political citizenship for the peasantry (implicitly Hungarian). In the second they did so to pursue the practice of living folk culture (the *népi nemzeti művelődés*, or folk cultivation, sought by the earlier generation) explicitly agrarian, in parallel with efforts focused on Romanian of discrimination towards ethnic Hungarians, implicitly agrarian. In both cases, they pressured the government of Hungary to be more Hungarian. In both cases these *népi* movements occupied a space of “opposition” from which they championed the people or the *nép*, despite shifting content and contexts.

Because *táncház* practices are oriented towards Hungarianness, culture talk may be particularly salient and meaningful to *táncház* goers, while *táncház* may also contribute to the salience of culture talk. In *táncház*, as in earlier *népi* movements, culture (the inner spiritual sphere) is emphasized as the primary domain of action in contrast with the political and material spheres. Yet, *táncház* still differed from earlier *népi* movements in its disengagement from issues of social justice (concerned as it was with the nation). Its culturalist tendencies can thus be further attributed to late socialist era state formation (including a relatively robust welfare state) and the opening for particular kinds of civic expression while political expression remained highly circumscribed (nurturing a so called “ethical civil society”), the availability of human rights language to articulate these claims in the international sphere, and emerging practices associating culture with property.

An increasing number of anthropologists have concerned themselves with the “introduc[tion] of ‘culture’ into rights talk” (Cowan et al 2001:3), pointing to a historical shift from a discourse in which rights stood in opposition to culture, to one about “the right to culture” or right to cultural heritage, paralleling the increase of attention to minority rights by supranational organizations since the 1980s (Cowan et al 2001: 9). This shift toward claims based on group difference, argues Nancy Fraser, is a “defining feature of a post socialist condition”(1997:2). Blake points out that although the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was adopted in 1966, “economic, social and cultural rights have tended to be regarded as secondary to civil and political rights by governments and other bodies”(2000:78). This is particularly interesting if we note, as David Harvey does, that “neoliberalism could be cast for example as a gross violation of human

rights”(2000:90). Is the emphasis on civil rights evolving into one on cultural rights as social rights are more and more obscured?

As “global citizenship”, measured by numbers and types of NGOs and the spread of cosmopolitan values worldwide (Kaldor, Anheier and Glasius 2003) is being touted as the answer to problems of all kinds, there is little attention to how it may also nurture cultural fundamentalism or an “archipelago approach to cultures”(Hyland Eriksen 2001). As groups fight for human rights on the communitarian principle of cultural rights, or are encouraged to mobilize culture towards tourism, what is to stop “representatives of specific cultures in a human diversity” (Finkelkraut 1995) from seeing themselves a mutually exclusive-as completely other? Fitting into “places of recognition” is not simply useful in pursuing human rights but also in securing cultural property. Such links could perhaps only become more intense in Hungary and Romania as property became one of the major areas of contention with privatization. The next chapter will examine this question of cultural property in relationship to the political economic conditions in the postsocialist period.

CHAPTER 7
***Táncház* Tourism and the Political Economy of Heritage at the Turn of the Millennium**

This chapter examines the political and economic context for moments of danger at the turn of the millennium, marked by a particular moment of post socialist global capitalism characterized by the dominance of market relations and the ideals of private property, and shifts in emphases on citizenship. Building on arguments about a post socialist cultural turn set forth in chapter 6, I suggest that the transformation of the nature of the Hungarian state in 1989 and the subsequent transformation in the relationship between state and society has produced conditions conducive to a kind of communitarian logic exemplified by populist ethnonationalism. Reasons for this include the feeling of dispossession resulting from the demise of social citizenship associated with liberalization of the economy, patterns of elite reproduction and related ideas about corruption, and the prominence of discourses about the *nép* and nation that have extended across the late socialist and postsocialist periods. As in chapter 6, I discuss moments of danger—the first a polarization in society according to their allegiance to “left” and “right” parties, and reflected in *táncház*, and the second a referendum on granting citizenship to Hungarians from over the borders—to illustrate the relationship between *táncház* and the political sphere.

While local politics is clearly one source of an essentializing discourse about culture within *táncház*, this chapter widens the perspective on collective memory production and the post socialist cultural turn by considering the role of culture in the assembly of new forms of monopoly privilege and the role of this process and related global discourses about culture and development in the production of

cultural distinction under the conditions of contemporary capitalism. The attention afforded to supranational forces reflects a recognition of processes of governance that cannot be reduced to “the state”, but also what appears to be the increasing relevance of governmental forces originating outside the nation-state. For example, in the form of NGOs (this theme will be elaborated upon further in the conclusion).

I begin with further discussion of the “regime change” of 1989 to show both continuities and discontinuities between the late socialist and postsocialist periods and to contextualize the two “moments of danger”. I then move on to a discussion of the role of contemporary capitalism in the production of cultural difference, before turning to *táncház* tourism and its relationship with development tourism and heritage discourse. I point to how efforts aimed at economic development and the politics of cultural rights converge in the contemporary notion of heritage, especially intangible heritage.

Representing what appeared to be a real circulation of elites²⁶⁸, the center right, or “national populist” Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) won the first parliamentary elections (1990) on an explicitly *Hungarian* platform.²⁶⁹ Setting a quite famous precedent, the first prime minister of the post socialist era, József Antall, stated “I am in spirit the Prime Minister of 15 million Hungarians”, including along with 10 million Hungarian citizens, the five million ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries (Fox 2003:455). Sándor Csoóri and another neopopulist writer, István Csurka, were founding members of the MDF, and it was in the MDF’s biweekly Trust (*Hitel*) that Csoóri had written the words quoted above. On those same pages he asserted that contemporary Hungary is faced with a “reverse

²⁶⁸ Indeed, Antall was the son of a deputy Minister of the Interior during the Horthy regime, his economic advisor the nephew of Count István Bethlen, a Horthy era Prime Minister (Szelényi et al 1995).

²⁶⁹ Kis (1995:411) notes, however, that the Party attempted to negotiate with MDF at the expense of FIDESZ and SZDSZ.

assimilationist trend” in whose aid the Jewry employs “a more powerful weapon than it has ever possessed”, in the form of the parliamentary system(Shafir 2001). Csoóri responded to critics, asserting that by the time he wrote those words he had already been labeled an anti-Semite and Hungary a nationalist and anti-Semitic land; that it was these accusations that had driven him to such statements (Brody 1995:11). Not only do Csoóri’s statements connect Jews with liberalism, but they also connect liberalism with Communism in a subtle way. Three years after the publication of the essay, during a “*népi* conference” Csoóri stated "the ghost of an irresponsible and exhausted liberalism roams the world instead of the ghost of the former communism" (Brody 1995:11). This statement, along with other accusations made by rightist MDF members such as that Hungarian born Jewish philanthropist George Soros was helping the Communist cosmopolitans turn over power to the cosmopolitan dissidents (Shafir 2001), refuels a “self evident” *népi- urbánus* divide.²⁷⁰ It also adds credence to the ethnonationalist elements of the *stolen regime change* discourse(discussed later) which asserts that there was in fact no change of regime, and that former Communists still control political life. Such views are supported by the fact that those close to the Party benefited disproportionately in the privatization process.

The discourse of the nation has continued to be central to parties on the right, including the leading government party from 1998-2002 (and the main opposition party thereafter), the Hungarian Civic Union (FIDESZ, originally the Young Democrats). Further, in recent years the charge of *un-Hungarianness* has been employed against the Socialist party (MSZP, the descendent of the Communist Party), the only party to hold the majority multiple times since 1990; and its

²⁷⁰ See Nagengast (1991:23-29) for a similar set of oppositions that developed in the early days of Polish electoral politics.

coalition partner, the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), commonly referred to as “the liberals”. This language of *Hungarianness* has ethnonational connotations. Extending beyond the bounds of the nation-state, it casts its shadow within the nation-state. Combined with the accusation that Socialists and “liberals” are not really (read ethnically) Hungarian, the rhetoric of numbers seems to say that it is because of this that they can ignore ethnic brethren over the borders.

In 1993 the far right faction of the MDF was expelled from the party, compelling openly irredentist neopopulist writer István Csurka and supporters to found a new party, the Hungarian Life and Justice Party (MIÉP). Csoóri, like Csurka, had been active in politics in the late 1980s and early 1990’s as a member of MDF. While Csurka went on to found MIÉP, Csoóri became disenchanted with the “political sphere”, subsequently serving as president of the Federation of World Hungarians (MVSZ), an international NGO dedicated to perpetuating Hungarian identity in the Hungarian diaspora.²⁷¹ In 1998 MIÉP entered Parliament, having won 14 seats. While it did not become part of the ruling coalition in the 1998-2002 period, claims have been made that MIÉP was able to attain influence on media supervisory boards far greater than its proportion in Parliament (BBC 2000),²⁷² facilitating the circulation of far right discourses to the population. Despite its relatively bleak recent history in Parliament since then,²⁷³ MIÉP continues to exert an effect in the discursive field. Indeed, FIDESZ came to power in 1998 by tapping

²⁷¹ It is since Csoóri was replaced by Miklos Patrubby as president of the MVSZ that it is said to have veered to the right (Kovács 2005).

²⁷² An Antidefamation League report states: “in exchange for MIÉP’s obstructing the nomination process, some extreme-right journalists [have] obtained key positions in Hungarian Television” (Anti Defamation League 1999). It is only fair to note that there are allegations from the right that Socialists and especially Liberals control the media and, therefore, that such influence was designed to counteract this.

²⁷³ Since then the 5% threshold law, which mandates that only parties that have obtained 5 percent or more of the national votes cast for the regional lists may obtain seats, has prevented MIEP from wielding much power on the national level.

into the public support of MIÉP and the Smallholder's Party²⁷⁴, and nationalist and populist appeals to these populations have been an important strategy for FIDESZ ever since.²⁷⁵ While FIDESZ has not fully adopted MIÉP's overtly anti-Semitic and anti capitalist language, its representatives avoid its outright denunciation and continue to emphasize the nation and Hungarianness, to which MIÉP's more explicit language is easily supplementary. When at the head of the government and while in opposition, FIDESZ has pursued the politics of the nation in novel ways (discussed shortly). Structured around the tenets of the *stolen regime change* discourse, which I discuss below, a general division has arisen in the population between nominally "left" and "right" factions.²⁷⁶ Informants traced this division to the campaign period before the 2002 elections, when FIDESZ lost its incumbency to the Socialist-"liberal" coalition.

The Political Polarization of the Population and The Stolen Regime Change Discourse

I initially encountered the idea of the *stolen regime change* in a speech given by István Csurka at a (MIÉP) rally in Budapest during my fieldwork in 2004.²⁷⁷ It is used to indicate the fact that members of the Communist elite continue to hold power in the so-called "postsocialist democracy" through their participation in privatization schemes and closed door agreements.²⁷⁸ I use the phrase to describe a cluster of elements that recur in reference to the reproduction of socialist era elites

²⁷⁴ The Smallholders Party, which won the majority of legitimate votes during the coalition period, was recreated after 1988, winning 12% of Parliamentary seats in 1990, and always fewer since then.

²⁷⁵ By which time a 5% rule had been established which made it impossible for either MIÉP or the Smallholders to create factions in Parliament. This rule has also solidified what appears to be the emerging two party system.

²⁷⁶ See Kósa (2007) and Rácz (2003:750 754) for discussion of this rift and the reinforcement of separate publics.

²⁷⁷ It is the title of a 2003 book by (radical right) journalist Pál Lakatos. The term for regime change employed here is *rendszerváltás*, whereas Kis and most others use *rendszerváltás*. The first employs a continuous form of the verb, making it in the act of changing, while the second implies a one time change; a finished deed.

²⁷⁸ Lakatos argues in his 2002 book that the leading elite and bureaucracy of the Communist Party brought about the "regime change" to its own advantage and that of those approximately 2 million bureaucrats, the upper strata remain in leading positions today.

combined with the failure of “democracy” which appear self-evident to many Hungarians. While the *stolen regime change* discourse has entered the everyday consciousness of Hungarians in part through its use by figures in MIÉP, whose version employs an anti-cosmopolitan rhetoric which conflates Jews, liberals, and the globalization of capital.²⁷⁹, its elements have diffused throughout society²⁸⁰ The MIÉP It was my frequent encounter with this cluster in *táncház* events that urged me to seek its origins.

While the “liberals”, a party of intellectuals referred to frequently as the “Jewish party”, have never achieved a parliamentary majority, they have entered coalition with the Socialists all three times it has been in power since 1994, and have traditionally held power in larger cities, Budapest included. Indeed, having defined itself in opposition to the Communists in the late 1980s, the “liberal” party lost much of its support upon entering this coalition. Nevertheless, Csurka, openly irredentist and anti-Semitic, insists that “the liberals” are in fact “running the country” on the basis of their disproportionate influence on the media and government policy (BBC 2000).²⁸¹

Insisting that secret pacts have been made between political and economic elites, the *stolen regime change* discourse is at its core a critique of corruption.²⁸²

Recall that according to Krastev(2006) the rising tide of populism in Central Europe is related to the failure of liberals to deliver on their promises. There is no question

²⁸⁰ See Csurka 2002, for an account of the so called Roszadomb Pact, in which the leading opposition figures supposedly met with representatives of the CIA, MOSSAD and the KGB to manufacture the regime change and divvy up the goods.

²⁸⁰ I should note that Lakatos does not spare Csurka or MIÉP in his criticisms. Nevertheless, their critiques overlap to the point that they are often indistinguishable.

²⁸¹ The fight over control over the media has been so intense as to be commonly referred to as the “media wars”. See Hankiss 1995 for one account.

²⁸² Despite his persistent reelection, I often heard complaints among *táncház* goers about Budapest mayor Gábor Demszky’s mismanagement of the funds for the repair of roads, his plans for the privatization of city services, and his supposedly shady real estate deals.

that the redistribution of wealth shown in the privatization process²⁸³ and the rise of the costs of health care and education have challenged values taken for granted during the Socialist period and have caused people to wonder about the “success” or legitimacy of the “regime change”. The *stolen regime change* discourse is mobilizable to create oppositions, and it appears that FIDESZ attempted to capitalize on it in the campaign period to which informants trace the rift. FIDESZ’s loss of the 2002 elections was followed by street protests asserting election fraud (based on supposed Socialist control of important institutions, including the media) and demanding a recount of the vote. *Népi* architect Imre Makovecz was a visible spokesman for this movement, and folk singer Márta Sebestyén (the singer for the Muzsikás ensemble for many years) performed at demonstration in front of the Parliament.²⁸⁴

Here for a moment (of danger) the interaction becomes visible, for this rift is reflected both within *táncház* and in perceptions of *táncház* by outsiders. Indeed, it appears that around that election year, just as the Hungarian public was becoming polarized and as hostility toward “Jews” and “liberals” was voiced openly among *táncház* participants, a number of “liberal” leaning²⁸⁵ *táncház* goers stopped attending. The words of one individual who had begun participating in *táncház* along with other ‘underground’ events in the 1980s as a youth and had returned to Hungary after years abroad are telling:

When I came home that was exactly 2000. That was when the elections were and there was critical misery and I found out after 10 years of living far away that these

²⁸³ Bodnár (2001) argues that the privatization of housing exacerbated inequalities already present due to socialist patterns-structured by the “state socialist ‘housing regime’”(2001:56).

²⁸⁴ In the protests against the government coalition in fall 2006, supported openly by FIDESZ, anti-Semitic symbols associated with Hungarian fascism (the ancient so-called flag of Árpád used by the WWII era Arrow Cross) were seen. Some have accused FIDESZ of mobilizing these far right elements, while others have seen the far right protesters as having hijacked FIDESZ protests.

²⁸⁵ Conversations with self ascribed “liberal” Hungarians reveal that they see themselves in opposition to “the right” in terms of attitudes toward minorities and homosexuals, and nontraditional cultural activities toward progressive forms of culture. Their discussion of “liberals” does not usually dwell on economic policies.

things do not work as they did back when I left this place. There was a really strong division (*megosztottság*) between the people that the media instigated and I imagine very masterfully for its political gain, and the people were two types right or left or *népiesek* or *urbánusok* or socialists or MIÉP followers. There wasn't-how should I say-it was a strange situation... For example, I was called a stinky Communist by my own family. I who lived for 10 years in Belgium in a big Monarchy. But whatever, the lack of consciousness of the people was used in such depth by the media and they put little labels on everything, every activity, any way of being. For example that *népies* things-folk music, folk dance, this became appropriated. The right made this culture, tradition and the rest its own property and it stuck in there its own ideology but in return a little brainwashing happened in the minds of the people, and those people who had been disposed to (*rendelkeztek*) a kind of openness closed themselves up in their so called proper way (*rendes ut*) and political false existence (*mulét*) and it was difficult for me to accept that people had become totally intolerant toward other cultures, other ways of being (*létforma*), conceptions (*elgondolások*)...and the whole thing was a bit foreign from me. I went to *táncház* once or twice but I constantly saw that they explicitly *politizál* really hard (*kokeményen politizálnak szokimondo módon*). Its possible that this was just because of the elections but it was really rough and negative/dismissive (*elutasító regeztó*)-irredentist words were flying and after that I didn't go any more.

My exchange below with another long-term *táncház* goer suggests a gradual process contributing to the rift²⁸⁶:

I think that after 1990 anything else is open for the people. Before that, *táncház* was a very good situation for meeting and for speaking, for thinking together...after 1990 it changed and very interesting...friends/brothers started a different way of life because [those who were] thinking together, after 1990 the[ir] thinking separated (*elválik*).

MT: is this because before 1990 the *táncház* was a space that had been outside of socialist politics, but that this relation was not that same anymore after 1990?

²⁸⁶Indeed, while people pointed to the election period, elements contributing to the rift, as I have shown, were present already with the return of the *népi urbánus* debate and with the rise of party politics. In fact, the addition of MPP to the end of FIDESZ's title in 1995, making it FIDESZ-The Hungarian Citizens' Party might be seen (as one Hungarian academic suggested to me) as an attempt to overcome the *népi-urbánus* divide, for rather than "middle class" they used the term bourgeois (*polgár*) that had been associated with Jews before the war. FIDESZ, made up of people too young to have been implicated as Communists, campaigned as a party of the middle class-"*kispolgár*"(petite bourgeoisie) attempting a "grassroots politics" involving "citizens circles". Indeed, without defining the citizen substantively, FIDESZ mobilized the language of the "citizen" as an integrating stimulus among heterogeneous views" (Rácz 2003:750). In this way citizen functioned much like the term *nép*.(people, *volk*) has in the past, while also overlapping with its understanding in the present, contributing to a set of overlapping oppositions. Nevertheless, FIDESZ' behavior in office was as clientelistic as that of the Socialists,edit simply targeti a different group. Ultimately, it seems, FIDESZ contributed to a new discourse equating the middle class with the *nép*, not the first time this happened (see Frigyesi 1994).

Yes, it loses its magic because before 1990 that was the only place where similar thinking could be. Now they can go here or there...the thinking-we were before that liberal-thought went in different directions. We didn't know about it then, and afterwards we met with it (faced it) and the way of friends separated. This is why you can say that *tánc ház* has a kind of right leaning character now-of course before also. But it was stronger because it was in opposition to force, now it is pinned to the right side of the flag (zászlójára tűz), part of the national right. The right side is [for]who[m] is important the folk traditions.

MT: Do you see this as a problem for Hungarian culture or not?

I see it as a very big problem because a lot of Hungarian people don't know about their tradition, their roots, because in the school they didn't learn about it. I think it is a very big problem in Hungary.

MT: So, it is a problem if it is only the far right because then the other people don't know it?

Yes, [they] don't know, and if you don't know anything, you don't want to do this I think. If you never heard Hungarian folk songs before and then you hear it for the first time, it's terrible, [you ask] 'what is this?'

Not only did *tánc ház* goers tell me that they believed that the majority of participants were FIDESZ voters (*FIDESZesek*), with MIÉP voters comprising a loud minority, but the opinions of outsiders were also telling. When many non *tánc ház* goers learned that I was studying *tánc ház*, they asked why in the world I would want to study "those people". A student at the Central European University²⁸⁷ told me that her impression of *tánc ház* goers was that they were "mostly rural immigrants from neighboring countries". She insisted that people who go to *tánc ház* have no or different social skills, that the women are passive and quiet and do not argue, and that they go there because they have nowhere else to go. She and her two friends agreed that *tánc ház* goers were conservative and nationalist.

²⁸⁷ The CEU is a private university founded by George Soros in 1991. The faculty employs a good amount of foreigners and attracts many foreign students. I have heard comments, and not only from *tánc ház* goers, that one cannot get into the CEU unless s/he has Jewish connections.

Another of the students told me “they are probably not intellectuals”.²⁸⁸ A British born ethnic Hungarian *táncház* goer reported similar experiences among non-participants. She described her experience at a “well heeled and elegant expat event”, noting that outsiders were quick to assume that *táncház* goers were nationalists.

The most recent...on New Year’s eve, this is what I wanted to mention, is that you know I was at a party where I thought there were sort of like minded people not dance house people and I said-we were talking about music because of what we were listening, dancing to, what most people liked and blah blah blah and I said ‘well incidentally I am quite into Hungarian folk music but I don’t normally talk about it because I find that the very mention of’...’oh what? what? what?’...I said that for instance you know if you mention the word dance house people jump to the conclusion that I belong to FIDESZ and this guy who was sitting there who is a teacher at the university said ‘oh that’s ridiculous’. But a girl picked up on it and she started saying ‘oh, you know friends of mine work on this and they say that you know it is very nationalistic’²⁸⁹

Considering these statements, it is perhaps not surprising that among the hundreds of *táncház* participants I spoke with during my fieldwork in 2004-2005, only two openly volunteered to me that they would vote for the Socialist Party or the Alliance of Free Democrats, while disparaging comments about “liberals” and “Jews” were commonplace. *Táncház* goers suggested that “the liberals” sought to suppress national expression, that they have mismanaged the city of Budapest, and that Jews were in control of the economy, not to mention the fact that the Socialist-“liberal” coalition had encouraged the public to vote no to the 2004 referendum question addressing dual citizenship (discussed below). The “liberals” had shown their true

²⁸⁸ While by no means are they a representative sample, their comments illustrate the kinds of reactions I received from many non *táncház* goers. None of this group of students planned to vote yes for dual citizenship.

²⁸⁹ The same person pointed out that there are more and less nationalistic leaning circles within *táncház*. Identifying a few spots as the most nationalistic, she said that she prefers not to frequent them. One that she singled out is held at *Magyarok Háza* (Hungarian House), run by the Federation of World Hungarians (MVSZ). The building hosts a far right bookstore (with some leftist “antiglobalization” literature mixed in). It functions as a kind of culture house: While I was conducting fieldwork, “the VI Hungarian World Congress” was held there, of which those giving papers in the “The Hungarians and the Orient Prehistoric Conference” subsection made up the largest contingent and at which among the papers presented were those connecting Hungarian folk culture to Native American and to Sumerians, just to name two examples. One person pointed out that when he had gone for archery lessons sponsored by *Magyarok Háza*, some of the other students showed up in Arrow Cross uniforms.

colors, some said, simply by entering into alliance with the Socialists in the first place. This rift, and the way it is reflected in a "cleaning out" of *táncház*, has important implications for the ways in which people perceive politics in terms of *nép* and *nemzet*, that is, in terms of Hungarianness.

In FIDESZ' last year in the majority, 2001, the parliament passed the "Status Law", intended to afford citizenship-like rights, including the rights of residence, work, and property ownership, to ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries, known as "over the border Hungarians" (*határontúli Magyarok*) by providing them with "status" cards. Having sparked controversy on the international level, especially with the governments of neighboring countries (some who suggested that it was a violation of sovereignty), and also with elements in the EU (Kovács 2005, Laihonon and Nyyssonen 2002), Parliament introduced minor changes to the law. In 2004, under the tenure of the Socialist –"liberal" coalition, a referendum was held on the issue of granting preferential citizenship to status card holders. The referendum provides another site at which we may spy the interaction of *táncház* with formal politics, that is, another "moment of danger", in this case with *táncház* goers acting collectively in the formal political sphere; in electoral politics. In order to understand this relationship, a closer look at the referendum and how Hungarians conceptualize some of the challenges facing them is called for. Considering the ways in which citizenship has been understood by Hungarians raised with "socialist values", and how the current political economic climate has challenged such expectations, may help us to understand why elements of far right discourse have such purchase.

The Referendum of 2004: Citizenship and the Nation

On December 5, 2004, 6 months after Hungary entered the European Union along with 9 other countries,²⁹⁰ a referendum was held which posed the following two questions:

- 1) Do you agree that public health service providers and hospitals should remain in state and local government ownership, and that Parliament should therefore repeal the law which is inconsistent with this?
- 2) Do you think that Parliament should pass a law allowing Hungarian citizenship with preferential naturalization to be granted to those, at their request, who claim to have Hungarian nationality, do not live in Hungary, and who prove their Hungarian nationality by means of a “Hungarian identity card” issued pursuant to Article 19 of Act LXII/2001 or in another way determined by the law which is to be passed? (Election Guide).

While the results of the referendum were nullified because of low turnout²⁹¹, the questions posed to the Hungarian public and the discourses about nation and citizenship surrounding them offer a lens into politics in contemporary Hungary. The two questions were initiated by quite different groups: that on the privatization of hospitals and health care by the Hungarian Worker’s Party—a party descended from the Communist party with little electoral appeal—and that on citizenship by the World Federation of Hungarians (MVSZ), which appears to be veering further right under its current leadership (Kovács 2005:55). Yet together they reveal the complex of anxieties facing the Hungarian public. At their core, the questions posed are about citizenship. The first question addresses the nature of citizenship, asking what role the state will play in protecting citizens from the market and assuring social equality. The second addresses the definition of the nation: whether it should be defined in ethnic terms, citizenship terms, or the adaptation of the latter to the former. While tensions between nation and citizenship can be traced back to earlier

²⁹⁰ The other countries that joined the EU on May 1 2004 were Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia

²⁹¹ 37.35% of eligible voters participated. 25% of the voting population was needed on either side for either result to be valid. Question 1) yes: 65%; no:35%. Question 2) yes: 51.55%; no: 48.45%.

times, the sensibilities of actors toward these questions are shaped by their experiences of 40 years of “actually existing socialism” as well as the dramatic changes that have come about since its demise. While the achievement of civil citizenship has been central to scholarship focusing on this region (Verdery 1996:104, Hann and Dunn 1996), and the “reethnicization of citizenship in Europe” has been noted (Kovács 2006:53, Joppke 2003), there has been little scholarship examining how as social citizenship is squeezed, the response to it may appear in (ethno)nationalist guise.²⁹²

Adopting T.H. Marshall’s distinctions between political, civil, and social citizenship²⁹³, Adam Seligman has suggested that because the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe offered social citizenship while denying civic and political citizenship, the achievement of “civil society” became the focus of oppositional movements in the region (Seligman 1992:113; see also Verdery 1996). The focus on bringing civil society to the region has been noted in social scientific studies of (Verdery 1996:104) and in Western aid programs and NGO activities focused on the region (Creed and Wedel 1997, Mandel 1993, Kalb 2002), as well. It may be that in the postsocialist context, it is the taken-for-grantedness of social citizenship, “the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security [and the] right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society”(Seligman 1992:113), by Hungarian subjects that is the key element in unpacking the political landscape. As Seligman puts it, there

²⁹² See Verdery 1993, however, for an interesting discussion on ethnonationalism in conditions of shortage.

²⁹³ He defines political rights as the “right to participate in the exercise of political power as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body”; civil rights as those “necessary for individual freedom—liberty of person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice...”, and social rights as “the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security [and the] right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society”. (T.H. Marshall, quoted in Seligman 1992:113).

exists an ideological tension between liberty and equality; between civil society and social citizenship.²⁹⁴ In East Central Europe the achievement of political and civil citizenship in the neoliberal age has come at the price of social citizenship, rapidly overturned by economic policies purported to promote democracy. Indeed, the conditions brought about by the policy of “shock therapy” and the corresponding decrease of social amenities and visibility of social differentiation have produced quite different results from the “liberal democracy” that dissidents and ordinary citizens in the former Socialist Bloc had imagined (Krastev 2006). Not only has “a human disaster on a previously unimaginable scale [has] ensued”(King 2001:494), but a 2007 poll indicates that the proportions of Hungarians expressing that their expectations of the transition have not been fulfilled has increased significantly since 2003 (MTI 2007). Indeed, “social inequalities and poverty have increased in virtually all regions and economic sectors of the postsocialist countries”(Hann et al 2002:4).

In this context, the “civil society” promoting practices of international NGOs, associated with liberalism, also come to appear opposed with social citizenship. Indeed, much like the human rights activism of Hungarian “nationalist” dissidents in the 1980’s, many “civil society” promoting NGOs focus on the protection of cultural rights. Pluralism, seen as carving out privileges for particular groups such as Jews or gypsies, is seen as part of a project of redistribution or even dispossession in which “real Hungarians” are the losers.²⁹⁵ Further, many Hungarians, revivalists included, see growing differentiation not as a function of the political economic system, but as the result of a stolen or incomplete regime change.

²⁹⁴ Writing about property restitution and reform in Romania, Katherine Verdery has pointed out that the bundle of entitlements assumed by postsocialist subjects is not fully congruent with “the construction of capitalist individualism and the notion of private property associated with it” (Verdery 1999).

²⁹⁵ An interesting adaptation to this perceived condition is the Hungarian “Hun” movement, discussed later, in which individuals are trying on the basis of genetic material to establish their identity as a Hun minority, eligible for minority status. The implication, however, is that they are the “real Hungarians”.

These two lenses are not mutually exclusive, for, as David Harvey points out, neoliberalism should be regarded as a class project. Indeed, he asserts, “the main substantive achievement of neoliberalization...has been to redistribute, rather than generate wealth and income” (2005:159). Yet with class based Marxist views generally discredited, the *stolen regime change* discourse, laden as it is with an anti-Semitism with historically familiar tones, appears to be the most widely salient critique of this class project. This points to the ways in which *nép* and *nemzet* can be understood in the Hungarian context, a context in which oppositions have often gained legitimacy by speaking in terms of the *nép*. The *stolen regime change* discourse discredits liberalism by mobilizing an opposition between Hungarian and foreigner.

The questions on the referendum together ask who should be considered citizens and what kind of citizenship they should enjoy. Read through the *stolen regime change* lens (by an already divided public), these 2004 appeals for a popular mandate appear to suggest that the *unHungarian* government serves “foreign” interests while ignoring those of “real Hungarians”. This story about an elite retaining power, about what may be understood as a class project, is combined with a familiar story found among the European radical right that the current state of affairs is engineered by Jewish and international (or American)—Cosmopolitan—interests in the form of globalization (and surely it is not irrelevant that the “transition has provided the conditions for a massive influx of foreign ownership and investment).²⁹⁶ In this, it indexes discourses salient in the

²⁹⁶ It should not be surprising that Csurka counts himself among LePen’s supporters. Further, while Matti Bunzl (2005) insists on the minimal role of anti-Semitism in the Euro right, my research reveals that even when the problem is perceived as immigration, liberal immigration laws are often blamed on the cosmopolitans or liberals-*or Jews-* in power.

interwar period both among the ruling elite as well as the populists who stood in opposition to them.

When the 2004 referendum was made null due to low turnout, the pro-citizenship camp argued that the governing coalition (MSZP and SZDSZ), demonstrating its *unHungarianness*, had frightened citizens from the polls with manipulative predictions of economic crisis in the wake of mass immigration—thus emphasizing the wellbeing of the citizens of the nation-state, rather than of the “nation”. Indeed, statements by the government that social spending would need to be cut further if Hungary were to increase its competitiveness (Magyar Távirati Iroda 2004), and that Hungary would be unable to adopt the Euro by the target date of 2010 due to budget deficits (Associated Press 2004), flanked those about the potential effects of dual citizenship. Official estimates associated with the Socialist party suggested that “the resettlement of 800,000 ethnic Hungarians would push up expenditure for education, health, and welfare HUF 573bn (EUR 2.2bn) a year, equivalent to over 5pc of the annual budget”(Magyar Távirati Iroda 2004). It might be wiser, however, to understand the results of the referendum, as one blogger on a Transylvanian website phrases it, as “a question of empathy”(GC 2005), for most Hungarian citizens have little to do with Transylvanian Hungarians and have never set foot in Transylvania. Transylvanians in Hungary are subject to the kind of discrimination faced by most migrant workers, and are viewed “with a combination of suspicion and disdain”(Fox 2003:456). The rhetoric of shared nationality appears to function well only as long as “over the border” Hungarians remain over the border.²⁹⁷ Indeed, according to Jon Fox, “the nationality of the migrant workers

²⁹⁷ Fox is not the first to make this argument. Hungarian ethnographer Attila Paládi Kovács (1996) argues that it is because of their oppression that Hungarians over the borders have achieved superior status: “Today it is the Hungarians living in Rumania and being subject to the most violent oppression who are

garnered them little more than scorn from their Hungarian hosts”(Fox 2003:456). Given the tightness of the labor market, “the abstract notion of shared nationality rhetorically privileged by the Hungarian state was of little consequence in assuaging [these more pressing] economic anxieties” (Fox 2003:456).

Combined with predictions of mass immigration, “lack of empathy” led many citizens feeling the squeeze on social citizenship in an already tense economic environment to feel uneasy about voting yes to citizenship. Yet, while they may not see Transylvanians as citizens, they did not feel comfortable voting no either. Indeed, public intellectuals on the ‘left’, such as philosopher Gáspár Miklos Tamás²⁹⁸ (born and raised in Transylvania), advocated abstention. Tamás argued that while it would be wrong to vote no, a yes vote would at most result in Orbán becoming Prime Minister again while doing nothing to help Transylvanian Hungarians (Tamás 2004). Further, a number of self ascribed “liberal” Hungarians told me that they deliberately did not vote in the referendum, hoping that enough people would abstain to make it null and void. They counted their absence from the polls as simultaneously an abstention and a vote. They abstained from answering this politicized question preceding an election year, voting with their abstention that such an issue should not be taken advantage of for political gain.

In contrast, *táncház* goers expressed to me that it was their responsibility not just to vote, but to vote yes as a matter of respect. After all, they told me, *táncház* had been relying on the good will and patriotism of the Transylvanian villagers for

placed on top of the of this scale of values. In short: The best Hungarians live in Romania.” He admits, however, that this is only so as long as they stay over the borders, writing that those who immigrate to Hungary are valued less.

²⁹⁸ Tamás Gáspár Miklos was also visible in the march for Nagy’s burial in 1988. An SZDSZ politician in the early days, he has since realigned himself with the supranational organization ATTAC, finding both the liberal-left and the far left in Hungary to be inadequate. The co presence of Orbán and Tamás at that event helps to illustrate how a rather united but fuzzy opposition transformed into political parties after the regime change.

over thirty years. Prominent figures in *táncház* even circulated a statement throughout *táncház* events in the weeks before the referendum beseeching *táncház* goers to vote yes for this very reason. *Táncház* goers too expressed apprehension about the politicization of the issue of the nation, and rejected its discussion in economic terms. Yet they understood the low turnout not as abstention aimed at the politicization in poor taste of a sensitive issue, but as a betrayal of the nation and a duping of the populace with misleading predictions. The following conversation came after I asked one *táncház* goer about why the referendum was so important if both countries would soon be part of the EU anyway.²⁹⁹

It shouldn't have been free to make a political target out of the Hungarians across the borders. On either side. Somebody started it-it is not essential who-somebody started it and the other side played to that tune (kontrázott) and it should not have been allowed on either side. This is beyond politics, above politics, outside politics, whatever you like. This has no connection to politics nor economics...they are playing with people's lives.

MT: So that's why it should have been now? Only because it came to referendum now?

No, as to why it had to happen I don't know either. But as a voter the reason why it should have been now is [because it is] now that one had to vote.

MT: Yes

This should have been done back in 1990, when the regime change happened. Without a question, without a referendum it should have been done. It was not necessary to do this circus. It shouldn't have been permissible to humiliate a nation in this way...to ask a question to which I know there is not the very best (legessleg) answer. Now we can make it beautiful in vain, but [those] who didn't go out voted no. Let's not beautify it.

²⁹⁹ This was a counterargument frequently employed by opponents of a yes vote to those that claimed that the referendum was really just a way to protect Transylvanians entering "the motherland", Hungary, from the financial requirements of entering the EU, which most could not afford.

Transylvanian *táncház* goers in Budapest echoed this view, some stressing that in their opinion, a yes vote would have been purely symbolic, yet extremely important for ethnic Hungarian Transylvanians.

Táncház goers also expressed concern about the aftermath of the referendum in Romania, where, they noted, signs had appeared on the doors of ethnic Hungarian owned pubs stating “no Hungarians”. When I asked about it, one *táncház* goer stated the following:

You are using very fine words to describe what is really happening—they are angry and are hollering. You are weakly describing what is really happening. And they are very embittered. I was just in a village and the villagers are totally confused. They don't understand what is happening in the world that they are part of again. The intellectuals are angry and literally shout because of how they tried to scare the people. Everybody denies it but this is how it is, sadly. A lot is happening because the mayor of Szalontai announced that he will not take the Hungarian sister city money. In Székelyföld they are handing back their Hungarian ID cards. Then in Székelyföld they wrote on bars that they will not serve Hungarians. A lot is going on and I say frankly as a tourist I wouldn't dare to go to Székelyföld³⁰⁰

It thus appears that participation in *táncház* correlates to a certain level of responsibility felt toward ethnic Hungarian Transylvanians substantiated in the referendum. People agreed that it was immoral to vote no and that what equaled a largely symbolic gesture was important for the morale of Transylvanians.

Frameworks of Sense and the Production of Empathy

The use of the word *népi* to describe the *táncház* is telling, for one shared feature of movements attached to this word has been their contention with elite governments with little popular participation, and ambivalence about their status as spiritual or political movements. Indeed, one source of legitimization of such

³⁰⁰ Székelyföld (Szeklerland) roughly corresponds with the Mures Autonomous region that was eliminated under Ceausescu. It holds the highest concentration of ethnic Hungarians. It also corresponds with the administrative district of historical Transylvania awarded to the Szeklers (a Hungarian speaking ethnic group) in return for their role as border guards. (See Verdery 1983 for details on the Magyar/Habsburg administrative unit). There is an historical memory available that distinguishes Szeklers from Hungarians as well as of a particular type of autonomy.

movements is their association with “the people” and their disassociation with establishment politics, considered corrupt or elitist. It is interesting to note, then, that since the 1990’s both Csurka and Csoóri have parted with establishment politics. Even FIDESZ’ president Viktor Orbán, whose party has a large electorate and led the government from 1998-2002, has established a certain kind of legitimacy through his oppositional status. Indeed, in recent events he has reinforced an image of himself as outside establishment politics despite FIDESZ’ strong representation in Parliament.³⁰¹ This place of opposition is claimed as a place of purity, the domain of the spiritual, rather than the political, and often conceptualized as the ethnic or national. It is the inner sphere, the domain of the *nép*, of the nation or the people, and those who claim it distinguish themselves from the *unHungarian*. Placing this notion of purity from politics among *táncház* participants and earlier populists in historical perspective allows us a longer historical view on the legitimacy gained by oppositional status shown in the postsocialist period (Verdery 1996). Both a sense of Hungarianness and a sense of empathy must be cultivated.

As we have seen, *táncház* goers often emphasized to me that *táncház* is not a movement, that it is not political. According to them, it lies outside the sphere of politics because it refuses to engage “political power” on its terms. One *táncház* musician and administrator told me:

that’s exactly the point, [*táncház*] doesn’t fight...and the most dangerous enemy is the one who doesn’t put on the glove ...I would compare it a bit to when the

³⁰¹ This is best illustrated by more recent events since fall 2006. By refusing to participate and organizing protests instead when Gyurcsány called a vote of confidence for the government, FIDESZ claimed to be illustrating that the ruling coalition had illegitimate control of the government. After failing to get Gyurcsány to resign, Orbán and FIDESZ again attempted to illustrate the illegitimacy of the government (and their own oppositional legitimacy) not simply by calling into question its constitutionality, but by personally breaking down the cordon built around the parliament in the wake of protests in 2006 (Interfax Central Europe 2007). Further, in the summer of 2002, which I spent in Transylvania at *táncház* camps, I heard Transylvanian Hungarians refer to the ex prime minister Viktor Orbán, of FIDESZ, as ‘our prime minister’. He even visited one camp, which coincided to his visit to Szek, where he addressed the public on the town square.

Roman Empire ended. In a really similar situation to the contemporary global society...and then one day there came a person who said “not money, love”... and said even death is ok and it was such a manifesto that it reached the whole world...and now again we have this kind of society.

Another *táncház* musician explained to me the tension he saw between political and cultural sides of *táncház*. He said he saw two “conscious undertakings” in *táncház*: one occupied with Hungarianness, and the other a political position.³⁰² Later in the interview he told me:

But it’s not free to make a political movement out of the *táncház* movement. That was in it too- enough political too, but that was just a small part and it was not its basic presumption (*alapsejte*) to be a big *népi* opposition (*nagy népi ellenállás*). Rather, the *táncház*...fulfilled this goal (*kivivta ezt a szerepet*). But it wasn’t that.

Later he described the way in which *táncház* connected to opposition for him in the 1980’s, pointing to a contrast between the conditions in socialist Transylvania and in socialist Hungary. Consider this exchange:

Well, from this view I had some kind of protection. No kind of power reached me. I absolutely openly and unsuspectingly realized it/met with it (*jutottam ki*) and when I realized for the first time what existing socialism means I was horrified and there was a moment when I felt that this, no, and starting then there was in me an opposition (*ellenállás*). Not like I was making *szamizdat*³⁰³ or those things-that is a different art (*műfaj*) again. My opposition was that, from that moment on, I stuck to Hungarian culture.

MT: So it was a different atmosphere that didn’t connect with the opposition? An internal resistance? A different level?

Yes, from then on I felt my most important task was that I should familiarize myself with it as much as I am able and that I must make as many other people as possible familiar with it. Not forcefully. I did not want to teach, just that this material should not just be my own, but that I would be happy to share it.

Given the statistics, it is indeed an *alternative* framework of sense that congealed into a “community” and surfaced as collective action in the political

³⁰² He also noted what he saw as an increasing proportion of *táncház* goers who simply regard it as a party (*buli*).

³⁰³ *Szamizdat* is the term used to refer to underground or illegal publications produced during the socialist period, usually with political content or intent.

sphere when *táncház* participants went to the polls as yes voters.³⁰⁴ While *táncház* goers and others who turned out to vote yes on the referendum did not achieve the narrow political goal of granting citizenship to over the border Hungarians, such activities are manifestations of the presence of a “submerged framework of sense” and its potential for eruption into the political sphere in moments of danger. Further, *táncház* goers exercise some common sensibilities at home, at work, and in the public sphere, where their opponents must formulate arguments that respond to their critique. *Táncház* remains popular as a social activity and numbers of people versed in folk dance as mother tongue are growing through professionalization and the institutionalization of an educational framework and a strong focus on youth.³⁰⁵

Indeed, while most formal discussion of the *népi-urbánus* opposition has focused on the literary world, the opposition itself is by no means limited to this realm. Considering the careers of Csoóri and Csurka, we see that the line between the literary and political worlds is very thin. Further, *táncház* goers refer to the *táncház* movement as a *népi* movement, and many refer to themselves as *népi*. Although the use of the term *urbánus* by *táncház* goers was much more rare than of *népi*, the vilification of “liberals” and Jews in *táncház* environments is perhaps indicative of the contemporary form of this opposition (if we consider, for example, Csoóri’s rhetoric). Yet rather than lively debates between sides, there is an isolation which precludes it. Indeed, when I addressed anti-Semitism with *táncház* goers, they argued much like Csoóri, that rather than being anti-Semitic, they were responding to Jewish and Western accusations of their anti-Semitism.

³⁰⁴ While data collected during my participant observation indicated overwhelming support for the yes vote, some *táncház* goers reported to their dismay that they knew of *táncház* goers who planned not to vote yes.

³⁰⁵ The emphasis on exposing children to folk traditions mentioned before, and the proliferation of child focused *táncház* activities call into focus the question of the political potential of future *táncház* goers.

Such a stance may be partly based on the expectations that postsocialist countries must face their “Holocaust past” (including the discussion and enactment of reparations, the apparent “enrichment” of Jews, in conditions under which major redistribution of resources is already felt as dispossession).³⁰⁶ Indeed one *táncász* goer told me that the “Hollywood Jews” always point to Hungary as the place where the Holocaust happened. This is hurtful towards Hungarians, he said, because the reason so many survived was because the Hungarians “delayed deportation for so long”. Yet the ubiquity of stereotypes that contrasted Jews and “liberals” to Hungarians in *táncász* environments suggests a shared *népi* ethic supported by shared sources of news and affect reinforced by a relative isolation of publics (Rajagopal 2001), both a function of and a contributor to the rift (Kósa 2007). We can imagine an alternative framework of sense stretching far beyond the literary world, not only into that of political journalism but also into daily conversation at sociable events involving circumscribed publics.

But from whence does the sense of empathy, respect and shared Hungarianness with Transylvanians come? In chapter 5 I discussed how the practice of folk dance as mother tongue combined with tourism to Transylvania inculcates a geographical sense of Hungarianness. As noted, *táncász* visitors to Transylvania had become so numerous in the late socialist period that summer dance camps appeared in 1990 to accommodate them. Camps have continued to multiply in recent years, attesting to the large numbers of people participating in *táncász* practices, while bringing more and more *táncász* goers to Transylvania. If such tourism is connected to a *népi* sense of Hungarianness which, on the one hand,

³⁰⁶ One book prominently displayed at a rightist bookstore which hosted a weekly *táncász* was the *Holocaust Industry*, by Norman Finklestein, which claims that International Jewish Organizations plotted with Israel to preserve the Holocaust as a unique event in history order to enrich themselves with exorbitant compensations.

reproduces a shared sense of Hungarianness with Transylvanians, and on the other, excludes liberal Hungarian citizens, then it deserves further attention. As I argued in chapter 6, the “cultural turn” and associated culturalist thinking has been perceived not simply in postsocialist countries, but as a broader “post socialist condition”. It cannot simply be attributed to local politics, alone. It results in part from the way in which culture has been conceptualized as a kind of property and has become the object of multiple and overlapping forces of governance (including increasing supranational governance). Before examining *táncház* tourism in Transylvania in more detail, let us consider the role of each of these factors in the production of cultural difference.

Late Capitalism and the Production of Cultural Difference

In his essay “The Art of Rent”, David Harvey illuminates how the special character of cultural events and products is reconciled with their status as commodities. Reminding us that the monopoly power of private property (including finance and land) is “both the beginning and the endpoint of all capitalist activity” (2001:397), he argues that characteristics of contemporary “globalization” and neoliberal capitalism have contributed to “desperate attempts to preserve and assemble” monopoly privileges by new means (2001:397). This process of assembling monopoly rent, however, articulates around a set of contradictions. First, the uniqueness of an object, practice or place is likely to be compromised with its greater marketability. Its status as a commodity, therefore, reduces the very peculiarity, uniqueness, or authenticity, which underlies its potential to collect monopoly rent. Second, competition tends toward monopoly, and, writes Harvey “the fiercer the

competition, the faster the trend” (2001:397). This can be better understood if we recognize spatial aspects of capitalist processes often not taken into account.³⁰⁷

Attention to how “the economic space of competition has changed in both form and scale over time”(2001:398), allows us to spy “monopolistic competition” as it relates to locational advantage. As the so-called “natural monopolies” of space, location, and the political protections of national boundaries have been diminished with “the annihilation of space through time”, “the question becomes how to assemble monopoly powers”(2001: 399). In this struggle to secure new forms of monopoly rent under conditions glossed as globalization, “the language of authenticity and uniqueness looms large”(2001:398), as the “idea of culture” becomes “more and more entangled with attempts to reassert such monopoly powers”(2001:399).³⁰⁸ The struggle over the definition and assertion of these monopoly powers is enmeshed in “the idea of culture”, Harvey writes, “precisely because claims to uniqueness and authenticity can best be articulated as distinctive and non replicatable cultural claims” (2001:399). Culture, that is, has strong potential to be the basis of monopoly rent.

Exploring the “the question of how local cultural innovation and the resurrection and invention of local traditions attaches to the desire to extract and appropriate such (monopoly) rents”, Harvey points to yet a third contradiction:

the most avid globalizers will support local developments that have a potential to yield monopoly rents (even if the effect of such support is to produce a political climate antagonistic to such globalization!)(2001:402).

³⁰⁷ Lack of attention to the spatial context has led many to arrive at the false assumption that the trend of a once competitive capitalism to form monopolies is best illustrated in the “centralization and concentration of capital in mega corporations”(2001:398).

³⁰⁸ The trend toward monopoly, Harvey argues, urges two ‘answers’: the centralization of capital in ‘mega-corporations’ or looser alliances, and the securing of monopoly “rights of private property through international commercial laws that regulate all global trade”(2001:399).

Rather than seeing this as a globalization process that happens from above or outside the local, Harvey urges us to look at how local initiatives are implicated in these processes of uneven development. The reasons for the promotion of cultural difference are multiple, and seemingly opposed ideologies, for example, ethnonationalist movements and international investors of capital, may become bed partners in this pursuit. Indeed, in order to appropriate new forms of monopoly rent, capital must support the kinds of differentiation and “to some degree uncontrollable local developments that can be antagonistic to its own smooth functioning”(2001:409), hoping to “co-opt, subsume, commoditize and monetize” them (2001:410).

While Harvey’s take on the production of cultural difference focuses on its utility for “capitalists of any sort”(2001:409), with his phrase “the expediency of culture”; George Yudice focuses on a broader range of utility for “culture”, particularly on the relationships between NGOs and “local” actors in a civil society framework designed to ensure stability under conditions of neoliberal capitalism (2003 95). I quote him here at great length:

Today it is nearly impossible to find public statements that do not recruit instrumentalized art and culture, whether to better social conditions, as in the creation of multicultural tolerance and civic participation through UNESCO-like advocacy for cultural citizenship and cultural rights, or to spur economic growth through urban cultural development projects and concomitant proliferation of museums for cultural tourism, epitomized by the increasing number of Guggenheim franchises. This expanded role of culture is due in part to the reduction of direct subvention of all social services, culture included, by the state, thus requiring a new legitimation strategy in the post-Fordist and the post-civil rights era in the United States. Advocacy for the centrality of culture in solving social problems is not new, but it took different forms in the past, such as ideological (re)production of proper citizens (whether bourgeois, proletarian, or national). Although there have long been art therapy programs for the mentally ill and for the incarcerated, culture more generally was not regarded as a proper therapy for such social dysfunctions as racism and genocide. Nor was it considered, historically, an incentive for economic growth. Why the turn to a legitimation based on utility? (Yudice 2003:11)

Harvey answers this question by pointing to the fact that capital needs this space in order to generate new forms of monopoly rent; noting that it may produce conservative, reactionary or exclusionist movements as well (2001:410). Renee Sylvain makes a similar point when she writes that in ethnotourism, market demand joins forces with identity politics (2005). What these arguments share is their attention to the way that culture has been instrumentalized under contemporary conditions of capitalism; culture is considered “a crucial sphere for investment” (Yudice 2003:13) and a now dominant paradigm of “development” is offered as the answer to economic stagnation and social cutbacks.

Not only does the idea of development enjoy widespread credibility among supranational NGOs as well as among local governments, entrepreneurs and activists ; neither is it limited to the third world³⁰⁹, having become a commonplace term in urban studies. Urban entrepreneurialism is noted to be an increasingly dominant paradigm (Harvey 2001:402; Harvey 2001a; Peck and Tickell 2002) associated with “marked intensification of spatially uneven development corresponding with neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell 2002 392). The ubiquity of development discourse in the so-called “first and second” worlds suggests that it is not enough to view development through a lens of colonialism, but that it must be examined in relation to capital.³¹⁰ Defining the “rise of entrepreneurialism”, as a “reorientation in attitudes to urban governance that has taken place these past two decades in the

³⁰⁹ Critics of development discourse (and of the growing role of anthropologists in development related professions), argue that it employs a framework in which the third world is marked as underdeveloped, while also assuming that “development is a historical necessity”(Escobar 1991:669). Arturo Escobar (1991, 1995) has pointed to a growing body of work on “alternatives to development” rather than “development alternatives”

³¹⁰ Unlike Arturo Escobar, I do not discuss these questions in terms of Post Development era, for not only (as Escobar himself notes), has development become naturalized “as a central organizing principle for social life” (2000:196), but it has refracted in the 1st world as the central principle of interurban or interregional competition.

advanced capitalist countries” (2001a:347), Harvey points out that local development is more and more influenced by coalitions of public and private ventures “within a broader coalition of forces within which urban government and administration have only a facilitative and coordinating role to play” (2001a:351). The new entrepreneurialism “has as its centerpiece, a notion of a public-private partnership in which a traditional local boosterism is integrated with the use of local government powers to try and attract external sources of funding, new direct investments, or new employment sources”(Harvey 2001a:352).³¹¹ Local development projects quite often feature spectacles touted for their ability to “break the downward spiral of economic stagnation” (Harvey 2001a:356), which draw tourists and produce income for local people through tourism related activities.

Folk Dance Tourism as Heritage Development

Harvey’s insights on interurban competition need not be limited to urban environments. Indeed, he notes that a feature of the new entrepreneurialism is its emphasis on place, rather than on territory (2001a:353).³¹² Such insights may be applied to the promotion of local or regional development and interregional competition, reflected, for example, in the “regionalism” which has enjoyed credibility in the EU (Keating and Jones 1985, Bukowski, Piattoni and Smyrl 2003).³¹³ The coalitions that cluster around tourism as development, said to reduce

³¹¹ George Yudice has suggested that it may no longer be useful to think in terms of public and private, while others (Li 2001, Hall 1996) have warned that a “new terrain of politics [has been] created by the emerging forms of state and civil society and new, more complex relations between them”(Hall 1996 434). NGOization, in Yudice’s esteem, is a form of institutionalization under which activism gives way to bureaucratic administration (2003:77).

³¹² This place based approach might appear to work against any political or ethnonational project that is territorially based; yet this chapter will show that this is not necessarily the case.

³¹³ Authors (Piattoni and Smyrl 2003, Keating 1985) have noted that regionalism is ill-defined, perhaps due to its emergence out of interests not entirely congruent, yet usually found in combination: issues arising from administration of the modern industrial state, economic approaches to development and growth, demands aimed at the central state originating within “regions”, and demands for regional autonomy (Keating 1985:1, 3). Indeed, in the European Union, as the economic difference among states has decreased, that between has regions grown (Dudek 2003:117), one response to which was the development

poverty by protecting natural resources and the development of sustainable economic activities, may be made up of apparently countervailing forces. Folk dance camps in Transylvania may be seen as an instance of the production of “locational advantage” through the practices of tourism as development. In the case of *táncház* folk dance tourism, such development is focused on heritage heritage.

In Transylvania, where the large majority of folk dance camps for adults³¹⁴ are hosted, a number of localities where social dance culture remained active and later became prominent in *táncház* tourism had participated in the Bouquet of Pearls revival earlier in the century. Some of them have a rich history of engaging with tourism and performative folk art activities, and production of folk art for the market³¹⁵, while still others have no such past, as in the case of some of the villages where “Gypsy” folk dance camps have popped up in recent years. While *táncház* tourism dates to the 1970’s, its institutionalization in the form of folk dance camps in Transylvania began in 1990, just after the “regime change”. Since then, camps have multiplied rapidly. Because of the manner in which they are scheduled, it is possible to visit a number of camps in succession, which many *táncház* goers do

For the summer of 2006, The *Táncház* Association’s website listed 69 dance camps in Transylvania, most also offering craft activities.³¹⁶ In different locations, camps are managed by different coalitions; they are quite often the products of cooperation among local entrepreneurs, local, national and international NGOs,

of direct contact between “regions” and central organs, often bypassing the nation-state. European Commission regionalist policies were intended to “encourage political modernization as well as economic development”(Dudek 2003:116).

³¹⁴ Camps for children in which they learn dance or dance and craft are also proliferating.

³¹⁵ For example, the region of Kalotaszeg, Transylvania, where one longest running camps is located (in the village of Kalotaszentkirály), was already popular destination by the turn of the 19th century. Famous for its “peasant culture”, it was a source for ethnographic collection and informed national styles (Szabó 1998 170).

³¹⁶ Beyond that there are many in Hungary, including many expressly for children. This is important for , as Striker points out, it is among the youth that change is apparent. Further, *táncház* managers expressed to me that a focus on the youth is essential.

combined with state as well as local council funding.³¹⁷ Often featuring professional dance instructors from Hungary, well known (mostly Gypsy) fiddlers from the region, and some local “tradition keepers”(*hagyományőrök*) as “informants”(*adatközlők*) for the dance style, a single camp may also receive support from both the Hungarian and Romanian governments. Indeed, a number of camps use funding from the Hungarian government toward subsidizing admission for Transylvanians³¹⁸ and for Hungarian citizens, while “foreigners” are expected to pay the “full price”.³¹⁹

The network of camps overlaps with other efforts aimed at tourism—most notably agrotourism, which, according to some *táncház* goers, originated in Romania with *táncház* tourism. Indeed, some camps are located in areas designated as agrotourism zones by the Romanian government.³²⁰ While many visitors prefer to camp at the official campsite of the camp (or to “illegally” rent a back yard of a villager), there are agencies in frequented areas which help tourists find lodging in the homes of local villagers, or in “guest houses”, often decorated with folk art. To qualify, such homes must meet certain standards, usually involving the presence of running water and indoor bathrooms, and often a stipulated menu as well. In areas less developed for tourism, the system may not be mediated through an agency, with villagers showing up at the camp on the first day to offer rooms. While this means

³¹⁷ During fieldwork I ask about the availability of money from the EU. Most anticipated that this would be an important source in the future but were concerned that they lacked the skills to write the kinds of proposals needed. They relied much more on networks connecting them to funding sources.

³¹⁸ While they did not always expressly state that the Transylvanians need be ethnic Hungarians, there are very few (if any) ethnic Romanians that enroll in the camps (including week long lodging and board and access to lessons). Local villagers do often attend events in the evening, or the “gala” on the final day, to which they are admitted without a fee.

³¹⁹ In 2006, one camp listed its prices as the following: 125 EURO (approximately \$154.00) (for those without sponsorship); 17.000 Hungarian Forint (approximately \$68.00) for those arriving from Hungary (subsidized with sponsorship from the Hungarian government); 1.650.000 Lei (approximately \$51.00) for Transylvanian participants (subsidized with sponsorship of the Romanian government and RMDSZ (the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Romanians—a political party).

³²⁰ I know that they were designated as such by the signs posted on the roadside. Unfortunately, while in Romania I did not investigate what such status entails.

they are not held to institutionalized standards, those with running water and other amenities tend to secure guests with greater ease and for higher fees. It is noteworthy that with the sponsorship of the “homeland program” (szülőföld) of the Hungarian Economic and Trade Ministry, the Democratic Alliance of Romanian Hungarians (the main political party of ethnic Hungarians in Romania, henceforth RMDSZ) and the Hungarian National Village and Agrotourism Association (Magyar Falusi és Agroturizmus Országos Szövetsége) have jointly organized tourist hospitality courses in at least one of the camp locations (Mediatica 2006). Indeed, I met RMDSZ’s vice president for cultural (művelődési) and religious affairs (and also a musician who plays the folk viola) at one camp. In an interview he told me that the camp had originally been his idea, and articulated that RMDSZ was concerned with making Hungarian folk culture and its connected community related values relevant to today’s youth.

It is unfortunate that very few anthropologists have attended to the relationship between the overlapping terms agrotourism, ethnotourism, and ecotourism, given that tourism “is one of the world’s biggest industries and one of the world’s largest employers” (Sylvain 2005:367 n18), and is growing rapidly in developing countries.³²¹ Tourism is “the world’s number one employer, accounting for approximately 200 million jobs, 11% of global jobs (Honey and Stewart 2002:9). Further, in addition to the longtime support of tourism by UNESCO, “the IMF now considers tourism a viable export strategy for debt-ridden countries, and tourism is being promoted by industry members as a means for achieving sustainable development”(Sylvain 2005:364). Between 2005 and 2007, the World Bank granted communities in Central and South America \$9 million dollars (£4.6m) for

³²¹ In Namibia, for example, tourism is expected to be the “largest contributor to the national GDP” in the next year or two (UN 1999; Sylvain 2005:367 n19).

ethnotourism programs (MacKenzie 2007).³²² While the World Bank promotes “eco/ethnotourism” as a viable income generating activity (for example in the case of “ecosystem management in indigenous communities” World Bank 2004), UNESCO prefers the term ecotourism.³²³

The connection between the terms can be found in the way that cultural rights discourses have developed, particularly the identification of cultural groups with territory.³²⁴ Sylvain argues that “the ubiquity of essentialized notions of indigenous culture is less a result of the power of activist discourse than of the ways in which “places of recognition” are shaped by ambiguities produced at the intersection of class inequalities, identity politics and privatized development initiatives, particularly ethnotourism ventures”(2005:356). She argues “a naturalized and territorialized conception of culture is advanced most conspicuously at the confluence of ethnotourism and international indigenous identity politics”(2005:356, A concern of Li 2001, as well). These kinds of tourism are very often associated with sustainable development, the assumption being that such tourism helps to preserve the environment (Wonderful Greece), and local traditions (Independent Online 2007). The term ethnotourism is often used in connection with trekking. Tourists trekking in remote regions are offered lodging in villages, where they are treated to the “everyday” activities of “the village” and invited to “engage in ancient traditions” (Kassam 2005).

³²² In the late 1970’s the Inter-American development Bank and the World Bank “closed their tourism departments and stopped loans for tourism projects”, seeing mass tourism as “a poor development strategy” (Honey and Stewart 2002:2). In a reversal of this, the UN declared 2002 as the year of international ecotourism (2002:3).

³²³ The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local people”(Honey and Stewart 2002:1). Honey and Stewart assert that the term entered the lexicon” in the late 1970’s connected with the environmental movement and “demands for sustainable and socially responsible forms of tourism” (2002:2).

³²⁴ Indeed, critics of development discourse -advocates of “alternative development”- have espoused place based projects as key to the “end of development”, as “radical critiques of power”(Escobar 2001, see also Dirlik 2001).

The agrotourism section of the “Romania Tourism” website of the Romanian Ministry of Transportation, Construction and Tourism appeals to potential guests by suggesting they “turn back in time” and behave as “your fathers did” (Destination Romania). While this website does not use the term ethnotourism, it is written on the agrotourism page, however, that “multiculturalism...makes this experience even more interesting”, and that one may visit “Romanian, Hungarian, Saxon, or Gypsy villages”. It does not make any mention of the folk dance camps. The Hungarian language “Transylvanian Tourism” site (Erdelyiturizmus.hu), on the other hand, features not only a “folk culture” category, but also a folk dance camp subcategory within it. While this site does not mention ethnotourism either, it is clearly geared towards ethnic Hungarian culture in Transylvania.

The following quote from an article in the Times Online, entitled Romania’s Last Peasants, sums up the romantic orientation of such tourism and a related perspective on the looming threat of standardization. It illustrates the lure of such tourism as a visit to the idyllic past, while emphasizing that this treasure is disappearing before our very eyes at the hands of globalization.

Agrotourism, putting up with peasants, is the joy of traveling in Romania. This is tourism on a human scale, bespoke. You are a lodger but treated as a friend. Catch it before its innocence has been lost and before Romania enters the EU in 2007. Your hosts who are subsistence farmers provide milk for your coffee fresh from the cow at the end of the garden. How much will be lost when EU health regulations bring all this to an end (Romania’s Last Peasants 2005).

Tourists are enticed by the promise that not only is such tourism good for the environment, and for local or indigenous people, but that such experiences are limited, finite in a globalizing world. These ideas are tied together through the notion of heritage.

The practices of folk dance tourism in Transylvania are place based efforts produced through public private partnerships aimed at generating revenue and to encouraging “development” through the promotion of cultural heritage. As the basis of locational advantage, this heritage must be reproduced. Indeed, folk dance camps are partly aimed at reproducing intangible heritage—the very thing that makes their locations tourist-worthy. In this, the goals of Hungarian political parties seeking to capitalize on ethnonationalist sentiment and ethnic Hungarian political parties in Romania seeking to halt assimilation converge with those of revivalists, other tourists, local entrepreneurs, and Transylvanian villagers seeking to eke out a viable living. Such convergences illustrate the contradictory process of producing difference with market value.

The monopoly sought here is on the authenticity and peculiarity of cultural products and practices associated with place—“the Transylvanian village”. To date, most camp locations lie beyond the convenience of railroad service and can be reached only by bus, private shuttles run by locals, and by car. The location of the camps, remote agricultural villages surrounded by green forests, while inconvenient, adds an aura of authenticity, allowing the visitor to feel that he/she is not a typical tourist. But the balance between the unique and the mundane is delicate. One younger *táncház* goer told me that she intended never to go to certain camps (including the one in the village mentioned below) because they are “too established” and “touristy”, and she doesn’t like to see herself as a tourist. Rather than be among tourists, she preferred to be among the villagers whom she came to see. Given such tensions, it is worth giving some attention to the relationship between socialization

and spectation in *táncház* “tourism”.³²⁵ Indeed, reflecting this tension, a significant number of *táncház* tourists mentioned to me their disappointment with the absence of “tradition”. One campgoer expressed disappointment about her stay at the home of a local villager, noting that villagers did not dress in folk costume daily. This notion of “tradition” seemed only to refer the realm of expressive culture, however. She did not note, for example, the workhorse in the barn and the adolescent son’s adept relation with it, the diet determined by local production, the ubiquity of the outhouse, the lack of heating, or the social use of brandy. Nor did she note the greeting “may God grant you a good day” offered to villagers and strangers alike. Indeed, many *táncház* camp goers, while bemoaning the lack of tradition, expected access to running water, and some even the availability of vegetarian meals. Some of the vicissitudes of this kind of monopoly based development tourism are illustrated in the case of the camp below.

In one village hosting a camp, my wait in the office of the mayor turned out to be fruitful. When I arrived at his office, the mayor was preoccupied with distributing a notice that the drinking water might be contaminated and that visitors should drink bottled water only. This crisis was in part a consequence of the presence of nearly 200 extra people in this village of approximately 1200 ; an amount proving far too great for the outhouses to handle, resulting (with the help of heavy rainfall after a dry spell) in contamination of the ground water. The mayor explained to me that “infrastructure must be improved or development (*fejlődés*) is unimaginable”. This was despite the fact that, unlike many villages in the area, this

³²⁵ The kind of experience one might have may also depend on income. The cheapest way to attend a camp is to camp in a tent. It is usually people with more spending power who stay in houses, becoming “intimate” with “informants”.

one has a paved road and a system for trash removal. He pointed to water and an international telephone line as two necessities.

While waiting for the mayor to take care of this quite important business involving serious health concerns (I myself had contracted parasites in a village not far from this one 2 years before), I picked up a pamphlet sitting on his desk; an edition of the *Transylvanian Farmer; The Agricultural Environmental Protection, Tourism and Knowledge Propagating Journal of the Romanian Hungarian Association of Farmers*. In this journal, I encountered advertisements for grants available to individuals and households interested in building “pensions”, or in the development of entertainment activities. In one article encouraging activities promoting tourism, farmers were urged to cease planting vegetables in their front yards and to replace them with flower beds, considered to be more attractive to tourists. Not long after that, a local villager explained to me in an interview that shortly he would be building a house appropriate for guests in the back yard. Pointing to the vegetable gardens, he told me that he planned to replace them with flowers!

Such examples: the replacement of vegetables with flowers and the installation of modern septic systems, indoor bathrooms and running water point to a contradiction. In order to accommodate guests, (indeed, in order to raise their own standard of living) villagers may need to adapt to certain standards, while if the results of this adaptation lead to “disneyfication” or even unbridled “development”, then they risk losing the uniqueness and particularity that draws tourists; they risk losing monopoly achieved through difference and authenticity. While the aim of such efforts is the development of both physical and social infrastructures, writes Harvey, there is also “a far wider application”(2001:405). If claims of authenticity are the basis of monopoly rent, then “on what better terrain is it possible to make

such claims than in the field of historically constituted cultural artifacts and practices and special environmental characteristics...?”(2001:405).

For tourism to work, the characteristics that draw tourists must be reproduced. The necessary development in the case of Transylvanian villages hosting folkdance camps, then, also includes that of intangible heritage, of culture. Indeed, while physical infrastructure may move away from “heritage”, as villagers build bigger and more modern homes and facilities, (if even in a “heritage style”), the reproduction of folk dance practices among villagers (and among camp goers) is necessary if the monopoly is to keep its hold. But what are the other effects of reproducing intangible heritage defined through difference? Sylvain points out, “the proliferation of essentialist claims is owed to a globalizing idea of culture that proves useful for generating income and securing recognition...embodied in the identity expectations imposed by donor agencies and the tourism industry”(2005:356). Yet she and others have indicated that such “places of recognition” are also connected to political claims to territory (indeed, we might add, property). Indeed, the activism of Indigenous peoples emerged in response to their disenfranchisement and dispossession at the hands of development projects in the 1960’s and 1970s, and NGOs provided a support structure that made it possible to couch claims according to the language of self determination (Sylvain 2005:356). She reminds us that to make such claims requires the crafting and reproduction of a “unique locally grounded but globally recognizable indigenous identity...”(2005:356), something which the notion of intangible heritage can be harnessed toward.

Conclusion: Ethnonationalism, Cultural Property, and Intangible Heritage

In the post socialist moment political and economic processes may quite often combine to contribute to the mobilization of discourses of absolute cultural

difference toward various ends. The opening up of the postsocialist “second world” to market forces, the emergence of neoliberal state forms and correlated civil society promoting organizations (Yudice 2003, see also Mandel 1993, 2002, Creed and Wedel 1997), and the massive redistribution of resources contribute to a context in which cultural property has increasingly relevant economic value. In such a competitive environment, and with the help of particular discourses about the *nép*, nation and citizenship discussed in chapter 6, the communitarian notion of the ethnonation has become an attractive way to understand such experiences; to explain the particular patterns of dispossession and redistribution, indeed, to decide which side one is on or who the enemy is. Taking such a view requires, however, that one adopt a bounded view of culture.

As groups strive to fit into “places of recognition”, into identity expectations originating in by “the state”, NGOs, the international donor community, or tourist preferences (Sylvain 2005:357) for access to resources, it is possible that they may come to adopt such a view of culture. Heritage discourse supports a notion of bounded cultures in which multiculturalism or the fluid and historically informed nature of cultural processes becomes obscured by a notion of authenticity in which purity and mutual exclusion is valued most. Lidija Nikocecic (2004)³²⁶ argues that the “archipelago approach to cultures” (Hyland Eriksen 2001) cannot recognize the kinds of cultural exchanges between groups that are extant. Categorizing cultural activities either at the level of “national culture” or of specific minority groups, this approach is unable to address the historically active and fluid mixes produced through cultural processes (Nikocecic 2004). While Nikocecic sees this as a function

³²⁶ Nikocecic is the director of the Ethnographic Museum of Istria, Croatia. This view was articulated in a paper given at the 2004 General Conference of the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Ethnography, as a practical concern.

of categorizations made by the nation-state, through which UNESCO funding is allocated, it also reflects the nature of any categorization or production of “places of recognition”. But because intangible heritage discourse has arisen in relation to mobilizations for indigenous rights and property in a situation of diminishing resources and dispossession, it is also connected to forms of “proof”. The bureaucratic practices in the implementation of heritage policy preferences require that distinct groups be defined and connect these groups with particular forms of property.

As discussed in chapter 6, the question of social rights may be obscured by emphasis on political and civil rights in the post socialist period, marking the increasing dominance of the culture talk. Indeed, reflecting this, an emphasis on “cultural citizenship” has become prominent in anthropology and elsewhere (Rosaldo 1989). Noting that it is reflected in the introduction of the UNESCO publication *Our Creative Diversity*³²⁷, Yudice argues that this emphasis generated in “the transition of the welfare state to the neoliberal state”(2003:165) is at odds with conventional notions of citizenship (2003:22). Janet Blake notes that the broadening of the concept of cultural heritage has taken place in the realm of cultural rights, where human rights are directly linked to cultural heritage. She argues that such an approach “has been spurred on by recent conflict in former Yugoslavia, involving attempts by one party to the conflict to eradicate the cultural heritage of the other in order to destroy their ethnic/cultural identity as a weapon of war”(2000:76). She writes that the construction of cultural identity is what is at stake in the right of a people to their cultural heritage (Blake 2000:77), but she fails to note that the

³²⁷ This publication states “economic and political rights cannot be realized separately from social and cultural rights (UNESCO 1996 11, Yudice 2003:22).

Yugoslav war was fought under the sign of the right to self determination based on the relation of a “people” to territory.

Such claims have, beyond their results in the ex Yugoslavia, produced the Czech and Slovakian Republics, the Ukraine, and Moldova (for example) in the flux of changing borders following the “end of socialism”.³²⁸ These identity based claims on the right to self determination were also made in the context of privatization, during which enclosures of formerly common space were being converted into private property; a redistribution of wealth that in some ways parallels the “Great Transformation” (Bodnár 2001:10). Such claims have also been made with regard to autonomous regions. Indeed, ethnic Hungarian politics in Transylvania have been focused on the establishment of autonomy in the part of Transylvania where ethnic Hungarians make up the majority. Since 2004, the ethnic Hungarian Szekler National Council has been pushing for a referendum on autonomy for the lands historically inhabited by Szeklers, a distinct subgroup of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania which enjoyed a type of “autonomy” (group nobility) under the Hungarian Kingdom and Habsburg Empire, most of which territory was retained in the Autonomous region in socialist Romania.³²⁹ It also hoped to convince the European Parliament “to make granting autonomy to the Szeklers a condition for Romania's joining the EU” (Radio Free Europe 2004b). This shines new light on the rumor circulating that the Hungarian referendum on dual citizenship was an

³²⁸ Moldova’s independence from Russia in 1991 was far from an abstract event to Romania. In 1994, the majority ethnic Romanian population voted no to union with Romania in a plebiscite (Springer 1997). In 1992, the Moldovan government fought a war with secessionists from Transneister region, which has a nearly 60% majority of ethnic Russians-Ukrainians. While Transneister continues to be a part of Moldova, repeated attempts have been made to gain autonomy, most recently by referendum (International Herald Tribune 2006). Another example of independence by plebiscite is Montenegro. Montenegrins voted themselves an independent state in a referendum, allowing the new country to begin negotiations to enter the EU (EU Observer 2006).

³²⁹ “It also adopted a resolution stipulating that it will ask the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to elaborate an addenda to the European Convention on Human Rights dealing with collective rights of ethnic Minorities” (Radio Free Europe 2004b).

attempt to make ethnic Hungarians citizens of the EU before other Romanians, in order to provide them a chance to vote in their own autonomy, and points to the pertinence of a deeper history of demographic politics in the region.

Thomas Hyland Eriksen (2001) points to a tension between the liberal and humanistic intentions of UNESCO and the “archipelago” image of cultures presented in *Our Creative Diversity*. “The political conclusions to be drawn from the description of the world inherent in the report”, he argues, “are not necessarily the liberal, tolerant and universalistic ones suggested by the authors (2001:134). Indeed, he writes:

Separatists, difference multiculturalists championing exclusive criteria of judgment for ‘my culture’, nationalists seeking stricter border controls and restrictions on the flows of meanings across boundaries, inquisitors chasing the Salman Rushdies of the world into hiding, and myriad nationalisms writ small could find a sound basis for their isolationism and political particularism in the report, notwithstanding its periodical assertions to the contrary (2001:134).

It is in part a shared acceptance of a bounded and static culture concept that ties these views together. As Hyland Eriksen states:

These assertions stand in a mechanical, external relationship to the basic view of cultures as bounded and unique. Cultures need to talk to each other as it were, and tolerate but they remain bounded cultures nevertheless” (2001:134)

Quite interestingly, it appears that the area of the world and population with which an anthropologist conducts research may influence his/her standpoint on the issue of cultural rights, suggesting that we must apply a spatial analysis to grasp how this discourse refracts under conditions of neoliberal globalization and uneven development. Hyland Eriksen describes a 1997 debate set up around the following passage in *Our Creative Diversity*:

Cultural freedom, unlike individual freedom, is a collective freedom. It refers to the right of a group of people to follow a way of life of its choice...It protects not only a group, but also the rights of every individual within it (UNESCO 1995:15). (Hyland Eriksen 2001:144)

He points out that “the two in favor of the motion argued from the vantage-point of indigenous peoples in Indonesia against state dominance, language death and global capitalism”(2001:144), while its opponents “spoke about the multi-ethnic (and in some cases post-ethnic) nature of contemporary European and North American society, and how the politicization of culture had drawn public attention way from the issues of rights and distribution of resources”(2001:145). Such a divergence points to the need for awareness of the refraction of such discourses across the globe and their employment under vastly different conditions, rather than solely in the places considered the traditional domain of anthropologists, where such mechanisms can be explained as a neocolonial encroachments on the third world (Escobar 1991:2000).

It is perhaps quite telling that in Hungary a group of citizens has attempted to establish minority status for themselves as “Huns”. This example allows us to see how the model advocated for the first scenario can find its way to the second. It is significant, that, as the BBC article chronicling the attempt of “Huns” to achieve minority status notes:

Under Hungary's 1993 law on the rights of ethnic and national minorities, recognition would have meant state support for Hun schools, language and cultural institutions - rights already enjoyed by 13 existing minorities in Hungary (BBC 2005).

It is significant too that György Kisfaludy, the spokesman for the group who considers himself a Hun high priest, “told the BBC that to be a Hun today was a matter of feeling and cultural identity”(BBC 2005). This is just one example of ways in which culture may be mobilized under conditions of dispossession and redistribution. We see other reflections of the struggle over cultural property in *táncház*. In the 2000s, the chief performing ensembles are revivalist bands made up

of ethnic Hungarians, a stark contrast with the rural Gypsy bands from whom revivalist learned to play in the 1970s and 1980s. Whereas elderly Gypsy musicians still provide authenticity as masters or first fiddlers (their names enthusiastically billed along with those of the ensembles when on tour), younger Gypsies are considered to play an adulterated style less authentic than that of the *táncház* bands. This dispossession of Roma, or the redistribution of cultural property into the hands of ethnic Hungarians, is just one example. *Táncház* goers also expressed resentment towards the multiculturalist aid for Jews and Gypsies. They wondered why these economic benefits connected to minority rights were available to everyone but them. Such tensions were also reflected in talk about *táncház* going Jews. On the one hand, those who identify with their Jewishness (and therefore probably don't frequent *táncház*) are considered to have "adopted Jewishness and denied their Hungarianness", while on the other, those who participate in *táncház* may "think they are more Hungarian than the Hungarians".

In this chapter I have shown the ways in which political and economic forces come together to promote ethnonational thinking as a variant of a more generalized culture talk. In a moment in which culture talk predominates, the cultivating practices which contribute to the *táncház* framework of sense—centered on Hungarianness as *nép*—interacts with ethnonational and populist expression in the political sphere toward often contradictory ends. The political results of the emergence of such a community of sense in a moment of danger are not necessarily what revivalists, investors in development tourism, cultural rights activists, or supranational promoters of heritage discourse, intend. They are the results, rather, of historical convergence. Implicated in this convergence is the cultural turn and the threatened condition of social citizenship, both symptoms of the post socialist

condition. Having pointed to the “globalizing idea of culture” and the role of supranational organizations in heritage discourse in this chapter, I examine them further in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has presented *táncház* as a composite entity imbricated in changing historical forces and political and economic conditions. I have argued that the production of a *táncház* framework of sense and the notion of an “inner sphere of sovereignty” unfolded in a mutually determining relationship with political and economic conditions. Yet it has also become clear through this study of *táncház* that the “political economy” is a result of a contradictory and processual relationship between political and economic spheres which may produce unexpected results. It has been helpful in this dissertation to further gloss these political economic conditions as conditions for state power, association and collective action. This lens allows us to focus on the relationship of cultivation and state power in a process of state making. I’ve examined it from the perspectives of citizenship, association and distinction-producing collective memory, suggesting that each is mutually informing with the political sphere. By examining a broader network of forces of governance, and pointing to the role of supranational governance in chapter 7, I have suggested that we consider “state functions” of supranational agencies as implicated in nation making, or even in the making of “inner spheres of sovereignty”.

In this conclusion I draw out some further research plans for investigation of the relation between cultivation and state power at the turn of the millennium as they relate to *táncház*. Intangible heritage discourse is quite explicitly about the cultivation of populations. Indeed, as a site of cultivation, *táncház* serves both as a model for and conduit of an intangible heritage discourse circulating in supranational and local spaces. But the effects of such discourses, as we have seen,

also result from specific conditions in national states, leading to particular refractions of this relationship.

Political and Economic Trends in Hungary

Despite the legitimacy that has accrued to those who can claim to have been oppositional under the socialist regime, revamped Socialist parties have enjoyed electoral success throughout the region. In Hungary, the most powerful condemnation of the electoral success of the Socialist party and the reproduction of socialist era elites is encapsulated in the discourse of the *stolen regime change*, elements of which are expressed by *táncház* participants. The fact that those that had been close to the party benefited disproportionately in the privatization process appears to support the contention that there was in fact no change of regime, that former Communists still control political life. It is perhaps best symbolized at present by the current Socialist premier, Ferenc Gyurcsány, among the richest men in Hungary, who had a leadership position in the Communist Youth League (KISZ) in the 1980s.³³⁰ In his first years as Prime Minister (as a midterm replacement), Gyurcsány was seminal in remaking the increasingly unpopular Socialist party in the image of Tony Blair's Labour Party. Embracing Giddens's third way or "modernizing social democracy", he has espoused that neoliberalized form of social democracy found among the European establishment parties on the left.³³¹ It is the

³³⁰ Conversations with some *táncház* goers revealed that some had refused to join KISZ despite its advantages. They admitted, however, that many people in KIOSZ worked to provide opportunities for efforts such as *táncház*. Their overall opinion, however, was that KISZ had supported such efforts in order to harness them.

³³¹ Because it occurred after my fieldwork, I have only included limited mention of the more recent events occurring around the anniversary of the 1956 revolution, in which street protests, some quite violent, occurred following a series of protests after a closed party speech by Gyurcsány was leaked to the media. This speech, among other things, suggested that the party needed to stop lying to the people about the state of the economy. It is generally believed that the center right FIDESZ used the protests to attempt to strip the Prime Minister and parliament of legitimacy. The protests drew elements of the far right, identifiable by their use of symbols such as the Flag of Arpad, associated with the "Hungarian Nazi" Arrow Cross party. FIDESZ has refused to admit to having encouraged them. In some cases police used unwarranted force to

Hungarian left that has been most active in the privatization process, a process that may be considered inevitable to all establishment parties, but in which the Socialists have had the greatest role, due to their longer time in power. Indeed, we can say that the neoliberalization of the Hungarian state and market has happened under Socialist leadership. It should not be surprising, then, that people question the legitimacy of the party. Not only is it pursuing policies quite inimical to the ideals of socialism, but it appears to be reproducing the same elites who were in power as Communists.

Táncáz goes used the words Socialist and Communist to represent a group that is perceived to have wielded corrupt power in the 20th century enacted in the name of socialism or communism. In this view, as the phrase *stolen regime change* suggests, Communists never stepped down, but have instead reinstalled themselves within the new party system as urbanite—or cosmopolitan—Socialists and “liberals”. While the economic policies of the Socialists have not differed greatly from those enacted by FIDESZ, by virtue of its longer tenure, the Socialist party is associated with the rapid economic changes brought about first by “shock treatment”, a general turn toward neoliberalism, and the related adaptations made for entry into the EU and the anticipated adoption of the Euro.³³² While my fieldwork ended before the elections that brought the Socialists into power for another term, the first incumbent reelection in postsocialist Hungary’s history, the situation has further supported this belief. Not only has the FIDESZ opposition cried corruption, but the austerity measures pursued by Gyurcsány’s government since the elections have been widely criticized within the country. Protests of up to

suppress and contain the protests, and it is generally believed that they did so according to government orders.

200,000, called by Orbán and FIDESZ, yet punctuated with far right symbols, have demanded that the government step down.³³³ It remains unclear, however, if dissatisfaction lies with the austerity measures or with the fact that the Prime Minister and his party had lied to the public, an opportunity the opposition used to erode the legitimacy of the Socialists, and particularly, Gyurcsány himself.

It is in this environment that Gyurcsány has accused Orbán of engaging populism, using the Latin derived “populismus”, rather than the Hungarian word *népi*. The word *nép* as we have seen, is laden with history, used sometimes as a label for class, but more often of ethnicity. To champion the *nép* meant and means to champion real Hungarians against their oppressors, who, by this logic, are not real Hungarians. It would have been unwise indeed for Gyurcsány to oppose himself to something *népi*, for *népi* movements have garnered much legitimacy in the past. Further research should continue to explore the relationship of *táncház* with party politics. Further investigation into the production of the rift, of divided publics, and into the attitude of *táncház* goes toward the more recent political events. Did they participate in the protests? To which factions did they attach themselves?

Liberalism and Culture Talk

Current global conditions are characterized by the greatest concentration of wealth in the hands of the rich since the 1920s (Harvey 2005:119), and post socialist uneven neoliberalization is further characterized by “the universal tendency to increase social inequality and to expose the least fortunate elements in any society” (Harvey 2005: 118). These conditions, combined with the near global deligitimation of a Communist alternative, and a defacto defeat of a truly Social Democratic one,

³³³ Orbán was accused of mobilizing far right forces in the 2006 protests. In 2007, when he again called people to march, he suggested that he was responsible for mobilizing only those that showed up for particular FIDESZ sponsored rallies. He has on several occasions “predicted” that the people will rise against this “illegitimate” government.

has made the post socialist contemporary conducive to essentialist thinking. I have argued that this may be particularly so in postsocialist societies due to the rapid reduction of social citizenship in polities where this has been the primary, indeed naturalized, form of citizenship. I argue that within *táncház* circles, the use of the term *nép* may combine with stolen regime change and heritage discourses to enforce notions of absolute cultural distinction, what Stolke (1995) refers to as “cultural fundamentalism”.

Indeed, solutions to these conditions are offered up on a platter of culture, whether it be under the guise of global civil society, cultural citizenship, cultural rights, or the mobilization of cultural difference for economic gain and the purposes of development, touted as the answer to economic woes, or as a manner of supplementing the state’s declining role in the social realm. But economic development, unless distributed evenly, does not bring equality. The debate over citizenship on cultural terms distracts us from the social implications of neoliberalization, even while postsocialist citizens take such citizenship for granted. This particularly volatile combination of high expectations for social citizenship and its rapid demise in postsocialist countries is not unconnected with “the rise of ethnonationalism” and “the tide of populism”.

Populist ideas, however, may also be—if divorced from essentialism—the root of a critique of neoliberalism. Indeed, the language of “the people” was central to the socialist and communist dreams of equality, or social justice. The disappearance of a discourse of equality is notable for coinciding with new talk of an undifferentiated “people” now anchored in the ethnic or national.³³⁴ While the stolen regime change discourse and the “folk critique” have incorporated elements of

³³⁴ Or in the FIDESZ equivalent, citizen (*polgár*).

socialist origin into their critiques of neoliberal capitalism, they tend to reduce conflicts in the current economic system to tensions between cultures. As such, the political opposition proposes that a social state be conserved on some level, while attacking those engaged in diminishing the social state as corrupt “foreigners”.

While one may say that in such critiques lie the seeds of class analysis, it is mediated through essentialisms. The discourse of the *nép* may indeed distract attention from class difference. Not only does it project an idealized and undifferentiated agrarian *nép* into the past, but it also perpetuates a contemporary picture of an undifferentiated people and sees the *nép* as one based on ethnicity, rather than class.

Despite the fact that socialist parties descended from communist parties have done remarkably well in the region, Marxist and contemporary socialist theory are not widely considered a source of legitimate analysis or critique. “The Socialists” have gained their power as liberals-by espousing a Western European Social Democratic platform. The dirty truth, however, is that the Euroleft is “neoliberalizing” as well, as was perfectly illustrated by financial experts’ hopes for Romano Prodi to be elected in 2005 in Italy. And here it is essential that we ask what “liberal” means. Part of the global “post socialist condition”, it appears, is a conflation of economic liberalism with cultural liberalism. If we can say that a liberal democracy must ensure plurality and the processes that allow for it, we can say that its conception diverges in the continental and British versions. With Hobbes and Locke, “the doctrine of individual rights is designed to protect... private property” (DeLue 2006:398), while for Spinoza and Kant, “freedom is associated not exclusively with property rights but with the idea of the autonomous individual who must be freed from externally imposed cant and dogma” (DeLue 2006:399). The “neoliberalization” of economies carries with it the reconfiguration of the state

to benefit certain parties, while the ideology of neoliberalism claims to challenge the state by assuring “freedom, liberty, choice, and rights”(Harvey 2005:119). The resultant economic inequality is, according to this ideology, not “what neoliberalism is all about”, but simply its “unfortunate byproduct” (Harvey 2005:119).

This is important because, not only does the focus on freedom and liberty correspond with culturalist approaches, but the ensuing differentiation is also taken as cultural by nature. This is in essence the argument that Amy Chua makes in her New York Times and Business Week bestseller World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability: democracy strengthens dehistoricized cultural groups (“market dominant minorities”) that already behave in a capitalist manner thus encouraging the majority to vote “illiberally”. Yet once again, the question of equality is missing here. Indeed, what is salient to *táncház* goes is the coincident emergence of new levels of inequality and the “multiculturalism” supported by the same “liberals” who are engaged in diminishing the social state. On the flip side, critical and “left”-leaning “cultural liberals” in Hungary are caught in a conundrum. While they may not approve of the privatization of health care (for example), the nationalist posture of the right opposition precludes their support.³³⁵ A closer look at the meanings of liberalism for everyday actors is required.

State Functions and Supranational Governance

As I have argued, the “rise of ethnonationalism” in Hungary cannot be understood without attention to the broader post socialist “cultural turn”. The events accounted above occur as a supranational network focused on promoting

³³⁵ FIDESZ is interesting here because it actually has a Roma representative to European parliament, making it more diverse than the liberals or the Socialists. On the other hand, FIDESZ’ willingness to use the far right to its advantage assures that many cultural liberals will not vote for it.

“civil society” exerts considerable force in local conditions without necessarily leading to the intended results. Terms such as “global citizenship” and “global civil society” suggest a civilization approach to culture. Yet, the on the ground results of projects promoted within this “global civil society” framework urge us to ask whether they might reinforce a *kultur* model, associated with the shift toward emphasis on the “right to culture” detectable in the development of a legal framework for minority and indigenous rights claims in the last three decades (Cowan et al 2001). The influence of this rights discourse can be found in the ways in which notions are expressed within *táncház*. Recall, for example, choreographer Sándor Timár’s statement about the right to speak one’s mother tongue, quoted in chapter 4.

While the “deployment of the rhetoric of culture” is not new, Cowan et al argue that its “renewed impetus in the last two decades” can be attributed to the role of supranational organizations (2001:9), including those aiming to protect intellectual and cultural property. The very language of cultural property, as we have seen, connects with the focus on heritage tourism, in which cultural difference is a key to a development naturalized as a solution to problems of inequality and economic stagnance. Alain Finkelkraut has pointed, albeit in a polemical manner, to a paradox connected to UNESCO’s cultural policy. This acceptance and promotion of difference inspired by cultural relativism, he argues, constitutes a turn away from the universalist civilizational values according to which the UN was founded in the post war years, toward a *kultur* or *volksgeist* model that “confine[s] individuals to their group of origin”(Finkelkraut 1995). While he points out that this shift was a reaction to the ethnocentrism and racism stemming from Western arrogance, (as was the founding of UNESCO itself), and spurred by the “spirit of

anticolonialism” and the “doctrine of multiculturalism”, he argues that it promotes “the production of absolute cultural distinction”(Finkelkraut 1995).

Finkelkraut argues that the understanding of culture as *kultur*, or *volksgeist*, as “the whole range of knowledge and values which were not specifically taught but which every member of a community nevertheless knows”(UNESCO 1982, quoted also in Finkelkraut 1995:82) has eclipsed the sense of culture as cultivation, *bildung*, an education that “seeks to provide students with the tools to choose among the many beliefs, opinions and customs that make up their heritage”(Finkelkraut 1995:82). Perhaps our mistake is to view these two models as mutually exclusive. James Ferguson, suggesting that “the hegemonic problematic of ‘development’ is the principle means through which poverty is de-politicized today”, argues that “failed development projects” may produce “instrument effects”(2006:273). Similarly, simply because the civilizational project of UNESCO may have “failed” in some cases, does not mean it has done nothing. It may have done something else. What if among the effects of the civil society and development focused projects of UNESCO and other supranational organs are the production of cultural distinction and the enclosure of a “cultural commons” into new forms of property and the assembly of new forms of monopoly?

Scholars have noted a broad international shift towards the cosmopolitan values of “tolerance, respect for others and an emphasis on human rights”(Kaldor et al 2003:16) associated with “a preference for democratic forms of governance and appreciation for cultural diversity” (Kaldor et al 2003:16). They tend to perceive the “shift to religious and nationalist causes” in opposition to this trend (Kaldor et al 2003:17), however, associating it with “religious and nationalist militant groups”(Kaldor and Muro 2003). As this dissertation has shown, this kind of

thinking may mislead researchers. It may discourage them from exploring the connections between the spread of cosmopolitan values such as appreciation for cultural diversity and the respect for democratic legal structures, and ethnonationalist movements (even while they note the connections between the former and indigenist territorial movements).

In the last two chapters of this dissertation pointed to a relationship of cosmopolitan supranational organizations (especially those involved in development tourism and heritage) and the rise of culture talk and ideas of absolute cultural distinction, or more specifically, ethnonationalism in *táncház* circles. I now discuss the history of heritage discourse in order to point to sites at which we might access in further research a more tangible connection between such forces and *táncház*, specifically.

Heritage Governance

A dense network of international law has developed over issues of heritage.³³⁶ Beginning in the 1950's, concerned with architectural monuments threatened by war as well as with archaeological excavations, UNESCO made the protection of "tangible" heritage incumbent on states (Blake 2000:61). In the early 1970's, as *táncház* was making its first appearance, UNESCO adopted the World Heritage Convention. According to UNESCO, the Convention was the fruit of "the merging of two separate movements: the first focusing on the preservation of cultural sites, and the other dealing with the conservation of nature" (UNESCO 2007c).

UNESCO's World Heritage Program, organized according to the Convention, "seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and

³³⁶ The common elements of cultural heritage as understood by International Law, writes Janet Blake, are "the sense that it is a form of inheritance to be kept in safekeeping and handed down to future generations", and "its linkage with group identity...it is both a symbol of the cultural identity of a self defined group...and an essential element in the construction of that groups identity"(Blake 2000:83).

natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity” (UNESCO 2007d). It adopts the notion of cultural diversity from the paradigm of biological diversity; with heritage considered a “nonrenewable resource”, culture is connected with nature (Blake 2000:72).³³⁷ As per its founding statement, the Convention emphasizes a common human heritage, stating, “World Heritage sites belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located”(UNESCO 2007d). Nevertheless, as we have seen, in some cases heritage discourse has functioned to connect “peoples” with territory (Li 2001, Sylvain 2005). This is partly an effect of the development of the concept of intangible heritage.

The appearance in recent decades of the term intangible heritage signals a broadening of heritage discourse to include cultural practices. Adopted by UNESCO’s general conference in 2003, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage entered into effect in April 2006.³³⁸ The move towards recognizing practices later subsumed under this term began much earlier, however. Steps taken by UNESCO aimed at the protection of “intangible heritage” have been the 1989 Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, the implementation of the Living Human Treasures program, promoted to member states by UNESCO since 1993, and the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (Western Europe), introduced in 1997.

While the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore and the Living Human Treasures idea were adopted to deal mainly with “folk art”, a UNESCO conference held in 1997 “toward the prevention of the

³³⁷ One employee at Heritage House used this language with me as well.

³³⁸ At the time this chapter was written, 53 member states had ratified it, including Hungary and Romania.

disappearance of spiritual resources adopted the 23 resolutions recording the necessary distinctions between the sections of cultural heritage” (Paládi-Kovács 2004:67). That same year saw the introduction of the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. In 2001 UNESCO adopted a definition of oral and intangible heritage and began the sponsorship of orally-transmitted culture, folk music, and folk dance as well as of those groups and institutions supporting them- including institutions dealing with festivals (Paládi-Kovács 2004:67).

While national states have developed programs that addressed those practices that come under “intangible heritage”, they are becoming standardized and codified under UNESCO governance. In selecting candidates, The Proclamation Programme for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage³³⁹ stresses that candidates should be “a living cultural tradition”, act as a “means of affirming the cultural identity of the communities concerned”, or “be at risk of destruction or of disappearing” (UNESCO 2006a). Candidates must further produce “a sound action plan for revitalisation, safeguarding and promotion” (UNESCO 2006a).

A shift toward the codification and standardization of intangible heritage is clear. Yet it is unclear what kind of influence such discourses have on local conditions. Further research must flesh out how this heritage discourse connects with *táncház* on the ground. To do so, attention must be turned to organizations or networks linking UNESCO heritage discourse to local projects. Such research would

³³⁹ Every two years, Member States are invited to submit candidature files that are then evaluated by NGOs specializing in the different fields of intangible cultural heritage. “An international jury examines the candidature files according to the criteria established by the Proclamation Rules. Proposed cultural expressions and spaces should be a living cultural tradition, demonstrate human creative genius, be a means of affirming the cultural identity of the communities concerned or be at risk of destruction or of disappearing. The candidature files must also include a sound action plan for revitalisation, safeguarding and promotion as awarding recognition of cultural spaces and expressions as Masterpieces does not constitute protection as such. (UNESCO 2006a).

contribute valuable insight into the relationship of supranational governance and the reproduction of the nation and cultural groups. This would not mean ignoring the role of the nation state, but would rather allow insight into the relationship of the cultivating practices of *táncház* with various levels of state (like) power.

Three Sites for Investigation of the Connections Between Heritage Discourse and Táncház

As may be clear, the *táncház* revival is a perfect match for the above candidacy requirements. Further, Blake emphasizes that the UNESCO Convention makes the duty of the participating states “ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and *transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage*” (Blake 2000:69, her emphasis), something *táncház* focuses on. But in what ways does *táncház* meet up with this project organizationally and institutionally? In considering how we might access such connections, I discuss three mediating organizations—Heritage House, The European Folklore Institute and its journal Hungarian Heritage, and CIOFF, the International Council on Folk Festivals, below.

The emergence of “the National Institution of the Ministry of Heritage”³⁴⁰ (*Nemzeti Örökség Minisztériuma Nemzeti Intézménye*), Heritage House (*Hagyományok Háza*) in 2001 as an independent institution completely separate from the Hungarian Institute for Culture (Magyar Művelődési Intézet; henceforth MMI) suggests a divergence of two visions of culture, *művelődés* and heritage. Even with many of the same individuals from earlier periods involved, the language employed in Heritage House has shifted towards emphasis on heritage, tradition,

³⁴⁰ In 1992 the Ministry of Culture (*Művelődési and Közoktatási Minisztérium*) was renamed and divided into two sections: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of National Heritage (*Nemzeti Örökség Minisztériuma*). While it has since been reorganized, we still find use of this term, as in, for example the Heritage House title above.

and preservation (Héra 2004). When asked about *művelődés*, *táncház* and Heritage House managers do respond that such practices have a role in *művelés* or *művelődés*. Nevertheless, they see little coincidence in the goals of the MMI and their own. They are vehement about the necessity of a state funded institution dealing with the Hungarian mother tongues of music and dance, long neglected in their view. While there is a strong emphasis on scholarly research in Heritage House, this emphasis is on music, dance or other folk practices, not on the sociological effects of revivalist practices or of folk art in contemporary society. The positive effects of preservation, protection and revitalization are assumed, and rarely investigated.³⁴¹

As an institution that emerged from the professionalization of the original *táncház* generation, yet reflecting continuities and discontinuities with its precursor institution, Heritage House provides a rich site for investigation into these processes. Further research into the relationship of Heritage House with supranational and national organizations, as well as with contemporary *táncház* events, would illuminate its role as a conduit between them.

The assumption that revival has positive results without investigating its effects³⁴² is also true of the European Folklore Institute, “a regional centre for the safeguarding, revitalization and diffusion of traditional culture and folklore in Europe”(European Folklore Institute 2007) founded by Hungarian ethnographers with the sponsorship of the Ministry of National Heritage and UNESCO in 1994. From 2000 to 2003, this Institute produced a publication entitled “Hungarian

³⁴¹ There have been, however, studies that examine past processes, including nation-making and revivalist projects and their effects on folk culture.

³⁴² Its journal does publish articles that take a critical historical approach to the revivals of the past. See, for example, Romsics(2001).

Heritage”, which brings scholarly works and efforts of the revival together. The inside front flap of the journal reads:

Hungarian Heritage presents an overall picture of the traditional culture of Hungary and the Hungarian folklore revival. It features original articles on folk literature, folk music, and folk dance (with special focus on the Hungarian *táncház* movement), and also deals with folk mythology, rituals, customs and games, and traditional arts, crafts, and architecture. Book reviews, and a critical look at some topical exhibitions, films, videos and sound recordings form a part of every issue, as do reports on the late folk dance and music festivals, folk dance and music camps and folk craft fairs. The journal also provides practical and up-to date information on coming events (festivals, fairs, exhibitions, etc), and new audio releases. (Hagyományok Háza 2000).

The journal indeed appears to serve the goals stated on the Institute’s website, which state that its primary aim is “to promote the research, preservation, teaching and revival of traditional culture and help make it more popular, according to the recommendations accepted at the 25th General Assembly at UNESCO in 1989” (European Folklore Institute N. d.).

Although the term folklore has been subsumed under the more general term intangible heritage in later recommendations, the 1989 recommendations coincide neatly with those stated by Heritage House. Indeed, Heritage House and the *táncház* revival from which it emerged could easily be cited as successful models of the recommendations. Further, under the “programs” section of The European Folklore Institute’s webpage, we find two lists: one of folk dance festivals and folk art (including camps), the other, a list of functioning *táncház*es. While the webpage seems to hold no new information since 2002, and the Institute has not sponsored any publication since then, its existence provides insight into the channels between UNESCO and *táncház*, and also into the networks involved in such projects. Its (seemingly brief) existence also urges us to look for other such conduits.

Another organization that links UNESCO and *táncház* is the International Council on Folk Festivals (CIOFF). Founded in 1970, CIOFF entered into an “official” consultative relationship with UNESCO in 1997. To illustrate CIOFF’s role, I cite extensively from the webpage of CIOFF Africa:

Since it’s foundation, CIOFF has been working for the safeguarding and dissemination of traditional culture. Through its activities, CIOFF aims at the following main objectives: 1) Promote the intangible heritage, through forms of expression such as dance, music, games, rituals and others arts. 2) Serve the objectives of UNESCO. 3) Support the activities of its members and those non-governmental organizations working in the areas of folklore and cultural heritage. 4) Serve the cause of peace and non-violence through the implementation of the above objectives

Through these different activities CIOFF aims at being an actor of the intercultural dialogue, considered as a vehicle of mutual understanding and peace. In this spirit, CIOFF acts also to make young people sensitive to this issue. Within this framework, the organization undertakes a programme to raise children and young people awareness to the traditional culture and to pass it on to them (Africa C.I.O.F.F. N. d.).

Beyond specific engagement with festivals, the mission stressed by CIOFF Hungary, CIOFF Africa, like The European Folklore Institute, stresses its “mission to set up the net between the agents concerned by the intangible heritage: local communities, national and international cultural authorities, bearers of knowledge, creators, teachers, scientists, political decision-makers, local and national associations” (Africa C.I.O.F.F. N. d.).

Interestingly, unlike that of the European Folklore Institute, the list of festivals on the CIOFF Hungary website includes only festivals of staged performances, excluding *táncház* and the *Táncház* meeting. But this does not mean that *táncház* goers have no contact with CIOFF, for a great many of them dance in ensembles or visit festivals for fun. Indeed, many festivals feature “pubs” at night where bands play and people engage in folk dance as social dance (a result of

tánc ház's effect on staged performance and pedagogy). The relationship of CIOFF Hungary to UNESCO would be important to investigate. Yet perhaps more important would be to trace the connections between stage dancers and *tánc ház* goers. How distinct are these groups and are there distinctions between their "frameworks of sense"? The fact that dance and music researchers sat on the festival and television competition juries during the socialist era signals that they may be conduits today as well.

Representatives of all three of these organizations, who rarely attend *tánc házes* today, were dismayed at my suggestion that ethnonationalist sentiment is powerful in today's *tánc ház*. They have connections with cosmopolitan supranational organizations and use the globally current terms to speak about this complex of activities. But while UNESCO efforts are connected with the idea that culture is a motor for development and are therefore aimed at how to integrate local cultural products into a global market³⁴³, representatives of the above-mentioned organizations, like *tánc ház* goers, speak often about preserving local cultures in the face of globalization (even as they promote record deals, tours, etc). This same posture can be found among anthropologists, perhaps particularly in the work of those critical of development, who have espoused such ideas as "alternatives to development" and "post -development"(Escobar 2001). For example, while admitting that local movements are "globalized in some ways"(2001:205), Arturo Escobar writes that it is necessary to distinguish "those forms of globalization of the local that become effective political forces in defense of place and place-based identities, as well as those forms of localization of the global that locals can use to

³⁴³ "In a context where it has become widely accepted that culture plays a central role in development, and is often qualified as "the engine of economic development", the challenge is to release its potential to the benefit of all. However, and faced with increasing asymmetry, a major question remains how to ensure that developing countries' cultural products can reach the global market" (UNESCO 2000).

their own ends” (2001:205). *Táncház* goes, among them the RMDSZ’s vice president for cultural (*művelődési*) and religious affairs, have stressed that a special feature of *táncház* is that “we produced it”- they did not borrow it from anyone else. But this study has shown that while *táncház* may be place based, it is hardly a “local project”. Indeed, this study has illuminated a complex process of place making “transnational tourism” connected intimately with political and economic conditions stretching across the 20th century.³⁴⁴

Further, aiming, as he does, to decenter “capitalocentric” analyses, Escobar appears to be blind to the way in which serving one’s own ends may lead to the commodification of cultural practices, or to exclusionary movements. Heritage discourse too may be said to have stemmed from just this type of “alternative to development” thinking. The rise of Heritage discourse, and especially its newer intangible heritage variety, has come in reaction to assimilation of and discrimination against “minority” cultures and ethnicities in the name of development, and to the dispossession of populations through the emergence of intellectual property regimes. Indeed, the 1989 Recommendation suggested that folklore deserves protections “inspired by the protection provided for intellectual productions”(UNESCO 1989), and, while stating that it is not enough, connects such a project with “WIPO and UNESCO’s important steps to protect intellectual property” (UNESCO 1989). As such, intangible heritage discourse employs the language of rights and property, in a context in which “natural monopolies” have been diminished through “globalization” (Harvey 2001:399).³⁴⁵ How do such questions connect with the place or territory based projects of Hungarian minorities

³⁴⁴ Of course, this dissertation has shown that “transnational tourism” is not new.

³⁴⁵ Li notes that ironically that a project to “free up land for Capitalist investment” sponsored by the World Bank would “have the effect...of fulfilling its more recent commitment to recognize and protect indigenous land rights” (2001:665).

over the borders? This is yet another lens through which we might view *táncház*'s role the relationship between cultivation and state power in changing historical circumstances.

Táncház and Transylvanian Hungarian Politics

In the conditions of neoliberal dispossession, postsocialist redistribution, and EU territorial revision, struggles over property in Romania are likely to be intensified. Further, while it may not lead to a diminished role of the nation-state, post socialist EU regionalization means additional competing governmental projects in increasingly circumscribed economic conditions. It is not yet clear how this may connect with the disaggregation of aspects of citizenship (civil, social, and political, rights) from citizenship in a state (Joppke 2003). Some scholars have promoted the general recognition of group rights as a necessary step to fulfill the promises of liberalism (Kymlicka 1995), while others have warned that such an agenda of group differentiated rights is hardly a viable answer to the “challenge to create a genuine polyphony of identities without reifying cultures”(Hann 2006). Transylvanian politics are steeped in these issues.

Espousing a communitarian notion of “nationalities”, ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania have attempted to gain “Hungarian” church properties and educational institutions nationalized in the past to make claims of sovereignty from the early 1990s on (Csergő 2002:9-10).³⁴⁶ Some have mobilized for regional autonomy, based on the idea of internal self-determination (Csergő 2002:10), as a “means of maintaining a separate language, culture and national identity” (Csergő

³⁴⁶ It is noteworthy that one Heritage House administrator told me that it is now in Slovakia that one can experience what the *táncház* was like in Transylvania in the 1970's. He did not mention it, but ethnic tensions are on the rise in Slovakia at present, with a far right party part of the ruling coalition. Tensions have revolved recently around whether the Benes decrees, which deported and dispossessed ethnic German and Hungarians from Slovakia after WWII, should be reconsidered. Here too, property is a central concern.

2002: 10). The ethnic Hungarian political field has become splintered, as new parties have emerged in favor of the autonomy of Transylvania or of (the majority “Hungarian”) Szeklerland, while the larger Democratic Alliance of Romanian Hungarians (RMDSZ) has pushed instead for decentralization “in the spheres of education, culture, health care, and economy”, expected to lead to administrative autonomy for Hungarians (Radio Free Europe 2004a)³⁴⁷ Many seeking regional autonomy insist that RMDSZ’s approach, which not only suggests that democratization in general can lead to equality for Hungarians, but also requires the party to cooperate with leading Romanian parties, affirms the Communist connections of party members. Nevertheless, all of the ethnic Hungarian parties are concerned with preventing the further assimilation of ethnic Hungarians.

Hungarians from Hungary are also dependent on Transylvania and the survival of its ethnic Hungarians as a source of authenticity. As we have seen, such projects of “preservation” are supported by notions of intangible heritage and projects aimed at preserving it as a living form. The prospects for the convergence of these seemingly separate trajectories are particularly striking when we recognize that the establishment of the relationship between cultural practices, a “people”, and a territory can be the basis for autonomy, in the case of indigenous groups. Indeed, concerned about the “racialization of territory”, Tania Murray Li, points to one group, defined by its members’ “adherence to customary ways”, that “assert[s] cultural distinctiveness as the grounds for securing rights to territories and resources”(2001:645). As authentic practitioners of a distinct cultural heritage connected with place-based small-scale agricultural (and foresting) practices, can

³⁴⁷ “UDMR Chairman Marko named the spheres of education, culture, health care, and economy as needing further decentralization. He said this would help the Hungarian minority in Romania achieve the administrative autonomy it seeks. He said minorities must be granted more rights to administer their own education and cultural institutions” (Radio Free Europe 2004a).

Hungarian Transylvanians assert the right to self determination as an indigenous group? This might seem ridiculous, especially in face of the fact that Romanians have long sought to scientifically establish that Dacians (proto Romanians) were present before the Hungarian conquest at the turn of the 10th century.³⁴⁸ Yet this provocative question asks how far the convergence of arguments for communal rights with heritage discourse might be taken in the future.

Further, while the Transylvanian village serves as the source of both an image of a “Hungarian” moral economy, and of notions of authenticity connected to *táncház* practices, there are real questions to be asked about the power relationships between Hungary and Transylvania, or between Hungarians and Transylvanians. While this dissertation has primarily approached *táncház* practices from the perspective of active Hungarian participants, a comprehensive study of Transylvanian experiences with *táncház* has yet to be done. Many Transylvanian villagers I spoke with did not see *táncház* tourism as connected with their lives in any way, while they resented the differentiation between themselves and their neighbors stemming, in part, from this industry.³⁴⁹ As we saw, the results of the referendum led to angry statements in Transylvania about Hungarians and may have fueled the efforts focused on autonomy.³⁵⁰ Indeed, despite the general notion that FIDESZ is

³⁴⁸ Hungarians claim that the land was uninhabited when they first settled there in the 10th century, thus affording them the “right of conquest”. Romanians claim that they were there at that time (indeed, since Roman times), inhabiting the foothills which afforded them protection from nomadic invaders. The archeological record supports early Dacian presence (Verdery 1991:219).

³⁴⁹ Village women I spoke to, for example, also resented the increased drinking and late night activities of their husbands, behavior that *táncház* goers think essential to the authentic villager.

³⁵⁰ The owners of a cafe in one Transylvanian town displayed a sign on December 7 in the window saying: “Entrance to Hungarian citizens prohibited,” to protest the outcome of the December 5th referendum. An ethnic Hungarian professor at the Public Administration College in Santo-Gheorghe announced he plans to cease teaching in the Hungarian language and return his ID card to the Hungarian government in protest of the referendum's results (Radio Free Europe 2004). Further, the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament (Hungarian Socialist Party) Katalin Szili was booed when taking part in the celebration of a Hungarian writer born in Kosice (Kassa) Slovakia. “several demonstrators held banners

the champion of Transylvanians, some have argued that the status law and dual citizenship reflect an attempt to establish a new form of colonialism (or “Eastern Expansion”) designed to gain access to cheap labor (Melegh 2002). So in Romania, the Hungarian benefits law (and the failed referendum) interacts with a context of battles over language rights, public monuments, and the restitution of “communal property”.

The *táncház* is invested in the preservation of cultural heritage among Transylvanian Hungarians and among *táncház* goers. It attaches authenticity to place and practices associated with Hungarian villages in Transylvania. Political forces of the Transylvanian Hungarian minority use the discourse of human rights to attempt to attain communal rights, on the basis of their relationship to territory, practices and property. Both of these are in line with heritage discourse. It is unclear what this relationship will lead to and how it may affect the cultural and political environments in both places. It is clear, however, that *táncház* as an instance of both the folk critique within Hungary, and as a model for and conduit of heritage projects, is illustrative of the complex relationship between cultivation and state power. It serves as an example of why it is important to consider “traditional” forms of sociality in relation to those forms subsumed under the contemporary rubric of civil society.³⁵¹

criticizing the negative attitude of the Socialists in the recent referendum about the dual citizenship of Hungarians beyond the borders” (Magyar Nemzet Online 2004).

³⁵¹ See Hann 2006.

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