

PhD Dissertation Theses

FOLK DANCE – SOCIAL DANCE – SOCIAL CONDITIONS

**THE ANALYSIS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SOCIAL DANCE AND THE RURAL
DANCE CULTURE IN THE HISTORICAL BIHAR COUNTY**

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I. The preliminary and the objective of the PhD thesis, the limitation of its subject

The research for this PhD thesis started nearly a decade ago, since 2004, examining the relation of the Hungarian traditional dance culture with the social (ballroom) dances. Beside the field research carried out in the settlements of the historical Bihar county, the investigation of the scholarly literature, the historical sources and the comparison of paradigms are the scholarly preliminaries of the present PhD thesis.

The subject of the dissertation is the study of the social dances, which is the common research area of the ethnocoreology, anthropology and ethnography. The other research subject of my PhD thesis is the exploration of the change in the traditional Hungarian dance culture during the 20th century, and through this the analysis of the interaction between the folk dances and social dances. The dissertation also includes the analysis of the general historical processes in Hungary and the two case studies in the historical Bihar county, as well as the joint application of folkloristic, anthropological and ethnographic research methods, with the presentation of new methodological approaches. The dissertation proceeds from that generally accepted, but less applied scholarly proposition, that the dance culture of a local community can reproduce the social dimensions of the community, enabling the analysis of the sociocultural background of the community having the same dance culture. Through my research on the dance culture presented in the PhD thesis, I have tried to understand the local social reality.

The objective of the dissertation is the examination of the interaction between the dance culture of the traditional agrarian society and the „foreign” cultural phenomena of the social dance, not only from the point of view of dance folklore, but also the social geography and anthropology as well. My aim was to prove, by studying the historical precedents, the national tendencies and case studies, that the inspection of the dance culture of a community may help to understand the sociocultural background of the local society. In my PhD thesis, I outline the new direction of research on the dance culture, which is different from the classical research trend of the Hungarian dance folkloristics, and which is closer to the anthropological paradigm of the dance science. One of the important goals of my work is to stress the fact, that the use of the non-traditional (non „folkish”) motion culture can be considered as the expression of the agrarian culture as well, which means that their analysis and their interpretation of the system of the sociocultural changes within a local society cannot be ignored. For this reason, I describe the social, historical background in my thesis

thoroughfully, which is designed as the framework of the connection of the traditional (rural) and the new (urban, civic) dance cultures. After the outline of the general tendencies, I analyze the presented case studies according to this aspect. My intention is to prove, that the dance culture of the local society reflects the key features of the social identity latently and manifestly. Therefore, the changes of the dance culture correspond to the cultural and social changes within the community. After the presentation of the interaction between the social environment and the dance culture I attempt to achieve the combination of the classic research methods of the dance folkloristics and the broadest methodological complexity.

In the first chapter of the thesis I summarized the research objectives of the last decade, as well the sites of the field research.

In the second chapter I concentrate on the comparison of the Eastern European dance folkloristic method and the American dance anthropology. My goal was to highlight the differences and similarities between the two dance research paradigms, to identify the relationship of the Hungarian dance folklore to the anthropology, and to underline, that the modern researches in the field of the dance science have to apply the methodological elements of both paradigms. Of course, the proportion of their composition depends of course on the aims of the research.

The chapter three is actually the broad summary of the connection of the social dances with the agrarian dance culture, which consists of three major units. The first gives an overview of the Hungarian dance folkloristics, its methods and literature from the early 20th century to the latest scholarly results. The second unit gives a synopsis of the research objectives, concerning the connection of the social dances and the traditional dance culture. In the third unit I make suggestions for solving the terminological problems. The reason of these suggestions was to promote a general scholarly consensus between the dance anthropology, ethnochoreology and dance sociology, and to establish a common terminological framework for these research fields.

The fourth chapter discusses the history of the connection between the social dances and the Hungarian folk culture. The sociocultural background is described parallel with the trends in the history of dance, therefore I analyze the history of the expansion of the social dances and their interaction with the traditional culture from the 16th century to the middle of the 20th century. I went into details of the processes in the 20th century, meaning the question of expansion, the possibilities of acquirement, and the change of the concomitants of the dance.

The fifth chapter prepares for the statement of the result of the field research. My aim was the summary of the research on the dance folklore of the historical Bihar, presenting the characteristics of the local dance folklore and reasoning the selection of the case studies.

The chapter six gives details of the interaction between the social dances and the traditional dance culture, according to the case study of Köröstárkány. The chief intention of this chapter was to illustrate, that how can an archaic, linguistically isolated community adopt and accommodate the new social dances, coming from an urban environment, and how can we examine this adoption from the context of the dance anthropology. It was also my aim to demonstrate the ethnic dimensions of the dance culture, and to signify the characteristics of the ethnic identity through the dance.

The chapter seven describes the appearance of the social dances applying the narrative paradigm in the case of Messzelátó-Sóstó. The settlement gives the sharp contrast of the example of Köröstárkány, since Messzelátó-Sóstó was established as an artificial settlement by locating the population of manors and servant quarters, which had no traditional dance culture at all. Once stood on the site of the present-day settlement the largest bath complex of the Great Hungarian Plain, which functioned as a cultural transfer place between the urban and local rural layer-cultures. The reconstruction of the dance life and the social dances gives the case study of the method of the narrative paradigm in the dance research.

The eighth chapter contains the summary of the thesis and the conclusions, providing the frame for presenting results, highlighting the necessity of the joint application of folkloristic and anthropological methodology, and to emphasize that the research of the social dances will be completed by the analysis of the transformation of the traditional rural society and culture.

II. The outline of the applied methods

The first chapters of the dissertations are designed to establish a new research paradigm within the dance science, by using the results of the historical and methodological approach. Therefore was the exploration and the critical analysis of the Hungarian sources, the scholarly literature, and the research preliminaries unavoidable. This enabled the comparative approach of the paradigms within the dance science, and the suggestion for solving the problems of the terminology, as well to settle the research direction of the interaction between traditional rural dance culture and the social dances.

The study of the dance culture of Köröstárkány and Messzelátó lasted nearly a decade. My research had started in 2006, in the historical Bihar county, which is consisted of the Northern Bihar in Hungary, the Southern Bihar in Romania, as well in the valley of the Fekete-Körös (Crișul Negru). My inquiries in this region are still often and frequent, using the methods of the ethnographic and anthropological field research.

The analysis of the two case studies was carried out by two methodological approaches, but for the same objective: highlighting the dynamic processes of the sociocultural environment by inquiring the transition of the traditional dance culture and the emergence of the modern social dances.

The Hungarian settlement of Köröstárkány in Romania and its motion culture is examined by the method of the contextual dance anthropology, in the middle of the 20th century. For the research on the social role of the social dances it is inevitable to analyze every aspect of the traditional dance culture and every context of the dance itself. Since my main objective was the study of the emergence and reception of the new cultural phenomenon of the social dance, there is a relatively huge chronological distance between the examined era and our present time. However, the contextual approach enabled the analysis of the attitude of the cultural heritage protection in Köröstárkány, by involving the social relations of the dance culture.

In the case of Messzelátó-Sóstó I have used the narrative paradigm in order to reconstruct the dance life of the Konyár Spa, closed in 1942, which was visited mostly by the agrarian servants of the former local manors. The settlement actually did not exist in the researched time period, hence the reported persons had to mentally reconstruct the physical environment in their remembrances and accounts; thus the narrative method became possible. It was also researchable, which role does the dance culture play in the autobiographical memory and in the (re-)construction process of the past.

Both methods of analysis are perfectly suited for the complex research of the community dance culture and those socio-historical phenomena, which may influence this culture.

III. The list of the new scholarly achievements

The results presented in my PhD thesis are intended to establish a new research field, to reveal the preliminaries in the scholarship, to outline the possible new trends, topics and methodological methods, and in the same time to contribute the ethnographic-anthropological

analysis of the sociocultural changes in the Hungarian rural communities, by presenting the former dance culture of the two settlements.

1. By presenting the different evolution, objectives and methods of the ethnocoreology and dance anthropology I illustrated, that the borderline between the two scholarly paradigms, despite their controversies, is getting slender, and by the fusion of the two separate paradigms the more complex method of the dance science is emerging. According to my findings, the research and examination of the social dances require a specific methodology, the expansion of the social aspect of the dance research, and the anthropology provides more help to this attempt than the folkloristics. The anthropology calls the attention more accentually on the social background, the transition of the cultural phenomena, however, is interpretable only in the context of the social development.

2. Since the early 20th century, the Hungarian researches in the field of the dance folkloristics affected the question of the social dances in the agrarian dance life only tangentially. The critical evaluation of the scholarly literature and research preliminaries, the critique of the theoretical position of the Hungarian folkloristics toward the social dances is formulated in this PhD thesis for the first time. After the summary of the previous scholarly achievements it has become clear, that the Hungarian dance folkloristics always have had the potential to study the ballroom dancing, its importance was emphasized by many scholars, however, no intended research was carried out to the 90's.

3. Basing on the experiences of the research since I propose a new research program for investigating the interaction between the traditional rural dance culture and the noble-urban social dances, practically designating the new research areas as well.

4. The research area dealing with the interaction of the traditional dance culture and ballroom dancing has its major strain, that the ethnographic and dance folkloristic notions for describing the traditional dance culture are required to use together with the concepts of other disciplines of dance science (dance anthropology, dance sociology) at the same time. My dissertation, partly basing on the preliminaries in the scholarship, makes an attempt to recommend the elaboration of a new, uniform system of terminology, involving the dance language, the folk dance – social dance, as well the historical and bourgeois ballroom dancing. This resulted in the reconsideration, supplementation, and in some cases the substitution of former definitions.

5. The relation of the ballroom dancing and the agrarian dance culture was not only characteristic of the disappearing local communities of the 20th century, as it is described in

the related chapters of the dissertation. It is out of question, that the late 19th century and early 20th century are the turning point in the process of social change of the peasantry. Unlike the earlier centuries, an important social change had in this historical period begun, which was in need of the change and acculturation, and which resulted in the total transition of culture, the slow embourgeoisement, and finally the disintegration of the agrarian society. The restratification of the rural culture eventuated in the transition of the traditional dance culture. Since I perceive the local dance culture as the proper phenomenon (or rather performance) for expressing the collective consciousness and identity of the community, the cultural and social changes of the community correspond to the modifications in the dance culture. Therefore the importance of the ballroom dancing in the agrarian dance culture, the depth of its integration, or its disintegration may contribute to modelling the sociocultural transitions in the community. In this research, we have to take into consideration, that the motion culture and customs connected to it, are the visual representations of the social reality of the community, and these may be influenced by the ethnic conditions, political and propagandistic efforts, or the permanently changing trends in fashion.

6. The case studies of the dissertation are settlements in the historical Bihar county. Northern Bihar, among to the most known micro-regions of the Bihar region, seems to be ethnographically uninteresting. The Hungarian dance folkloristics does not apply the concept of Northern Bihar at all. My research project tries to change this situation, within the framework of a complex ethnographic research program. The dissertation may contribute to this effort by describing the change in the open-air dance customs and presenting the case study of Messzelátó-Sóstó.

7. Köröstárkány in Southern Bihar is a settlement in Romania with Hungarian majority, having its traditions for over centuries and keeping its traditional folk culture as the key element of its Hungarian identity. The contextual studies in the research field of dance anthropology made clear, that the first wave of the spread of ballroom dancing (bound, coordinated social dances) did not affect Köröstárkány, and also the second wave of this spread appeared later. These dances did not have an important influence in the life of the community, their presence was provable in the traditional dance culture of Tárkány (the open-air dance events) only for a decade. Due to the material-based social separation of the village (Alszeg-Felszeg), its slow dissolution, the unification of the dance spaces, and the lack of the official dance school there was no group in the settlement, which may have regarded the ballroom dances as the opportunity of further separation, or the tool of embourgeoisement. There are many reasons of the unpopularity of ballroom dances, their short-term fashion,

which are connected with the slow embourgeoisement of the peasantry, but the cultural isolation of the Hungarian villages in the Fekete-Körös valley may have also contributed to this circumstance. We cannot leave the diffuse nature of these settlements out of account, which had made the traditional dance culture as the representative tool of the national identity, and provided protection against the new dance styles.

8. In the case of Köröstárkány, the contextual method of the dance anthropology enabled the study of the dance from the point of view of the national and ethnic identity. The accounts from Köröstárkány affirm, that there are some implicit ethnic ideas behind the dance: Hungarian researches indicate, that the introduction of the new, so called „urban” customs was always opposed by the older population. The same is to be observed in Köröstárkány as well, but with a substantial difference: the qualifier „urban” is connected in many cases with the „Romanian” by the report of the interviewees, indicating that the appearance of the „foreign” custom was meant not only the „conquest” of a different social class, but also a different ethnic entity. However, the new dances were not always acquired by the Romanians, but other ethnic groups.

9. Since there was no previous settlement on the site of Messzelátó-Sóstó, but a famous spa, and the recent population of the settlement was artificially established, this necessitated a special research method. The reason of the research was the spa itself, which was built among the homesteads, therefore the manorial population of the region was connected with an exclusive social class. The use of the narrative paradigm is unique both in the research on the traditional dance culture and the ballroom dancing as well. The interviewees constructed first the physical space of the former dance space mentally, then they reconstructed the dance life. The interpretation of the memory fragments regarding the spa occurred by involving the consideration of the representation of narrative reminiscences. The former image and space of the dance culture appeared in the narratives of the spa. The use of the narrative paradigm has called the attention to the question of constructivism in the research of the dance culture, the problem of the reconstruction of once existed phenomena and their relationship to the historical reality, as well the possibility of interpretation of the dance as cultural narrative. The former sociocultural environment in the case of the spa provides the analysis of the phenomena of the „foreign body” within the rural society. The spa in the rural environment of Northern Bihar gives an excellent opportunity to analyze the relationship of the ballroom dancing and the agrarian dance culture. In the special social conditions the ballroom dances had an unusual impact. Unlike Köröstárkány, here was the community not closed, which could have resisted any cultural, „foreign” influence and refuse

any foreign cultural element. Both case studies confirm, that the transitions in the dance cultures are associated with the dynamism of the internal and external sociocultural conditions.

10. The dance folkloristics interpreted the expansion of the ballroom dancing in the traditional agrarian culture as the depravation and corruption of the folk culture. The results of my dissertation call the attention to the fact, that the emergence of the social dances should not be explained as the emptying of the dance culture, because they described the ballroom dances as an entertaining motion culture without essential part. It is undeniable, that the ballroom dancing in the environment of the nobility has its actual function of the entertainment – however, this statement needs to be refined because of the representative and political role of the dancing –, but the same is to be perceived in the case of the new style folk dances of the agrarian dance culture. The case studies of the PhD thesis have proven, that the dance language may become a symbol, especially due to political reasons, if this dance language leaves its original environment, and it is accommodated by another social class. Indeed, the ballroom dancing has its specific content and symbolic meaning, which is used by the agrarian community in order to identify itself with or against it. The inhabitants of Messzelátó-Sóstó had left their own traditional environment, and discovered the pattern of a community with coherent traditions in the bourgeois public of the spa. The community of Köröstárkány, however, possessed by its complex, traditional and strong cultural system, which required the protection within the foreign ethnic conditions. The social dances did not find that functional gap in the local society, which they could have occupied.

IV. The scholarly works published on the subject of the dissertation

1. A táncantropológiai módszer alkalmazásának lehetőségei a nemzeti-etnikai identitás vizsgálatában. In: Karlovitz János Tibor (szerk.): Tanulmányok az emberi gondolkodás tárgykörében. International Research Institute s.r.o. Komárno. 2013. 89-97. <http://www.irisro.org/inter2013magyar/012KavecsanszkiMate.pdf>
2. A társastáncok és a néptáncok egymásra hatásának kutatási programja. In. Kavecsánszki Máté – Szászfalvi Márta: Tanulmányok Ujváry Zoltán 80. születésnapja alkalmából. Notitiae Iuvenum II. Debrecen, 2012. 71-88.
3. Szempontok az észak-bihari szabadtéri táncalkalmak táncantropológiai elemzéséhez. Ethnica, XIII/4. 2011. 67-70.
4. Szüreti szabadtéri táncalkalmak. Jegyzetek az észak-bihari szőlő- és borkultúra táncfolklorisztikai jellegzetességeihez. In. Bihari-Horváth László (szerk.): Észak-Bihar szőlő- és borkultúrája. Újabb eredmények Észak-Bihar homoki szőlőskert-vidékének néprajzi kutatásából. A Kurucz Albert Falumúzeum Közleményei 2. Észak-Bihar néprajza II. Konyár, 2010. 171-180.
5. Táncfolklorisztikai jegyzetek a házasságkötés hosszúpályi szokásrendszeréhez. In. Bihari-Horváth László (szerk.): A pályi parasztság hagyományos kultúrája. Észak-Bihar néprajza I. Hosszúpályi, 2010. 237-246.
6. „...Kárhoztatandó hát a fajtalan Táncz...”. Collegium Doctorum 2010. 244-254.
7. Társastáncok a magyar paraszti közösségekben. In. Varga Sándor (szerk.): Folkszemle. 2009. december. (<http://www.folkradio.hu/folkszemle/main.php>)
8. Konyári-Sóstófürdő táncélete a 20. század első felében a konstruált fürdő-narratívum relációjában. In. Horváth László (szerk.): Fejértótól Messzelátó-Sóstóig. Néprajzi tanulmányok Hosszúpályi külterületéről. A Bödi István Falumúzeum Közleményei 2. Hosszúpályi, 2009. 54-74.
9. (Szászfalvi Mártával közösen): Adalékok a tánc megítéléséhez a református egyházi iratokban. Ethnica, 2008. 10/2. 48-52.
10. Társastáncok a magyar paraszti közösségben a 19-20. században. In. Kiri E. – Kovács L. E. – Szilágyi J. (szerk.): Notitiae Iuvenum. Tanulmányok Ujváry Zoltán 75. születésnapjának tiszteletére. Debrecen, 2007. 129-142.

V. Conference papers on the subject of the dissertation

1. A tánc politikuma: Szempontok a nemzeti identitás és a politikai akaratképzés közötti kapcsolat értelmezéséhez a változó táncműveltségben. Elhangzott: Kulturális értékeink a Kárpát-medencében. I. konferencia. Az identitás megnyilvánulási formái a 21. század kezdetén. 2014. febr. 21. Mali Idos (Kishegyes), Serbia. (Nemzetközi konferencia).
2. A táncantropológiai módszer alkalmazásának lehetőségei a nemzeti-etnikai identitás vizsgálatában. Elhangzott: International Research Institute Interdiszciplináris Konferencia. 2013. nov. 29-30. Nové Zámky, Slovakia (nemzetközi konferencia).
3. Identitásvizsgálatok a Fekete-Körös völgyi magyarság körében. Elhangzott: Tolerancia és párbeszéd – A nemzeti és etnikai kisebbségek jogairól c. nemzetközi konferencia. 2013. 05.17. Eger.
4. A társastáncok kutatásának eredményei és módszertani tapasztalatai a történeti bihari régióban. Elhangzott: Táncantropológiai és táncfolklorisztikai intenzív kurzus. Szegedi Tudományegyetem, Néprajzi és Kulturális Antropológiai Tanszék. 2011. december 6. Szeged
5. Szüreti szabadtéri táncalkalmak – Táncfolklorisztikai jellegzetességek Észak-Bihar szőlő- és borkultúrájában. Elhangzott: I. Észak-Bihari Tudományos Néprajzi Konferencia. 2011. október 28. Létavértes.
6. A református egyházi iratok jelentősége a társastáncok hazai kutatásában. Elhangzott: Református Doktorok Kollégiuma Konferencia, Egyházi Néprajzi Szekció. 2009. 08. 27. Budapest.
7. A társastáncok kontextuális táncantropológiai vizsgálatának köröstárkányi esetpéldája. Elméleti alapvetések egy új kutatási terület kialakításához. Elhangzott: Martin György Emlékülés – Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Zenetudományi Intézete. 2009. 05. 05. Budapest
8. Társastáncok Köröstárkányban a 20. század első felében. A társastáncok megjelenésének és a hagyományos táncéletbe történő integrációjának kontextuális elemzése. Elhangzott: Országos Tudományos Diákköri Konferencia Humán Tudományi Szekció. 2009. 04. 16. Szeged
9. A tánc megítélése a református egyházi iratokban. Elhangzott: Református Doktorok Kollégiuma Konferencia, Egyházi Néprajzi Szekció. 2008. 08. 29. Sárospatak

10. Társastáncok Köröstárkányban a 20. század első felében. Elhangzott: Kultúraközi, etnikai, vallási és társadalmi folyamatok kutatása a Fekete-Körös-völgyében c. konferencia. 2008. 05. 26. Debrecen.

VI. Further publications of the author

1. Közelítések Tiszaug turisztikai rendszerének szociokulturális vizsgálatához. A turizmus és a falusi szállásadás épített környezetének relációja. In. Hegedűs Krisztián – Kovácsné Kaposvári Gyöngyi – Pusztai Gabriella – Pusztai Zsolt: Peremlétben? A Tiszaug néprajzi, történeti, földrajzi kutatása az ezredfordulón. Félúton. Szolnok, 2010. 275-298.
2. A minoritás társadalmi problémakör középiskolai oktatásának empirikus tapasztalatai, a nemzeti és etnikai kisebbségekről oktatás lehetőségei. Néprajzi Látóhatár, 2010. 3. 4-40.
3. Hosszúpályi gyermekjátékdalok. In. Bihari-Horváth László (szerk.): A pályi parasztság hagyományos kultúrája. Észak-Bihar néprajza I. Hosszúpályi, 2010. 165-190.
4. Hosszúpályi zenei élete a Bödi-népdalgyűjtemény tükrében. In. Bihari-Horváth László (szerk.): A pályi parasztság hagyományos kultúrája. Észak-Bihar néprajza I. Hosszúpályi, 2010. 247-285.
5. Kultusz és diplomácia. Szempontok Szent Erzsébet élettörténetéhez. Néprajzi Látóhatár, 2008. 4. 71-90.

VII. Further conference papers of the author

1. Az etnikai identitás performatív elemei egy esetpélda tükrében. Elhangzott: Fiatal Néprajzkutatók és Kulturális Antropológusok VII. Konferenciája. 2013. 09. 07. Backa Topola, Serbia. (nemzetközi konferencia).
2. A közösségi együttélés magatartásnormái a hagyományos népi életmódban. Elhangzott: Néphagyományörző Óvodapedagógusok Egyesületének XIV. Tavaszi Szakmai Találkozója. 2012. 04. 13. Gödöllő
3. A Magyar-német diplomáciai relációk kontaktusrendszere 1141 és 1172 között. Elhangzott: Kárpát-medencei Keresztény Tudományos Diákköri Konferencia. Gál Ferenc Hittudományi Főiskola. 2010. április. 29. Szeged

4. A vendégfogadó falusi turizmus helye a Tiszazug turisztikai rendszerében. Elhangzott: Tiszazugi kutató szeminárium előadásai (OTKA K 68902). 2009. 12. 10. Debrecen.
5. A vendégfogadó falusi turizmus és a lakásbelső kapcsolata a Tiszazugban. Elhangzott: Peremlétben? A Tiszazug néprajzi, történeti, földrajzi kutatása az ezredfordulón c. tudományos kutatási program (OTKA K 68902) konferenciája. 2009. 10. 27. Kunszentmárton.