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## Reassessing Conclusions in György Martin's Case Studies

The selection of papers in this volume consists of György Martin's most elaborated case studies; it properly represents his scientific background and widespread expertise. During the compilation process, we have taken care that the topics of the papers chosen be in connection with a specific dance dialect or dance type to make it easier for the reader to review and interpret Martin's lifetime work. Nevertheless, we have access to more field data and more developed research methods than were available to him, which require that we critically review the evidence for his conclusions.

Among dance types, besides circle dances, Martin investigated most thoroughly the Transylvanian *legényes*. As a consequence, we have inherited from him several papers<sup>1</sup> on this topic and the monographic study of a dancing individuality, an excellent male dancer, István Mátyás "Mundruc," but not a great synthesis concerning *legényes*, to stand alongside his summarizing book on circle dances,<sup>2</sup> a work highly appreciated within the international discipline of choreology. Although the outline of a summarizing volume is delineated by his writings, his early death hindered the long hoped for appearance of the monograph on this dance type.

Besides belonging to one particular type, the *legényes* dances of Kalotaszeg, Mezőség, and the Maros-Küküllő Region are also related by the fact that each variant occupies a well-defined position in Martin's theorization of relationships among the male dances of Central Transylvania. This scheme proposes the development of the *legényes* to begin with the simple Hungarian *ugrós* then passing through a transitional form in the *féloláhos* of Gyimes and Csík.<sup>3</sup> This evolutionary line is primarily deduced from comparative analyses of the accompaniment. However, the relationship among the accompanying tunes does not necessarily prove the kinship of different movement systems. Music, of course, always influences dance, but the question remains whether the corresponding transformation of movements is inevitable or not. Martin's statements which ascertain that male solos in couple dances emerged as a consequence of the diffusion of *verbunk* style or that the *legényes* type developed

<sup>1</sup> For a brief summary of Martin's professional achievement and publications, see Vargyas 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Martin 1979; Martin 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Martin 1966: 202, 204; Martin 1977: 266 (Martin 2020/13: 600); Kallós–Martin 1970: 211 (Martin 2020/17: 773).

from improvisational couple dances cannot be confirmed either without further research.<sup>4</sup> An overarching comparative analysis of related movement sets, a search for new sources, and critical revision of the already accessible ones could lead to a firm response to these questions.<sup>5</sup>

Having studied motivic richness, variability, structural complexity, and adaptation to music within the category of the Central Transylvanian *legényes*, Martin differentiates three regional groups: the Mezőség *sűrű legényes* is the least developed type; the structurally more complicated *pontozó* is found in the Maros-Küküllő Region; the Kalotaszeg *legényes* is the most complex of these and it is also the most variable within the sections of its accompanying music. However, he mentions only changes in regard to this comparison and not development during the formal comparative analyses of Central Transylvanian male dances. Martin considers the *sűrű legényes* to be the oldest in style, and he originates *lassú legényes* dances from that category. Based on a well-prepared folk music model relying on a richer comparative material, he reckoned the development of old-style accompanying music into a new style, when he determined—concerning the male dance repertoire—the series of changes starting from the *sűrű legényes* through *ritka legényes* and *lassú verbunk* to *verbunk*. In this case, there are doubts concerning the alteration of accompaniment, too, which Martin himself also articulated. There is likely a relationship between the *lassú magyar*'s mode of accompaniment tending toward asymmetrical and old-style asymmetrical slow tunes; thus, the position of *lassú magyar* between *sűrű legényes* and *verbunk* is dubious.<sup>6</sup> Martin might have used conditional tense when writing that concerning the *sűrű legényes* the musical material of the other subtypes seems to be a “secondary formation.”<sup>7</sup> He applied one of the principles of diffusionism by saying that the chronological primacy of *sűrű legényes* is also verified by its spatial distribution.<sup>8</sup> Correspondingly, we have to note that in this case, there could be—in

<sup>4</sup> Kallós–Martin 1970: 212 (Martin 2020/17: 734–735); Martin 1982: 193 (Martin 2020/16: 714–715)

<sup>5</sup> Further methodological questions will probably emerge during that with respect to the classical dance folkloristic fieldwork and the principles of selection of the material involved in recent analyses. On the basis of a partial revision of relevant collections and accompanying documentation, as well as on examining the genesis of some publication (e.g. Fügedi–Vavrincz ed. 2013), it seems indeed, that the twentieth-century Hungarian dance folkloristics created its own source material on a strong basis of preconception. (For relevant critics, see Varga 2014: 491.)

<sup>6</sup> Martin 1980b: 208 (Martin 2020/15: 668–669).

<sup>7</sup> Martin 1980b: 198 (Martin 2020/15: 659).

<sup>8</sup> Martin 1980b: 198 (Martin 2020/15: 659).

theory—a remarkably intensive dance trend prior to the *verbunk* dance, which spread quickly in great area similarly to the dance type of Romanticism.<sup>9</sup>

Martin's study on the Kalotaszeg *legényes* is a pioneering work. One of his most important conclusions—namely that the existence of improvisation necessitates a structural form adjusting to the music—continues to provide a principle for the analysis of improvisations.<sup>10</sup> In connection with *legényes* dance's basic structural unit, the *pont*, Martin describes the rural terminology.<sup>11</sup> His generalization that key informants' texts represent communal knowledge now appears, in the light of re-reading and amplification from fieldwork since his time, suggest that these were, rather, sophisticated personal opinion.<sup>12</sup> Martin's view that opening formulae in Kalotaszeg *legényes* provide time for planning and thus have an important role in improvisation<sup>13</sup> suffers from a similar problem. It now appears that this conclusion cannot be verified either by the dancers' practice or interviews; when only a few specialists in a village use opening formulae, we may doubt their communal character. Subsequent investigations highlight that besides the knowledge represented by specialists in villages along the Nádas Valley, there is a communal dance knowledge that is formally poorer and often lacks the opening formula. Newer investigations reveal that the representation of Kalotaszeg *legényes* in the interwar period was rather characterized by a communal form danced in a circle, whereas its solo variations became almost exclusive after World War II.<sup>14</sup> All of these observations refer to the importance of the contextual analyses focusing on the sociocultural environment of dance culture.

<sup>9</sup> We consider in this case, too, that determining the laws of adaptation to the accompanying music necessitates that we will have to analyze a far greater amount of data than before. We have to accomplish comparative sociocultural research, which we can indicate as one important duty of the present. Within its framework, we have to involve dance variations performed by Romanian and Romani informants in the analysis in order to understand the history of changes and the dynamics of cultural relationships between ethnic groups.

<sup>10</sup> Martin 1966: 204; Martin 1977: 274–275 (Martin 2020/13: 606–607).

<sup>11</sup> Martin 1966: 205; Martin 1977: 275 (Martin 2020/13: 606).

<sup>12</sup> According to Transylvanian informants—see Martin 1966: 205, note 23; Martin 1977: 275–276 (Martin 2020/13: 606–607)—it is a mistake to neglect cadence (“if someone dances regardless of the *pont*”). At the beginning of three dancers' *sűrű legényes* filmed in Bonchida in 1969 (Ft.682.8) none of the three—anyway excellent—dancers are dancing as expected when the structure of the dance corresponds to the eight measures of the accompanying. Starting the whole dance, György Tamás missed the usual support-gesture structure as these dances are generally performed in this area. The dancing partners followed his initiation. Therefore, they had to modify their performance in order to reach the dance's cadence that regularly adapts to the musical cadence. That case seems to prove that the expectation to adapt to one another or the one being the beginner or perhaps a leading person can overrule the general practice of adjusting to the structure of the music.

<sup>13</sup> Martin 1966: 210; Martin 1977: 276 (Martin 2020/13: 607).

<sup>14</sup> Martin 1966: 210.

In light of this finding, it seems that a better elaboration of theories of studying dancer personality will be necessary for the future.<sup>15</sup>

Martin clearly perceives the significance of cultural diversity of the Mezőség region in his writing, focusing on Mezőség male dances.<sup>16</sup> We can only regret that he did not involve dances presented by Romanian and Romani informants during his examinations of *ritka legényes* dances that were definitely regarded as Romanian in the neighborhood.<sup>17</sup> Had the male dances of Mezőség been studied comprehensively from this aspect, a clearer knowledge of the ethnic character of those dances would have been gained; a point acknowledged by Martin.<sup>18</sup>

The article on the Mezőség *legényes*, published here, offers a sound formal analysis of the dance and, as mentioned above, a comparative study of musical accompaniment. The strategy of comparing dance types known by one informant in order to establish the general features of certain subtypes can, in fact, give a deeper insight into the interpretations of the region's *legényes* dances.<sup>19</sup> We now possess enough folklore data such a work as well as enough to affirm or not the connection between the Mezőség *verbunk* and the *székely verbunks*, which was assumed by Martin.<sup>20</sup>

Other methodological issues emerge when one reads the study of the Mezőség male dances with contemporary knowledge in mind. Hungarian intellectual circles in Romania<sup>21</sup> had a thorough local knowledge of the local terminology of Mezőség dances, but we do not know accurately to what extent their help influenced Martin's analyses. The linguistic source material and its implied emic knowledge represent a remarkably important topic for dance folkloristic research; a possibility which, once again, Martin pointed out ahead of his time.<sup>22</sup> We now know, as well, that this issue calls for an extensive interdisciplinary study. Based on recent work checking his data as well as adding to it, we know that he made his informants "reconstruct" disused

<sup>15</sup> This issue is marginally touched by László Felföldi (Felföldi 1999; Felföldi 2004; Felföldi 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Martin 1980b: 188, 189 (Martin 2020/15: 649).

<sup>17</sup> Martin only mentions the Romanian variations of *ritka legényes* dances (i.e., *românește in ponturi*, or *românește in botă*) in his writings focusing on the Mezőség *legényes*. These dances are unequivocally regarded as Romanian in the surroundings, despite the fact that Hungarians were sometimes danced them in ethnically mixed villages. The issue can be raised whether or not the *ritka román legényes* dance's accompanying music of asymmetrical beat can be traced back to older cultural-historical periods than the *sűrű legényes* dance's accompaniment of symmetrical beat.

<sup>18</sup> Martin 1980b: 188, 190 (Martin 2020/15: 649, 651).

<sup>19</sup> Martin 1980b: 189–190 (Martin 2020/15: 650–651).

<sup>20</sup> Martin 1980b: 194 (Martin 2020/15: 655).

<sup>21</sup> Zoltán Kallós, who possessed less scientific expertise, but rather represented public educational objectives, should be mentioned in this respect, whose influence on the field can be assessed clearly in connection with dance denominations.

<sup>22</sup> Martin 1966: 204.

dances in few cases.<sup>23</sup> For these and other reasons, a critical revision of Martin's field data should be undertaken in the work ahead.

Martin moves forward in the analysis of neighboring peoples in the case of the Transylvanian Romanian *haidău* that can be connected to the Maros-Küküllő Region as well and involves it in his investigation focusing on the Transylvanian *legényes*. The deficiencies of research methodology and accidental international cooperation—mentioned in the introduction—are especially conspicuous in this work. Based on his resources in 1968 (and again in 1980), Martin declared that,

Today, stick dances play only a minor role in the Transylvanian dance life. Those dances that are performed by rotating the sticks or dancing above them (sticks are crossed on the floor), and those that resemble dual-like combat rarely appear in the historical and geographical area of Transylvania. The majority of dances performed by Romanian shepherds who live in high mountains is resembling Balkan chain dances; therefore, herdsmen's dances are diverse not only in the Alföld, Felvidék, and Dunántúl regions, but they differ from the dance culture of Hungarian and Romanian peasants in the Transylvanian Basin.<sup>24</sup>

At the beginning of the 2000s, I managed to find a large amount of data in connection with Transylvanian dances with implements bearing witness to a rich herds-

<sup>23</sup> The so-called *tempós magyar*, which is classified into the *lassú magyar* subtype, was in use in the interwar period in Szék. A few movements of this male dance may appear in *négyes* that is performed by two couples in a small circle, man and man, woman and woman holding hands behind the body, the dance's accompanying music is identical to the male dance mentioned here. While still circling with walking steps in the same direction, the men release the handhold, slightly widen the circle, and perform figures (primarily leg circles as in *lassú magyar*). In the dance footage recorded in 1969 (Ft.671.23), three male informants performed a variation of *négyes*, now without women. During feed-back interviews (Varga 1996; Varga 1999; Varga 2008), it turned out that they performed this variation on the explicit request of Martin. Two of them had not even remembered that this dance could be performed without women, whereas the third one (Márton Tamás "Kántor") remembered that his father had talked about it. On the basis of recollections and knowing the formal characteristics of musical accompaniments of *ritka legényes* and *lassú magyar*, Martin recognized the differences between *ritka legényes* and *lassú magyar* during his fieldworks—see Martin 1980b: 190 (Martin 2020/15: 651). From local informants, he also realized that the two dance types existed in Szék between the two World Wars (Varga 1996). We presume that on the basis of this knowledge, he asked the informants to reconstruct *lassú magyar* that he thought was performed for the music of *négyes*. His film logbook does not inform us about the circumstances of his intention to reconstruct a tradition already vanished. Therefore, it is a question for us that the adaptation of the dance to the accompanying music on the film mentioned above is an established practice or a single, occasional trial to conform to an unusual request. However, Martin did not include the *lassú magyar* performed for the music of *négyes* in the comparative analysis in his paper on the *Mezőség legényes*—see Martin 1980b (Martin 2020/15)—despite the fact that the study includes a photo where Szék men dance *magyar tempó* to the music of the *négyes* (see Martin 1980b: 196).

<sup>24</sup> Martin 1980a: 169–170 (Martin 2020/14: 625).

men's dance culture in Transylvania that could have been documented even in the 1960s and 1980s.<sup>25</sup> This data overrides his assertions above.

A sociocultural analysis of the background behind the more uniform, homogeneous, and communal character of Romanian male dances of Central Transylvania (e.g., the *haidău*) has also become an inevitable task. The uniform performing character and the occasional presence of a dance leader cannot, by all means, be taken as an ethnic feature accounted for by the Balkan roots of the Romanians.<sup>26</sup> These features, and others, seem likely to stem from the homogenizing impact of an intensive Romanian folk dance revival and school education after World War I.

In his paper on the Maros-Küküllő Region's dance repertoire, Martin writes about old "internally developed" dance types and new "adopted dance types, which arrived recently from the neighboring areas."<sup>27</sup> Martin discusses the relative chronology of certain genres, styles, and types concerning the geographical diffusion of folklore phenomena in the case of the Hungarian dialect in the Maros-Küküllő Region.<sup>28</sup> In this way, he diverges from earlier evolutionist approaches; nevertheless, it is clear that far more written and visual sources should be used in analyses at a micro-level for a better understanding of the appearance and influence of specific dance trends along the Maros and Küküllő Rivers.<sup>29</sup>

Martin emphasizes the significance of interethnic relationships in connection with the dance material of the Maros-Küküllő Region, the southernmost Hungarian dance dialect.<sup>30</sup> In the overview, he refers briefly to the regions' Romanian dance repertoire and its impact on the Hungarian dance folklore.<sup>31</sup> Subsequently, he notes that a Hungarian and a Romanian dialect can be delineated in the ethnically mixed region whose geographical boundaries more or less coincide. The basic dance types of the two ethnic groups are different, but at the same time, dance life, dance music, and the correlation of dances show a "certain degree of merger." Using the organization of independent community events and demonstrations of the different dance types call our attention to the implication of nationality. At the same time, however, the phrase "certain degree of merger" implies that one should look beyond the national horizon in terms of interpretation, as well as investigate the dance culture of the Maros-Küküllő Region from the aspect of the local Romani and the Saxons in the neighborhood.

<sup>25</sup> Varga 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Martin 1968: 103; Martin 1966: 211; Martin 1977: 265–266 (Martin 2020/13: 599).

<sup>27</sup> Martin 1982: 190 (Martin 2020/16: 710).

<sup>28</sup> Martin 1982: 183 (Martin 2020/16: 702–703).

<sup>29</sup> Systematic dance folkloristic investigations were conducted in certain villages along the Maros and Küküllő Rivers in the 1990s, however, their results have not been published yet.

<sup>30</sup> Martin 1982: 183–184 (Martin 2020/16: 703).

<sup>31</sup> Martin 1982: 184, 186–187, 189 (Martin 2020/16: 703, 705–707, 709).

It is striking that after having assessed the dance culture along the Maros and Küküllő Rivers, Martin paid disproportionately great attention to *legényes* dances during the investigations than he did to couple dances, which were more significant in dance life.<sup>32</sup> It is clear that Martin preferred formal analysis in his work over its social and functionalist aspects. This critique brings up again the question raised in relation to his Kalotaszeg work: to what extent does the male dancing skill of a certain specialist represent the dance knowledge of a given settlement or region? Once again, in the Maros-Küküllő Region, Martin relied on emic data—and similarly to the studies of Gyimes mentioned next—deriving from an excellent dancer and good observant, Zsigmond Karsai, who had been born in that region.<sup>33</sup>

Martin's investigations of the Maros-Küküllő Region's dance dialect point, as well, to other research directions now recognized as significant. He emphasizes the culture-shaping impacts of the former administrative unit (county) in the region, which introduces a hitherto unexamined factor in the delineation of dance dialects. The cultural influence of the Hungarian administration must certainly have affected Hungarians, Romanians, and Romanis in different ways,<sup>34</sup> adding to the complexities of interethnic relationships with a region. It is also an important, innovative declaration that the intensive presence of musicians in certain centers plays a role in the internal structure of the dance dialect region by affecting the cohesion of certain village groups.<sup>35</sup> Later investigations have verified this finding—in the case of Mezőség.<sup>36</sup>

Martin's collaboration and co-authorship of the Gyimes Csángó study with Zoltán Kallós, who had been a local teacher in the region, incorporates the emic observations of Kallós, who knew the community inside out together with the etic perspective of the professional researcher with good sense.<sup>37</sup> The study also gives an account of other segments of dance culture (dance occasions, dance life, and so forth) besides local dances. Martin introduces the dance repertoire of Gyimes, classifying it into three stylistic strata, verifying the findings—which bear a resemblance to the theory

<sup>32</sup> Only 112 couple dances were recorded as opposed to 400 male dances. See Martin 1982: 187 (Martin 2020/16: 707).

<sup>33</sup> Martin 1982: 184–185 (Martin 2020/16: 704).

<sup>34</sup> Martin 1982: 188 (Martin 2020/16: 708).

<sup>35</sup> Martin 1982: 190 (Martin 2020/16: 710).

<sup>36</sup> Varga 2011: 57.

<sup>37</sup> As a result of that, the study consists of interesting data in terms of social ethnography either (e.g., reference to the institution of trial marriage relating to the dance occasion), besides the description of dance folkloristic phenomena; and he briefly reflects on changes of the dance culture taking place in the 1940s. See Kallós–Martin 1970: 200–221, footnote 74 (Martin 2020/17: 745, footnote 49).

of cultural areas—through presenting specific dance material.<sup>38</sup> The dance folklore of the Gyimes people living on the boundary of the Alpine-Carpathian Region and Southeastern European or Balkan dance dialects clearly represents the changes in European dance history and the interactions deriving from the mutually enriching coexistence of dance cultures.<sup>39</sup> However, a comparative analysis of dance cultures of Romanian and Romani inhabitants of the area is missing, by which Martin could undoubtedly have supported his statement on interethnic relations. In addition to a profound analysis of interethnic relationships, more comprehensive consideration of the particular geographical, ecological, and settlement-historical contexts would have been needed in this instance.<sup>40</sup> We must apply a more complicated model for a better understanding of the dance culture of Gyimes than that offered by appeals to traditionalism and the diffusionist explanation of migratory cultural preservation.<sup>41</sup>

I will call attention to one further section of the Gyimes paper. We can notice that the dance culture of Gyimes region was undergoing serious changes during the data collection. Kallós briefly refers to modern dances and modern dance etiquette of the period, but their accurate denomination and short description would have been useful for the posterity.<sup>42</sup> The table at the end of the paper, however, which introduces a remarkably large number of local dance occasions, is exceptionally profound.<sup>43</sup>

(Translated by Valér Bedő)

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<sup>38</sup> He also calls attention to the issue's importance concerning the dance culture along the Maros and Küküllő Rivers. See Martin 1982: 183 (Martin 2020/16: 702–703).

<sup>39</sup> Kallós–Martin 1970: 208, 220, 224 (Martin 2020/17: 730–731, 744, 749–750).

<sup>40</sup> Reading Tamás Hofer's impressive study, newer opportunities of interpretation of the region's dance culture have also emerged. According to Hofer, it is not simply about the revival of the onetime, archaic Székely culture in the case of Gyimes, but that the adaptation to the new circumstances generated a series of historical and cultural changes toward a particular direction, in which the relationships among ethnic groups played an important role, too (Hofer 2009).

<sup>41</sup> Martin presumes a Székely influence in the background of the diffusion of *magyar kettős*—known locally as *sormagyar*; see Kallós–Martin 1970: 230 (Martin 2020/17: 756)—but at the same time, its transfer by schools, moreover by folk plays is also plausible according to later research.

<sup>42</sup> Kallós–Martin 1970: 203, 205.

<sup>43</sup> Kallós–Martin 1970: 231–234.



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