

## THE IMPACT OF THE HUNGARIAN AND ROMANIAN REVIVAL ON DANCE TRADITIONS OF VILLAGES IN THE TRANSYLVANIAN PLAIN

In this paper I will discuss two examples of ethnic-national dance attribution in the Transylvanian Plain-region (Hungarian: Mezőség, Romanian: Câmpia Transilvaniei) in Romania, that well illustrate the complex political entanglements of dance knowledge and practice.

### **Case study: The *târnăvăeană* and the *korcsos***

Monitoring the changes happening to the *korcsos* (Hungarian term) vs. *târnăvăeană* (Romanian term) dances with regard to form, proxemics, and meaning, allows us to reveal more clearly the connections between the phenomenon and the politically influenced revival movement.

The Romanian revival, which emerged in Transylvania after the WWI and encourages unified stage performances, left its mark on the formal characteristics of a certain dance which was known in the *Târnava / Küküllő* Region by the name: *ponturile*.

This slow male dance from *Târnava / Küküllő* Region appeared in the Transylvanian Plain by the mediation of the Romanians and the Gypsies. This in the same period (1950s) when the original, local slow male dances disappeared. The new dance was called *târnăvăeană* (lit. from *Târnava / Küküllő* Region). The strictly regulated nature of how to use space, and the fixed order of motifs suggest strong influence from the revival. When dancing *târnăvăeană* in groups, the dancers were so aimed at synchronizing the motifs, when someone deviated from the others, he stopped and had a short break to catch up with the other dancers.

A precise understanding by scholars and revivalists of the foregoing processes has been hampered by a number of confusions:

1. The accompanying music for the *târnăvăeană* arrived to the Transylvanian Plain approximately 15 years sooner than the male dance itself. Local couple dance motifs were first danced to this new music. This music began to be applied to the male dance from the 1950s. Consequently, *târnăvăeană* has both couple and solo variants.
2. The *târnăvăeană* was recorded several times as *ritka magyar* (lit. slow Hungarian) during fieldwork by Hungarian folklorists. They painted a misleading picture implying that the locals considered this dance to be Hungarian, while its Romanian origin is clearly confirmed by the local informants of the Transylvanian Plain.
3. The term *korcsos*, adopted and propagated by the Hungarian folkdance movement, became very popular. The dance appeared in stage performances of both countries, and was incorporated into the national identity of all people concerned, that is, the dancers, the musicians, and the audience. This

perception has managed to infiltrate even into academic circles starting in the 1970s, adding further to the confusion over this term and the ethnic origin of this dance form.

The Hungarian and Romanian revival movements each continue to consider this dance to be Hungarian or Romanian respectively. Moving from the traditional context into the revival scene, *târnăvăeană* has undergone some changes in terms of function and meaning: The dance has now acquired a political connotation, and the dance acts as an ethnic marker among both the local Hungarians and the Romanians. This phenomenon is exemplified by the fact that the Hungarians living in the Transylvanian Plain and the Gypsy musicians have begun using the term *korcsos* more consistently, as a result of their communication with those who are interested in Hungarian folk-tourism. In the meantime, it is evident that this piece of their traditional dance culture, which is about to vanish, has become more precious and is increasingly regarded as a tradition to be preserved.

Changes in *târnăvăeană* / *korcsos* are completely in line with the political ideologies that characterize the Hungarian and Romanian folk dance movements. The rising number of festivals and their increasing presence in the media prove that the current government(s) employ(s) folklore not only for community-building and developing the creative output of folk artists, but makes use of it for intense propaganda activities. This is framed by political intentions sweeping into cultural management which, on both sides, often derives from ideologies against the other nation. These interventions are in direct opposition with the interethnic character of the local dance tradition which provides the foundations and breeding ground for the diversity of dance and music culture in this region.

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