



Choreomundus: International master in Dance Knowledge,
Practice, and Heritage

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**The Features of the Csángó Dance Style: An
Ethnographic Study of Csángó Dance Events in
Hungary**



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Abstract

Csángó people are a Hungarian minority living in Moldova, Eastern Romania. Their dances can be separated into three main categories: circle dances, couple dances and chain dances, although a mixture of the above forms is also present in the culture. In comparison to Hungarian dances from other regions, Csángó dances have the feature of building community, as many people can dance together at the same time as a unit. Csángó dances have become popular in the Hungarian Dance House movement in the 1990's, thus more and more Csángó people travelled to Hungary to showcase their knowledge, and later on to teach the Hungarians their dances.

Nowadays Csángó dances are one of the most popular folk dances in the Hungarian Dance House movement. There are several dancing events that promote these dances, and Csángó dances appear on most of the important Hungarian folk dance events in Hungary. However, despite their popularity, Hungarians and Csángós do not perform the dances totally in the same way, even though the dances are considered to be simple and easy to acquire.

In my dissertation I will try to present the main features of Csángó folk dances from Romania as practiced in Hungary, and how people from within and outside the community comprehend those features of the dances. My goal is to see how the two groups of people relate to the dances, what do they find important when it comes to Csángó dances, and how they present these dances on folk dance events in Hungary.

Key words: Csángó dances, dance style, folk dances, ethnochoreology, dance analysis

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Lakatos Demeter¹

CSÁNGÚ TÁNC

Húzza cinigész a nótát,
Forogva, szél fújja fótát.
Veresz, züld, kyk kaszinkákval
Lyányok dorsa szíp font gicákval,
Három keresztnél a szílen
Tílbe, nyárba nálunk ilen.

Zingek mind a hópelenkék,
Ilvaszuk sz a szelemkék.
Minden ingnek mász a híme,
Mind a szorványnak a színe.
Csendesen folyik a tánc,
Meddig letörik a lánc.

Táncalnak, meghevülnek,
Utuljára feltürkeznek.
Rossz urába ul az ura,
Bicska kerül mindig sorra,
Szembül a verekedis,
Kezdődik az öklelis.

Zegisz baj ész zegisz potka,
Itt a bor és csak a vodka.
Csángú szeret táncalny,
Inny, mindig vigadny,
És kell járnny kedvibe,
Mert a bicska zsebibe.
(Lakatos, 2003)

Demeter Lakatos

Csángú Dance

Play the music, fiddler,
The skirts are moving from the dancing.
Red, green, blue headkerchief
Girls with beautiful plaits,
At the three crosses, on the side
This is how we live during winter and
summer.

The blouses are like snowflakes,
The beads are multi- coloured.
Every blouse has different decorations,
Like the colours of the rainbow.
The dancing is quiet,
Until the chain is broken.

They dance and sweat,
Then they fold their shirts.
The clock has hit a bad time,
There are knives in every line,
People are fighting in the front,
The fighting has started.

Everything is trouble and bad,
There is wine and vodka.
Csángós love dancing,
Drinking and having a good time,
And you have to keep them in good mood,
Because they have knives in their pockets.

¹ Lakatos Demeter (1911-1974) was a Csángó poet, writing in Csángó dialect.

INTRODUCTION:

In the past few decades, Csángó folk dances have grown from being barely known or practiced, to being one of the most popular dances on Hungarian dance houses. Despite the fact that Csángó dances are present on more and more dance events in Hungary, and that a growing number of people engage in Csángó dancing events, the dances are criticised by several kinds of participants from teachers to stage dancers, researchers till ordinary participants of the dance houses. The main point of the criticisms, that Csángó dances are not taken seriously as the dances of other Hungarian dance regions, and less attention is paid to how to dance Csángó dances, compared to how much attention is invested in the details of other dances.²

My mother, by profession is a heritage keeper, and as a child and young teenager, I would participate in as many of her activities as I could. Accompanying my mother to all sorts of folkloric events has raised my interest towards protecting, and helping in saving the heritage of the culture that birthed me. I moved to Budapest for University, and while being in Hungary, I was invited, and happily participated in countless events dealing with the Hungarian folk culture, and the folk culture of Hungarian minorities, including the Csángó culture, which sparked my interest to pursue this path in my academic development. Out of all sorts of folkloric activities such as singing songs and ballads, creating handcrafted objects, reciting archaic prayers, and dancing, the latter was the one that captured my attention and engaged me the most. At first, when I was still in Moldova, I would only participate in the dance classes of my mother, then I started attending dance houses in my village, later outside my village, and finally I took part in events that were organised in Hungary. I could not help but notice how popular Csángó dances were in Hungary, and how happily dancers with very different dancing skills and backgrounds engage in these dances. Dániel Lipták, a musician and ethnomusicologist from Hungary, claims that in the 1990's, the popularity of the easily decipherable Csángó dances skyrocketed, and thousands upon thousands of dancers started practicing them, creating a subculture in the Hungarian dance house movement (Lipták, 2012), that is very much still alive

²In this essay, I will use the term "Csángó" to coin the Moldavian Csángó concept, referring to the members of the Csángó Hungarian minority, and the folk dances of the same community. By using the concepts of Moldavian or Csángó dances, I refer to Csángó dances from Moldova, Romania.

and growing today. As someone who belongs to a minority that is popular outside of its country, I was always interested to see how other people see my culture, how Csángós see their culture, why do people see us the way they do, why do we see ourselves the way we do.

Csángó dances are considered to be easy to be acquired, and fairly simple to perform in comparison to the dances of other Hungarian dance regions, this is one of the reasons why they are present during the most important Hungarian folk dance events and dance houses. In my dissertation I will only be dealing with dancing in the context of two cities in Hungary: Budapest and Jászberény, as these two cities host the most Csángó dance related events in the country. The events that I attended happened in the span of eight months, from January of 2018 to August of the same year.

Even though Moldova is one of the most researched areas in Europe, little research has been done specifically on dance, and even those in the recent years. The main topics that have been researched are the identification of Csángó dances and main dance events, dance and identity, and the impacts of the dance house movement on the Csángó dance culture. All these topics are very much relevant in the current era, and are contributing to the better understanding of the Csángó dances and culture. However, all of these researchers are from outside the community, and for me, as someone who belongs to the Csángós, it is important to show and represent another perspective, which adds a new discourse to the field.

Something that I noticed when I started attending Csángó dance houses and other events housing Csángó dances in Hungary was that, although the music and the steps of the dances were similar to the ones in Moldova, there was something missing, or something extra that gave the dances a different flavour. Even though apparently I was dancing the same dances with the same steps as those around me, it often felt like we are not dancing exactly the same dances. I started paying attention, trying to figure out what the differences were in how my fellow Csángó dancers and Hungarians danced, so I can find the answer to the following question: why did dancing Csángó dances in Hungary felt so different from dancing the same dances at home, in Moldova? Initially, I thought that the way the Csángó culture was represented in Hungary might be the difference, this was why after starting Choreomundus- International master in Dance Knowledge, Practice and Heritage training as a dance anthropologist, when I had to decide on what I would like to research, I decided to look into how the Csángó culture would be represented through dance in Hungary by both Csángós and Hungarians.

After I started attending different events in Hungary as part of my fieldwork, I came to realise that the topic was way too broad, and the materials that I was collecting were not going to help me answer that question. The more time I was spending on the field, the more one specific topic kept coming back into discussion: how should Csángó dances be danced. Most of the people that I talked to during the fieldwork have mentioned at some point either how Hungarian people, and sometimes Csángó people do not dance Moldavian dances the way they should be danced. When I was asking people how exactly should Csángó dances be performed, most of them either struggled to answer, gave very brief or vague answers, or were only able to mention a few features.

In an article on “A Modest Attempt at Understanding a Way of Dancing”, Mats Nilsson, an ethnologist based in Gothenburg, mentions the “Little Tradition” which is “informal, popular dancing” and the “Great Tradition” that is “conveyed by dance teachers, dance schools and other institutions” (Nilsson, 2007: 409). In the case of my fieldwork, Csángó people would be the ones representing the little tradition, as they are the ones that dance the dances on different life events, whereas Hungarians would be the ones representing the Great Tradition, as they encounter Csángó dances on more formal events. The fact that participants to these events could tell there is a difference in how Csángó dances are performed by Hungarians and the people who belong to the community of practice, motivated me in trying to find the answer to the question which is now the research question of my dissertation: What is the Csángó dance style, and what are the features, and the factors that influence the style?

By tackling this question, I would like to reflect the necessity to reduce or extinguish the ambiguity that surrounds the matter of what is considered to be allowed and not allowed during Csángó dances, and what are the factors that influence how people dance Csángó dances. Undertaking this topic is relevant firstly because through the presentation of the dances, some of the moral values of the Csángó community are projected, they show the community from a new perspective, and provides readers with a better understanding of the culture and of the dances. Secondly, it opens the conversation about why Csángó dances are treated differently compared to the dances of other Hungarian minorities in the Hungarian context. In this dissertation I would like to present what people from both Hungary and Moldova consider is needed to dance Csángó dances in their own style, by compiling a list of the features of the Csángó dance style.

I consider this topic to be relevant, because I am curious to see whether Csángós and Hungarians would find the same features of the Csángó dance style worthwhile to mention, if the two communities agree on what Csángó style is deemed to be. Another point that motivates me is, that there is a discrepancy in how the Csángó culture is seen in Hungary in comparison to the way in which cultures from other Hungarian minorities are dealt with. I want to see to how big the differences are, in terms of how the dances of different regions are treated.

One of the challenging aspects of my research during the fieldwork, was the fact that I was conducting research on my own culture, albeit in an alien place. Even though I have learnt much about how people relate to the Csángós, and how Csángós relate to their own culture and dances in a context other than their home region, at times I would get emotionally engaged with the events, and I had to remind myself to distance myself from them periodically. Focusing on gathering my materials, or what the next steps are usually helped me get back into the researcher shoes, and out of the Csángó perspective, but the Csángó and the researcher in me were in constant conflict throughout the entire fieldwork. Spending more time on the field turned out to be helpful regarding this issue, as some actions, such as recording audio-visual materials, or taking field notes became almost a routine, and I became more comfortable in the researcher role.

METHODOLOGY:

Because this subject has not yet been tackled, and because there is still very little academic material on Moldavian Csángó dances, my argument will be mostly based on the interviews that I conducted during my fieldwork, and on the opinions and the ideas of what the Csángó dance style is according to my interlocutors.

I experienced dance houses in Moldova and in Hungary, and I could not help but notice that the way Csángós dance and the way Hungarians dance Moldavian dances are not exactly the same. Even though the steps of most dances are given, the style in which the two groups perform the dances seems to be different, and also the attitude towards the dances during dancing is different. For example, Csángós openly mock dancers that jump a lot during the dances through chantings that they shout during the dances, and Hungarians are often energetic and jump a lot, which is showing a different attitude towards how dances should be performed.

Wax and Wax quote Horowitz saying that “The value of preparation preliminary to entry into the field cannot be overstressed. Such preparation is a mark of respect to the hosts,

as it demonstrates that one considers their affairs of sufficient importance to learn whatever one can about them before formal introduction” (Wax and Wax, 1980: 31). They also claim, that prior research can influence the way we might see the field, but also that one always enters fieldwork with preconceived ideas, and it is better if these are influenced by academic material, rather than “what passes as conventional information” (Wax and Wax, 1980: 31).

As my fieldwork revolved around different events that included Csángó dances, it was important for me to look up these events online, and see what has been already published about them. I was curious to find out about the schedules, who will be the organisers, who will be the participants, so during the events I can make sense of who is who easier and faster. Because these events are independent from one another, and very different in purpose and presentation, my fieldwork was multi- sited. Multi- sited fieldwork is a fieldwork type where the researcher is not bound to one place, but follows the object of interest in different places, putting it in a more global context, and tries to learn about the connections between the different events. According to Marcus, an American anthropologist, who coined the term, “multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography” (Marcus, 1995: 105). This is important in my research because even though the events I am researching are different from one another, they are all connected to Csángós, they are all outside Romania, making my research connect to people from two different countries. I decided to include this method in my research for two reasons: the first one is because multi-sited ethnographies deal with the influences of globalisation, Csángó dances became popular in Hungary once the borders were opened after communism, and this way the relationship of Csángós with Hungary changed. The second reason why I decided to implement this research method is because according to Henne, an American sociologist: “this approach requires field-intensive qualitative methods, which include, but are not limited to, participant observation, interviewing, fieldnote taking, archival and document analysis, audio and/or visual recording and sustained interactions with participants” (Henne, 2017: 97). I considered it very important to come up with a plan of what exactly I would be doing during fieldwork, how I would be gathering the data, and reading as much about these methods as possible.

I conducted my fieldwork in Hungary, in the two most active cities on the Csángó folk dance scene, Budapest and Jászberény, from January of 2018, until august of the same year.

Both cities organise countless folk dance events throughout the year, and have numerous dance groups performing folk dances from all around Hungary and other Hungarian dance regions from outside the country. The folk dance events that are organised in these two cities cover a broad range: occasions where people can learn, and practice different dances, performances, by both amateur and professional dances, dance houses, and so on. My main goal during the fieldwork was to collect as many materials on how Csángó dances are danced, during events that include Csángó dances under any context, regardless of who the dancers were. I have recorded dances that were performed as part of shows, which meant more attention was put into the dances and the dancers look like, and during dance houses or other spontaneous dancing situations, where people were having a good time, and less attention was paid to how the dances are realised. Because I conducted qualitative research, collecting some materials, like videos and interviews became easier and easier as I was progressing with the fieldwork, and the more events I was attending. Even though writing field notes was easy from the beginning, the more immersed I got into the fieldwork, the easier it got to structure my notes, and also to put down on paper everything I deemed relevant on the moment or as soon as possible, to the point where writing down my thoughts, or recording voice notes of my thoughts on what was going on during the events.

After having finished my fieldwork, the interviews turned out to be the most valuable materials that I collected, as they contained the most information on the topic that I decided to write about, and they provide a strong base in building my argument.

During the time of the interviews, I tried to pay attention to what Briggs, an anthropologist based in California suggested, which is making sure that there is a clear definition of key concepts, assuring that both the interviewee and the interviewer share a code and a channel for communication, ensuring that references are clear for all participants, and that they mean the same for all partakers; gender, age, social roles were also to be taken into consideration, etc. (Briggs: 1986). The main focus during the interviews was to find out who my interviewees are, how did they get in contact with Csángó dances, where and when did they learn how to dance them, how often do they dance and on what occasions, what do they think of the performances of the Csángós if they saw any, whether they think they dance the dances differently than Csángós, and getting to know as much of what they would like to share on the topic of Csángó dances, as possible. In order to be able to be as productive as possible during

the interviews, I tried to follow the tips provided by Blommaert and Jie, two ethnographers, which are the following:

- 1) “Interviews are conversations.
- 2) You are part of the interview.
- 3) The importance of anecdotes.
- 4) No such thing as a bad interview.” (Blommaert and Jie, 2010: 43)

These tips were useful because they took away from the pressure of having “perfect” interviews, gave me the security that I cannot get out of an interview without any information, which gave me more confidence in entering such situations. The main topics that I introduced during the interviews were how did they get in contact with Csángó dances, where and when did they learn how to dance them, how often do they dance and on what occasions, what do they think of the performances of the Csángós if they saw any, and whether they think they dance the dances differently than Csángós.

Another important method of gathering data, that provided me with invaluable materials, were doing participant observation and observant participation. Mukherji, an Indian sociologist quotes Klukhohn (1940) saying:

Conscious and systematic sharing insofar as circumstances permit, in the life-activities and, on occasion, in the interests and affects of a group of persons. Its purpose is to obtain data about behaviour through direct contact and in terms of specific situations in which the distortion that results from the investigators being an outside agent is reduced to a minimum (Mukherji, 1973: 27).

During my fieldwork I have interchangeably used these two methods, and tried to experience how it is to dance Csángó dances with Csángós and Hungarians, but also to watch Csángó and Hungarian people dance Moldovain dances. Having participated in the dancing also helped me connect with people on the events easier, so talking to them, or interviewing them later on came more naturally. These methods of gathering data gave me a better insight into the dynamic of the dancing crowds, which helped me grasp the points that I then wrote in my field notes better. Being active during the events gave me a better perspective on different aspects of the events, that would not have been possible if I only watch a recording or read about them.

CHAPTER 1: The Csángós

WHO ARE THE CSÁNGÓ PEOPLE?

Moldavian Csángó people are a Hungarian minority based at the Eastern side of the Oriental Carpathians, in Eastern Romania. The etymology of the word “Csángó”, in Hungarian comes from the verbs “csángál”, “elcsángál”, which mean to stray away, referring to the fact that Csángó people have always been away from the Hungarian motherland, never having belonged to it. According to Vilmos Táneczos, an ethnographer from Transylvania, in the census of 1992 there were nearly a quarter million Catholics in Moldova, and as reported by both Hungarian and international sources, most Catholics in the region, apart from a few people of other nationalities such as Romanians, Italians, Gypsies, who blended with the core population, were Hungarians. The Moldavian Csángós are only one of the four Csángó communities, next to the Csángós of Gyimes, of Hétfalu and of Bukovina. The Csángós of Moldova are separated into two main parts, the Northern (they are situated on the North from Roman city) and the Southern Csángós (situated at the South of Bacău). The Csángó region has undergone a process of Romanian assimilation which has affected all the villages, with some of them having been completely assimilated to the surrounding Romanian culture, and others being affected to different degrees (Táneczos, 1997).



Figure 1: The map of Romania. The area where Moldavian Csángós live is indicated by the black circle

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CSÁNGÓ PEOPLE:

Moldova is one of the three great regions of Romania next to Transylvania and Wallachia, and it is the home of Moldavian Csángós. There are a few hypotheses about where did the Csángós come from to Moldova; according to Pozsony, an ethnologist based in Transylvania, some researchers believe that Csángós were tribes left behind by the Huns during the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin, others believe that they might be the descendants of the Turkish or the Cumanians; a third group of researchers claim yet another hypothesis, which seems to be the most likely, and which is that they were groups of people that broke away from the Hungarian Monarchy and stayed behind to protect the frontiers; the fourth hypothesis, which does not have a lot of scientific support, is that the first Csángós were Transylvanian Romanians Magyarized (assimilated to the Hungarian culture) by the Catholic church (Pozsony, 2005). To the already settled group of Csángós, later on more people joined from Transylvania, some escaping revolutions, punishments, or seeking a better life.

Moldova, and thus the Csángós never belonged to the territory of Great Hungary, but as their language was Hungarian, people, mostly of Hungarian descent, started being interested in researching in Moldova from the second part of the eighteenth century, and by the twentieth century, despite the difficulties created by the political situations, several people were researching the area. The great materials that were collected make Moldova one of the most researched places of the Hungarian culture, and possibly even Europe (Pozsony, 2005). Even though this territory is popular among researchers, academics that did fieldwork in Moldova, researched other topics of the Csángó culture, as in the case of Tánczos Vilmos, who researched identity; Peti Lehel, who dealt with religion and spirituality; Pozsony Ferenc, who looked on traditions and rituals; Kallós Zoltán, who focused on singing in Moldova. Only recently have people started dealing with the dances of Csángós in more detail. Even in the biggest anthologies about the dances of Csángós, the dances from Moldova are described briefly and incomparably in less detail, almost just mentioned, than Hungarian dances from other Hungarian regions. For example, György Martin, who was one of the greatest dance researchers of Hungary, and the work of whom is immeasurable and incredibly valuable in the research of Hungarian dances, gave a very short and broad description of the Csángós in Hungarian Folk Dances, and an even briefer description of their dances, compared to other groups of people that he included in his writing. He wrote the following:

Their (Csángós) dances and folk poetry, as well as their folk songs have kept the Hungarian character, but their instrumental music and dances are replete with Romanian influences. Their stock of dances has all the Trans- Carpathian Balkan features. Many, sometimes twenty or thirty formally simple dances are in use in every village. They are of strophic structure and differ in name and tune. The majority are open chain dances, or closed, circular ones (*Öves*, Belt; *Kezes*, Hand; *Korogászká, Tulumba*, etc). Their couple dances are also of the Moldavian Romanian semi-regulated character (*Baraboj, Ruszászka, Románka*). The *Ardeleanca*, the *Magyaros* and the *Lapos Magyaros* (Flat Magyar) show certain links with Transylvania. Here and there, a formal simple *Csárdás* is danced to the tune of composed melodies. Male solo dances, as a rule called *Țiganeasca*, are rare. Their dances are archaic in many ways, just like those of the Moldavian Rumanians. They are accompanied by a shepherd's pipe or a *cobza*, a plucked string instrument (Martin, 1974: 75).

THE BACKGROUND OF CSÁNGÓ- HUNGARIAN COLLABORATIONS:

Even though Moldova was never part of Great Hungary, because it had villages that spoke Hungarian, there was always some sort of interest towards the Csángó community from the Hungarians. Even so, because Moldova is outside of the Carpathian Basin, education in Hungarian language only started after the Hungarian Revolution against the Communist regime, and lasted only for a few years, as the leaders of the country- Romania- wanted to dismiss Hungarian education in Romania (Pozsony, 2005); it would only start again after the Romanian Revolution against the communist regime, when the Ceausescu dictatorship ended, in 1989. Education in Hungarian language didn't become official, and was not studied in school until the early 2000's –even then only as an optional subject-, but children and adults could attend different events and camps in Transylvania and Hungary, where they could interact with other Hungarian speaking groups. After the 1989 Revolution, these events and camps became more and more frequent, and slowly the Csángó dances started to infiltrate in the Hungarian dance houses. As I have already mentioned, because the dance steps were considered relatively simple and easy to learn by people in Hungary, the popularity of the dances grew rapidly, and they continue to be popular as we speak in the Hungarian dance house movement. Currently, I would go as far as to saying that the Csángó dances are danced more outside the community, as they are inside, as in Moldova there are no regular dancing opportunities such as the regular dance houses in Hungary, and people mostly dance on big events and celebrations such as weddings. Even though there are not many dance house- like kind of events in Moldova, groups of Csángós participate in different events like camps, festivals, balls, or even dance houses, in Hungary, throughout the year. Most of these events are sponsored by some sort of Hungarian organization, and Csángós are invited to these events, it is very rare that they go to events

uninvited. The events that are specifically connected to Csángós like the Csángó Bál, or the weekly dance houses are co-organised with Hungarian people, but there are events like the Csángó Fesztivál, that is organised by Hungarian people only.

According to Jan Blommaert and Dong Jie, deciding upon a research question, and then on where to do fieldwork brings a series of consequences as “it places your work on a track which has its own requirements and peculiarities” (Blommaert and Jie, 2010: 16). I have done my fieldwork in Hungary, and the two main locations were Budapest and Jászberény, two of the cities with the most Csángó and dance events in Hungary. I am aware of the fact that even though most of the events I have participated in are regular occurrences, I have only documented particular editions, that are unique; depending on the theme of the events, some people might have gotten invited, others might have not, some performances will have gotten on stage, while other will have not. I will not be looking into past occurrences of the same events, and I will also not be focusing on future plans of these events, if not, I will put the events of this year, the performances and the participants under a magnifying glass, trying to find as much information as possible about the topic.

CSÁNGÓ DANCES:

Csángó dances can be mainly classified into three categories: circle dances, couple dances, and open chain dances. Lisbet Torp definition of circle dances covers what Csángó circle dances resemble:

circle dances performed by more than three people in a linked formation. It is essential to the definition... that all participants perform basically the same step pattern simultaneously. This limitation, however, does not exclude dances with improvisations performed by the leader and/or dances in which individual dancers perform variations of the basic pattern “in line”, where traditions for personal displays of this kind exist. The term *chain and round dances* compasses dances performed in line formation as well as in closed -or open- circle formation, provided that the above conditions are fulfilled (Torp, 2007: 113).



*Figure 2: Csángó People Dancing Magyaruska in Labnic, during a Csángó dance camp
(Photo by: Eloisa Quinto, 2018)*

According to György Martin, a Hungarian ethnochoreologist, circles are one of the simplest, and most natural forms, and they are one of the easiest shapes to create in space. Dancing circles can be expanded or shrunk, dancers can join or leave a circle dance without complications. Martin also states that the circle is a natural form of grouping because there is no hierarchy among the dancers, everyone is equal, unlike in the case of lines, where there is a leader, and a person who closes the line, that might have different roles than the people in the middle of the line (Martin, 1979).

Couple dances are danced in pairs, but the pairs can be composed both by people of the same gender or different genders. Some of the dances, such as Banu Mărăcinii, combine the two forms: dancing one part of the dance in circle, and then the second part of the dance in couple. In chain dances, the dancers are lined up in a straight line, that they keep throughout the dance. The line has to be kept both when moving in any direction, and when the line dances in one place.



Figure 3: Csángó women dancing a couple dance in Labnic, during a Csángó dance camp. The musicians can also be spotted on the right side (Photo by: Eloisa Quinto, 2018)



Figure 4: People dancing Bulgáros, in a chain formation, in Labnic, during a Csángó dance camp (Photo by: Eloisa Quinto, 2018)

There are little records of the Csángó dances from before the Romanian Revolution of 1989, and analysis of those materials has also mostly been done after the Revolution, as before that, despite the popularity of the region among ethnographers, not much attention has been paid to dances from Moldova. Even though after the Revolution the amount of energy put into

researching Csángó dances was significantly less than that put into music for example, the situation has improved. One of the reasons this might be the case is the fact that before the Revolution people from outside Moldova did not really get the chance to interact or experience these dances, as during the Communist Era it was very hard for people, especially researchers, from outside Moldova to enter the region. After the Revolution, when the borders opened, a new world was presented to outsiders, and more and more people started researching the Csángó culture.

In an informal conversation with one of my interlocutors³, who is a Csángó dance researcher, she said that she has by now learnt about the existence of about 60 Csángó dances, encompassing all types of dance. Even though all those dances are considered Csángó, all 60 dances were not danced in all the villages in Moldova, that are populated by Csángó people, but rather over 60 dances were recorded in the entire region. Even though some of the dances, such as *hora* and *sarba*, are known in all of the villages, on the same music the dance might be different in certain villages, or different variations of the same dance might be present. Another of my interlocutors⁴ stated that regardless of the number of dances that can be listed, there were always some dances that were popular at a given time, and the number of those dances would not typically exceed 15. Some dances would eventually fade out of the active knowledge of the people, and some would make a come-back, but all the 60 dances were never danced within one dance event.

The dances are mostly made of steps, stamps, spinning, springs, and other gestures, performed in all directions, inward, outward, to the right, to the left, in different combinations. The fact that the motifs of the dances are repeated over and over again countless times, allows the dancers to let go of focusing on the “technique”, or what should they do next. Because of this feature of the dances, the dancers can get into a trans-like, ecstatic state, where they move together with the people around them.

Dancing events such as *horas* were organised by lads, called *vatávok*, who were helped by girls, *vetevicák*. They were in charge of finding the space, collecting payments, finding musicians, and paying them. Another dance event would be the working bees. In a village, there

³ Hungarian female, interview recorded on the 12th of August 2018, in the Csángó ház, Jászberény, Hungary during the Csángó fesztivál. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

⁴ Hungarian female, born in 1989, interview recorded on the 30th of July 2018, in Szent- Györgyi Albert Agóra, Szeged, Hungary. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

would be several working bees at the same time, and young people from different “neighbourhoods” of a village would gather together to do hand work, sing and dance. Yet another occasion where people would dance in Moldova, were weddings. Traditionally, this was the only place where women would shout rhyming chantings about the newly-wed couple, married life, everyday situations, such as: “Those who do not know how to dance / Should go home and sleep, / But we know how to dance, / And we stay to have a good time.”⁵ These chantings have made their way into mainstream dance events, and can now be heard on most Csángó dance houses.

Nowadays, the most popular musical instruments used during dance houses and dance events are the shepherd’s flute, drum, folk-lute, saxophone, fiddle, but in the past the most popular instruments were the fiddle and the folk-lute.

Some of the dances can be found in different variations in different villages, some with minor, others with major differences, such as Sarba Studentilor (one of the Csángó circle dances), which has at least three versions. In the case of a few dances, the music can also have different levels of alterations, depending on which village the dancers belong to. In order to differentiate between the several versions of the dances, people refer to the village from which the variation spread initially, such as Rekecsini, Klézsei, Somoskai⁶ dance.

⁵ Csángó dialect: „Aki nem tud táncolni / Menjen haza aludni, / De mük tudunk táncolni, /Itt maradunk mulatni.”

⁶ English: From Rekecsin, from Klézse, from Somoska.

CHAPTER 2: The fieldwork

I would now like to move on to presenting the events that I attended as part of my fieldwork. Most of these events (except for the Dance and Sacrality Conference) have been organised for years now, so they are popular among the Csángó culture enthusiasts both from Moldova, but also from outside of it. Even though there are many other events throughout Hungary that display the Csángó culture and dances, these events are some of the most well-known and popular, and attract the most number of participants. The two main locations of my fieldwork have been Budapest and Jászberény, in Hungary.



Figure 5: The map of Hungary, with the two main locations of my fieldwork, Budapest and Jászberény underlined. (Illustration by: The Interpreter's Friend)

CSÁNGÓ BÁL:



Figure 6: The poster of the XXII. Csángó Bál in Budapest (Photo by: Csángó bál)

The first event that I had attended was the “Csángó Bál” on the 9th of February 2018. It was in Budapest, and it is an event that happens every year, this year having been the 22nd edition. According to the official webpage of the event, the organisers want to show the public the social and economic hardships of Csángós (Csángó Bál, 2018). It is the biggest event that celebrates the Csángós and their culture in Hungary, hosting over a couple of thousands of participants. The Ball is organised by Csángós in collaboration with Hungarians, it begins with an on-stage show, followed by a great dance house, workshops and a fair. The event attracts various well-known people, such as the main mentor of the event, János Ádler, who is the

president of Hungary. This event was the first one I attended as part of my fieldwork, but I had a hard time “being a researcher”, so apart from a couple of very short videos, I have not recorded any audio-visual materials. Some days after the event I wrote retrospective field notes about the atmosphere, the musicians, the dancers, performance, and about how it felt being there. I have also looked the event up on the Internet, and I have found photos, videos, and also some press articles. The event consisted of two main parts: it started with a show, that has a different theme every year, that tries to present a snippet of the lives of the Csángós. In the past years, some themes have been about important life events, such as a wedding, famous Csángó personalities like Demeter Lakatos, famous researchers like Pál Péter Domokos. This year the focus was on the celebrations and traditions between Easter and the Pentecost. The show usually consists of singing, dancing, chantings, poems, and prayers. This event is not only for Csángós from Moldova, it also includes other groups of Csángós, like those from Gyimes, or Bucovina, other regions in Romania, so usually all these groups represent themselves on the stage during the show that combines their performances. Not only Csángós get to be part of the show, dance groups and bands from Hungary also have a chance to participate in it. After the show, the chairs, where the public sat during the show, are removed from in front of the stage, and a big dance house follows. Moldavian Csángó and Csángó dances from Gyimes are interchanging periodically on the main dance floor in front of the stage. Musicians both from Romania and from Hungary are playing live music throughout the night for the dancing crowd. Next to the main dance floor, in other rooms of the building there are concerts, smaller dance houses with different dances than the ones on the main dance floor, folk dance teaching, there is a fair, and other smaller activities. Given that this was the first event that I visited as part of my fieldwork, it was the first time where I had to introduce myself as a researcher, and start to collect materials as such. I struggled with walking up to people to ask them to talk to me, for I had the feeling that I am interrupting and disturbing them, as they were here to have fun, and not give interviews, this is why the conversations I had with the people that were present on the ball were not oriented towards my topic at all. Because of this, in the end I did not have any interviews, and I decided to do participant observation and observant participation.

ORSZÁGOS TÁNC HÁZ TALÁLKOZÓ ÉS VÁSÁR:



Figure 7: The poster of the National Táncház festival and fair in Budapest (Photo by: Országos Táncház Találkozó és Vásár)

The second event I had attended was the “Táncház Találkozó”, the National Táncház (Dance house) Festival and Fair. This event is the biggest dance house event in Hungary, and dance groups from all around Hungary, but also outside Hungary, mainly from Hungarian speaking regions come and participate. I was present on the 14th of April 2018, on a Sunday, and that was the third day of the three days long event. According to their official website, the event provides the participants with “a chance to get a taste of many kinds of traditional dances from all over the Carpathian Basin” (Táncház Fesztivál, 2018). This event is a forum that allows all dancers from the Hungarian regions from inside and outside the country to participate and

represent themselves, and to sell their folklore related products on the fair that is organised in the same venue.

The day when I was present was mostly designated to children, as most of, although not all, of the sections for teaching dance on the main dance floor, included games and a lot of playful activities to entertain children. There was also a Csángó dance segment, and it was led by a Hungarian person, followed by Hungarian Dancers, and the dancing crowd. Given that I attended the event as part of my fieldwork, I took photos, and some videos, most of them about the Csángó session. I also actively participated in the dancing, applying the participant observation method. I had a short interview with one of the participants, and agreed to meet again for a lengthier interview, then met one of my acquaintances, and had an informal conversation, that I notated after the conversation ended, in my field note diary, that I had been writing into throughout the event. Apart from the videos, the field notes and the recording of the very short interview, I also gathered some leaflets, and the schedule booklet of the event, next to the entrance ticket.

I went to this event determined to talk to people, and to not repeat the experience from Csángó Bál. Thanks to this determination, this event felt more like fieldwork, than the previous one, and I seemed to walk around more openly and bravely. I was more eager to talk to people, I took field notes throughout the event, I participated in the events in the venue trying to absorb as many details of what was going on around me as possible. This event was also the first event that stirred me up emotionally, and that started me in a new direction regarding how I saw the fieldwork from that point on, how I saw my own culture, the Csángó culture, in Hungary, but more on this in the ethnography, later on.

TÁNC ÉS SZAKRALÍTÁS CONFERENCE and CSÁNGÓ EST:

RÍTUS · ZENE · TÁNC

2018. május 11. péntek 19.00
CSÁNGÓ HÁZ Jászberény, Táncsics Mihály utca 2.

Petrás Mária és zenész barátai
Petrás Mária prima primissima- és Magyar Örökség díjas
énekművész vezetésével



Filmbemutató
részletek a
Sámánének című filmből
bemutatója: Péterbencze Anikó néprajzkutató



Táncműsor
Papp Gergely Bálint, Papp Máté Bence a Fricska Táncgyűttes
tagjai valamint Bódi Tamás, Bódiné Bagi Éva,
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Figure 8: The poster of the Csángó Est performance in Jászberény (Photo by: Csángó Fesztivál Alapítvány)

The third event I participated to was a conference called “Tánc és Szakralitás”, “Dance and Sacrality”, on the 11-12th of May, 2018, in Jászberény. The event was tackling topics like shamanism, dance and death, and other rituals that involved dancing or some sort of spirituality. I had also presented on this conference, and another Csángó person presented as well. Apart from the two of us Csángós, we both presented on Csángó topics, there were two other

presentations that were linked to Moldova. One by a university professor in Romania, the second one by a PhD student from Budapest. I recorded the presentation of the Csángó woman, and I took notes during the other two presentations. I also kept the booklet containing the abstracts of the presentations from the conference, engaged in conversations with the participants and I also took field notes. Unfortunately, I could not interview any of the people, nor could I stay until the end of the second day of conference, this way I missed the last two presentations of the conference, as because of personal reasons I had to leave the conference earlier than planned.

The conference was a two days long event, and during the evening between the two conference days, on the 11th of May, the organisers prepared with a “Csángó evening”⁷ in a venue that wears the name of “Csángó House”⁸, this is the event that I took into account as part of my field. The dancers on this event were all Hungarians, while the musicians were Csángós, and the evening was constituted of the projection of a film, a dance and music show, followed by a dance house. I took photos and videos, participated in the dance teaching/ dance house that followed the show. I also had small conversations with some of the participant in the dance, and with one of the musicians, that was Csángó.

Doing fieldwork on this event was somewhat easier, as I already had the experience of the previous two. Talking to people came naturally, recording the event did not constitute a problem anymore. Even though personally I was not happy with how people related Csángó dances, this time I was more prepared, thus I was able to handle the situations better, and I was less affected.

⁷ Hungarian: „Csángó Est”

⁸ Hungarian: „Csángó Ház”

GUZSALYAS:



Figure 9: The poster of Guzsalys Táncház in Budapest (Illustration by: Guzsalys)

The fourth event is a Csángó dance house, called Guzsalys, in Budapest in Marczibányi Square Cultural Center⁹. This dance house is organised every Thursday, it begins at 19:00 with dance teaching, and it continues with an open dance house from 21:00. The music is played live by different bands, some of them are made up of Csángós, others are Hungarian bands. The event is organised by Csángós in collaboration with Hungarians, and most of the participants are Hungarians. The crowd of the participants is made up by mainly Hungarians, some of which are there almost every Thursday, and a few Csángós are also present now and then, although the target audience of the event are Hungarians. This event looks back to a great tradition, as it has been organised for about two decades now, and its popularity is still great, hosting about 100 people each week.

⁹ Hungarian: Marczibányi Téri Művelődési Központ

By the time of this event in the timeline of my fieldwork, I had the experience of three others, so collecting materials here went smoothly, as I could record the dances, interview people and write field notes effortlessly. This event was probably the easiest to participate on as a researcher, as everything seemed to fall in place, without any major disruptions.

CSÁNGÓ FESZTIVÁL:



Figure 10: The poster of the Csángó Fesztivál in Jászberény (Photo by: Csángó Fesztivál)

Csángó Fesztivál is a festival that was organised for the first time in 1991. A bus of Csángós were invited to participate on a dance and music camp in Jászberény the year before the first festival was organised, and one of the Csángó women that participated, who was very old, became extremely ill, and passed away, but not before claiming that she wants to be buried in Hungary, which she later on was. The year after, a festival was organised to commemorate her, and then the festival was organized every year. This event was initially organised especially for displaying Csángó culture, but by now has grown into an international festival, hosting dance groups from all over the world. Even though the festival is still called “Csángó”, on the official webpage “The Folkloric Festival and Fair of European Minorities” is added right after its title. Groups of Csángós participate every year in this festival, even if in just a very small

number. The festival is made up of two main parts: it starts with a dance and music camp, and then it ends with a three days long festivity and gala, the two events usually make up for about one week. The Csángós rarely participate in the camp, usually they only join the event for the last three days, during which they participate on the shows, and present performances on the main stage. Apart from the shows on the main stage, the festival has different locations with different activities, like conferences, dance houses, handcraft workshops, religious masses, and so on.

The Csángó Fesztival, in Jászberény, between the 8-12th of August turned out to be the most challenging and demanding event during my fieldwork. Participating in this festival was the hardest part of being on fieldwork, probably because I engaged with the festival from different points of view, for a prolonged period. During the event I participated as a Csángó performer, as part of a Csángó dance group, and being both a dancer and a researcher turned out to be very complicated. Some of the organisers had a hard time familiarising themselves with the fact that a Csángó person is there as a researcher, I had to fight for my position the entire time, but in the end, it was the event that made me the proudest and gave me the most satisfaction, from my fieldwork, as I had to fight for my position, and materials.

INSTITUTE FOR MUSICOLOGY:



Figure 11: The logo of the Zenetudományi Intézet (Illustration by: Zenetudományi Intézet)

Apart from witnessing how Csángós are represented on all kind of events in Hungary, I was also curious to see how they are represented on the Hungarian academic level. For this, I first looked into the online database of the Hungarian Institute for Musicology in Budapest, then I would visit the archive of the Institute, and see what kinds of materials they had on Csángó dances. Apart from analysing the materials, I would have liked to talk to some of the people that work at the institute and work with these materials. Apart from the materials from the Institute for Musicology, I wanted to look into some of the published materials of two PhD students that research Csángó dances from Moldova, and then interview them.

I had planned to spend three weeks, in June of 2018, in the Institute for Musicology, in Budapest, as I was curious to see what kind of materials they have on Csángó dances. Unfortunately, I learnt too late about the fact that the institute was in the middle of a crisis, where employees had to be let go, and given that it was summer even most of those who were still working were on holidays. Regardless, I managed to spend two days in the Institute after finding someone who was willing to help me, I was able to put my hands on at least some materials, after reaching out to my contacts online, and I managed to interview the two researchers that I had planned to.

BACK FROM THE FIELDWORK:

Coming back from fieldwork turned out to be as challenging as preparing for, or doing it, although in different ways: one cannot possibly learn everything about the field before going there, as there is always something one wishes to have known beforehand, that one only learns while completely immersed in the field; also, there are so many unexpected events during fieldwork, particularly because of how unique the events are most of the time, that one cannot count with all the possibilities that can occur, so it is easy to feel paralysed. After I tried to get as prepared as I possibly could before going to the events that I had planned to attend during fieldwork, and doing my best to stand my ground, be focused and open-minded while visiting the events, when the fieldwork was done, instead of relief, I felt overwhelmed, on one hand by the thought that I will not be able to participate on those events again, at least not in the same context, and on the other hand by the amount of some materials and the lack of others.

Initially, before fieldwork, when I had to make a decision regarding the topic of my research, I settled on the following: As someone who belongs to a minority that is popular outside of its country, I was always interested to see how we represent ourselves, and how we are represented outside the community, what are the similarities and differences between these two kinds of representation, how other people see my culture, how Csángós see their culture, why do people see us the way they do, why do we see ourselves the way we do. My research question, thus, is: how is the Csángó culture represented through dance in Hungary by both Csángós and Hungarians in Hungary? In order to be able to answer my research question, I decided to do my fieldwork in Hungary. In the meantime, my topic has changed, but I will talk more about it later on.

Something that I had not anticipated before going to the field, was that I will have a hard time positioning myself as a researcher in the field. I believed, initially, that because I am Csángó, and I have attended most of the events before, it will be easy for me to just put my researcher hat on, and do my work. I could not have been more wrong. The moment I introduced myself as a researcher, people started treating me differently, and started altering their behaviour, which took me off guard. I had to negotiate my position at every event, and I had to present myself over and over again as a researcher, in order to remind people that in this case I am not just a Csángó participant on the event, but I am here doing fieldwork.

Even though I processed some of my materials during fieldwork, I handled most of it when my fieldwork was completed. When I returned to the files weeks later, my perspective on them has shifted already, and while doing the transcription of the interviews, re-watched the videos, I gained a different perspective over the information that those files included. I started seeing myself in the field differently, and so the people that I encountered, the dynamic between them, the events, and me. Even though when I left the field I had the feeling that I did not collect enough materials, or that the ones that I did collect are not relevant, after taking a break I realised that I had indeed great materials, that were full of relevant information.

Coming back from the fieldwork, I realised that my experience, the way I lived the moments and events are equally important as the materials that I gathered, given that I will see the materials through the lens provided by my experience. Stoltje, Fox and Olbrys in *The Self in "Fieldwork": a Methodological Concern* came up with a great metaphor that explains the researcher in the field:

Entering a culture to carry out ethnographic research, whether it is familiar or strange to the ethnographer, is much like looking into a pool of water. Depending on the light and the time of day, one may see a reflection of oneself, refracted perhaps because of the ripples on the surface. At sunset the reflection of the surrounding trees and foliage appear, and eventually one sees deeply into the water, simultaneously becoming aware of the underwater world, the forest, the sunlight, and one's own reflection (Stoltje, Fox and Olbrys, 1999: 158).

Being on the field, and later dealing with the collected materials was often challenging because how I saw my community from this new point of view, and the impacts the field had on my identity. Apart from learning about the dynamic of Csángós and Hungarians on these events, I was also faced with the fact that I am both Csángó and Hungarian at times, about the great differences between the two groups at times, about the different values that the two communities represent, and where I place myself on the Csángó-Hungarian spectrum. In fact, my personal experience, and the fact that I was a Csángó person participating on these events, was what made me shift my focus regarding my research topic. I was faced with the fact that although Csángós are a Hungarian minority, the two communities have developed independently from each other, and this led to some major differences in their values and way of life.

It is even more evident that in today's complex, highly interconnected, media-dominated world, there are fewer and fewer native cultures left. They are oppressed by the international market for the objects once iconic of their identity, which are now

tokens in the drive for authenticity in metropolitan commodity cultures. They are pushed by the forces of development and nationalisation throughout the world and are attracted by the possibilities of migration (of refuge) in new places. Natives, as anthropologists like to imagine them, are therefore rapidly disappearing. This much many will concede (Appadurai, 1988: 39).

This quote, by an Indian-American anthropologist, is very relevant for my research from multiple points of view. Firstly, as I saw myself as a native person, but with the addition of the multiple experiences that I lived, compared to the average Csángó: I had the chance to get a higher education, travel and meet cultures others than mine. Secondly, the culture that birthed me is expected to be presented in its “authentic way” by the natives, on stages outside of its territories. Thirdly, in Hungary Csángó dances are proudly proclaimed to be Hungarian folk dances, but in fact, as I already mentioned, little people care about the way the “natives” dance their dances, and often times it feels like Hungarians entertain the dances as “tokens in the drive for authenticity in metropolitan commodity cultures.” (Appadurai, 1988:39) 4. I also mentioned that Csángó dances tend to become more and more popular in Hungary, and are incomparably less present in Moldova, which means that “natives” are disappearing, and this is due to multiple reasons, among which migration and the globalisation helped by the media, can be found. 5. Elders that dance, teach and promote dances are told off, and criticised for the way they do, by scholars that think that they are not dancing like natives used to, the authentic way. This quote is fitting because it encompasses the main struggles of Csángó dances, and as a matter of fact of Csángó culture in Hungary, with cultural appropriation by their very own majority, who claims to take pride in Csángó dances, and the values its culture projects.

CHAPTER 3: An ethnography

In Eastern Romania, in the valleys of the base of the Carpathians live the Csángós, a group of people, living in about 30 villages, that until recently identified with their religion, rather than their nationality. Religion used to be the backbone of everything that happened in Csángó communities, from celebrations, to everyday actions. Living off of their lands, these communities were never rich, and were always isolated from the people living around them, as they spoke Hungarian, a language different from the language of the country. Csángó dances from Moldova are mainly circle and pair dances. The instruments for their music is usually rudimental and basic, such as a shepherd's flute and a drum, although it can be played on other instruments such as a fiddle, accordion, saxophone. Dances usually have the same motifs that are repeated over and over again throughout the dance. This repetition can bring the dancer into a ecstatic state, where they are moved by the circle, and they go with the flow. This is possible because the dancer does not have to focus on improvisation, but rather on the sensation of the dance.

In these communities, dancing in a social setting occurred under three circumstances: 1. Guzsalyas: during winter, young people would gather and do hand work, dance and sing together. 2. Horba: dance event in front of the church or on the main square of the village. This event would last for only a couple of hours, and would occur on Sundays or other holidays, outside of fasting periods. 3. Weddings. The dances of Csángós are danced in circles, couples, chains or the combination of the three. Csángós were isolated from other Hungarian speaking communities until 1989, until the Revolution against the Ceausescu dictatorship. After the revolution, people could get in and out of the region in an easier manner, researchers and people eager to get to know or study the region started to flow in, thus slowly, but surely, the Csángó culture, and with it the dances became more and more frequent during dance houses inside and outside Hungary. During my fieldwork, I participated to different events that involved Csángó folk dances in Hungary, throughout a period of 6 months, and in this essay I will be talking about a few moments that I have experienced.

As part of my fieldwork, I visited the greatest Hungarian dance house of our times: Országos Táncház Találkozó és Vásár, or The National Táncház Fesztival and Fair. It is a yearly event that happens in Budapest, Hungary, where Hungarian folk dancers from the Carpathian Basin, from outside it, and the Hungarian diaspora come to share their dances, learn new dances and dance together in a three-day long event. Thousands of people participate in it either as

dancers, vendors on the fair, or simply as visitors. The venue has several rooms, where all kinds of folk related activities happen, such as teaching dance, concerts, teaching folk songs.

When I arrived to the Táncház Találkozó, I was a bit tired, I had to wake up very early in the morning to be able to arrive to the event when it started, that day. When I arrived to the venue, I went to get my ticket, and I was happy that there was no queue. I was a bit surprised how little people there were in the morning, but my amazement shifted pretty soon to the dancers that were rehearsing in front of the stage. Over 100 girls were dancing in two circles, bouncing up and down, and spinning their circles in a mesmerising rhythm. First thing after taking a seat in the audience, I took out my notebook, and started writing some field notes, then I took out my mobile phone and took some photos and videos about the dancing girls. Through these simple actions that I took my time with, I wanted to set my mind set, and vision to a researcher's, "today I will be as much a person doing their field work more than I will be my usual self" I said to myself. I decided to make this thought my mantra for the day as I was nervous that I will miss important events, that I will not be doing my fieldwork activities properly. I decided to write down everything that I will be noticing or will be doing while on the event so I do not forget important details later on.

At 12:30 the Moldavian dance teaching begun. I was very curious to see how it was going to go down, as I could tell from the schedule that neither the teacher nor the dancers that were helping him were Csángó. From the moment the teaching started, there were many people in circles dancing, and more and more joined. The session lasted for about 20 minutes, and we danced 5 dances: Botosánka, Drumul Dragului, Nelu, Sarba Studentilor, Zdrabuleanca. All the dances are circle dances, and are some of the most commonly danced dances on dance houses. Everyone seemed to have a great time, people were stamping and springing and spinning, but something was feeling off to me, there was something very much not Csángó in the way the dances were performed by the teacher and the participants. As someone who was born and raised a Csángó, I felt uncomfortable, angry and disappointed: Csángós have so many great dancers, great dance teachers, heritage keepers, and none of them were there as they were not invited, instead, the people teaching did not prepare properly for teaching the dances, as all they knew were the steps that they taught to the crowd, and nothing else. Not only neither of the teachers or the dancers had anything to do with the Csángó culture, as they are not active in Csángó events, or involved in the Csángó cultural life, but they did not even make the effort of looking into these dances, or their culture, and that was clear from the way the event happened.

During the Csángó dance slot, people were pulling each other, jumping, and making elaborate gestures with their feet that were just inappropriate for Csángó dances. Another thing that I noticed was that the Csángó national wear that both the dance teacher and the dancers were wearing was not put on properly, and because of this their entire appearance looked rather clumsy. Both women and men Csángó national wears have a long, woven belt that people wrap around their waist multiple times to secure the skirts, and then when the belt is over, the end of it is tucked under the multiple layers of the wrapped belt. Instead of doing so, the dancers tied a knot at the end, which looked inappropriate, and was yet another proof that they were not well prepared.

During the third dance, Nelu, I noticed that one of the men who used to organize dance camps for Csángó dances inside and outside of the community, had joined the circle. I started focusing on him, and how he dances. He was paying attention not only to the steps, but to his posture, velocity of his movements, connection to the people dancing next to him, and he did not let the circle and the other people dancing around him influence his movements. He stood his ground, and danced the way he knew it was right to dance Csángó dances. This man is not part of the Csángó community, he was born and raised in Hungary, and as soon as he could enter Csángó villages he started making friends, and learning from the locals about their dances. He started organising dance camps where he would employ Csángó people to teach dances, he would organize performances for Csángó people, and he would regularly engage in the other cultural activities of Csángós for decades now. Seeing him there made me think of two things: 1. Why is he not teaching the dances? He attends the event every year, he is well known for his activities with Csángós, and is from Hungary, instead someone that was by far not as well prepared was asked to. 2. As I mentioned before, this man was born and raised in Hungary, and learned the dances as an adult, still he mastered the dances to a point where he cannot be spotted as an outsider, the way both the teacher and the dancers were obviously outsiders to Csángó dances, if he ever were to dance with people from any Csángó village. The man paid attention to learn the small differences and variations from different villages, he paid attention to the velocity of the movements of the people who danced around him, he paid attention to posture, differences in music, what people would sing and shout, when people would sing or shout. In that moment, he was the living proof that our dances can be fully transmitted, with everything that belongs to them, and that people from outside the Csángó community are able to learn them, if they put effort into it, and do not just label them as “easy dances”, the way many people from outside of the Csángó community do. This man was also trained and danced Hungarian

folk dances from other regions too, and was still able to master the Csángó dances, why are so many other people not paying attention?

When the dancing was over, I wanted to go and greet him, so I started walking towards him. He noticed me, and when he saw me, I could tell that he too, was disappointed of how the teaching went. When I got close enough to him, he recognised me, and without any greeting or introduction, he said: “Some people should teach these people (he pointed towards the dance teacher and the dancers) a few things, if we want to respect this [Csángó] culture.” He could not have said anything else that would have resonated more with how I was feeling at the moment, and I was happy that I was not the only one who thought that way. A bit later, I had the chance to talk a bit more with this man, and during our conversation, he said (at first repeating what he told me earlier): “Some people should teach these people (dance teachers) a few things, if we want to respect this culture...anyway, it was interesting, it was as if they didn’t even know the basics. It looked like a city mayhem...Maybe it is not how they meant it, but to me it seemed as if it was lacking in professionalism. This would require a more thorough analysis, to learn why these people do not treat these dances with similar professionalism as they do with dances from other (dance) regions.”

When I was going back to my seat from talking to this man, on the way, I bumped into another acquaintance, a Hungarian folk dancer, who also danced Hungarian folk dances from different regions of the Great Hungary territories, and who also took the time to learn Csángó dances thoroughly. After introducing me to his friend who was accompanying him, he asked me: “What do you think that the dances from Moldova were taught by people who have never been to Moldova?” I was happy to see that I was not the only one pondering on the same issues, that it was not fair, that the organisers employed people from each region to teach their own dances, but they did not hire someone from Moldova, or at least someone acquainted with the culture to teach Moldavian dances.

This event was the second event that I had attended as part of my fieldwork, but was the second most challenging event of all, personally, after the Csángó festival that lasted for days, as it was the first event that really stirred me up. It was the first event when I was faced with the undoubted unfairness with which the dances of my community are treated. On the event I was able to witness how other dances are displayed, how much thought and attention are given, and then, in comparison, how Csángó dances are just ticked off without too much effort involved. This event was challenging because I came to the realisation that not only the dances

are dealt with in a superficial manner, but also my culture and my people, and this was just one of the events where neither the organisers nor the participants really focus on or care too much about understanding those or respecting them. I felt offended and embarrassed that we, as a culture, are treated like this, and that nobody, including ourselves, do not really do much to change the situation. There may be different reasons why the situation is the way it is, but knowing that did not help my frustration. Still, I got encouraged to see that even though not numerous, there are some people who think likewise, and at least are willing to start a conversation.

I left the event after about seven hours, and during those hours, all the Csángó activity were the five, very poorly taught and performed dances. I felt disheartened, that there are people who would believe that whatever happened during those 20 minutes of teaching the dances would do justice to either the Csángó dances, or the culture. I felt sad that there were people who would live that event thinking that this is how Csángó dances are, or believing that this is how the Csángó culture is. Given how big the event was, and how many people attend it, I can see how people would think that learning certain dances on this event might be great as there are so many great professionals organising and participating, still, from the point of view of the Csángó dances, this could not be farther from the truth. By having only 20 minutes allotted, I felt like the organisers believed it might be enough time to show off the Csángó dances, and based on their performance, they could not be more wrong. Taking a look at all of the above, it seems to me that everything was done in a hurry: the dressing, preparation and performance during the very short time. All these, left me with a bitter taste. Is this all we are to other Hungarians? Is this all the time and effort we are worth? How did we get here, and what led to this unfortunate situation?

The incident that I portrayed above was the one that made me pay attention to how Csángó dances and Csángó culture are dealt with in Hungary, and in a way or another, the same superficiality and ignorance that I experienced on The National Táncház Fesztival and Fair appeared on all of the other events that I participated in during my fieldwork, and they peaked during the last event, the Csángó Festival, months later, in August. During that event, at some point the dance group that I was part of had an on-stage performance. We were six dancers, out of which 2 were heritage keepers who learnt the dances as children, in the villages, and have been very active in teaching those when the practice started rising in popularity, and ever since after. They are two of the most competent dancers in the entire Csángó community,

acknowledged both by the community and outsiders, and have been the people that taught some of the dances as informants, for the first time for people outside the community. After the performance, one of the organizers told them that the dance group did not dance the dances correctly, that they should listen to the Hungarians that are working on teaching the Csángó dances back to the Csángós – neither me nor the heritage keepers have heard that someone is trying to teach our own dances back to us-, as she thinks that Csángós have forgotten the right way of dancing, and she is there to help. When I asked her where she learnt the Csángó dances so well, she told me that she recorded a video of Csángó people dancing the authentic dances in the 1990's. When the heritage keepers heard that, told her that both of them were dancing in that video, so she is telling the people who she learnt from that they are not dancing correctly. The woman only added that “Well, let's just say that you were not the best dancers.”

This incident really shocked me. I had the feeling multiple times during my fieldwork that my community was not taken seriously, or at least not as seriously as others, but I could not believe the extents to which some people are capable of going. Having someone from outside the Csángó community tell two of the our most recognised and valued dancers that they are not good enough, left me speechless, and the fact that she thought she is entitled to tell us how we are supposed to dance, was the outraging.

I am aware of the fact that, as Kirsten Hastrup (1993), a Danish anthropologist implies, during fieldwork, there are participants with different backgrounds, and I have experienced all these events with the background of a native Csángó, so I might be biased, even though I am trying to display an anthropology background as much as possible. In my case, it is completely true what Hastrup states in *Writing Ethnography*: ‘Fieldwork...is a social drama confronting the performers with their unbound selves’ (Hastrup, 1992: 118). Fieldwork showed me a part of my culture that I have never payed attention to, and it allowed me to take a step back, and have a look at what happens around us and with us. Even though it is others who treat us in a non-ideal way, I also had to realise that we, the Csángós, did not do much, and still do not do much to change the situation, so it is not a single-sided problem.

Participating on these events made me change my perspective, and shift from the original topic that I had in mind for my dissertation. Initially, I wanted to write about how the Csángó culture is represented through dance, but I realised that that topic did not align with what happened on the field. These incidents urged me to try and define what our dances and culture are, both for myself, personally, as a member of the community, as a dancer, and as a

researcher, but also for people in the Csángó community, so that later on I am able to compare them with how Hungarians see the dances and practice them. The new direction, in the end, is to be able to have a conversation about what we are, and what we are not, and to project our own version of our own culture, and dances. In the end, despite of all the negative feelings that I often felt during the fieldwork, I also felt encouraged by the fact that even against all odds, there are still, even if very few, some people that pay attention to Csángó dances and culture, and try to make a difference, each in their own way, and most importantly, are willing to have a conversation about the issues that I had encountered.

CHAPTER 4: The database

The database that I constructed, which contains the materials that I collected from all the events on which I participated, is a compilation of all the videos, photos, field notes, voice notes, interviews and other materials that I collected.

While in the field I have been documenting events by taking photos and recording videos, making voice recordings and field notes about interviews and conversations, through participant observation and observant participation, as well as conducting interviews, collecting leaflets and other materials available, that seemed remotely relevant to my research. Even though returning from the fieldwork I had the feeling that my materials are incomplete, I still tried to make sense of and organise them, which led to some sort of relief. While immersing myself in them, I noticed elements that turned out to be helpful and valuable. As Geismar and Mohs anthropologists argue, databases help with charting and embodying connections that are not only obvious between materials and events, but also facilitate the process of discovering new links (Geismar and Mohs, 2011). This has definitely happened to me during the digitalisation and structuring of my materials. Returning to my materials over and over again, even if only in an attempt to categorise them, it turned out to be a very useful exercise.

During and after my fieldwork, I tried to keep my materials as organised as possible, as I wanted to make the most of them. I regulated my materials in a folder on a drive, and I created a Microsoft Excel file (Appendix A) so I can browse through my materials in an easier manner. In the Excel sheet I included 16 categories that allow me to filter through the entire database. The first column includes the name of the event during which I have collected the materials. This is important because I did not want to mix the materials from different events, and also because I wanted to make sure that I will not get lost into what was recorded on what event. The second column marks the folder in which the materials are found on my drives, within the folder of the event. The third column is the name of the file within the folder from the previous column. The fourth column contains the format of the file from the third column, which can only be one of the following: photo, video, field notes photo, word document, link, or voice note. The following column contains the date of when the material was collected, or when the file was created. This is important because some of the materials have been created sometime after leaving the field, and are created with a new perspective, the one of a person who had some time to process the events from during the fieldwork, and a person who took some distance from the field.

The column that follows contains the place where the material was produced, and that can be from during the fieldwork, or after the fieldwork. Column G contains the name of the dances that are recorded in the given file. The next column contains a short description of the file; this column gives more contextual information about the information in the file. The ninth column presents the language in which the file is recorded, which can be English, Hungarian or both languages. The language of the file depends on the language the people involved speak, mostly, which most of the time was Hungarian; my field notes are mainly in English, as I knew that I will use them in an English context, and I did not want to have to bother with translating them.

Column number 10 indicates the name of the participants in the material, and the column after presents their role in the material. In column L I listed the names of the people who are mentioned in the material, and the column after indicates the role of the mentioned people. As I worked with a relatively small group of people, and as some people appeared on multiple events, it was important for me to be able to easily find their contributions and apparition in different materials, regardless of how big or small, this is why I decided to include two categories of people in my data base: participants, and people who are mentioned. As I would like to present how people and cultures interact with each other, it was important for me to make visible these relationships in my database.

Column N is where I listed the topics that are tackled in the material, and column O contains the key words that describe the material the best. While in the “Description column” I added more contextual information about the materials, these two columns provide more information about the content of the files. These two columns (N and O) will be very useful as I will be able to narrow down the files based on topics and key words, and I will be able to see which files have topics in common. The fifteenth, and last column P, contains “other notes”, information that does not fit in any of the previous columns, but are still important to know, or could be helpful when I would like to narrow down the material later on.

Structuring the knowledge from my fieldwork into one file, and coming up with the categories, allowed me to see connections between the events, categorise based on dances, participants, topics, and places. Having to put all the materials in one Excel file has been very useful because I had to go through all of the materials that I have gathered during my fieldwork, and I had to read, listen to, transcribe and watch my materials. According to Harper, as decisions are made by individuals who have fallibilities, human reactions and special traits of their own,

it is important to take all these into account when one is faced with the decision taken (Harper, 1950). Although this database contains most of the materials that I have gathered during the fieldwork, before making it into the list, they all went through a relevance filter, but also through my filter as an individual.

CHAPTER 5: Interpretation

DANCE STYLE:

One of the topics that are mentioned by most of the people that I interviewed during my fieldwork is how Csángó dances should be danced, or should not be danced. Even though there is no clear definition of what the Csángó dance style is, there are some criteria that were disclosed. Before moving on to what my interlocutors have said, I shall first establish what dancing style means, and what I mean by it in the context of Csángó dances.

The opinions on what dancing style is, and whether style is an important feature of dancing, are shared among dance professionals and scholars. Adrienne Kaeppler, an American anthropologist, in her article entitled *Dance and the Concept of Style* discusses that “style is a manifestation of culture as a whole, the visible signs of its unity...forms and qualities shared by all the arts of a culture during a significant span of time” (Kaeppler, 2001: 51), and she adds that it is a “system of forms with a quality and meaning expression through which the personality of the artist and the broad outlook of a group are visible” (Ibid.). Eva Kröschlová, a Czech ethnocoreologist, claimed the following: “A dance is indeed the sum of movements; but its form must be seen not just as the sum of movements, but as the way in which these take place in time and space which is just their artistic organization. We do not need to analyse the material itself, rather the form which this material takes in dancing.” (Kröschlová, 1992:6).

During the Dance Critics Conference, where the topic was *The Subject of Style*, one of the participants was a definite supporter of the notion of style, stating the following “it referred to real or imagined shared attributes of a work, probably retrospectively recognised by critics.” Another participant regarded style “not as a critical concept, but as a device to gain acceptance”. The perspective of a third participant on the topic was as it follows: “[Style] maintains a sort of assiduous control over art, insisting on singularity, homogeneity and identity”. Not everyone had a positive attitude towards style, with one of the participants claiming that “it is a restrictive, normative ideal that only freezes the progress of art” (Armelagos, 1984: 57).

Adrienne Kaeppler argued that, when it comes to the structure of dances, it is important how movements, no matter how big or small, are linked and connected, in what order they are following each other, and ultimately how movements come together into one dance. In her view, the structure of a dance should be “emic”, i.e. it should be based on the concepts that fit

into the “movement tradition” of the specific dance culture, to which the dances belong, rather than “etic”, as that would mean the movements being based on the interpretation of the spectators or outsiders, and their “ideas about movement differences.” (Kaepler, 2001). The author added that:

Style is the way of performing- that is, realising or embodying the structure... In addition to movement meaning, meaning in a larger sense (such as symbolic, narrative, etc.) is not inherent in movement itself; meaning is attributed to movement by people who are part of the larger activity and depends on knowledge of the cultural system, such as male and female roles in movement, social status, social structure, and access to politics and power (Kaepler, 2001: 53).

She then proceeded to give an example of three different native speakers of English, who come from different parts of the world, and although all three of them grammatically speak, or can speak the same language, “there is something very different about them, their *way* of speaking, their accent, their style...” (Kaepler, 2001:52). Later on she added that “it is the way the structure is realised, that is, the style that enables us to understand and delineate differences that are manifested in time and space” (Kaepler, 2001:53).

With this premise that the style should originate from the community of practice of a dance, how do people “create” style? According to Anne Elise Thomas, an ethnomusicologist from Virginia, it has to do with “social learning”, the process through which an individual goes in order to become part of a social group. She then presents Etienne Wenger’s argument, according to which, an individual must participate and undergo reification, in order to become part of a community (Thomas, 2001). According to Wenger, an educational theorist from Switzerland, “participation refers to the process of taking part and also to the relations with others that reflect this process. It suggests both action and connection” (Wenger, 1998:58). In the case of the dance styles, this implies that in order to be able to acquire one, people should be active and connected to the community of practice that created the dances. Furthermore, the author claims that reification refers to “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness.’ In so doing we create points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organized” (Wenger, 1998:58). While participation makes one a member of a community, reification allows people to apply the knowledge learnt from the experiences acquired as a member of a community to the way they live their every days. The way people do actions is influenced by the community that shaped them, and by the values of that community. In the case of style of dances, in order to be able to

perform a dance in its style, one must familiarise themselves with the culture, and the value system that influences their decision making.

Csángó dance style:

Before trying to present what people have to say about what the Csángó dance style is, I shall add that some of the dances are danced differently in certain Csángó villages, and the steps that are executed on some music might differ partly or completely. I would like to make my argument regardless of this aspect, as what I am interested in is not what the steps of dances are like, but more how any dance steps should be performed, regardless of the village, as long as they are Csángó dances. I would like to present the similarities and differences in how Csángós and Hungarians see the dances, and what their opinions are on how these dances should be performed, what are the circumstances that can influence how these dances are performed. This is why in making my argument I am mainly relying on the confessions of my interlocutors during the interviews.

Even though nobody could give a concrete definition of what the Csángó dance style is, or how Csángó dances are supposed to look like, everybody listed characteristics of how Csángó dances should be danced. In what follows, I will be presenting what each of my informants had to say about what they consider the Csángó dance style should or should not be. All the people that share their opinions on the topic are considered experienced in Csángó dances and culture, as they are either Csángó, active in Csángó cultural activities, or are from Hungary, and are either researchers, or people who have been active in the preservation, teaching, promotion of the Csángó dance culture for years. I shall first present what Csángó people have said, and then the Hungarian points of view. I will not be mentioning any of the names of the people I have interviewed, in my dissertation, as it was part of the agreement to guarantee that they will stay anonymous, and the interviews will not be published in their entirety.

Csángó dance style as defined by Csángó people:

A young, Csángó musician¹⁰, who is playing both in dance houses in Hungary, and Moldova suggested that:

¹⁰ Csángó man, born in 1992, interview recorded on the 31st of May 2018, at Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, during the Guzsalyas táncház. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

- “[Csángó dances should be] danced **like old people do**”¹¹
- the steps should be danced in an “**old**”¹² way.

An elderly woman¹³, who has been dancing since she was a child, made the following statements:

- the steps should be danced the way “the **elderly** do, steps should be **flat**, their **feet** should stay **close to the ground**. People used to **drag their feet on the ground**...and they did **not stamp much**.”¹⁴
- In Ruszászka and Keresel¹⁵, the interlocutor claimed that “it never happened that people went towards the middle of the circle. Towards each other? No. The couples were following each other in a circle, but never facing each other towards the middle of the circle. I do not know to have had a dance where people did that.”¹⁶

After sharing her perspective on how Csángó dances used to be danced, she shared an anecdote about a conversation she had with her husband, who is a musician. I think this is important to mention, because it shows the changes in how people are expected to perform Csángó dances now, in comparison to the past in Moldova. She claimed as follows: “My husband asked me today, or yesterday:

Husband: Do you not know how to dance Botosánka¹⁷?

Wife: Why?

Husband: You did not stamp.

Wife: How many times did we stamp in the past? Do you recall stamping in Botosánka? I do not know... or in Nelu¹⁸, we did not stamp in Nelu either. We danced like this in Nelu (she performed the steps of the dance showing how they used to dance without any stamping), and

¹¹ Csángó dialect: „mint az öregek”

¹² Csángó dialect: „régies”

¹³ Csángó woman, born in 1953, interview recorded on the 16th of August 2018, in Cleja, Bacau, Romania, in the house of the informant. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

¹⁴ Csángó dialect: „ilyen öregessen, lapossan, úgy közel e földhöz e lábaik. Úgy, mind úgy húzogatták e földön e lábaikat...[nem trapisgáltak], nem ki tudja mit”

¹⁵ Two couple dances, where the couples form a circle, that consists of two parts, in the first part the couples rhythmically walk back and forth, nowadays towards the middle of the circle, although initially couples would follow each other in the circle, and then in the second part the couples spin in circle, following each other.

¹⁶ Csángó dialect: „Ruszászka nálunk nem volt, hogy béfelé menjen? Bé cserc felé? Vagy e másíkok, nem tudom még milyen táncok vannak melyivel mennek...Keresel? Szembe?! Há mind egymás után mentek szépen cserkban, így kettősdí kerülték egymást. De szembe bé nem volt olyan tánc nálunk. Nem tudom én, hogy lett lenne.”

¹⁷ The name of one of the Csángó circle dances

¹⁸ The name of one of the Csángó circle dances

then we would go like this, and then again. We did not do this (stamps). This is how we danced the dances.”¹⁹

Another elderly woman²⁰ from Moldova, when asked about how people from Hungary dance Csángó dances added the following comment:

- “They were stamping like they do”²¹, implying that “unlike us”.

While the people from Moldova used either adjectives, or brief descriptions of how Csángó dances should be danced, the Hungarians were rather talking about what dancers do, what they might think or feel about Csángó dances.

Csángó dance style as defined by Hungarian people:

All three informants from Hungary suggested that in Hungary, Csángó dances are considered “easy, simple”. But in their opinions the situation is as such because people do not dance the dances in “their style”:

- “The dances are very **easy** [to learn], but it would be better if many people would get to a point where they are not that easy...it is rare that a couple spins well...**in style**...beautifully. They know the dances roughly, but the dances are not Moldavian, they cannot get them that way... the emphases are not how they are supposed to be... **they get the steps, but it is not enough to make the dance Moldavian**...[the way people dance in dance houses] is lame.”^{22 23}
- “I feel like people just whisk it off, as in – oh, **everyone knows this**”^{24 25}
- “[Csángó dances are considered] **primitive, easy dances**...those who think they are great dancers do not like these dances...although dancing these dances in **their own style** is not that easy...nobody pays attention to the inside rules of the

¹⁹ Csángó dialect: „Még ma mondá (a férjem), ma mondá-e vagy tegnap? Aszongya „Te nem tudod Botosánkát?”, aszongya. Há miért? „Há nem trappontottál”. Há te hányszor trappantattunk műk ezelőtt? Jut eszedbe trappantattunk, mondom, e Botosánkában? Én nem tudom...vagy e Neluban, mondom, Neluban sem troppontottunk, mikor e Neluban így tettünk, így szépen (csak lépeget, troppantás nélkül)... s még mentünk, s még így...így jártuk, mondom, nem tettünk így, mondom (troppant). Műk így indítottuk e táncokat.”

²⁰ Csángó woman, born in 1934, interview recorded on the 16th of August 2018, in Cleja, Bacau, Romania, in the house of the informant. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

²¹ Csángó dialect: „Eppe úgy, mind ők.”

²² Hungarian: „Nagyon könnyű tánc de hát jó lenne ha sokan eljutnának oda ami már nem olyan könnyű... ritkán lehet olyat látni hogy mondjuk jól forogjon egy pár... vagy az hogy az úgy stílusos is legyen, meg szép...kilóra megvan, de hogy az nem a moldvai, és azt nem tudják megcsinálni... a hangsúlyok nem úgy vannak...persze minden lépés megvan de valahogy nem lesz moldvai... béna (ahogy járnak táncházakban).”

²³ Hungarian woman, born in 1977, interview recorded on the 31st of May 2018, at Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, before Guzsalyas táncház. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

²⁴ Hungarian: „Egy kicsit úgy érzem hogy ilyen legyintés van hogy ezt mindenki tudja”

²⁵ Hungarian woman, interview recorded on the 12th of August 2018, in the Csángó ház, Jászberény, Hungary, during the Csángó fesztivál. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

dances, to what is allowed and what is not allowed while dancing these dances...[On a dance house occasion, I decided that no matter what] I will dance the two very simple steps that I learnt in a Csángó village, and my steps were more **modest** and **simple** than the ones of the steps those around me were doing, or creating...[my friends consider these dances to be] very **simple**, and embarrassing...and they do not like them...[Csángó dances in the mainstream Hungarian culture are considered to only be] **ancient, authentic, archaic, beating the shaman drum...**²⁶²⁷

Some of the Hungarians²⁸²⁹ also mentioned general features of Csángó dances such as: “the dances are ecstatic, the focus is on the community that dances together, the individual does not get special attention”; “these dances are ecstatic, it takes some time, until the dance has an impact on you”³⁰; “the community form is strong, there are barely any solo, improvisational dances.”³¹

Teaching Csángó dances:

Another aspect that the people from Hungary brought up was how Csángó dances should or should not be taught. This topic is relevant in the context of Csángó dance style, because how dances are taught can influence how people would dance the dances later on. Most of the Csángó dances are considered to be simple, and easy to acquire not only by Csángó people, but by outsiders and even novices, as the movements are mostly repetitive, and little improvisation is needed. According to one of my interviewees³², who researched Csángó dances, the dances are seen in such a way because when heritage keepers, people from Moldova that are in charge of safeguarding, and teaching the customs, traditions and culture to the next

²⁶ Hungarian: „Primitív egyszerű tánc... meg nem szeretik...akik magukat nagy táncosoknak tartják... hát stílusában eltáncolni nagyon nehéz... a táncnak a belső szabályszerűségeire egyáltalán nem ügyelnek, nem figyelnek meg azt hogy mit engedhetsz meg magadnak tánc közben meg mit nem... én megfogadtam, hogy most kész, én azt a kettő nagyon egyszerű figurát fogom táncolni amit kint ... tanultam: én szerényebben táncoltam, egyszerűbben, hogy még nem tudom azokat a cifra figurákat amiket ők ott kitaláltak, vagy belevittek meg milyen egyszerű ... meg milyen ciki... pedig hát nem szeretik... de a Moldvai az csak egy olyan ősi, autentikus, archaikus, verjük a sámán dobát”

²⁷ Hungarian female, born in 1989, interview recorded on the 30th of July 2018, in Szent- Györgyi Albert Agóra, Szeged, Hungary. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

²⁸ Hungarian female, born in 1989, interview recorded on the 30th of July 2018, in Szent- Györgyi Albert Agóra, Szeged, Hungary. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

²⁹ Hungarian woman, interview recorded on the 12th of August 2018, in the Csángó ház, Jászberény, Hungary, during the Csángó fesztivál. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

³⁰ Hungarian: „de ezek extatikus táncok, kell egy idő, hogy tényleg valamilyen hatást gyakoroljon rád maga a tánc”

³¹ Hungarian: „közösségi formák az erősek, szólisztikus, improvizatív táncból alig van”

³² Hungarian female, born in 1989, interview recorded on the 30th of July 2018, in Szent- Györgyi Albert Agóra, Szeged, Hungary. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

generations of Csángós or to people from outside the community, present the dances in non-Csángó environments, which are mostly Hungary and Transylvania, when they teach the dances they simplify the dances as much as possible to make them as easy to learn as possible. The heritage keepers do so without considering the possible consequences that can happen because of their actions, this is one of the reasons why people think the dances are easy, and in some places are even passed down as dances for children. Another point that was made, this time by more than one person³³³⁴³⁵, is that neither dancers, nor teachers, pay attention to the regional style, the style in which dances from the Moldavian region should be danced, compared to dances from any other region, where dancers and teachers go beyond themselves to acquire and learn about every single detail in execution. One of the reasons that was brought up to defend this point³⁶ was that Csángó people, historically, adapt easily and very fast to the environment around them. When people from Hungary started changing the way Csángó dances were danced, they just went along with the new trends and requirements, and did not confront or complain to anyone about the (unrequired) changes.

On the other hand, people who teach Csángó dances that are not from Moldova do not pay attention to the details of the movements when teaching. After a teaching session of Csángó dances at one of the biggest folk dance events in Hungary, one of the participants suggested that it lacked professionalism³⁷. When talking to two other interlocutors about the same topic, one³⁸ said: “dances are taught in a poor way”³⁹, and the other one⁴⁰:

“They do not take care of the regularities of the dances, they do not pay attention to what is allowed and what is not allowed during the dances, and that is interesting because if we look at Transylvanian dances, or a Transylvanian dance dialect, they can dissect those dances to the bone, and they want to be as professional about them as possible. The same cannot be said about Moldavian dances, [people think that] those can be danced anyway, anyone can dance them, and then they put into the dances

³³ Hungarian woman, born in 1977, interview recorded on the 31st of May 2018, at Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, before Guzsalyas táncház. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

³⁴ Hungarian woman, interview recorded on the on the 12th of August 2018, in the Csángó ház, Jászberény, Hungary, during the Csángó fesztivál. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

³⁵ Hungarian female, born in 1989, interview recorded on the 30th of July 2018, in Szent- Györgyi Albert Agóra, Szeged, Hungary. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

³⁶ Hungarian female, born in 1989, interview recorded on the 30th of July 2018, in Szent- Györgyi Albert Agóra, Szeged, Hungary. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

³⁷ Hungarian man, born in 1955, interview recorded on the 15th of April 2018, at Országos Tánc ház találkozó és Vásár, Budapest, Hungary, Papp László Budapest Sportaréna. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

³⁸ Hungarian woman, interview recorded on the on the 12th of August 2018, in the Csángó ház, Jászberény, Hungary, during the Csángó fesztivál. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

³⁹ Hungarian: „silány módon tanítják a táncot”

⁴⁰ Hungarian female, born in 1989, interview recorded on the 30th of July 2018, in Szent- Györgyi Albert Agóra, Szeged, Hungary. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

movements that have nothing to do with them. If those dances would be danced like that in a village in Moldova a few years ago, they would have been laughed at.”⁴¹

Csángó dance style influenced by music/ instruments:

Vivien Szőnyi, a PhD student researching Csángó dances in Moldova, states in her MA dissertation that:

In the ‘Moldavian dance house band model’ that was spread after the 1990’s, that consisted of a shepherd’s flute, kaval, folk lute and a drum. This line-up did not exist in the self-organised, traditional dance occasions in Csángó communities. This has several consequences: firstly, it has an impact on the dances, as a shepherd’s flute requires a different execution of the dances, compared to a fiddle; secondly, it narrows the space of the fiddle as a prime, traditional, Moldavian music instrument. One of my folk musician informants phrased it the following way: ‘You showed me the ’58 recordings, with Antal Gábor, and György Gyöngyös. I was then listening, listening, and I realised, that this is different Moldavian (music), than what is played here under the Moldavian label. (...) The music is more free, more varied, it leaves space for...maybe not improvisation, but variation, so it is straight-up fiddle music.’ (...) Behind the changes in the band line-up, apart from the will to salvage the archaic and ethnocentric Csángó community, the lack of information and sometimes deliberate changes can be discernible; and the same reasons can be seen behind the changes in form of the dances⁴² (Szőnyi, 2014: 63).

It can be said that the way Csángó dances are going to be performed can be influenced by the musicians and the instruments they use in producing the music. One of the people I interviewed, a Csángó musician⁴³, revealed that he sometimes alters the way he plays the music, based on whether the dancers are Csángó or Hungarian: “When I play for someone from Moldova, I have to give them a good rhythm...for a Hungarian, ok, sometimes I play the drum

⁴¹ Hungarian: „...a táncnak a belső szabályszerűségeire egyáltalán nem ügyelnek, nem figyelnek. Meg azt hogy mit engedhetsz meg magadnak tánc közben, meg mit nem, és az azért nagyon érdekes mert hogyha megnézünk egy erdélyi táncot vagy erdélyi tánc dialektust, akkor azokat még annyira kitudják vesézni, meg annyira belemennek részleteibe, hogy nagyon profin megcsinálják. És a moldvai az nem, az csak ilyen valahogy legyen meg, úgyis egyszerű, minden hülye megtudja csinálni és aztán beletesznek olyan dolgokat aminek köze sincs hozzá, azt eltáncolnak, tényleg, Moldvában mondjuk, egy ilyen régebbi falusi környezetben, akkor jól kiröhögnek őket.”

⁴² Hungarian: „Az 1990-es évek óta elterjedt „táncházas moldvai zenekari modell” legtöbbször egy furulya vagy kaval, koboz és dob együttesét jelenti. Ez a zenekari felállás a rendszerváltás előtt nem létezett a csángó közösségek önszerveződő, tradicionális táncalkalmain. Ennek azonban számos következménye van: egyrészt visszahat a táncra, hisz más előadásmódot követel meg a furulya- és hegedűkíséretre való táncolás, másrészt leszűkíti a hegedűnek, mint tradicionális moldvai prímhangszernek a játékkerét. Egy népzeneész adatközlőm ekképp fogalmazta meg a jelenséget: „Mutatta az ’58-as felvételeket, a Gábor Antalt, meg a Gyöngyös Györgyöt. És akkor hallgattam, hallgattam és rájöttem, hogy ez valami más moldvai, mint amit itt moldvai címen művelni szoktak. (...) Szabadabb zene, változatgazdagabb, teret ad a...ha nem is improvizációnak, de a variációnak, tehát olyan becsületes hegedűs zene (...) A zenekari felállás átalakulásának háttérében a csángómentés archaizáló és etnocentrikus volta mellett információhiány és olykor szándékos változtatás is megfigyelhető, s ugyanezen okok körvonalazódnak a táncok formakészletének változása mögött.”

⁴³ Hungarian man, born in 1992, interview recorded on the 31st of May 2018, at Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, during the Guzsalyas táncház. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

really well for Hungarians as well... but sometimes I take back from the tempo.”⁴⁴ Even though the musicians and instruments can be an important factor in how people dance, they have an effect mostly on the rhythm and the speed of the dances, rather on the dance style.

Csángó dance style influenced by the purpose of dancing:

Another argument that was brought up in my interviews as to why Csángó dances are danced differently in Hungary, some of my interlocutors⁴⁵⁴⁶ argued that some of the people who attend dance houses do so in order to have fun, and the form and style in which they dance is not of primary importance. My interlocutor⁴⁷ argued that because people go to dance houses to have a good time, it is not right to correct, the way they dance: “they cannot be told off, they come here to have a good time.”⁴⁸ While I believe this could be a valid point, during our interview she also added that people would correct other participants in the dance house if they would not be dancing the dances from other regions the way they are supposed to, which means that there are regions where there is a clear image of how dances should look like, and if someone would dance the dances of that region in a way that it does not fit the image that has been accepted to represent the dance form, they would be held accountable, as variation would mean that they are not fully familiar with the dances, or it would mean that those are not dances that belong to the specific region anymore. When I asked her about why it is not the case of Csángó dances, she⁴⁹ stated: “Moldavian dances have a layer that is easy to dance... it allows even amateurs to get into a dance, but it gets tricky in terms of what we add [to the dances].”⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Hungarian: „Amikor egy moldvainak zenélek akkor ott meg kell adni a ritmust... egy magyarországinak, jó, valamikor egy Magyarországnak is oda nyomok dobhoz jó keményen, hogy na... van mikor visszafogom a tempót.”

⁴⁵ Hungarian woman, born in 1977, interview recorded on the 31st of May 2018, at Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, before Guzsalyas táncház. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

⁴⁶ Hungarian woman, interview recorded on the on the 12th of August 2018, in the Csángó ház, Jászberény, Hungary, during the Csángó fesztivál. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

⁴⁷ Hungarian woman, born in 1977, interview recorded on the 31st of May 2018, at Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, before Guzsalyas táncház. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

⁴⁸ Hungarian: „...de rá nem lehet szólni, hogy hát ő is szabadon jön el mulatni.”

⁴⁹ Hungarian woman, born in 1977, interview recorded on the 31st of May 2018, at Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, before Guzsalyas táncház. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

⁵⁰ Hungarian: „...lehet meg hogy a moldvainak megvan az a rétege amit könnyen el lehet táncolni... moldvai ad erre lehetőséget hogy hogy amatőr is simán be tud állni csak emiatt jön ez is, hogy kicsit ilyen meredek hogy miket teszünk bele.”

How can the Csángó dance style be acquired?

When I asked one of my informants what should a dancer, who knows the steps to Csángó dances, do in order to dance them like Csángós, in order to understand how the Csángós dance the dances, she⁵¹ replied: “I would tell them to travel to Moldova, and live there for some time... In my opinion it is important to understand the culture in order to be able to dance the Csángó way, one needs to think like them. Even if they do not think like them, it is important to understand how they think. And this encompasses everything, even the over-discussed identity topic, because we do not even understand that fully yet either. They should go to Moldova, and they should empathically listen to people, without preconceptions, because we have a lot of preconceptions to destroy, so they should create a whole new image of Csángós from Moldova, solely based on the experiences lived there. They should be very patient, and try to understand and to feel how Csángós from Moldova think, because it is different from how we think. If we can say so, the way people think in Hungary is nowhere close to the way Moldavian Csángós think. So, I would say this is what makes it different, and those who understand it will behave differently during the dances as well, they will not produce movements that are too much.”⁵²

Another of my interlocutors⁵³ has touched on this topic during our interview. She stated: “Moldavian [Csángó] dances, give an opportunity to amateur dancers to be dancing, but this means that it becomes tricky what we add to the dances... because they (dancers) have their own style, and it is hard, because that’s how they know how to dance the dances... but in my opinion, a Csángó person, who feels these dances are their own, feels what is allowed, what they can add to the dances, and do it in a freed way. If those who learn the dances in Hungary add something to them, it will look foreign. Sometimes I watch people dance, and I think -something is about to happen, this is interesting, but

⁵¹ Hungarian female, born in 1989, interview recorded on the 30th of July 2018, in Szent- Györgyi Albert Agóra, Szeged, Hungary. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

⁵² Hungarian: „...hát én megmondanám neki azt hogy ki kell menni Moldvába és akkor ott élni egy kicsit... merthogy szerintem az lenne a lényege hogy megértse magát a moldvai Csángó kultúrát tehát ahhoz hogy moldvai Csángóul tudjon táncolni, ahhoz úgy is kell gondolkodnia. Ha nem is úgy gondolkodik, csak meg kellene értenie. És ehhez tényleg minden hozzátartozik, már amiről a csontot is lerágtuk, az identitás, mert azt sem tudjuk megérteni teljesen. Menjen ki Moldvában, nagyon empatikusan hallgasson meg mindenkit, ne legyenek ilyen prekoncepciói, mert ezeket itthon még le kell rombolni, tehát építsen fel egy teljesen új Moldvai Csángó kultúrát, amit ott kint tapasztal. És legyen nagyon türelmes és aztán próbálja megérteni meg megérezni, hogy hogyan gondolkodnak a moldvai csángó emberek, mert azért teljesen másképp, mint mi. Ha lehet így mondani, egy ilyen kis magyarországi gondolkodás köszönő viszonyban sincs nagyon a moldvai csángóval. Úgy, hogy én ezt mondanám, ettől lesz más, és akkor másképp fog viselkedni tánc közben is, nem lesznek benne ilyen irtó nagy túlmozgások.”

⁵³ Hungarian woman, born in 1977, interview recorded on the 31st of May 2018, at Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, before Guzsalyas táncház. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

this is not Moldavian dancing anymore... of course, all the steps are there, but somehow the dance is not Moldavian.”⁵⁴

Who is a good/best Csángó dancer?

When it comes to whether there is a good/ best dancer, and who is a good/ best dancer in a Moldavian Csángó context, the opinions of the interlocutors from Hungary, and those from Moldova differ. One of the people⁵⁵ from Hungary stated the following: “The community knew in Moldova who the best dancers are, Anti László, and the Bezsán family... Anti László was considered to be the best by everyone, so they knew among themselves who the best dancers are, on the one hand. On the other hand, these people grew up, and were part of the traditional dance life, they were there in working bees, they were there in horbas, and they were the ones leading the [dances]...they were the first ones to stand up to dance, as the best dancers were the ones who were allowed to start the dances.”⁵⁶ In an informal conversation with the same person, we started talking about in a community, who are the people that should be considered the ones that novices should learn dances from. When I mentioned some heritage keepers, and that I think they are valued dancers in the community, my interlocutor added that they are not the best dancers, so they are not enough on their own to validate how dances should be danced. My point with this anecdote, is to show that not only the question of who is the best dancer is important, but also the fact that in a hierarchy where a best dancer exists, those who come lower in the pyramid, and their knowledge is valued as less than, and everything compares to the top of the pyramid. The best dancer becomes a point of comparison, and a goal to strive for, and it almost annihilates anything below them.

When I asked the same question to people from the Csángó community, one of them⁵⁷ said:

⁵⁴ Hungarian: “Moldvai ad erre lehetőséget hogy hogy amatőr is simán be tud állni csak emiatt jön ez is, hogy kicsit ilyen meredek, hogy miket teszünk bele vagy... de ez pedig az ő stílusa tehát az is nehéz hogy hogy ő ezt tudja, meg így tudja... Szerintem egy Csángó akinek ez saját tánca az jobban érzi hogy mi az amit még beletehet meg szabadabban teszi... (Aki) Magyarországon megtanulta az ha beletesz olyat ami a sajátja, akkor az nagyon idegen lesz... Néha nézem hogy új valami elszabadul, akkor hát olyan érdekes lesz mert az már nem a moldvai... persze minden lépés megvan de valahogy nem lesz moldvai.”

⁵⁵ Hungarian woman, interview recorded on the on the 12th of August 2018, in the Csángó ház, Jászberény, Hungary, during the Csángó fesztivál. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

⁵⁶ Hungarian: „Moldvában a legjobb táncosok azok voltak akik egyrészt ott is tudta a közösség hogy kik ezek, a László Antiék meg a Bezsánék... László Antit mindenki a legjobb táncosnak tartotta, tehát ők tudták egymásról, hogy kik a legjobb táncosok, egyrészt. Másrészt bele születtek a még, a még a hagyományos tánc életbe, tehát az az aki nemcsak gyerekként hanem már felnőtt korban beleszületett abban hogy ott volt a guzsalyásban, ott voltak a horbákba, és azért általában ők vezették a... először ők álltak fel táncolni egyébként mindig a legjobb táncosok állhatok fel legelőször táncolni.”

⁵⁷ Csángó woman, born in 1953, interview recorded on the 16th of August 2018, Cleja, Bacau, Romania, in the house of the informant. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

A: During horba? It is possible that they said to each other (during the dance event), that ‘look, that person does not know the dance’

Isabela: But did they ever say who the best dancer was? Did everyone know who the best dancer was?

A: No. There was no such thing as the best dancer. There were people who would stop dancing because they did not know how to dance a dance, or, if we started Ruszászka (the name of one of the couple dances), we danced really fast, because we were young, and our feet did not touch the ground, that’s how fast we were, and those who did not know the dance, and were stumbling, would be pushed to the side, (laughs) we were children, and did not know better... ‘Get out of my way, why do you keep me back, if you cannot go fast, get out of here’, and you would push them out, and they would have to stay on the side...

Isabela: Who would start the dances?

A: Everyone started getting into a circle at the same time, maybe a few people went just a bit earlier, but then everyone would get going towards the circle, because they would all be on the side, and then they would all start dancing.⁵⁸

I had the following conversation with another Csángó person⁵⁹:

Isabela: Do you know whether people used to acknowledge who the best dancer was in a village?

B: No, everyone was the same.

Isabela: Nobody ever said that if this person dances like this, this is how people should dance?

B: No one was praised more than others. Where people dance one by one, where they hit their feet, there people say ‘look this one dances better than the other one’, but here everyone was the same, nobody dances alone.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Csángó dialect: A: E horbába? Így lehet mondták egyik e másnak, hogy „Ne, nem tudja táncot”

Isabela: De olyan volt, hogy ne ez a legjobb, s mindenki tudja, hogy ez a legjobb?

A: Nem. Nem voltak. Voltak olyanok hogy melyikek félre álltak ki e táncból mert nem tudták e táncot, vaj ha elindultunk e Ruszászkába, e Ruszászkába mentünk, mert hát fiatal voltál, lábaid nem érték e földet, úgy mentél s az melyik nem tudta s botorkázott, azt ütted el, (nevet) gyermek eszed volt. Lükted ki „Menj el előlem, mit akasztasz, ha nem tudsz menni, menj ki innen.” S ütted ki onnat, s kellett álljon félre...

Isabela: S kik indították e táncokat?

A: Mindenki indult bé, volt hogy hamarabb indult egy néhány, de aztán indult ki bé mindenki, mert szélekre ki voltak gyűlve szélekre, s akkor indult bé mindenki a táncba.

⁵⁹ Csángó woman, born in 1934, interview recorded on the 16th of August 2018, Cleja, Bacau, Romania, in the house of the informant. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

⁶⁰ Csángó dialect: ela: Volt olyan, hogy elismerték, hogy ez a legjobb táncos e faluba?

B: Nem, egymódú volt ez egész...

Isabela: Nem volt olyan, hogy ha az úgy járja, akkor azt úgy kell járni

B: Nem volt egy es dicsértebb, mint a másik...Hol táncolnak egyenként, hogy verik a lábukat, egymás, ott mondják, hogy „NE, ez jobban táncol, másik rosszabbul”, de így, ezek mind egyformán, itt egyenként nem táncol senki

It is clear from the conversations above, that the opinions about whether there is such a thing as a single best dancer in the context of Csángó dances, where dances have a strong emphasis on community are shared. The fact that both Csángó interlocutors deny the existence of a best dancer in their community, makes me believe that indeed, nobody was considered the best, but people could either dance, or were not able to dance certain dances, but in either situation, dancers were not getting any labels, were not put under the spotlight. My speculation about the different approaches on the topic, is that the concept of “the best dancer” is a cultural one. In Hungary, where many dances have a strong individualistic features to them, the idea of a single best dancer is prominent because it was, and still is a position that provided prestige, and people were striving towards achieving it. In the Csángó community, where the individual does not get special attention on their own, people would not single out dancers, not even for praising; participants in the dances were considered equals, and were accepted as long as they would not obstruct other dancers.

Nationality of Csángó dances:

I would like to talk about this aspect of Csángó dances, because it is a controversial topic in the Hungarian-Romanian context and among the Csángó culture researchers, it was inevitable, that the dances of the community would be looked at from this perspective as well. In a description of Csángó dances in an anthology of Hungarian folk dance traditions, the following statement can be found: “Their dances and instrumental music is under the influence of Moldavian Romanians”⁶¹ (Andrásfalvy et al, 1980: 42). When I asked one of my Csángó informants⁶² whether during dance events musicians would only play music for dances that the people dancing knew, she replied: “They did not play Romanian ones, they did not play Romanian dance music.”⁶³ During another interview, one of my Hungarian informants⁶⁴ claimed, that:

“In Moldova the assimilation politics did not stop on the level of the language, that Csángós should speak Romanian, the folklore is also ‘Romanianised’, and this is not only my opinion... a researcher that deals with Moldavian and Transylvanian dance-music shares my opinion, and other researchers believe the same... these dances are the Moldavian version of bourgeois Western-European dances. And then the Central-European dance materials, that we basically consider Hungarian, based on the music,

⁶¹ Hungarian: „Táncaik és hangszeres zenéjük a moldvai románság hatása alá került.”

⁶² Csángó woman, born in 1934, interview recorded on the 16th of August 2018, Cleja, Bacau, Romania, in the house of the informant. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

⁶³ Csángó dialect: „Oláosakat nem futtak... nem futtak oláos táncokat.”

⁶⁴ Hungarian woman, interview recorded on the on the 12th of August 2018, in the Csángó ház, Jászberény, Hungary, during the Csángó fesztivál. Interview by Isabela Botezatu.

and the kinship relations, and then there is a Balkanic (influence), but it is Balkanic, and not specifically Romanian.”⁶⁵

Based on the answers above, it can be said that neither Csángó people nor Hungarian people believe that Csángó dances are Romanian, but based on the description of the second informant, the dances are not specifically or exclusively Hungarian either.

Taking into consideration the information provided above, from what people think about the origins of the Csángó dances, we can agree that Csángó dances are considered to have strong Balkanic roots. In a comparison between dances from the Carpathian Basin, and the Balkans, György Martin, highlights the characteristics of Balkanic dances, which are also the features of Csángó dances in contrast to the features of the dances in the Carpathian Basin, which are considered mostly Hungarian:

The difference between the two dance cultures may be measured among other things by the extent to which they permit of individual improvisation. Almost unlimited possibilities for individual dance performances are given in the Carpathian basin by the solo and couple dances completely lacking structural regulations. Among the Balkan peoples, however, individual improvisation can come into being only within certain limits in the predominant dance forms, i.e. in the collective chain dances, as allowed by the chain form. The dancer is regulated by the contact, the close relation to the others, the joint movement in the space, the direction of progress, and the prescribed pattern in space. Only a restricted individual improvisation is made possible by the chain form; otherwise the form is dissolved, as is shown by examples from Rumanian, Bulgarian and Croatian folklore. The closed collective chain dance is sometimes dissolved in spontaneous dance manifestations, since individuals and couples separate from it one after another, and the closed community, previously dancing almost impersonally, becomes a group dancing solo or couple dances independently of one another. This phenomenon can often be observed in the Bulgarian *ruchenitsa*, in the Romanian *hora* and *sirba*, and in the *drmes* and *krizanje* of the Croats along the Drave (Martin, 1968).

At this point, I would not like to draw a conclusion about what is, in the end, the nationality of Csángó dances, but I would like to raise some questions, that could be subject to further research: What makes Csángó dances Hungarian or Romanian? The fact that they are danced in Romania makes them Romanian? The fact that Csángós are Hungarians makes the dances Hungarian? The fact that the music has Hungarian influences makes them Hungarian? Given the fact that their features are Balkanic makes them Balkanic only, without being able to

⁶⁵ Hungarian: „tapasztaltunk moldvában hogy hogy az asszimilációs politika nem állt meg a nyelv használatnál hogy románul beszéljenek a csángók hanem a folklórt is romanizálják és ez nemcsak az én megállapításom hanem X kutatónak is ez a véleménye aki az erdélyi és a moldvai tánczene kultúrával foglalkozik és számos más kutatónak is ez a véleménye... Ezek mind nyugat-európai polgári táncoknak a moldvai változatai. Akkor a Középeurópai tánc anyag amit mi azért alapvetően magyarnak tartunk zenei alapok alapján meg a rokonság alapján és van egy balkáni de ez balkáni tehát nem kifejezetten román.”

be more specific than that? Can these dances be considered either only Romanian or only Hungarian? Are they Hungarian or Romanian at all?

CHAPTER 6: Dance analysis

After organising my material, I also started the analysis of it. I was curious to see if there are any differences between how a Csángó dance group and how a Hungarian dance group would dance the same Csángó dance. I selected two videos that I recorded during my fieldwork, both of the same dance, Magyaruska, one in which Hungarians perform it, and one in which Csángós perform it. In order to learn about the similarities and differences in the way the two groups dance Magyaruska, I decided to Labanotate the version danced by the most energetic dancer in both videos, next to a neutral, basic version, to which I can compare the two dancers. I was inspired to add a “neutral” version by Judy van Zyle, a dance ethnologist and notator, who has applied a similar practice during her research: “when writing the scores... for my monograph... I was concerned with documenting a generic version of each of the dances. I was not concerned with differentiating movement variations..., but rather with the movement ingredients necessary to constitute a particular dance” (Van Zile, 1999: 86).

All the notations are under appendix B. First of all, I Labanotated the two versions of the basic steps, the ones that would be taught to beginners, and in my notations I called these “Basic A” and “Basic B”. My next notation is “Csángó”, and is the notation of the most energetic dancer from the Csángó group. My third notation, “Hungarian”, is the notation of the steps of most energetic Hungarian dancer.

Although I notated the positions of the dancers in the circle, (Csángó Circle and Hungarian Circle), and how they are connected to the other dancers, my notation only focuses on the positions and gestures of the feet, and it does not show how other parts of the body behave.

Magyaruska, is a circle dance that has two main parts: the first part consists of the same motif, that can end in either a light stamp or a leg gesture, repeated symmetrically eight times. The second part includes spinning of the circle to the right and then to the left, at the end of which a stamp or a leg gesture can be, but it is not compulsory, included.

According to László Felföldi, a Hungarian ethnochoreologist, “the quantity of variants may... decide the character of a dance” (Felföldi, 2007: 161). When I was analysing the videos, I realised that the dance looked very different in the two videos. The first difference that I noticed is that the Csángó dancer has the stress of the movements down while the Hungarian stresses the movements upwards. Another difference is that the Csángó dancer starts the dance

to the left, while the Hungarian dancer starts the dance to the right. The stress and starting direction, was, obviously, the same for all the dancers in the respective circles, not only for the ones I am analysing, everything else, the elements that I am analysing from now on, are only reflecting the dancing movements of the specific dancers. While the Csángó dancer is constant in their steps, performing the same motif every time, the Hungarian dancer performs new dance gestures instead of the basic motifs. The Csángó dancer does not stamp, or lift their legs too much, while the Hungarian dancer both stamps, and raises his legs multiple times. The differences displayed by the notation do not only show how different the approaches towards the dance are, but they also project the cultural differences of the dancers. Csángó dances are characterised by upbeat modesty, while Hungarian dances are proud and often involve loud stamps. While in Hungarian dances improvisation plays an important role, in Csángó dances, improvisation and variation is rather uncommon. Torp argues in the conclusion of one of her articles that “the present study clearly indicates that the number of step patterns which form the structural basis of the body of European chain and round dances in general, is indeed very limited” (Torp, 2007).

The notation of these dances showed me once again the difference between how the two groups relate to the dances, and how knowing the steps and staying in the rhythm, is not enough to perform a Csángó style in its own way.

Apart from Labanotating, I tried to compare both dance instances in terms of the characteristics that were listed regarding what can be considered to be the Csángó style, and see how the two performances compare.

Even though when I did the Labanotation I only focused on the feet of the dancers, from now on I will also be paying attention to the rest of the body. The first aspect that I noticed was that while all the dancers from the dance group have a uniform hand hold, all of them connecting their hands at the back of their neighbours, in the video where the Hungarian group is dancing, the men have the traditional hand hold at the lower back of the people on their sides, just like the participants in the Csángó group, but the women are resting their arms on the shoulders of the men which are next to them, and not at their backs. This is interesting not only because the holds are not the same for everyone, which is uncommon, as participants in a dance usually have the same hold, but also because it seems that in this way, the dancers that do not have hands connecting behind their backs have more space to use, which allows them to perform more variations, and they both used this space to push their hips back multiple times while

improvising different variations in the first half of the dance. This brings me to the next interesting point, which is that even though the Hungarian group is creating more variations, than the Csángó group, where everyone is dancing their own, but all the same variation of throughout the dance, the ones who are constantly varying the basic steps in the Hungarian group are the men, as the women also perform the same variation over and over again. Both men are very familiar and proficient dancers of Hungarian solo dances, and improvising or varying the basic steps comes easily, naturally to them.

Moving on to the first characteristic of how Csángó dances should be performed, while the Csángó group dances in an elderly manner, without abrupt movements, at a moderate, constant pace that they maintain throughout the entire duration of the dance, the Hungarian group has very abrupt stops between different bits of the dance, and because of this, when they start again, they do so suddenly. The next point was that Csángó dances are supposed to be flat, or close to the ground/floor. In the Csángó group all of the dancers, except for the one who's steps I notated above, which is the most energetic, keep their feet at a few centimetres from the ground in both parts of the dance. Even the woman who is the most animated only breaks this rule during the last part of the first motif, when she gestures a leg lift. On the other hand, the Hungarian dancers raise their feet sometimes until their feet is in a 90 degrees angle to the back, in the first part, and every step they make while they spin in the second part of the dance is a small spring.

Another feature of the Csángó dances was that there is very little stamping, most of the movement is done by steps. This aspect of the dance can be found at all of the dancers from the Csángó dance group, who step throughout the dance, but the same cannot be said about the Hungarian group, where none of the dancers is just stepping, rather they are stamping throughout the first part of the dance, and springing in the second part. Another listed component of the Csángó dance style was modesty. The Hungarian dancers are very animated and energetic in the way they dance, and are also louder in their movements compared to the Csángó dancers, who are very moderate and fairly quiet.

Based on the main listed features of how Csángó dances should be performed so that they are in their own style, it seems like the Csángó dancers have performed more in style than their Hungarian counterparts. In order to be able to see a fuller picture of how present the Csángó dance style is during Csángó dance events in Hungary, I decided to re-watch all the videos that I recorded of people dancing during the events that I have attended as part of my

fieldwork. After doing so, I realised that on all events there are participants that dance within the style, and there are dancers who do not. The conclusion I have come to after doing so, is that in order to be able to tell which events attract more dancers that dance in or out of the Csángó style, deeper, further research should be conducted on these events, as from the videos I am not able to tell whether people dance the way they do because it is how they always perform Csángó dances, or they do so because they are influenced by the dancers around them. Based on the videos that I recorded, there are some people who dance within the style at particular dances, and then do not at other dances, which makes me wonder whether the dancers are aware of the fact that they do not constantly dance in the same style.

CONCLUSION:

Csángó dances are rising in popularity in Hungary, so understanding the Csángó culture, and their dances should be important for both communities. Defining the dance style of Csángó dances from Moldova, Romania, is important because the way Csángós dance their own dances reflects their basic moral values, and it can help people from outside the Csángó community understand their culture better.

Both Csángó and Hungarian participants in Csángó dance house events claimed that Csángó dances are not treated as seriously as dances of other Hungarian dance regions. They also agree that despite the fact that Csángó dances are considered very easy to learn and to perform, to the extent that sometimes they are considered dances for children, or suitable for amateurs, they are only so to a certain extent, and in reality there are very few people from outside the Csángó community who can execute the Csángó dances in their own style properly.

In order to be able to create a definition of what the Csángó dance style might be, I gathered all the features of the Csángó dance style, and the circumstances that can influence it, that the participants, both Csángó and Hungarian, in my fieldwork have mentioned, into one block. According to them, Csángó dances should be danced in an old fashion, close to the ground, in an elderly, modest way, without abrupt movements. Improvisation is considered almost non-existent, but variations are common. I also presented how, in the opinion of the same people, Csángó dances should be taught, how is the dance style influenced by the instruments used to produce music for the dance events, how the way Csángó dancers are performed by some dancers is influenced by the dancing event they are participating in, and by the reason behind why dancers are engaging in the dancing; who is a good dancer is another topic that has been tackled, and what the nationality of Csángó dances are, based both on what has been mentioned in the academia before, on the topic, and on what the subjects of my interviews have stated.

Further research would be able to determine why some of the dancers are dancing the dances within the Csángó style, whether they are aware there is a Csángó style, and that they are dancing as such; how did they acquire it, if they are aware of it or not; whether those who do not dance within the style are aware of the fact that these dances could be danced differently, or that they are not dancing according to the Csángó dance style.

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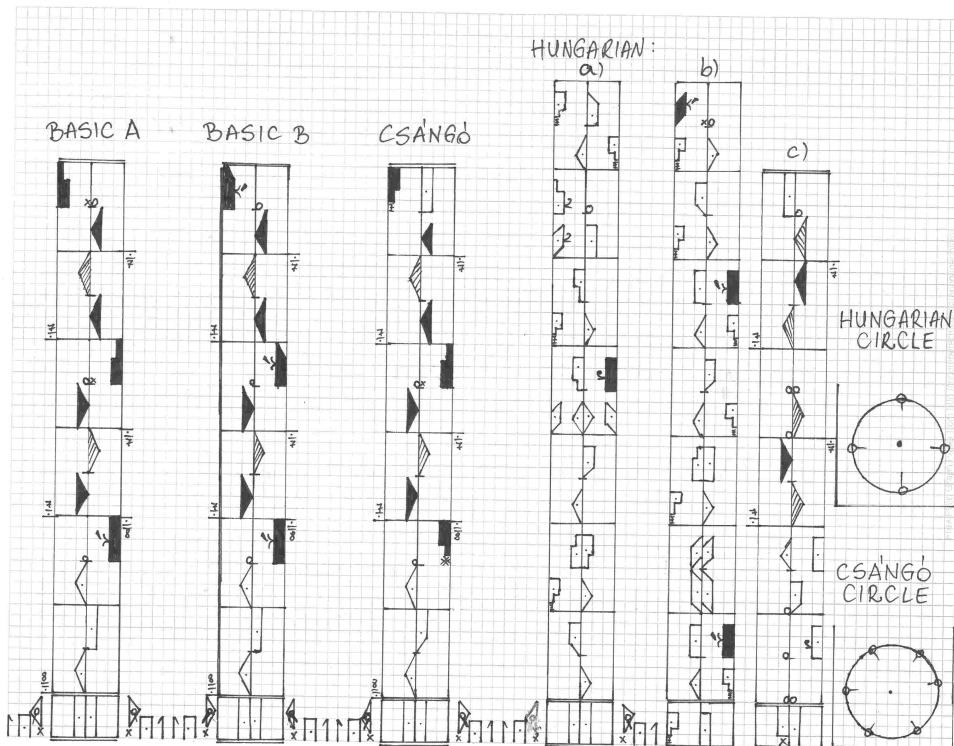
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Appendices:

Appendix A:

Event	Folder	File Name	Format	Date	Phase	Dance	Description	Language	Participants	The role of the participants	People mentioned	The role of the people mentioned	Topics	Keywords	Other notes
1	National Tánc Fehetők	Fehetők1	Fehetők	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the note English and Hungarian						Arrival to event		
2	National Tánc Fehetők	Fehetők2	Fehetők	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the note English and Hungarian				Tündik Tamás	Dancer, Choreographer, Ethnologist	Moldovian Csángó c cultural respect		
3	National Tánc Fehetők	Fehetők3	Fehetők	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the note English and Hungarian				Kádir Elemér	Dancer, Choreographer, Ethnologist	Notes on the concert representation		
4	National Tánc Fehetők	Fehetők4	Fehetők	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the note English and Hungarian						Leaving the event. Final notes on how other dances were taught on the event		
5	National Tánc Fehetők	Fehetők5	Fehetők	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the note English and Hungarian						How Moldovian Csángó dances were received by other participants on the event		
6	National Tánc Fehetők	Fehetők5	Fehetők	15.04.	Budapest		Transcription of 1 English and Hungarian				Tündik Tamás / Kádir Elemér	Dancer, Choreographer, Ethnologist			
7	National Tánc Fehetők	Táncok Társaság	Word Doc	07.12.	Clermont Ferrand										
8	National Tánc Fehetők	Entrance Ticket	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the entrance								
9	National Tánc Fehetők	Dancers Csángó	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		People dancing during the Moldovian Csángó dancing part on the event								
10	National Tánc Fehetők	Dancers Csángó	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		People dancing during the Moldovian Csángó dancing part on the event								
11	National Tánc Fehetők	Dancers Csángó	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		People dancing during the Moldovian Csángó dancing part on the event								
12	National Tánc Fehetők	Dancers Csángó	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		People dancing during the Moldovian Csángó dancing part on the event								
13	National Tánc Fehetők	the location	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the venue where the event took place								
14	National Tánc Fehetők	youth dancers	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of young people dancing in front of the main stage during the event								
15	National Tánc Fehetők	booklet front	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the front								
16	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page2	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
17	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page3	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
18	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page4	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
19	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page5	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
20	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page6	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
21	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page7	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
22	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page8	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
23	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page9	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
24	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page10	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
25	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch page11	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the book								
26	National Tánc Fehetők	Sch booklet back	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Photo of the back								
27	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8980.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
28	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8980.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
29	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8980.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
30	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8980.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
31	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8984.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
32	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8986.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
33	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8987.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
34	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8988.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
35	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8989.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
36	National Tánc Fehetők	Ok DMG 8990.J	Photo	15.04.	Budapest		Flyers with prem								
37	National Tánc Fehetők	botosárka	Video	15.04.	Budapest		Botosárka Video of people (Hungarian								
38	National Tánc Fehetők	drumal drac	Video	15.04.	Budapest		Drumal Drac Video of people (Hungarian								
39	National Tánc Fehetők	netu	Video	15.04.	Budapest		Netu Video of people (Hungarian								
40	National Tánc Fehetők	szarha student	Video	15.04.	Budapest		Szarha Student Video of people (Hungarian								
41	National Tánc Fehetők	Zsibolcsai	Video	15.04.	Budapest		Zsibolcsai Video of people (Hungarian								
42	National Tánc Fehetők	Tinók	Video	15.04.	Budapest		Tinók Video of Tinók Hungarian								
43	National Tánc Fehetők	Tinók	Video	15.04.	Budapest		Tinók Video of Tinók Hungarian								

Appendix B:



Videos:

Video 1:

Csángó dancers rehearsing Magyaruska in Jászberény, during the Csángó fesztivál

Duration: 00:58 seconds

Date of recording: 10th August 2018

Recorded by: Isabela Botezatu

Video 2:

Hungarian Dancers performing Magyaruska in Jászberény, during the Csángó est

Duration: 00:50 seconds

Date of recording: 11th May 2018

Recorded by: Isabela Botezatu

Interviews:

As agreed with the people that I collaborated with during my fieldwork, I will keep their names anonymous in my works, and I will not publicise our conversations. In the case that someone would like to listen to the interviews, they can get hold of them at Isabela Botezatu.

Interview 01:

Topics: Dancing style, attitude towards Csángó dances in Hungary

Recorded: 15th of April 2018, Országos Táncház- Találkozó és Vásár, Budapest, Hungary, Papp László Budapest Sportaréna

Duration: 05:53 minutes

Year of birth of informant: 1955

Gender of informant: male

Interviewer: Isabela Botezatu

Interview 02:

Topics: Csángó dancing events, dancing style, Csángó dances in Hungary, participants in Csángó dance house events

Recorded: 31st of May 2018, Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, Guzsalyas tánc ház

Duration: 25:45 minutes

Year of birth of informant: 1977

Gender of informant: female

Interviewer: Isabela Botezatu

Interview 03:

Topics: Csángó dancing events, dancing style, music on dance events

Recorded: 31st of May 2018, Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, Guzsalyas tánc ház

Duration: 09:24 minutes

Year of birth of informant: 1992

Gender of informant: male

Interviewer: Isabela Botezatu

Interview 04:

Topics: Csángó dancing events, dancing style, encountering Csángó dances

Recorded: 31st of May 2018, Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, Guzsalyas tánc ház

Duration: 29:02 minutes

Year of birth of informant: 1978

Gender of informant: male

Interviewer: Isabela Botezatu

Interview 05:

Topics: Csángó dancing events, dancing style, encountering and learning Csángó dances in Hungary

Recorded: 31st of May 2018, Marcibányi Téri Művelődés Központ, Budapest, Hungary, Guzsalyas tánc ház

Duration: 12:37 minutes

Year of birth of informant: 1994

Gender of informant: female

Interviewer: Isabela Botezatu

Interview 06:

Topics: Csángó dancing events, dancing style, attitude towards Csángó dances in Romania and Hungary, researching Csángó dances

Recorded: 30th of July 2018, Ágora, Szeged, Hungary

Duration: 43:59 minutes

Year of birth of informant: 1989

Gender of informant: female

Interviewer: Isabela Botezatu

Interview 07:

Topics: Csángó dancing events, dancing style, best dancer, creation of Csángó fesztivál and Csángó house

Recorded: 12th of August 2018, Csángó ház, Jászberény, Hungary, Csángó fesztivál

Duration: 44:25 minutes

Year of birth of informant:

Gender of informant: female

Interviewer: Isabela Botezatu

Interview 08:

Topics: Csángó dancing events, dancing style, learning Csángó dances as a child, best dancer

Recorded: 16th of August 2018, Cleja, Bacau, Romania, in the house of the informant

Duration: 01:08:02 hours

Year of birth of informant: 1934

Gender of informant: female

Interviewer: Isabela Botezatu

Interview 09:

Topics: Csángó dancing events, dancing style, best dancer

Recorded: 16th of August 2018, Cleja, Bacau, Romania, in the house of the informant

Duration: 36:11 minutes

Year of birth of informant: 1953

Gender of informant: female

Interviewer: Isabela Botezatu