UDK 398.8(497.4)
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NATIONALIZING THE FOLKSONG TRADITION OF GORIŠKA BRDA

The article examines processes of nationalizing folk culture, with special emphasis on the folksong tradition of Goriška brda. Nationalizing processes and »cultivation of culture« are more clearly discernible in border areas and are primarily based on distinctions made on the grounds of the language and forms of intangible folk culture.

Key words: folklore, national identity movements, borderlands

1 Introduction

Folklore (in the sense of intangible folk culture and its representational forms) is often perceived as a mirror of the past, and folklorists as guardians of collective memory. (Silverman 1989). Their interpretations of the past are reflected in the complexion of the folksong canon, which, like national literature, is understood as a vessel of collective memory and a means of representing (and even a factor in the process of constructing) national identity. However, the concept of canon itself leads to consideration of the instruments of representation, agents, interests, and strategies (Juvan 2011) leading to selection of a certain corpus of texts that is presented as (nationally) significant. These processes of canon formation as well as the construct of the folksong phenomenom itself have their roots in the cosmos of national identity movements and cultural nationalism, which spread throughout Europe and significantly influenced events in Slovenia, too. National identity movements to a large extent relied on local forms of culture. According to Miroslav Hroch (1968; 2000), the interest in cultural questions was not only a result of political activism but usually intensified in advance of it. Preoccupation with cultural questions, significant for phase A in Hroch's definition of national identity movements, made it possible for an ethnic group to begin to understand itself as a political subject. According to Hroch, this stage was followed by the social demands of phase B and the mass resonance of phase C, which assumed widespread cultural consciousness (Leerssen 2005: 9). Or, as D. Smith summarized Hroch's model (1998: 56): First, an original small circle of intellectuals rediscovers the national culture and past and formulates the idea of the nation (phase A). There follows the crucial process of dissemination of the idea of the national by agitator-professionals who politicize cultural nationalism in the growing towns (phase B). Finally the state of popular involvement in nationalism creates a mass movement (phase C). (Leerssen 2005: 10) Cultural consciousness had to do with the language question as well as traditions on the basis of which political demands for ethnic groups' autonomous rights were founded. In ethnically mixed or border areas, this led to competing and opposing territorial demands (Leerssen 2005: 16–17), which is evident in the case of how the image of the Goriška brda folksong was formed.

2 Elements of Folk Culture in the Processes of Nation Building

The formation of the phenomenon of the Slovene folksong and the presentation of a folksong heritage was integral to the processes of nation building, the goal of which was to create a single entity out of diverse local and regional cultures and languages (Anttonen 2005: 85). This array of not fully formed and competing identity models attained not only symbolic function but was filtered, treated selectively, and reconfigured, at times to the point of mutations and inventions (Leerssen 2005: 15). »In order for the concept of the nation to operate as a symbol of integration (rural, local, and regional) and identification, it had to overcome particularistic thinking and attach itself to emotionally determined cultural conceptions and particularities of pre-industrial, rural life« (Baumann 2000: 122–125 in Juvančič 2005: 211). According to Pertti Anttonen, this fixation caused modernity, which is customarily thought to destroy tradition, in an epistemological sense to have created it. (Anttonen 2005: 13).

Thus the formation of the concepts of tradition and folklore were closely tied to the idea and experience of modernity. The concepts are rooted »in the modern interest in objectifying the past and the non-modern [...] define, and in documenting and conserving selected types of communication discovered in that cultural otherness« (Anttonnen 2005: 13). At the same time, when exactly that past ended was not clearly defined (Silverman 1989). Folklorists collected traditional cultural expressions among the »folk« and brought them to the society's symbolic center, into the capitals' historical and ethnographic institutions, which had prominent places in representing national histories and cultures (Anttonen 2005: 88). Susan Steward (1991: 105) called this the artifactualization of cultural expression, which uproots the text from its original context, favoring certain genres and content (Bendix 1997: 48). »Textualized expressive culture such as songs and tales can, with the aid of the rhetoric of authenticity, be transferred from an experience of individual transcendence to a symbol of the inevitability of national unity« (Bendix 1997: 20); however, »if folklore speaks for the nation, it speaks for a particular political construct« (Anttonen 2005: 91). Folklore does not exist *per se*, but the researcher creates it when defining certain cultural expressions as traditional or folkloric (ibid.: 57). In Slovenia, the basic determinant was the differentiating factor, on the basis of which positive definitions of given pieces were established. In this way some songs were designated as folksongs on the basis of selected criteria (e.g., anonymous author, commonness, oral transmittal, variations) and especially in contrast to others (e.g., authored, in other languages, new). Yet precisely this led to standardization and exclusion of numerous features that were for various reasons not accepted as folk, even though they had a significant place in the life and singing customs of a people. Thus with the transformation of practices into heritage and applying metonymy to tradition in the course of representing songs, the growing field of folklore shaped a »national canon« authored by the »folk« and spoken in the voice of the »nation« (Anttonen 2005: 88). This premise of Herderian nationalism, which had a significant influence on the formation of folklore, views the people as embodied and voiced in traditional culture, especially in folk poetry (Anttonen 2005: 88). So it was that folksong, and more generally music

passed from representations of an immanent core of a people to representations of the people themselves (Bohlman 2004: 86).

Dunja Rihtman Auguštin (2001) noted that the canonization of folk culture for the purposes of national homogenization impoverished folk culture by depriving it of its social context. Since »the items and events of folklore are recurrent forms of local, dynamic human expression—artifacts and performances created one at a time under particular circumstances« (Toelken 1996: 33–34), no text can be understood without understanding the dynamic context in which it appears (ibid.: 56). Therefore, folklore often evokes the past, and factors of historical context are erased, engendering a sense that the past was not in flux (Silverman 1989: 152).

According to Johann Gottfried Herder, folksong has the potential to represent all human culture, as well as culture in its specific, delimited forms. Thus, in his opinion, there is nothing more common yet specific than folksong (Bohlman 2004: 43). Yet Slovene folklore studies did not limit itself to Slovene songs as unique entities, but sought their significant features, which »would be evidence of the authenticity of the songs' heritage« (Kumer 1975: 97). At the same time, identifying particular cultural expressions as authentic, attested, and legitimate implies that others are inauthentic, false, or illegitimate. Thus folklore »made homogeneous nostalgia« (Kapchan 1993: 307) and rejected illegitimate (or bastard) traditions, thereby constantly holding to the false idea that the norm was cultural purity and not hybridism (Bendix 1997: 9).

The fixation in certain circles on cultural questions was also tied to the so-called cultivation of culture, as Joep Leerseen (2005) termed it, and forming national culture. Only here was there a way to salvage disappearing models, to promote fresh productivity, and propagandistic proclamation (Leerssen 2005: 25). Therefore, Slovene philologists and other precursors of folklorists attempted to record and preserve songs that the aging among the folk sang and other cultural expressions, which are essential to a way of life threatened by modernization (ironically, the same scholars who enable and advance modernization perceive it as threatening). The first concern was to record and describe disappearing cultural components (Leerssen 2005: 26) and to use them to create harmonies and adaptations. There arose a school of »national composing«, which was to be based on a nationally distinct, non-classical musical traditions (folk music and dance). Peasant life inspired the genre of the rural »realist« tale, which was replete with local and folklore color (Leerssen 2005: 27; Hladnik 1990). Thus »salvaged« and preserved elements of »national« culture were used for the propagandistic purpose of forming and making conscious a collective national identity (Leerssen 2005: 27).

3 Goriška brda in the Processes of Nationalization

The homogenization and stereotyping of folk culture were part of the processes of building a national culture. They relied more on exceptional phenomena than on common practices, and the structural and social differences within the ethnic group were not accounted for (Rogelj Škafar 2011). Ethnocentristically colored nationalization (and related folklorization) of the elements of folk creativity was completely

successful only when it was anchored in the local and regional cultural and political structures, which, in Slovenia, were represented by the nation-strengthening movement, which included reading rooms[1] and politically orientated gatherings referred to as »camps« (Sln. *tabori*). (Juvančič 2005: 211) In this, Hroch's C stage of nation building, there was an effort to mobilize broad masses of the population, as we can see in the newspapers published in Goriško in the second half of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

Any research of the processes in a given space is complex and necessarily incomplete, because a space is »socially constructed by the people that live there« and is »politicized, culturally relative, and historically specific« (Rodman 1992: 641 in Low and Lawrence Zúniga 2003: 203). Further, a space has unique meaning for each inhabitant, and therefore views of a space in practice often compete with one another (Low and Lawrence Zúniga 2003: 15). This is to say that an area is not made up only of that which we see, but also of what we have in our minds (Whate 2002: 7); it is a construct of that world (Urbanc 2011: 16). And while administrative or geographical borders are fixed, the borders of interpersonal relations are such that they expand and reduce a given space, thus setting research boundaries (Gri 1989: 21).

One of the fundamental features of Goriška brda is its border location. Border areas are not passive spaces but have their own dynamics. According to Morehouse, they serve as limen or threshold spaces, where a social group can deconstruct, examine, change, and reconstruct politics and events on a wide spectrum (Morehouse and Pavlakovic Kochi 2004: 15–16). The majority autochthonous population on the Slovene side of the border is Slovene, on the Italian side, Friulian. For many centuries, »even before the names of ethnic groups were in use« (Perusini 1965: 1246), the people lived peacefully together in the same political constructs, and therefore day-to-day relations between them were ordinary, despite their differences.[2] The area was one of the most dynamic intersections of diverse traditions, for »on this linguistic border in the course of almost half a millennium not for a moment did the mutual exchange of spiritual goods cease, from the time of settlement to the present: lexical, mythological, folktale, ballad, and narrative content; musical features, refrains, etc.« (Matičetov 1940: 410). Matičetov underscores that inter-traditional exchanges took place where the Slovene and Friulian peasants met, and much less in Trieste and Istrian towns, where transfers were hampered by the barriers of social differences and the town dwellers' sense of superiority (ibid.: 410).[3]

Political relations between residents began to intensify in the nineteenth century, when the concept of ethnicity became the core organizational and mobilizing concept in the society. Public discourse highlighted the necessity of distinguishing between ethnic groups, and ethnicity became the core distinguishing feature. For this reason

[1] Regarding literary activities in societies and reading centers, see Perenič 2012 (in this volume) and in particular Perenič (2010; 2011).

[2] These contacts reintensified following the easing of border crossings and increased Slovene employment in Italy.

[3] It is worth recalling that before Maria Tereza's reforms, which permitted peasant trade, contacts between towns and rural areas were considerably less.

the stereotypical descriptions of those from Goriška brda, founded on the distancing from the closest Other, the Friulians or Italians, are interesting:

> The clothing of those from Goriška brda hardly differs from that of the Italians or Friulians. But the way they live differs. An Italian is tight and pleased if only he has polenta, while one from Goriška brda likes to eat well and drink well and is not too concerned about the past. The Italian is more serious, while a person from Goriška brda is merrier and for this reason loves festivities more than the Italian, and especially dancing. There is hardly a Sunday during the year that there isn't a dance in Goriška brda. (Kociančič 1855: 345)

And although Arnold van Gennep noted that ethnographic borders in Europe seldom correspond to current national borders (Perusini 1973: 79), Ludvik Zorzut attributes the similarity of the way of life of those from Goriška brda and the Furlanians' precisely to the fact that they belong to the same state:

> However, between these or those contrasts, between the differences between peoples and places on the signpost of nations, the inhabitants of the borderlands are united by many similarities of thought, views, expression, customs, food, clothing, agricultural practices, ways of building houses, and more, all under one spiritual horizon. On both sides, we meet proximate viewpoints most often among the older people, for over the centuries Austria put its stamp on people on both sides, though it is slowly sinking into the old aria: »once in the old days …« (Fervidus 1972: 112)

At the time when ethnicity began to function as an organizing principle, the distinction between »Slovene«, and »Friulian« or »Italian« cultures and broader culture was foregrounded. The differences that determine belonging to a certain ethnic group are not vital and »objective«; the socially relevant factors are. It is unimportant how different members of some group are—if they say they are A, in contrast to another cognate category B, they are willing to be treated and let their own behavior be interpreted and judged as A's and not as B's; in other word, they declare their allegiance to the shared culture of A's (Barth 1969: 15). Since under the horizon of emphatic ethnicity the ethnic border defines the group, not the components of the culture themselves (Barth 1969: 15), it is understandable that collectors and researchers of folksongs in Goriška brda focused on collected Slovene, Italian, and Friulian songs that they probably heard did not write down. We find out about the singing of non-Slovene songs only from reports and descriptions—e.g., from a letter of Josip Tominšek, which he sent in 1911 to the Committee for Collecting Slovene Folksongs, part of the project Das Volkslied in Österreich. In it, he describes his efforts to get folksong collectors: »A start has been made, but there is not enough qualified help, and native song collecting is not at all promising, because people sing less than in Carniola and Styria, and on top of that they latch onto non-native songs« (Murko 1929: 42). For the most part, Slovene recorders in this project did not pay attention to »non-native« songs, although special questions were devoted to non-Slovene songs in the publication *Navodila in vprašanja* [Guidelines and questions], which was to have directed the recorders' fieldwork. Thus the selection of a song recording becomes an important element in constructing the image of tradition, because »such an image gradually becomes canonized and in a more or less reliable form migrates into the

media, popular publications, and school textbooks and even becomes a part of official cultural politics and the nation's collective consciousness« (Kovačič 2009: 143).

Newspapers played a special role in the process of nationalization: »During the era of capitalism, the press enabled readers to begin thinking of themselves as adherents to the same group, together with people beyond the borders of local communities and kinship groups they didn't know« (Vogrinc 2003: 182–83). Thus in the Goriško newspapers[4] of the time we find correspondents' reports on singing customs in Goriška brda, which were (apparently)[5] written for the most part by teachers and priests—that is, people of higher status.

> Especially for peoples without a state or without a long and constant tradition of politics or statehood, the linguistic and cultural definitions were an expression of a process that enabled individuals to connect in a pluralistic social whole and shape for themselves new feelings of belonging and new identities. All of this explains the role of students and intellectuals in the process of defining nation at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. They were among the first to espouse belief in the people and they defined its national political ideology in goals. (Rogelj Škafar 2011: 69)

We can recognize their engagement in advancing the organization of cultural life and belief in the people's progress in their contributions to these newspapers. At the same time, we can see the disjuncture between the everyday customs of the Goriška brda people and the standpoint and dispositions of the local opinion makers, as an example from Soča shows: »And I call on the Kožbana Society: Keep up the good work! Continue to work fearlessly and courageously like this. Much has already been cleared out in this place thanks to your efforts, you've smothered the former funny dialect, thrown out the former Friulian singing, and made the people realize whose land they are living on« (*Soča*, 7 September 1906). Thus, objectivized, »factual« history, traditions, customs, and language do not determine »cultural« boundaries; what do are the internalized, actors' agreements, as they go about determining the extent of the imagined group, on collective meaning (Šumi 2000: 178). The newspaper articles approximate Smith's concept, according to which an ethnic group is

> a collective of people that at least some individuals external to it see as a separate cultural and historical grouping. A population thus marked can have a very low awareness of the fact that they constitute a unique group. Nonetheless, according to Smith, there is a collection of attributes of an ethnic group that might be acknowledged only by a minority, and in a given period, individual attributes might be more pronounced than others. These attributes are the group's proper name, a myth of common ancestors, collective historical memories, one or more elements of the collective culture that differ from those in other cultures, a connection with a meaningful "homeland," and a sense of solidarity in segments of the populations. (Smith 1991: 21) (Rogelj Škafar 2011: 15)

[4] In particular *Sloga, Edinost* (1876–1928), *Goriška straža*, *Soča: organ slovenskega političnega družtva goriškega za brambo narodnih pravic* (1871–1915), *Gorica*, and to a lesser extent in some others.

[5] Most of the reports are unsigned and therefore their authorship is undetermined; however, we can discern the writers' occupations in the subtext.

The authors of these newspaper articles cited specifically the elements of shared culture, and foremost those that were expressed in Slovene as opposed to another language tradition. Since folksong is a syncretic unity of text and melody, it is because of the text, which is usually in a given language or its dialectic variant, (although bilingual or macaronic songs are known), that it is employed for ethnic or national identity purposes. Identity is thus more a result of marking differences and excluding than a sign of identity, a naturally constituted whole—that is, an all encompassing similarity, identicalness (Hall and de Guy 2002: 4). So identities are created from differences. It is only through relations with the Other, with the one who is not, or with what is absent that it is possible to construct the »positive« meaning of any term, and this applies to »identity«, which is able to function as a point of identification and belonging thanks to its capacity to exclude and leave aside. For this reason the opinion makers were most disturbed by »Slovene« residents singing songs in »non-Slovene« languages:

> Our residents of Goriška brda have already begun to peeling plums, as is their annual custom. This is also »economical« because peeled plums can be sold for a higher price. In families where there are several daughters, they peel over four hundredweights a day. They usually peel during the day and pit dried and sulfured prunes at night. While doing this fairly thankless task, they usually sing entertaining songs. »Slovene songs«, one might think. No? In what language then? Certainly not Slovene, we know that much, and German even less, because the farmers in the Goriška brda don't speak German at all, except in Kozana,[6] where they speak the Carinthian dialect, but in a mangled fashion. What they sing is some kind of Friulian-Italian minestrone without color, smell, or taste. The local girls sing without even knowing themselves what they're singing. Where folk singing gives way to foreign songs this is sad because this is the best proof of national unawareness and negligence. (*Soča*, 16 September 1875)

The making ethnic of folk culture in border spaces, which are characterized by mixing and blurring of cultural identity that borders protect (Morehouse 2004: 19), did not take place as opinion makers expected:

> Getting around to what I wanted to talk about before—I and every other Slovene that comes to this area must confess that here folk singing is neglected. Surely I'll get comments asking how I dare judge so harshly because after all the young men sing all night so that their singing echoes far and wide. It's true that they always shout and whoop, but the question now is what is this singing like and what do they sing? I'd like to clarify this a bit more. What do we hear when we listen to our young men sing? Perhaps a Slovene song, of which we have hundreds? Ah, no, they prefer a coarse Friulian or Italian song, which even the Friulians have already stopped using and thrown out of their houses, but which our people in the remote Goriška brda have carefully picked up and preserved as though it were a precious gem. And when they want to make it longer, they add a »holi-lai-la-la, la-la-liu-la-le-lie«, and so on, with every stanza ending with a »doi, a doi farin l' amor«, or even »evviva l'amor«. And so they keep singing even up until midnight. So you can

[6] Kozana residents were known for selling fruits in various Austrian cities, where the women even lived for a number of months while selling Brda fruits.

> never hear a Slovene song? Sure, when they make something up themselves and add a folk melody to the words. This kind of Slovene singing, if I may even call it so, does have its purpose, although I don't want to discuss it further. Perhaps some understand me well enough. This way, it is mainly Friulian or Italian songs that echo in the remote Gorizia Hills (they are especially common at folk dances). But I must draw attention to the fact that here in Šlovrenc you can often hear Slovene songs such as »Zvedel sem nekaj novega« [I Learned Something New], »Kje so moje rožice« [Where are my Flowers?], and some others that I don't know well. I must grant them this. Otherwise Italian songs are also common in Šlovrenc, and in fairly large numbers at that. (*Soča*, 18 June 1881)

Opposition to singing non-Slovene songs was based on many factors. The first was the question of the linkage between ethnic identity and language: Slovene-language songs were the only ones suitable for the Slovene population because they were supposedly their own. Another factor was the question of modernity in opposition to tradition, with the past and its original Slovene »folk« song having an immeasurably higher status than the »newer« Friulian or Italian »tunes. Some writers also raise the appropriateness question: love songs—especially in Italian or Friulian—were inappropriate and immoral. Therefore by organizing singing activities they wanted Slovene singing to prevail in Goriška brda and to »drive out all of the Italian hooting fala—nor« (*Soča*, 2 September 1881). However, real life was a good deal more heterogeneous, and hybrid forms and practices appeared. Everyday normalcy, according to Ulrich Beck (1993: 912) is not found in either-or categories but is characterized by »and« (Tschofen 1999: 235). Along these lines, as an informant born in 1924 told it, in his childhood in the village of Golo Brdo, three languages had equal currency in public places: Italian in school, Friulian with children at the market, and Slovene in church. Marriages between Goriška brda men and Friulian women (or Goriška brda women and Friulian men) were not uncommon.[7]

Proponents of the national idea strove to organize singing activities in Goriška brda as well in order to »revive afresh« Slovene folk singing:

> Speaking frankly and without beating around the bush, it is necessary to raise some national prophets, national organ players, and Goriška brda patriots to nurture folk singing with all their might. Whoever feels capable should make an effort to save or Goriška brda border folk from the darkness of lack of national consciousness. Since they have long lived and slept in unconsciousness, it is high time they wake up. The best way to achieve this is folk singing. It will awaken them from their long sleep and prepare them to be conscious Slovenes. Folk singing positively influences national consciousness and fosters an ardent love for the mother tongue, and, moreover, sparks a burning love for our homeland, surrounded by enemies. (*Soča*, 18 June 1881)

4 Nationalizing Folk Culture and the Spread of Folksongs

The nationalization of folk culture was a multi-layered process that included collecting and preserving »folk« wealth as well as spreading it among the »folk« in

[7] The poet Alojz Gradnik's mother, Lucija Godeas, was Friulian, and usually the principle of local origin and language use in the area the family lived governed.

»cultivated« forms. In his call to Collect Folksongs in the project Das Volkslied in Österreich, Anton Štritof justified this on the basis of the void that forms when

> folk songs disappear, and then there is the danger of what might replace them: he says that foreign songs that people bring from elsewhere, especially »soldiers or from faraway mines,« fill the void caused by the abandonment of native songs. Above all the writer voices open concern not only for the folksong, but for the language and people as well. He says that in place of "priceless native songs that so purely express the folk's sentiments and thoughts, in many places German polkas and ugly march tunes are to be heard: foreign goods updated in a cloak of native words. Where does this lead? (Štritof 1908: 31) (Klobčar 2005: 72–73)

The »guardians« of national culture thus attempted not only to represent and preserve some disappearing tradition, but primarily to set the groundwork for recreating practices that would mean a continuation of a tradition in new circumstances. Collecting folksongs was to aid a renewal of the »nurture of folksongs in school, at home, and in society« (*Osnovna načela* 1906: 2); songs were to be returned to the people to sing in place of foreign songs, to be taught in schools, and to inspire new composers (Klobčar 2005: 74). On entering the national sphere—for example, with the publication of folksong collections—folk music would not lose its sheen of authenticity (Bohlman 2004: 17), because in the second half of the nineteenth century, »when the significance of folk art was first emphasized, reliance on the folk heritage paradoxically did not mean rejection of originality. On the contrary, it was then that the apparently illogical position that the individuality of a work had to be rooted in the national, »folk spirit« prevailed« (Barbo 2003: 156). The »Slovene spirit« was supposed to inform new songs. In the opinion of Mari K. Arko Klemenc, »because a primary goal of 19th-century cultural advocates was Slovene cultural (and, in turn, political) unity, many composers intentionally toned down regional distinctions in their arrangements, a practice that often resulted in a certain musical homogeneity in the harmonization of Slovene folk songs« (Arko Klemenc 2004: 47–48). Yet »national style is not something that can be reliably constituted by defining specific melodic types, rhythmic patterns, or types of harmony … On the contrary, Carl Dahlhaus even thinks that we can define the national as primarily a functional and not a substantive concept« (Barbo 2003: 156). At the same time, it was not always clear what was truly folk and what the »folk« spirit ought to be like.

> My principles when recording and harmonizing folk melodies are: The melody should be recorded conscientiously and exactly. With us, we still argue what the folk spirit is and what is foreign; we must show how the folk sang the song in the old days, when the folksong was still alive. Those »screamers« then would learn from these melodies what the spirit is like, which is only possible when the melody is fully recorded like this, as the folk sang it. (Kokošar, Vol. XIV)

We learn from the texts of Ludvik Zorzut, a poet and collector of folk art from Medana in Goriška brda, how Ivan Kokošar[8] carried this off in practice:

[8] Ivan Janez Kokošar (1860 Hudajužna–1923 Grahovo) attended the gymnasium in Gorica between 1871 and 1879 as a pupil of a small seminary. Then he studied theology (1879–83) and became a priest in

> Kokošar would call the oldest people in the village to the rectory and write down for himself the text and melodies, as our »old timers« sang them. His collection contains mostly songs from Baška grapa, the Idrija area, Soča Valley, and elsewhere, as well as some from Goriška brda, which I brought him when I was a student. At concerts, the late Kokošar began adding to the program some folksongs from his collection, which he harmonized himself. Harmonizing is adapting a melody for a full choir. Kokošar's harmonization was simple, sometimes too sharp, but he saved for us so many Goriško melodies that would otherwise have gone to the grave with our old folk. Enough reminiscing, they sing for him! […] The modern harmonizer must have sensible and correct artistic taste. He must save the essential character of a folksong, preserve its pure genuineness, its homey simplicity, as God created it, I would say, so that »non alterat naturam«: without changing and spoiling its features, its essence, drawing the folk soul from it, and shaping it so that a simple, country choir can sing it as well as a polished choir in a concert hall. To put it like Vodopivec: "A folksong is like a hale, fetching, peasant lass who is full of life and only beautiful as long as she doesn't prettify herself with dandified, artificial, perfumed beauty! (Zorzut 1924: 3)

Composers wished to »shape« folksongs for use by an every growing number of choirs. Choirs were an extremely great mobilizing force, because a choir was viewed as giving voice to and embodying the people, giving a voice to each of its members and harmonizing the voices in a meaningful consonance. The transformation of a choral performance into a moment of high nationalism was thus very frequent (Bohlman 2004: 97).

> We especially see the power that singing has over the heart when a patriotic song suddenly springs from a large gathering. Instantaneous inspiration grips everyone like an electric shock. How eyes light up, how cheeks burn, and how fists clench! People that were just limp and bored instantly become excited and inspired. This is the marvelous power of our song. (Vodopivec 1922: 27)

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, mass events entailed especially praise for the nation, because massiveness meant overwhelming strength in the cultural battle (Cigoj Krstulović 2000: 101). Such engagement was understood as especially important in the border areas, where in addition to preserving the tradition of »beautiful singing« and quality use of leisure time, gatherings were to »resuscitate and spread knowledge of the Slovene tongue. They encouraged an organizing spirit and increased consciousness« (Komavec 2001: 56). Promoting singing, which was called »the flame of national life«,[9] was thus motivated in the borderlands by the desire »to teach Slovene folksongs […] so that soon trivial Italian songs would disappear from the area and our Slovene songs will be heard in their place (*Slovenka*, 1/19, 1897). This is also how the founding of village choirs was justified: »The purpose of village choirs is also to dam foreign influence, which also flows through the up until recently quite firmly domesticated Italian tunes. We must recognize our Slovene blood not only in the words, but also in the singing. Singing folksongs especially

1883. Between 1883 and 1888 he served as a parish priest in Cerkno, then as pastor in Šebrelje from 1889 to 1891. In 1901 he was appointed pastor at Sv. Ignacij na Travniku (Gorica), where he worked until his retirement in 1914. He carried on his duties as a priest in Grahovo until his death on 16 May 1923.

[9] *Soča*, 18 April 1884; a correspondent from Šebrelje.

helps to root out Italian tunes« (*Primorec*, 27 January 1905). Or as a correspondent from Medana in Goriška brda wrote:

> The fact that Medana, the last Slovene station on the trade road to Italian Karmin, is progressing apace is a special joy for Slovenia. Praise to the teacher who awakens and educates peoples with beautiful Slovene singing. Praise to the pastor who lends his beautiful voice and precious time to the promotion of Slovene singing! Praise to the Medana choir, which sings Slovene songs on the threshold of Friuli! May there be many such choirs founded on the Italian border! There is national strength in singing; it is a national army. (*Soča*, 28 July 1882)

In guidelines for Goriška brda choirmasters of the time we read that

> songs that, of course, are national and inspiring and musically comparatively easy should be chosen for singers. In Goriška brda, as we glean from reports, it is just a matter of awakening people; but that can only be done if the young men and women learn folk singing without difficulty, and that singing is widely embraced by the people. Italian singing (young men's) is also a danger to us for this reason, because it is mostly just la-la-la or some similar yelping; since it is not singing, it is not hard, and then it very easily and quickly swoops up the ignorant, simple Slovene who wants to sing. (*Soča*, 9 September 1881)

The author posits the demands of Slovene songs as a reason that simple residents prefer singing »Italian« songs. From the contrasting evaluations of Slovene songs and Italian »yelping« we can conclude that Slovene songs are artistically superior, and so they require study and not just spontaneous transfer from generation to generation or mouth to mouth. Singing leaders therefore tried to spread Slovene »folk« choir songs among the residents in order to root out non-Slovene songs: thus, for example, one of the most a noted Goriška brda choir director and organist, Anton Simoniti »selflessly taught singing groups and fought against the influence of Friulian songs for over sixty years« (Kožlin 1995: 31). According to a *Soča* correspondent's reports, the singing leader J. Marinič »drove German yodeling from our community (Kozana —M. P.) and replaced it with Slovene singing, so that today you seldom hear German singing, whether in taverns or und beneath a leafy linden« (*Soča*, 11 January 1877).

Similar processes that developed in Friuli, where composers and choir directors arranged folk songs to emphasize their ethnic significance and motive ethnic identification, show that this was not a national peculiarity, but that »nationalizing« culture was an international process (Leerssen 2008). The new songs and arrangements, which expressed Friulians' patriotism and demands for autonomy, were much beloved by the »simple« folk in Friulian villages under Austrian power (Starec 2005: 72). However, underlining the significance of choirs also concealed a trap, as a correspondent from Cerkno concluded:

> Reading centers are opening and reading societies being formed, and popular celebrations are held. Singing leaders try mightily to drive out bad singing and here, too, they've widely planted the seedlings of artistic folk singing. The people have started to take an interest in what is new, what is artistic; that which was seems to them incomplete, too familiar. […] Many folk treasures are nowadays on a dangerous cliff. (*Soča*, 1 March 1884)

Marija Klobčar thus concludes that in Goriško »a very early and intensive growth of choir singing […] quickly began to change the valuing of folksongs, something that was already strongly observable during the Folksong in Austria project« (Klobčar 2007: 13). Likewise, Zmaga Kumer says that »the preference for choir art song as better, more beautiful, more valuable […] turned many singers from customary folksongs« (Kumer 1978: 353–54).

Organized singing societies also spawned spontaneous singing societies, at first fluid in number and composition, and gradually changing into organized performing groups (Šivic 2007: 30). Choir singers were originally folksingers, and their choir activities were to enable them to bring folk songs into everyday life in an aesthetically higher form. Choir singing was thus »a means to make the people cultivated«, or in Vinko Vodopivec's words:

> The young men who are members of our singing groups and who appear on our stages soon loose that coarseness that held them back in the past. Real cultivation that touches the heart and mind soon appears in their appearance and mutual interactions as well. Their thoughts are no longer drowned in the tavern and dancing, and they become open to higher visions. (Vodopivec 1922: 27)[10]

A letter from Goriška brda interestingly shows the connection between coarseness and the tavern milieu as opposed to the cultivation of festivities organized by societies. We might also recognize in it a low evaluation of spontaneous folk dance to the accordion:

> The Kožbana society holds very nice festivities that we border Slovenes are proud of. It is unfortunate that there can be found some ignorant people who oppose the society, not knowing why themselves. I noticed a hideout of these ignoramuses at »Štela Benedeta«, or as we call it, at Nježa's in Kožbana. The flower of wild life was gathered in this den, and they were dancing crazily to an accordion, trying to compete with the society festivity. It is a wonder there are people like that around, who can't value the society's activities, which only help improve the Slovene people living on the border. (*Soča*, 7 September 1906)

The symbolic and identity meaning of choir activities and the »use« of folksongs further increased when Goriška brda and a large part of Western Slovenia came under the Kingdom of Italy. In other moments of crisis, too, the folksong was used in its cohesive and manifesting social function.[11] After Italy's capitulation, event planning on the reading center model once again took hold; the most notable and well attended was singing. »Choirs song old Slovene folksongs, and Slovene battle songs spread quickly, too, coming from central Slovenia« (Plahuta: 2008: 44). After the end of WW II, when the border was being determined, the composer Srečko Kumar, with the help of his daughter Vukoslava, founded a young women's choir Soča. It performed also for the Allied commissions that came to Goriška brda

[10] In order to understand the quotation, it is important to note that Vodopivec was a priest.

[11] This mechanism in moments of crisis was exceptionally strong in Friuli during the decade following the catastrophic earthquake: »It could be understood as the record industry's fitting response to the catastrophe of '76, that Friuli rethought its way of life, past, and proper cultural specificity« (Gri 1985: 21).

(Uršič 2007: 23). Although the Slovene folksong was used in times of crisis as a symbol of resistance to foreign regimes, this did not mean the exclusion of everyday favorite Friulian and Italian songs. In informal situations, singers still sang both Friulian and Italian songs that they liked, even though they associated in organized singing groups, in the context of which they learned arrangements of Slovene folk and patriotic songs.

5 Conclusion

The processes of nationalizing folk culture, which the founders and propagators of the national idea promoted, encountered obstacles presented by the common practices in the lives of border area residents, regardless of ethnicity. Thus the example of Goriška brda showed that »ethnically or culturally defined communities are an artifact and a tool of sociopolitical interests, with expressive forms objectified and strategically employed« (Bendix 2000: 42). Nonetheless, it is impossible completely to supervise and command the real life of traditions. The singing of folksongs is primarily situational, and therefore only the songs that meet and address the needs and requirements of singers and listeners are sung and preserved (Muršič 2002: 25). It is evident that if an element remains part of the heritage, then it must have some meaning for carriers of the tradition (Dundes 1980: 39). In this way, in the traditions of a given space we can recognize meanings that are important to the local residents but which have been influenced by larger factors, including the nationalization and »cultivation« of culture.

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