

Bojan Knific
Fund for Cultural Activities
Ljubljana
Slovenia
bojan.knific@jskd.si

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Costuming of Folk-dance Groups: Demonstrating Identity under the Pretence of Historical Witness

The central topic of this discussion is the analysis of clothing or dressing up of Slovenian folk-dance groups which is closely connected to affiliated costuming (with this term I refer to the wearing of costumes with which the wearers express affiliation to certain representative groups).¹ This phenomenon can be followed from the first occurrences of dance folklorism in the middle of the 19th century up until today. It is linked to the development of ethnology, namely with the researchers who explored the clothing culture. Their findings had a major impact on the way the clothing heritage and folkloric costumes were perceived. Up until the doctoral dissertation which serves as a basis of this discussion there has not been a thorough research on how folk-dance groups dress up.

Key words: folk-dance groups, folkloristic costumes, national costumes, clothing culture, identity, Slovenia

Introduction

During performances that recreate older style folk dancing, folk-dance groups interpret clothing heritage through folkloric costumes that, due to their tendency to portray dress from historic dance events, are increasingly moving away from the phenomenon of affiliated

¹ Not generally accepted technical terms which the author uses in this text (e.g. affiliated costuming, folkloric costuming, folkloric costume(s), clothing heritage,...) are defined in detail later in the text and are related to the dressing up of folk-dance groups, respectively to the wearing of so-called national costumes.

costuming, although in no way can they separate themselves from it entirely. The expression »heritage« has a long history, and in the last quarter of the 20. century, a politically motivated use was established, which attributes a special meaning for the present and the future to individual elements of past cultural creativeness and, moreover, with the purpose of serving people by feelings of affiliation (Jezernik 2005). In terms of thinking »heritage«, Rajko Muršič wrote, heritage is no more and no less than a totem in which recognition and belief are not possible outside of political origins. Heritage, as understood by a politically motivated discourse, can become anything which exists in the physical form or in thought conception under the condition that the thing is accepted as heritage. Like that, however, the representative of the politically institutionalized community ie. authority has to recognize that thing, which was handed over to him as the mandate of recognizing heritage (Muršič 2005: 35).

Language and literature have played a crucial role in the formation of the Slovenian national identity and my intention is not to disprove their significance as a basic identifying element of the nation, but to shed light on a smaller but nevertheless fundamentally recognizable element that assists in forming the development of ethnic and national identity. At issue is the question of dress that is always related to identity (Bayly 1996: 307) and more specifically, the question of costuming folk-dance groups, which is more frequently and more explicitly than we sometimes hope to acknowledge, intertwined with affiliated costuming. In spite of prevailing ideologies and general norms, dress, like other symbol systems, is subject to the manipulation of individuals or social groups (Donahue 2004: 105–106).

Terminology prologue

Clothing culture is a theoretical concept which covers everything connected to the investigation of clothing practices that are grounded in field work, intercultural comparisons and contextualization, where it is necessary to investigate social meanings of clothing practices in dynamic and constantly changing contexts in which recognition of identity processes is most important. *Obleka* (dress), in the broadest sense of the word, denotes not only objects that cover the body but also all modifications of the body (hair, beard, skin, body shape, smell...) and accessories (jewellery, hair pieces, bags...) , as well as sounds that are given off by the individual's dress (bells, rustling of fabric...) – therefore, not only all that is visible but all that is noticeable upon the person. A particular field of dress studies is represented by costuming, which in comparison to dress has one particularity: its purpose is to hide the identity of the wearer, and through the performance expose the identity that is being expressed in the costume.

In discussions of particular forms of dress that are essentially determined by ethnic or spatial identification, particularly in discussions of costuming that serve to express national, ethnic, regional, local, institutional and other types of affiliations, or where this affiliation is expressed regardless of the wishes of the wearers, there continues

to persist substantial terminological confusion not only in the Slovenian but also in other languages. In Slovenia, authors most often use the expression *noša* (traditional costume) and *narodna noša* (national costume), accompanied by other attributes that frequently determine the community on which the dress or costume is based (*bohinjska noša* (Bohinj traditional costume), *gorenjska narodna noša* (Gorenjska national costume), *slovenska narodna noša* (slovenian national costume) even though in various contexts related forms also serve as expressions of affiliation with various communities. However, due to unequivocal connotations with the nation, we cannot use these expressions to correctly identify costuming whose purpose, more than expressing affiliation with the nation, is to represent ethnicities that are not nationalities, and even more so to signalize affiliation with communities that are spatially bound but not ethnically divisible. For this reason, it is best to avoid using expressions *noša* or *narodna noša* when discussing costuming. It would be more appropriate to write of costumes that people wear with the intention of demonstrating affiliation to imagined communities² or rather, that they demonstrate imagined communities without this being their primary intention. In the Slovenian language, we can identify various types of dress as *pripadnostne costume* (affiliated costumes) and the phenomenon itself as *pripadnostno kostumiranje* (affiliated costuming). Slovenians, and with specific variations, also Non-Slovenians who live in Slovenia and who have developed such costuming in their own communities (for example, the Germans of Kočevje, the Hungarians, the Romi ...) identify themselves with affiliated costumes that have developed in Slovenia. Affiliated costuming, through which the wearer can emphasize one aspect of the identity (or can perform it) more than other aspects, is developing in the community (and in performances external to the community) in the constant self-reflection of its members with respect to who they associate themselves with and in their relations with other communities from which they differ.

The persuasiveness of affiliated and other costuming is dependent on how effectively it hides the wearer's effectual identity and how clearly it emphasizes the identity that is determined by the costume. This serves various purposes and for this reason the covering up of identities and the taking on of new ones that are suggested by the costume and with which it is not necessary for the wearer to identify with, is achieved with various intensity. In affiliated costuming, the costume wearers normally do not cover up their gender, nor even some other aspects of their identities, but whether or not intentionally, they do emphasize affiliation with that which is represented by the costume. The effect is more apparent if the symbolised affiliation of the costume is enforced and generally accepted among people who are in contact with those who are costumed, and becomes less clear if the symbolism of the affiliated costume is not

² Imagined communities is a term which Benedict Anderson (2003(1983)) introduced as technical term and it characterizes a group of people, who feel affiliated to one another even though they do not know each other. Within some of these groups, costuming developed to demonstrate loyalty to ideas, which connect and define the community. That is why in the following, where it is possible and where with this somewhat more complex way of expression wouldn't blur the meaning, I avoid the use of the sintagem, which comprises the word *noša*, even more so *narodna noša*, and I write about affiliated costumes, with which the wearers want to or not, show their affiliation to an imagined community, and with that in connection to affiliated costuming, as a phenomena, which developed inside imagined communities because of the need to express affiliation.

known. This comprehension is constantly changing and is developing partly in accordance with the expectations of the costume wearers. It is partly independent of their wishes or may even contradict them.³

As an expression of stage dress, in Slovenia the term *kostum* (costume) is used in theatre, film, opera and dance. Since 2001, this term has also been used in folk-dance activities in Slovenia that – similar to theatre, opera and ballet – fit into field of the performing arts. On stage, members of folk-dance groups recreate dances and other elements of folk culture and in the function of *gledališča zgodovine* (theatre of history) or *živega muzeja* (living museum) (Bogataj 1992) – they costume themselves – that is, they dress themselves in garments that represent a specific period, place, and social status, and that frequently also signify the performance role (for example: the bride and groom, fire fighter, masque...). They therefore dress in *folklorne kostume* whose function is two-fold and is related to the costumes of actors in activities whose goal is stage performance: the dress must enable the performer to be able to identify himself with the role he is playing and must, above all, provide (adequate) information to the audience.

On stage, members of folk-dance groups are dancers, singers, instrumentalists, speakers and others – as a collective group we can identify them as actors (be they children or adults) who play various roles on stage and, according to the vision of folk-dance group leaders and stage performance authors, represent historical dance related events or entirely newly constructed dance events that are inspired by different sources, are adjusted to the timeframe from which they and their ideologies originate and through this interpret dance and other traditions. If a folk-dance group wishes to accurately represent a factual historical event (for example the portion of a wedding that is related to the dance) or an imagined event in which a past condition is exemplified, the group must research this event and dress in folkloric costumes that illustrate the event, region, time and social community that are affiliated with the clothing appearance. Those folkloric costumes that are made from individual clothing pieces and to which an appropriate appearance of the body, including behaviour, is also relevant, should be based on the dressed appearance of people who would (at least hy-

³ What a member of an imagined community recognizes as clothing heritage and what as suitable costume, with which he/she can identify, depends on many factors. In any case, however, although it sounds unbelievable, other factors influence the form of affiliated costumes more than dressing of members in the past who are part of the imagined community. First of all the choice, which is limited to the more or less remote past and which offers itself to contemporaneity as exoticism. One possibility of choice offered by limited sources, which bear witness to dressing of members of an imagined community in the earlier period of its development, the other possibility of choice is an uncontrolled quantity of sources, which bear witness to dressing in the last few years and past decades. Irrespective of the inadequacy of earlier and later sources, affiliated costuming can develop from both. The only thing that is important is that the object of dress use in the eyes of the member of an imagined community has the status of clothing heritage. At which it is unavoidable, the choice of components and their stereotypization, but consideration of infinite amounts of possibilities has prevented installation of dress forms in an imagined community, installation is necessary, if We ourselves among our own would recognize symbols of costuming, by which we are separated from Others. It is about choosing dress components, which, with symbolization, allow unification on the inside and show differences to non-members of the community.

pothetically, despite having been imagined) take part in this event. Aside from exceptions, these garments were fundamentally not represented by affiliated costumes, but were clothes of the time that were influenced by the current fashion whose shape, cut, decoration, material ... were a function of the financial resources of the individual, of his age, social status and also the role that the individual played in the specific event. Already in the 19th century and later, affiliated costumes from time to time emerged in dance-related events, but these were more the exception than the rule and this occurred with the folklorisation of traditions over time.

The need for establishing the expression *folkloric costume* and rejecting the expression *noša* as a symbol for the stage clothing of *folkloristikov* (folk-dance group members),⁴ is also strengthened by the realization that the activities of folk-dance groups are expanding and that folk-dance groups no longer deal simply with the recreation of folk dance, but are (for the time being very rarely but in the future we can expect that these attempts will become more frequent) also dealing with the traditions of other social groups (workers, city dwellers) and with a time period during which we can no longer speak of *noša*. If we take into consideration that the expression *noša* can be used only as an indicator of clothing belonging to the peasants, and that, without violating established linguistic practices, we cannot speak of the *noša* of workers, city dwellers, nobles, etc. (Baš 1991), and even less so of *noša* from the time of the Beatles or *noša* of a later period (if we are thinking about clothing practices that follow the contemporary clothing fashion) and that the users of folkloric costumes of children's folk-dance groups that already in some cases reflect the (appearance) of more relaxed shepherd's clothing do not speak of *noša*, then it would of course be more reasonable to use an expression that surmounts these limitations and at the same time creates the desired effect as closely as possible. Costumes of folk-dance groups are related only to the activity of folk-dance groups and denote what members of folk-dance groups wear at performances but exclusively what was manufactured, bought or selected for the needs of illustrating past ways of dressing in folk-dance groups.

Excursus: The development of affiliated costuming in Slovenia

Affiliated costuming in Slovenia has a rich history of just over 150 years. Affiliated costumes initially developed as identification symbols from the need for visual expression that was affiliated with the nation. Clothing components from the peasant population of the first half of the 19th century were taken as the basis for these costumes. From the time of its conception until the First World War, these satisfied various interests. In addition to expressing national awareness, which was the primary purpose of the costumes in the 1840's and 1850's, the costumes also served, at the end of the 19th century, as garments for choirs, while their elements were in part also visible on theatre stages. Already prior to the presentation of members of the Kranj region at

⁴ In the Slovenian language, we try to draw a distinction between *folkloristi* (folklorists) – research workers, who deal with folklore research –, and *folklorniki* –folk-dance group members.

the 60th anniversary of the Caesar's reign in Vienna in 1908, and more so following this event, the affiliated costumes, in addition to expressing national identity, in some places also demonstrated affiliation to local communities. Because of this change in function, people sought particularities in the local clothing heritage and incorporated these into their own constantly changing and developing costumes.

During the interwar period affiliated costumes more frequently became garments for very special occasions, while their appearance became increasingly more uniform. The attitude towards these garments was romantically nostalgic and the stereotypes of »typical« and »the only correct« affiliated costumes, which became established following the Second World War, were becoming increasingly more established. Because of functional differences and searches for novelties, explicit diversification also came about. Many opposed these changes but created them at the same time with arbitrary explanations of the previous ways (manners) of dressing. One might try and find the reason for the search of "typicalness" and formation of uniform costume image of folk-dance groups in the existent endeavours of amateurs and so-called experts. In their quest for presenting individual groups they were searching for typicalness and particularities within them. They were looking for "authenticity", "genuineness", "originality", "peculiarity" based on individually preserved pieces of clothing and frequently standardized notes on dressing of representatives of certain individual groups. Intensely decorated products with lots of handiwork were mostly appreciated.

The *slovenska dečva*⁵ action, in which the clothing heritage intentionally intertwined with contemporary clothing, also brought additional stylistic differentiations to affiliated costuming. Already in the period between the two world wars, affiliated costuming exhibits an extremely varied understanding of clothing heritage. Following the Second World War, affiliated costumes become a conglomerate of everything "old" and "national" or that which this was reminiscent of, or rather, that which was socially recognized as "old" and "national". Changes in the understanding of affiliated costuming were set off by Marija Makarovič first through her exhibition in *Slovenskem etnografskem muzeju* (Slovenian Ethnographic Museum) (Makarovič 1966) and then through some of her notable works (Makarovič 1971, among others) and following this, through her pragmatic cooperation with folk-dance groups through which she brought her academic knowledge and personal opinions into practice.

The movement of folkloric costumes away from affiliated costumes

Folkloric costumes that are planned by stage performance designers of today's folk-dance groups, predominantly (but by no account all) strive to move away from the

⁵ Under that name, it is about formation of modern »slovenian« style fashion, which included elements of clothing heritage in the fashionable expression every time.

notion of the canonized versions of affiliated costumes as unified, stereotypical, mythologized and national preconceptions or later national or national-identification processes related to dress. Instead, they strive to satisfy needs that are more consistent and in accordance with the understanding of performance history or live museums that are related to the exhibition of historical clothing practices. The function attributed to folk-dance groups in Slovenia today is thus not only to demonstrate the dances that thrived in Slovenia in the past, but also to exemplify how people at dance events were dressed, how they sang, played, communicated with one another, etc. But all together was and still is just a show created within a political and cultural occurrence. The phenomenon that the costuming of folk-dance groups is placing on a new level among people who were accustomed to stereotypical interpretation of the dress designs of members of individual regions is creating some confusion. On the other hand, it is opening new opportunities for creating varied and interesting programs in activities of folk-dance groups. Costuming folk-dance groups not only in Slovenia, but also elsewhere in the world, is developing under the pretence of representing historical content (dances and other elements of peasant heritage), but in fact what is at issue is legitimizing the interests of national and other imagined communities in their name.

The complete rejection of the use of well-established affiliated costumes in folk-dance groups would be pointless, despite the realizations that people who dressed for dances that were not yet folklorised and that presented an actual way of life normally did not dress in what are today affiliated costumes, because affiliated costumes have for numerous decades been tightly linked to the establishment of organized folk-dance tradition. At the same time, by moving away from established affiliated costuming, folk-dance groups continue to develop affiliated costumes because of the role of folk-dance activities in today's society. For *šagre* – dances festivals in Primorska – people frequently dressed in affiliated costumes from the end of the 19th century onward. The same is true for *števanje* – an equestrian play in *Ziljska dolina* (Zila valley) that also included dance. Although in these cases, an earlier form of folklorised dance tradition was also demonstrated. In *metliško obredje* – a series of dances and plays that were performed in Metlika on Easter Monday – the performers did not, other than in exceptional cases, dress in affiliated costumes when the ritual was not yet folklorised (Rus, ed. 1996). The decision, inspired by France Marolt, that the *Metliško obredje* performers dress in »old« predominantly white clothes that were found among people in neighbouring villages, set off the popularization of Metlika affiliated costumes. Today, the folk-dance group from Metlika, which performs the ritual in its place of origin on Easter Monday and as a stage interpretation in various other regions (external to the time and place of origin) performs in these costumes today as do all other folk-dance groups that execute this ritual as a staged event. Years ago this would not seem possible but I can stipulate the same for contemporary folk-dance groups that use former clothing designs as the basis for designing new folkloric costumes for their own performance needs. Most often, folk-dance groups search for motives for their costume designs in the local clothing heritage – thereby transferring clothing designs from the past into the present, with their typification and emergence in various social

situations. Where people (not just the wearers but also external observers – the public) understand the representation as *Our past and Our property* (in contrast with *Other*), affiliated costume related understanding of these garments is set off. Despite consistent research of how they dressed in the past and approximately precise reproduction the very function of clothes has changed – they have been transformed from clothes into costumes which in society represent local, regional and also national identity of their wearers/actors. The function of the clothing, even if only »old« dress is at issue, has changed, and as a result, dress becomes costume; the original content and function of the clothes is no longer essential as the identification does not rest upon the historic content, but most often on the form (Jezernik 2005). For the implementation of the new function, the design is thus of primary importance, »nurturing« this form is related with exaggerated cleanliness, ironing and other »beautifications« interesting and special forms which repeatedly bring folkloric costumes closer to affiliated costumes. Closely related to this are methods of preservation and dressing, long-standing and special processes of washing, ironing, creasing and that it would be impossible for the wearer of the folkloric costume to dress without external assistance.

Throughout its entire development, the costuming of folk-dance groups has been closely related to affiliated costuming, even though, years ago, an uncritical analysis of folk-dance groups” research of clothing culture in the field indicated a withdrawal from affiliated costuming. This is especially true of investigations led by ethnologists who were involved with clothing culture and who searched for sources that moved away from then established affiliated costumes and subsequently made proposals on which the establishment of folkloric costumes was based. An analysis of numerous folkloric costumes of folk-dance group (indicates that those with costuming which is based on such or other sources, develop affiliated costuming and with this, also affiliated costumes. Thus, a paradoxical situation. A several decades long wish for a redefinition of authenticity was expressed in Slovenia especially in the last years of the 20th century, when folk-dance groups moved away from uniform costuming that for the purposes of designing folkloric costumes misused the elements of stereotypical affiliated costuming. Through this, the costumes would more consistently and less imaginatively represent the dressing of historical dance events. That canonized versions of affiliated costumes are not appropriate representations of history has quite widely been accepted, but this has not resulted in a movement away from well established affiliated costuming. A closer resemblance to the clothing worn at events at which people danced was truly greater and with this also the costumes” historical accuracy, although in the design of costumes of folk-dance groups the issue was (and remains) an artificial construct – an invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1993: 1–2) that is formed in the context of meetings of smaller or larger communities and also in the international context (Buijs 2007). The costume design used by folk-dance groups that reject existing affiliated costuming and build their artistically designed image upon other foundations is moving away from socially recognized symbols. This makes it impossible for the public to associate folkloric costumes with a specific place and with the community that inhabits this place, which at least on first examination endangers their existence. The feeling of threat only occurs during the first phase of the devel-

opment of a new expression of affiliated costuming, when the folkloric costumes are not yet identified as affiliated costumes (I do not identify them as such due to distinguishing between folkloric and affiliated costumes) though folkloric costumes have been created specifically with the purpose of indication of the former ways of dressing of members of imagined communities. Affiliated costumes should exhibit the general clothing appearance of the (above)average representative members of communities who lived in a specific place. However, in searching for particularities in clothing heritage the representation of the clothing appearance of particular individuals in these communities can also frequently arise. These particularities are brought upon the whole; the identification with the community and not the individual who arises from this group. In this case, a complete invention and (re)construction of the past is created for future generations (Buijs 2007).

Why was the movement away from the canonized versions of affiliated costumes in the costuming of folk-dance groups then even necessary in Slovenia? Above all, folk-dance groups interpret dance and dance related traditions. As activities of folk-dance groups developed, socio-political and professional-academic spheres articulated the idea that the costume image of folk-dance groups should exemplify the dress of people who had participated in such dance events in the past. A complete snap-shot of the historic dance related event would not be possible to achieve, not from a dance, nor costume, nor any other perspective. The fact itself that a determined number of pairs take part in the stage interpretation of folk-dance groups, that the event is being presented on stage, that they have at their disposal a limited amount of time, etc., makes it impossible that the historic dance related event would be able to come alive in its »original« form and also that it would be able to substantially come close to this image. For this reason, stage installations of folk-dance groups are always interpretations of events and not only interpretations of events, but the interpretations of interpretations of presumed events, in which the interpreted are already themselves the sources that the authors take as their basis, not to speak of their stage (re)productions. Folk-dance groups almost never recreate dance events that would really happen, but always interpret some imagined state that represents the union of various, frequently generalized (also mythical) exhibitions of an historic image of dance related life. Even if it were not true, every ethnography which offers the description of a concrete event is already interpreted.

A brief look at former Yugoslavia

Among researchers who were involved with folklore activities in Croatia, Ivan Ivančan, who passed away in 2006, has had the greatest influence on folklore activities in Slovenia because of similarities in perspective with those of his Slovenian colleagues. His work, *Folklor i scena*, was also familiar to Slovenian leaders of folk-dance groups. In his book, Ivančan pointed to the problem of stylization of folkloric costumes which in his opinion could not be successful. He defended (over the span of seventy years) affli-

ated costuming and the purchase of elements of garments used on the field (Ivančan 1971: 100–114).

The costuming of folk-dance groups, which is in Croatia substantially more directly than in Slovenia based on affiliated costuming that was developed in the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, is influenced by books that were written directly for the purpose of creating folkloric costumes. The idea for the publication of various books grew from the needs of folk-dance groups of the former Yugoslavia. In the past eighty years, these groups found it increasingly difficult to create folkloric costumes from clothes and clothing supplements that were obtained from people in the field. In addition, some were aware that thus obtained objects become destroyed more quickly in folk-dance groups than was desired. For this reason, it seemed right that the evidencing of historic clothing practices be collected and published in books that would enable folk-dance groups to (re)create appropriate folkloric costumes. They asked for assistance primarily from ethnologists, directed them onto the field and persuaded them to seek out the clothing of the common population in regions which they perceived as appropriate to the research and in regions which were, in their opinion, necessary to investigate. Fifteen books were published by 1989. The goal was to accomplish the publication of 185 books in the future (Salopek 1989).⁶

On the one hand, the books were ethnographic documents and on the other, manuals. Because of the desire that they be internationally used, the books were printed in a few languages. Aside from publishing the results of the research, the books provided directives for the creation of folkloric costumes (including suggestions for possible use in markets carrying accessible fabrics and other materials), pictures of designs, directives for dressing and visual material (old photographs, photographs of old clothing, photographs stemming from the research of costume folklorists). As evidenced by the works, the authors who wrote the manuals subconsciously dedicated themselves, in the name of the process of clothing culture of the common population, to affiliated costuming and to the actual dress that the various costuming inspired. Central to most books is the decoration of garments and the emphasis of their aesthetic components which were less apparent in the actual clothing of the common person than in the costuming that developed from it. For this reason, many books which are still in use by folk-dance groups today are more representative of affiliated costuming than of the dress of the common population that participated in dance events in the past. This is conclusively born witness by published photographic material that exemplifies photographs of affiliated costumes from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, contemporary photographs of affiliated costumes, photographs of costumed folk-dance group members and also a photograph of a folk-dance group that demonstrated the summer dress appearance of the common population but was taken in the snow. At least in some areas, contemporary photographs exhibit contemporary costuming that is exemplified by the uniform design of folkloric costumes, (the use of modern material, sewing technicality, etc.) more than the actual histor-

⁶ The series of books continued even after the downfall of Yugoslavia, yet did receive a new title *Narodne nošnje Hrvatske* (Bačić 2003 : 7).

ic clothing. Among other things, the photographs exhibit the development of canonized versions of affiliated costuming and also the costuming of folk-dance groups. In comparison with the photographs that were taken at various times, we can observe changes that the authors of the works were evidently unconscious of, or at least that they do not bring attention to.⁷

Having been established expressly for this purpose, these mentioned and other unmentioned publications not only in Croatia but also in Slovenia and elsewhere in the world have a significant effect on the costuming of folk-dance groups. The presentation of a former dressing appearance of peasants (country people) has already been changed into stereotypes and additionally interpreted with reconstruction suggestions. Books also offer descriptions of a few pieces of costumes. Therefore the costume of folk-dance groups, based on that supposition, make a clear deviation from the former dressing appearance of peasants (country people).

Evaluating costume images of folk-dance groups – a political project

If we accept the fact that the ethnographies themselves are sometimes questionable, and without exception, interpretive, then we cannot overlook the interpretation of folkloric costumes. We can evaluate their historic accuracy in depicting clothing forms that they more or less consistently copy (given the selection of materials, the method of production, the appropriateness of wearability...), we evaluate their suitable role in contexts (the suitability of the entire scope of folkloric costumes, suitability given the content of the stage set up...), but in this, we cannot avoid subjective evaluations, irrespective of whether we understand in detail all available sources. Subjectivity is additionally encouraged by common socio-political circumstances and the conditions of folk-dance activity. Constant redefinitions of suitability affect the standards, considered in evaluation of folk-dance groups dressing up more than available and understandable sources. There remains but one fact: each folk-dance group costume image, each folkloric costume and each of its component parts is an interpretation of interpretations. And not just any interpretation, but an interpretation that is historically, socially or politically based. From their very conception, folk-dance groups have taken on a socio-political function that is evident in the exemplification of Us as members or performers (actors) of represented groups over Them. Of who and what We are, we do not decide ourselves, but the representation of this is formed with the assistance of Others. The activities of folk-dance groups are politically motivated as is also the creation of affiliated costumes (Hopkins 2006: 134). Although connections with actual political parties and their actions is not possible to identify on first observation, it is possible to recognize the constant redefinition of authenticity that is related to socio-political ideas. With respect to conditions in Croatia, Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin recognizes that the work of ethnologists is actively bound in the folklorisa-

⁷ For detailed statements see Knific 2008: 318–324.

tion of folklore in public life. Although not stipulated in their working tasks and obligations, it is expected that those employed in museums and research institutes assist in the recreation of folklore. Rihtman-Auguštin questions the needs of various activities and concludes that ethnological discourse of applicative endeavours should not entirely reject politics, but must distance itself from it (2001: 286–288). As evidenced by experience, this is nearly impossible in applicative endeavours. Interference of science into politics, namely the talks about science in political achievements is not acceptable even though the subject of study is linked with politics and even though it is essentially the politics which is the essence of the academic question. It must handle it but not in a scientific or political way.

The political activity of folk-dance groups is thus clearly apparent and, perhaps most illustratively proven at the beginning of the 1990s, when Slovenian folk-dance groups almost at once rejected the »Yugoslav« program, despite the objections of most members of groups which implemented such a program. Instead, the groups directed themselves to the traditions of people of their own new nation. It is also possible to view such processes elsewhere in the world.

The question of why folkloric costumes that move away from canonized versions of affiliated costumes and interpret historical daily or holiday folk dress over years attain the meaning of affiliated costumes in society is not entirely clear. The main reason was examined above: the programs of folk-dance groups and in relation to them, costume image, always play a role in certain representational communities that live in a particular region and whose appearance is stimulated by socio-political processes. Imagined communities are not some wild naturally-forming groups, but are, above all, artificial constructs that are constituted through socio-political activities in which folk-dance groups, through their programs and costume image, contribute to the construction of symbolism, which in turn makes possible the formation and existence of representational communities. Placing the folk-dance groups programmes within a certain area of ethnic groups and forming of costume images of folk-dance groups enable(s) them to take part in creating images of dressing heritage of interpreted individual groups. Folkloric costumes are basically placed within a certain imagined community whose chosen sources, which bear witness to the dressing forms, they interpret. Protocol use (in political usage) of folklore and affiliated costumes further contributes to how they are understood. This is also true for other intentions that are not related to the basic activities of the folk-dance groups (at weddings, funerals, in tourism ...). As a result of these activities, the representation of the clothing heritage that is constructed by folk-dance groups is expanding and becoming socially recognized and accepted – accepted and recognized among individuals within imagined communities and in their appearance to groups that are external to them and recognizable as Others. But costumed *folklorniki* who recreate the regional tradition to which they feel affiliated represent Others in performances within their own community. Not those Others who would emerge from another place – from another imagined community – but those Others who emerge from a different time, possibly also a different social environment. They therefore represent Others – people, who because of the removal of time are not who they are themselves – but because of regional con-

nections they nevertheless identify with them and understand themselves as belonging to them. From this perspective, time is disregarded while region is emphasized, as through their costumes, the performers represent the heritage of a place where time can be mentioned, but is not essential. In front of the public of their own represented communities they will also present themselves as Others – Others because of the removal of time – but at the same time they will not forget about the regional perception that becomes even more apparent when they present themselves in places that are removed from the affiliated group with which they associate themselves. There, Others (can be) of several categories: regional, time and social, but despite the visual difference on which time and also social status has more influence than region, the regional category is more noticeable. If we examine the sources that bear witness to the dress of Slovenians, it is possible to evidence clear differences in the dress of inhabitants of particular regions during different points in time and also in the dress of members of individual social positions, but the exhibition of these differences in the costumography of folk-dance groups is substantially less noticeable than the exhibition of differences in the dress of members/representatives of regionally bound units (for example, Viničans, Adlešičans, Metličans, etc.). This is also clearly demonstrated in the renaming of stage installations of folk-dance groups (for example, *Štajerski pustni plesi* (Štajerska carnival dances), *Plesi Poljanske doline* (Dances of Poljanska valley), *Ohcet izpod Karavank* (Wedding Celebration below the Karavanken Mountains)...)

Investigations of clothing culture whose findings are interpreted by folk-dance groups are limited by time, region and frequently also by social elements. But the question which has already been posed in the previous paragraph – why in the actual renaming of individual types of folkloric costumes and even more so in their comprehension, is the connection to place so important and why is time interpreted while the social element is overlooked, not only in name but also in the wider descriptions of the programs and in the comprehension of costume image. The reason for this can again be found in imagined communities that are always regionally perceived. Folkloric costumes normally interpret the dress of the people of a particular place, but also in cases where they interpret the dress of the uncommon status, place is important in social division (similar is true with the definition of time). Place is thus exhibited in the characterization of folkloric costumes as well as in the characterization of stage performances that are, with rare exceptions, regionally differentiable already by their names, while the feelings of costumed folk-dance group members also clearly express place.

What do ethnologists have to do with this?

The role of ethnologists is important in the costume construction of folk dance groups. Our research processes influence the future development of the phenomena which we investigate – particularly through the publication of research findings – whether or not we are aware of this (and whether or not this is what we wish). Considering

this, I feel that it is important to emphasize that also explicitly historically regulated investigations affect the present as well as the future. Various amateur and professional creators who wish to bring individual elements into the present use the material taken from these investigations. Theatre groups, folk dance groups, choir and band groups, renaissance dance groups, souvenir makers as well as other individuals and groups are all concerned with the interpretation of historical elements of clothing culture. Whether we want to or not, ethnologists are included in the process of actualizing the objects that we investigate and, at the same time, through our research, we influence the construction of perceptions of clothing heritage of communities that are included in the research. If we are aware of this, we can influence the development of various fields through application content on the basis of detailed research and the development of suitable paradigms. Alternatively, people interpret academic research on their own. The fact remains the same: through our discoveries, ethnologists influence the subsequent development of the contents which we investigate. Syntheses of clothing culture of the population in individual regions, which include field research, analyses of archive material, including taking into consideration preserved clothes and their supplements, substantially contribute to the comprehension of that field not only in academics but also among people who have an amateur interest in activities of folk-dance groups. Even if work about clothing culture discusses only the past and is imperceptibly moving away from the present (imperceptively because each investigation is made in the present and as such, the present is clearly indicated within it), these works serve the present and influence on future processes in which the phenomena will develop. This is true irrespective of whether we are adherents of applicative ethnology and accept it as a part of the profession or if its value is of no worth to us, or rather, if we value it as negative. The influence is clearly indicated as even non-involvement in applicative ethnology influences on the processes of developing the field with which we are (not)involved.

In this way, without wanting to be ourselves, we as ethnologists, are politically active. We are involved in processes of forming representations of heritage, first through experience on the field where we cultivate people's perceptions of heritage and also influence what is even perceived as heritage, and secondly through the functioning of all the remaining processes in which this ethnographic experience rests. There is no other possibility. Each scholar is involved in society and each society is political. Because ethnologists, not only in Slovenia but also elsewhere in the world, who are directly and indirectly – and always as a professional entity – connected to the costuming of folk-dance groups, they substantially affect the development of this phenomenon. They especially significantly affect the representation of what fits into clothing heritage, and what from past clothing practices should be considered as the basis for designing folkloric costumes. Therefore many works in which clothing culture is discussed are basically misleading. In them the authors write as if they were treating everyday or holiday dressing of regional population but were actually treating the products of affiliated dressing up (affiliated costumes). Such works which include also affiliated costumes besides everyday dressing are in their basis misleading – they are more political than academic since they praise individual cultural elements and ex-

pand politically motivated images at the same time. Ethnologists and others whose research is directed, or at least intertwined, with the goal that their findings will serve to influence folk-dance groups, construct representations of clothing heritage, and through their publications provide suggestions to folk-dance group costume image designers and to directors of development as to which elements from past methods of dress are suitable for recreation in folk-dance groups. On the one hand, there is the desire to demonstrate the average and the every day, and on the other hand, the need to exemplify particularities – but always in a representation that is intended to bring attention to the dress of the »typical«, although in actuality imagined representatives of represented groups. Who are the »typical« representatives of represented groups: those who exhibit exception, or those who are lost in the crowd? The question is actually unimportant because neither in the interpretation of the former nor of the latter is it possible to determine consistent historical testimony. It is only possible to work and hide behind this idea, as in the costume image of folk-dance groups there resonates some imagined past that is marked more by the present than by history. Due to the needs of the present and through ethnographic experience, some researchers attempt to (re)construct the clothing image of people who no longer live with the intention that folk-dance groups would be able to design their costume imagery. Through this, they represent the community in which they work or the community whose elements they recreate in their programs, while through time (and regardless of historical accuracy) their contemporary representatives equate themselves with it. Doubts that these works in Slovenia testify for particularities in dressing more than those of everyday life; that frequently ways of dressing of the elderly are transferred to the young; that they give a general (but wrong) image of women who were supposed to wear long and wide skirts during both world wars; are necessary, just as so many others. For example, doubts connected with dancing, how (and if) to choose certain events involving dancing which would be representative; how from a multitude of ways of dressing choose the ones that could be representative. In contrast to my own principles I could write that this is not necessary because everything can be representative if representation is attributed to it. Therefore the information even if it is fabricated (for instance that an Istrian wore wooden shoes in the second half of the 19th century) can become a symbol of identification which many Istrians can relate to in the future. However this can only be true if the object enters the field of symbolization and is mediated to the Istrians and Others as a mythical image. A folk-dance group can substantially assist in constructing this symbol, namely with the interpretation of the source in its own costume image. Even more will be added if the formal realization of many products is the same – thus through uniformism, if the group is socially active and if it continues its work for a longer period of time.

Conclusion

Folk-dance groups have, with the abandonment of uniformly formed folk-dance costumes and with the deviation from stereotypical ideas about past dress forms in individual areas, moved away from functions which are socio-politically motivated, but only apparently, for they only changed their form but not their function. Folk-dance groups, in the name of historical witness, recreate elements of past cultures, taken from imagined communities and interpreted with the intention of consolidating those communities. In this, they consider the principle of being different and being similar, as groups want to be different from other already existing groups and at the same time they want to be like them since too much of a difference can lead to isolation and unacceptance of an interpretative solution which the group makes use of. Costuming of folk-dance groups enables that their programs are comprehensible differently than they would be if the performers were not costumed. We are witnesses on one hand to the constant emphasis on financial and other problems which the folk-dance groups face due to dressing up and on the other hand explicit disinclination to the ideas for folk-dance group members to perform without costumes. Neither folk-dance leaders dealing with problems of assuring appropriate folkloric costumes nor the members of groups who often do not feel comfortable wearing them agree with this. In their costumes the folk-dance group members feel differently. Like all other costumes, folkloric costumes enable the bearer to conceal their identity and expose the identity that is conveyed through the costume. At the same time they change everyday life into holidays. The person in the costume abandons themselves and takes on another self. Basically the performers remain the same people but are perceived as others due to the costume transformation. With the costume they add another identity to the already existing ones. Not only do they add something – they place it in the forefront.

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