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"NATIONAL IN FORM AND SOCIALIST IN CONTENT" OR RATHER "SOCIALIST IN FORM AND NATIONAL IN CONTENT"?: THE "AMATEUR ART SYSTEM" AND THE CULTIVATION OF "FOLK ART" IN SOVIET ESTONIA

The article offers an insight into the practical implementation of Soviet folk art policy in everyday life in the Estonian SSR. Bureaucratic rules, state control, material aid, social prestige and motivation, the "folk art" competitions, media coverage, the folklore protest movement, etc., are the topics of this article. By looking closer at the ways of dealing with, interpreting and adopting the political and ideological requirements, the author explains why the Sovietised style of "folklore" could erase its Communist image in favour of a national Estonian one, and continue to be appreciated as part of the generally highly-valued "folklore" in Estonian society today.

Key words: folklore, folk dance, amateur art, popular culture, everyday history, national identity, Estonia, Baltic states, Soviet Union, 1970s

The simple division into national and socialist as I have formulated it in the title of my article is tempting but, unfortunately, the answer is far from being so easy and cannot be given in such a black-and-white manner.[1] In fact, the engagement in what was called "folk art" (Estonian: *rahvakunst*), "folk creativity" (Estonian: *rahvalooming*) or more generally "amateur art" (Estonian: *isetegevus*) – terms widely used synonymously during Soviet times – was a bit of everything; it was both national and socialist, it was communist propaganda and ethnic self-expression, it was internalisation of communist ideology and it was national resistance – all at the same time. Even for the most extreme poles in the spectrum of "folk art" – the "anti-Soviet" proponents of the folklore protest movement on the one side, and

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the officially acknowledged showcases of "Soviet folk art" most trusted by the communist regime on the other – this distinction can not be drawn as sharply as is often claimed.

That the situation is and was obviously more complex becomes clear when one looks for an explanation as to why "Sovietised folklore" still exists almost 20 years after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Not only by some Soviet nostalgists, but throughout Estonian society, "Sovietised folklore" is generally acknowledged to be "true Estonian folk art", or at least one possible interpretation of it, along with others.

As is the case anywhere in Europe, the range of what is called "folk art" is very diverse in Estonia today, too, ranging from the scarce remnants of a former, orally transmitted, rural culture and the "purists" who try to copy these models as "authentically" as possible, to those who claim the term "folk art" for the popular hits of the pre-war period and for whom simple care of costumes is enough to declare a performance to be "folk art", on to professional "folk musicians", educated at special institutions, who enrich "Estonian folk music" with elements of jazz and world music.

Its "Sovietised" interpretation is therefore an integral part of the general appreciation of "folk art", whose importance and omnipresence in Estonia's everyday life, and in that of the Baltic states generally, is eye-catching for any attentive observer. Just to mention some examples: ethnologists or musicologists with a strong appreciation for "folk music" in all three countries have become presidents of their countries (Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga in Latvia, Lennart Meri in Estonia and Vytautas Landsbergis in Lithuania), occupying the most prestigious position of state; major student "folklore" festivals (under the title "Gaudeamus") are bringing together fellow students from all the Baltic states, singing and dancing to "folk music", an event that would be hard to imagine in Central Europe (e.g. in Austria), not to mention the major national song and (folk)dance festivals, that resemble – at least to an outsider – the communist mass events of the Brezhnev era (with the exception of the absence now of the colour red and the Lenin portraits), but still enjoy great popularity among Estonians. The programme of the 2009 music festival "A Dozen Europe" could serve as a current example for the obviously higher importance of "folk art" in the Baltic states than elsewhere in Europe. It was held in Austria and dedicated to the "new" EU member states, attempting to offer an overview of the contemporary state of the art in these countries. Although the bands from the Baltics are very different in music style, all of them (8 in number) relate to "folklore" in one way or another – playing folk-metal, folk-jazz or "traditional folk music".[2]

[2] See the festival program at http://www.posthof.at/programm/festivals/ein-dutzend-europa (accessed May 21, 2009).

Without a doubt, "folk art" has a special role in today's Baltic society. Nonetheless, the question remains – leading directly to the topic of my article – why even the most visible and publicly shown parts of a "Sovietised folklore", also including the corresponding institutional framework established during Soviet times, could survive practically without any change through the national, sometimes almost nationalistic and openly anti-Soviet transformation in the years after regaining independence. Why has it not been replaced (to a greater extent) with the more "authentic", and expectedly more "national" style of the folklore protest movement, which had gained high social prestige especially during and immediately after the fight for independence? Or generally speaking, how did "Sovietised folk art" manage to abandon its Soviet image and become a true expression of Estonian national identity?[3]

As my article deals with the cultivation of "Sovietised folk art" in everyday life in the framework of the institutions of the state-imposed amateur art system, it is first of all necessary to take a short glance at the history of "folk art" cultivation in Estonia and to clarify what it is that makes folklore "Soviet style"?

The transformation of "folklore" from a rural culture naturally practiced as an integral part of the everyday life of Estonian peasants to a stage-performed interpretation and conscious cultivation under the motto of keeping alive "folklore" and "national culture", respectively, emerged with the process of "national awakening" in Estonia during the 19th century and played an important role in the process of the formation of a common Estonian national identity. By adopting German and Baltic-German models to create an Estonian culture of their own, Estonian intellectuals used folklore motifs from Estonian peasant culture as a basis for the creation of nationally-minded literature, choral pieces and music compositions. The tradition of "song festivals" imported from Central Europe[4] became especially influential in the Estonian and more generally in the Baltic context, leading to the enormous popularity of choral singing throughout society.

However, the cultivation of "peasant folklore", too, not orientated towards the standards of classical art, but as the "old farmers did", started in then independent Estonia in the 1920s, joining together with a nationally orientated amateur art

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[3] For example, most of then well known Soviet-Estonian (folk dance) choreographers, like Salme and Ott Valgemäe, Ullo Toomi, Helju Mikkel or Helmi Tohvelmann, are still appreciated today and several awards, grants or competitions bear their names. See for example: the grant of the Ullo Toomi Fund for folk dancers, http://www.erkf.ee/index.php?nid=1 (accessed April 30, 2010) or competition of dances by Salme and Ott Valgemäe, http://www.errs.ee/index.php?id=11257 (accessed April 30, 2010).

[4] While this phenomenon ceased again in Central Europe, it has remained alive in the Baltics up to the present day. Although Soviet propaganda took over the tradition in the 1940s, the appearance of the festival today, including the corresponding nationwide (folk-)dance festival, is very much a product of Soviet times. The fact that it had a pre-Soviet past helped very much to erase its Soviet image after the re-establishment of an independent Estonian republic.

movement, which came under state influence by the mid 1930s, when the authoritarian regime of Konstantin Päts came to power. This basis of cultivated “folk art” could then easily be taken over, channelled and transformed by the communist regime, when Estonia was made a socialist republic as part of the Soviet Union in 1940/1944.

The guidelines for a Soviet interpretation of what “folklore” is go back to the mid-1930s, when the communist regime started to use its potential for propaganda inside and outside the USSR, declaring “folk art” to be the basis of all Soviet culture and transforming it according to ideological needs. Following the ideological dogma of “Socialist Realism”, folklore “was the source of all that was best, and only the best, in culture. Consequently, folklore should be the best in and of itself” (Zemcovskij; Kunanbaeva 1997:4).

Implemented in the state-sponsored institutions of the amateur art system, covering the country down to the last village, cultivation of “folklore” that was claimed to be a form of art equal to “high culture” was fully orientated towards a technically perfect performance on stage. Simultaneously, the “collective” was brought into the foreground at the expense of the individual “folk artists”. In “folk dance”, for example, this led to a unification of dance styles incorporating ballet techniques, which finally looked quite similar all over the USSR, differing only in certain steps, claimed to be typical for each nation. In “folk music”, this meant the standardization, reconstruction or total replacement of “traditional” instruments in order to fit the newly implemented (collective) forms of “folk music orchestras”, lead by a conductor and using sheet music, with choir singing seen as the ideal form of expression.

Part of that propagated “advancement” of “folk culture” towards an equal position with classical art was to create new, technically more demanding, “folklore” and to take advantage of this opportunity to bring out the intended political message.

“Traditional” peasant culture was appreciated as source material, but was not meant to be kept alive in the institutions of the amateur art system. The way to create “Sovietised folklore” out of the traditional sources was to eliminate repetitions, to choose the most impressive passages of different pieces, to re-unite them into a single whole (Giurchescu 1994:170) and to “beautify” all this with individual supplements by the composer/choreographer, with the aim to provide (artistically and ideologically) more interesting and “educative” material for the stage.

The most visible attributes in terms of “Sovietised folk dance”, which was the main focus of my research, are the so called “sojuznye ruki”, as Kalev Järvela called it, a Russian term literally translated as the “[Soviet]Union hands” (Järvela interview, 01:58:36). This (pejorative) saying stands for the ballet-like gestures and unified, strictly determined movements, the sporty-athletic performance

demanding good physical condition, and the "optimistic" tenor, with ever-smiling faces and loads of makeup promoting the "happy peasant image" (Stites 2004:25). One other characteristic of Soviet "folk art cultivation" was the strict separation into domains according to the models of classical art. Dancers, singers and musicians all had their own amateur art groups.

In the Estonian context, this "Sovietised folklore" had become widely accepted by the 1960s (Kuutma 2008:589), almost totally displacing all other possible interpretations of what could be Estonian "folk art". In order to explain why this interpretation could have been so successful even after the breakdown of the Soviet regime, it is necessary to take a look at what people were confronted with during Soviet times concerning "folklore", what ideological and institutional framework formed their attitudes, what everyday life was like for people who engaged in "folk art" cultivation, and what the political dimension and aim of the ruling Communist Party was towards that engagement.

With the focus on "folk dance" in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I examined the topic by working on archives of the Soviet Estonian folk art institutions, files, reports and bureaucratic material of the state administration and some folk dance groups, by taking a look at repertoire and training material as well as media coverage and, last but not least, by conducting a series of problem-focused guided interviews with "folk art" activists of various backgrounds, including different ages, urban and rural locations, affiliation to official amateur art or scientific institutions and/or to the folklore protest movement or the engagement in prestigious and "ordinary", less "successful" folk art groups … My findings are embedded in the theoretical approach of Michel de Certeau (1988). Although his theory on popular culture was primarily developed on the background of western type mass culture and with strong attention to the role of mass media and consumption under free-market conditions, I argue that the core elements of his theory are applicable to the communist system as well. Concerning my study, I assume that the communist state and its powerful ideologists and party secretaries, respectively, imposed a certain ideological and institutional structure that was practically compulsory for any kind of "folk art" activity. Although there have always been unofficial ways of acting outside that structure, that took place to a very limited extent. It was this dominating structure, as was the frame of mass culture in the West, which made it hard for people both in the East and in the West to escape this framework imposed on them by the powers-that-be with an intended political/ideological goal. Therefore, I suppose that the basic social processes of negotiating everyday life were quite the same in the East and West: not having serious and easily accessible alternatives, people try to settle into the framework in order to live normally without major obstacles, in the sense of avoiding consequences for potential misbehaviour while, at the same time, avoiding coming into serious conflict with one's own beliefs and values.

The given framework is accepted (unconsciously), on the one hand, as the inevitable system to be coped with and, on the other hand (and also most often unconsciously), adapted to personal needs, sometimes leading to a quite different outcome than intended by those in power, but at the same time not crossing the boundaries of the officially permitted or socially accepted. This process of adaptation is, therefore, an important factor for the consolidation and stabilisation of a ruling system, but it always bears a certain potential for protest and resistance, too.

However, this process is not a one-way track, where once fixed rules are handed down from above and are then accepted and/or adopted by the population. Rather, it has the character of a negotiation. As Kirsten Endres suggests referring to Ben Kervliet: if the subjective interpretations of the rules by single individuals are pointing in the same direction and reach a certain massive level, the made adoptions influence the policy of those in power as well, who have to react in their own interest, eventually leading to changes of the framework (Endres 2000:4).

The key question in this context is that of "legitimacy". No regime or system can survive for a longer time without having at least very basic support and acceptance among the population. Therefore, it can not totally ignore the attitudes and needs of the population. As von Geldern points out to Soviet popular culture under Stalin, even at the highest peak of the totalitarian regime, it was not possible to force people actively to consume and internalize the intended leisure time propaganda program. Still, it was the free choice of every single person whether to go to the cinema and to read the offered books, or just to stay at home doing virtually nothing. And even if people accepted this programme in principle, everybody could still make and certainly did make their own personal interpretations that could seriously differ from the ones intended. In order to (ideologically) reach and educate people it was therefore necessary not only to look at the ideological value of the proposed popular culture itself, but to make compromises in order to offer real entertainment that would be willingly accepted (and unconsciously internalized) by the population (von Geldern 1995:xv).

That is exactly what happened in this case: Folk art policy was a constant manoeuvring between a straight-lined implementation of what was ideologically desirable for creating and propagating the "new Soviet" culture, and practical considerations of what was possible and what brought the greatest legitimacy for communist rule, since the main objective was to gain support throughout the population and, thereby, to secure communist rule in general.

"Folk Culture" between the Policy of Internationalism and Nationalism

One very effective measure for gaining this popular support was (and still is) to promote national culture – and as one part of it, the corresponding "folk culture" – and to claim for the ruling regime the image of the saviour of national interests. Especially in the Estonian case, the national culture was very much interconnected to "folk culture" due to historical reasons, so that the latter was especially important.

Following Konrad Köstlin's theory of folk culture as the "cult of being different" (2001:46), the engagement in "folk culture" always bears in itself the content of separation and exclusion from those who are not "awarded the title" of belonging to this special group of people. At the same time, it homogenises the differences within this group itself by referring to common history, common tradition, and common language and culture.

Köstlin set up his theory mainly against the background of western "folk culture" and especially in relation to the German-speaking area, but I suggest that it is applicable to the communist part of Europe as well, despite the ruling propaganda of internationalism, the attempts to overcome national separatism and the intention to create a common all-Soviet identity, especially from the 1970s onwards. Nonetheless, "folk culture", no matter how much it may have been penetrated by socialist ideas, still kept this function of separation and exclusion.

However, the policy of internationalism and all-Soviet patriotism was certainly not without effect. Soviet national policy itself, as Connor shows (1984:496), contributed to the persistence of different national identities inside the Soviet block by keeping up ethnic distinctions in many respects – starting from the administrative structure of the state alongside ethnic criteria, to the persistence of the category of "nationality" in the Soviet passport, forcing everybody to opt consciously for their nationality, to the ideologically-driven promotion of Soviet art in general and "folk art" in particular as socialist in content but still national in form. As early as at the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet ethnologist Julian Bromlej, although obliged to respect official ideology and censorship, stated that the national identity of the diverse Soviet peoples was not vanishing despite all the factual approximation of Soviet people in economic and cultural respects, but was even increasing (1977:98).

What Mevius (2005) points out for socialist Hungary, and Brandenberger (2002) for the Russian Federal Socialist Republic and the Soviet Union as a whole, seems to be true for Estonia, and probably all of the national republics of the USSR, as well. In need of popular support and easily understandable messages, Stalin had played the Russian "national card" already in the 1930s, prior to the

Second World War. Gaining popular support in the newly conquered territories was even more difficult, and the most promising way to reach this goal was to promote communism as the saviour of the nation (from fascism) and the guardian of national interests.

Especially in Estonia, the need for gaining support or at least acceptance for the newly introduced communist rule was desperate in the period after the war, as the incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union was quite traumatic in the light of the mass deportations to Siberia that affected almost every Baltic family in one way or another. That was, in the long-term perspective, not the best way to convince Estonians of the blessings of communism. At the same time, the incorporation was never legally accepted by the West, so that, generally, the legitimacy of Soviet rule in Estonia was not very deeply rooted, and ways had to be found to consolidate power over the Baltic states by giving the Soviet rule a national touch. One method to do that was to promote the well-being of national culture, including the (Soviet interpretation of) "folk culture".

Although the incorporation of this national-communist theme challenged the ideological key concept of internationalism, it was nonetheless applied in the Soviet satellite states as in the Union itself. It was maintained even after Stalin's death, as well as during the era of boosted propaganda of "all-Soviet patriotism" and "socialist friendship among the peoples", remaining a constant factor up to the break-up of the Soviet Union (Brandenberger 2002:243).

The Soviet Amateur Art System as the Institutional Basis for the Cultivation of "Sovietised Folk Art"

To come back to the topic of "folk art": It was not necessarily a contradiction for ordinary "folk dancers" and "folk musicians" to combine national identity with a general appreciation of socialist values or even with pride in the achievements of the Soviet Union, as the commendable showcases were approved and implemented by the highest state ranks. It was absolutely possible to be a "good" communist and still feel pride about one's national identity, as long as it did not exceed a certain accepted level.

Especially during the 1960s, when political pressure somewhat softened in the period of "Thaw", new ethnic Estonian cadres filled up the state bureaucracy and people started to plan their CVs in the framework of the Soviet system, so that this national-communist way of interpreting Soviet rule attained more room. (Ruutsoo 2002:118–122) At the same time, "folk art activities" consolidated along the guidelines of Soviet folk art policy in a process of negotiating an acceptable way between popular support and political/ideological goals, remaining simultaneously an expression of (Soviet-)Estonian identity.

The so-called "amateur art system" was the arena where this negotiation was carried out. This was the accepted common space inside which it was possible to make arrangements and re-interpretations. It is therefore necessary to take a closer look at its institutional structure and main characteristics, and at how this system really worked.

On the basis of the ideology of "Socialist Realism", stating that "folklore" is the basis of every kind of Soviet art, a very open interpretation of the word "folk art" was used in the context of amateur art. The term "folk art" was in fact a synonym for "amateur art", covering the whole spectrum and all genres of amateur art – from photography to wood carving. However, genres that more or less directly referred to an "old tradition", for example, by performing in costumes, were clearly dominating the system. In the Estonian context, the most important amateur art genre was singing (and the choirs, respectively), followed by "folk dance".

The institutional basis was a hierarchical structure of culture houses and so-called clubs, attached to enterprises and factories, covering the whole country. Every group that wanted to perform publicly or just wanted to get a room for rehearsal had to register in one of these "club-institutions" in order to get a permit to operate. Outside of this framework, practically no organised artistic leisure time activity, in the widest sense, was possible.

These "club-institutions" housed not only the amateur art groups themselves, providing room for rehearsals, performances and parties, but had a much broader function in generally offering the population premises in which to spend leisure time and, in doing so, trying to influence them ideologically. Therefore, various activities were organised starting from knitting courses, lectures on gardening, and children's education, but also on direct political topics, collective film watching, celebrations of Soviet and individual holidays and anniversaries, etc.

The political aim was to concentrate leisure time at these institutions in order to keep control of what people were doing in their free time and to influence them (ideologically) in the most effective way. At least in the countryside, where no cinemas, theatres or other recreational alternatives of the like existed, this was one of the very limited possibilities to take part in social life outside the purely private sphere. As one of my interviewees put it: "There was nothing else to do" (Järvela interview, 01:47:53). Despite this kind of monopoly position, culture houses and clubs at least had to try to be attractive to people to some extent, as participation in their activities was still voluntary and there was always the alternative to stay at home and watch television, meet with friends or, in the worst case from the viewpoint of the regime, to spend time by thinking of or even engaging in subversive activities. One task of this system was, therefore, also to keep people busy.

The political function of the club institutions in general and the amateur art system in particular, as one of the most important parts of their activities, can

be summarised by the principle tasks of keeping control by bringing people to take part, thereby preventing other less controllable and potentially undesirable activities, and to use this framework to influence and accustom people to the general system of communist values, to the communist holiday calendar and to a communist way of life, and to gain support and legitimacy for the regime in the long run.

These political goals found their expression in two major aspects in the practical work of the amateur art system: one was the enormous extent of bureaucratic rules, guaranteeing that every single move of an amateur group was registered and kept under control. The second aspect was a generous system of material, artistic and ideological support and other tactics of motivating people to participate in an amateur art group.

The starting point of this bureaucratic control was the registration of any amateur art group at one of the cultural institutions. A responsible group leader had to be appointed. Besides teaching the group artistically, his/her task was to set up a working log where all participants, including their address, occupation, party membership and their attendance at rehearsals, were registered, and to write down the activities of every single meeting. Furthermore, a general working plan had to be set up every year, complemented quarterly by a more detailed schedule. For any public performance, a separate repertoire list indicating every single song, dance or theatre piece, exactly in the order in which they were to be performed, had to be officially approved by the local culture department.

Although this network of control was dense, the way it was implemented in practice looked quite different. For the responsible bureaucrats it was important that everything was correct on paper, the actual implementation on the spot was barely controlled at all. As archive files and statements of my interviewees prove, it was an open secret that these bureaucratic requirements often had the quality of pure formality. The provided information was kept in rather general terms, so that a very flexible interpretation was possible, and often the forms were filled in completely falsely, not corresponding to what was happening on the ground at all. There simply were not enough personnel resources to maintain really efficiently such a huge system of control. However, the mere existence of this control system, even though it was poorly implemented, guaranteed a certain awareness on the part of the amateur art activists of what was possible and what was unacceptable, that is to say, what was likely to have negative implications. In fact, the work of the groups was never controlled so strictly that it would alienate people from the amateur art system. It was simply accepted as a form of an inevitable and necessary everyday formality, which did not in fact meddle with the practical work of the groups to any large extent.

Although taking part in an amateur art group was seen as a way of recreation after a hard working day and as a leisure time activity, there were also some duties

to be fulfilled by the group. One of the main political aims of club institutions was to educate people in the communist way of life, these duties being twofold: inside the group, the leader was obliged to include ideological/political lectures on a regular basis in the group's practice sessions, to be conducted by him- or herself or by an external (trained) lecturer, or to visit with his/her group other political-educational events inside and outside their own culture house. These obligations were also hardly ever fully met and it became common for the required bureaucratic entry in the working log to use the expression "discussion over an actual political topic", meaning anything in fact, while that obligation was often ignored altogether (Uno Veenre interview, 1:04:54).

Beside that internal educational work, it was the duty of the group to educate others through their performances by choosing the (ideologically) correct repertoire, trying their best to improve technically and to offer the audience a most joyful and emotionally captivating show, which would eventually prepare the ground for the acceptance of a more politically general programme.

Especially for "folk dance", which was relatively apolitical compared to other genres that were based on textual messages, one of the main duties was to bring colour to (political) events by performing in costumes, and to demonstrate appreciation of national culture and a close connection to the people in general.

One of the expectations of the regime towards the groups was that they provide the population with (Soviet) art, especially in the countryside where no professional art network existed. The work of an amateur art group was thus a personal fulfilment of leisure time and recreation for the group members, but also a service to be offered to the population living in the area of responsibility of the particular culture house or club. It was seen as an important propaganda tool reaching potentially more people on a more emotional, personally inclusive basis than most other propaganda measures.

The massive participation in the system itself and the technical quality of the groups were used, on their part, as propaganda inside and outside the Soviet Union, showing the prosperity and mass interest in amateur art under Soviet rule.

The general ideological claim – that under Communism everything improves in quality as well as in numbers – was also valid for amateur art, finding its expression especially in two respects: a constant supportive atmosphere for the advancement of "folk art" by technical and artistic improvement (in the sense of Sovietised "folk art") was created on the one hand, while on the other, this almost obsessive atmosphere of steady advancement led to the common practice of falsifying data regarding the numeric growth of amateur art.

Although visible to anyone on the spot, the fact that, for example, many groups only joined together directly before the big "folk art" events of the amateur art system – primarily the nationwide song and dance festivals – but vanished again shortly afterwards, was very rarely publicly reported. On the contrary, it was always

desirable to provide increasing numbers, for instance, how many new groups had been founded in the course of an event and to what impressive extent amateur art had grown, not mentioning that the numbers went down again immediately after the event as quickly as they had gone up. In fact, the peak of amateur art was reached in the late 1960s/early 1970s, as internal discussions in the cultural administration (see for example ERA.R-1040.13.598:207) and retrospective evaluations of that time as the "golden age" of amateur art (Vill 2006:46) show. Official data provide the number of 130 000 participants in amateur art in the Estonian SSR in the year 1969, that is, approximately a tenth of the total population. (ERA.R-28.2.388:32)

To control and register "folk art" activities was one thing, to persuade people to take part, as a prerequisite of the former, was another, and as participation was voluntary, this was not an easy task. The way that promised the greatest success was a broad system of support and motivation (alongside the mentioned means of control), which I want to demonstrate using the example of Soviet Estonian "folk dance".

Amateur Art "Folk Dance" on the Ground

The essential person for the work of a folk dance group was the group leader or teacher. Without such a person, no group could be established. This could be a professionally trained amateur art teacher,[5] but the majority of group leaders were made up of ordinary people without any special education in the field of teaching. Virtually anybody who had previously participated in a folk dance group and had at least some experience could become an amateur art group leader, as far as working hours and personal skills allowed him or her to perform this task. To ease the decision to become a group leader, the work was paid according to the actual practice sessions conducted. Especially for teachers who had more than one group, this meant a significant increase in regular income. The log about the activities of the group that every group leader had to keep, was thus not only a tool of control but also a kind of work reference, on the basis of which the payments to the group leader were made.

For an ordinary group member, participation was totally free of charge. He/she did not receive any financial reward, but he/she did not have to invest anything: folk costumes and music instruments were provided, travel expenses for performances outside one's own institution were covered and the group leader as well as the music accompaniment, most often an accordion or piano player, were paid by the cultural institution and the state respectively. Additionally, it was always possible to leave the group if personal circumstances changed or people simply

[5] There was a special educational institute, the culture school in Viljandi, for the training of professional culture workers, who worked as teachers in the amateur art system.

lost interest. For an ordinary group member, engaging in amateur art was indeed totally voluntary, free of charge and without much obligation; however, it was also an opportunity to meet friends, to socialise, to have fun, to get around the country and, if the group was technically skilful and ideologically trustworthy, even to travel abroad, including to the West.

That relatively unstrained atmosphere for group members did not mean that there was no political influence on the group whatsoever, but that the direct target was the group leader as a kind of mediator between cultural policy and ordinary people – and he/she was not left alone in his/her work by the regime.

The lines between control, direct interference and disinterested assistance are thus hard to define, being a bit of everything. The actual person in the cultural institution responsible for supervising the work of the groups was the "artistic director", who gave advice on practice methods, repertoire suitable for the technical skills of the group, topics of lectures conducted within the group and their supportive material, etc. The artistic director and, in the final consequence, the general director of the club institution, were responsible to the culture department of the state administration, and had to ensure that the ideological work was moving in the right direction. As the interviews and internal reports showed, their interference into the daily work of the groups was relatively small, as long as the bureaucratic requirements were fulfilled correctly.

In the case of cultivated "folk dance", this political *sine qua non* was to guarantee the cultivation of "friendship among the peoples". In practice it meant that the general repertoire of a group, as well as the repertoire of each public performance, had to consist of a certain number of dances from other peoples, preferably Soviet peoples or those of other socialist states. Although no percentage was officially fixed, it was an unwritten law that approximately one third of the repertoire had to consist of these dances (Tõnurist interview, 00:29:29). However, practice was not as severe and did not alienate people from the amateur art system. It was simply a well-known and unquestioned requirement for the group leader – as he/she was the person to select the repertoire for the group – to include "folk dances" of other Soviet peoples. These were not necessarily Russian "folk dances", and those of the neighbouring Latvians and Lithuanians were chosen in many cases (always in a Sovietised form).

The second fundamental institution for a folk dance group and its respective leader was the "house of folk creativity" (Estonian: *Rahvaloomingu maja*). Having the status of an institution of political education and propaganda, it was responsible for ensuring that the practice of "folk dance cultivation" and other amateur art genres in the country was conducted according to the guidelines of Soviet folk art policy. The main field of its activities was the (ideologically "proper") compilation and creation of repertoire, its distribution to the amateur art groups, as well as the training of group leaders.

Its main publication was the monthly *Our Repertoire* (Estonian: *meie repertuaar*), each issue including two to three descriptions of (newly-created) "folk dances" and was distributed to the cultural institutions and local libraries, so that it was easily accessible to everyone. Although it was the group leader who freely chose the concrete repertoire for his/her group, this journal had a kind of monopoly, at least concerning the "folk dance" repertoire. The vast majority of group leaders chose their dances from this journal. Other sources were not prohibited and dedicated group leaders could even create their own dances. However, the high enthusiasm and commitment, and also enough free time besides the regular occupation that were necessary to do so, prevented most of the leaders from obtaining such alternative material, as did, for example, the later folklore protest movement.

Therefore, the repertoire policy did not have the character of forced implementation but rather that of free choice, although this choice was not very wide. In fact, the repertoire of common folk dance groups was very much dominated by, and often limited to, the repertoire required for the major dance festivals. To take part in these huge festivals – where virtually the whole Estonian nation, relatively small indeed when it comes to the number of its inhabitants, came together in one spot – became a tradition of its own and was a major driving force for participation in amateur art.

For the training of group leaders, the house of folk creativity conducted a series of seminars and long-term courses. Especially influential were the one-month camps, held in summer when amateur art activities paused. The full range of Soviet "folk dance" art was taught there, including the ideological foundations of Soviet "folk art", the historical and then-current (meaning Sovietised) "folk culture" of the different peoples living in the USSR and the socialist countries, respectively, but also very practical contents such as correct behaviour on stage, wearing of costumes, elocution, make-up, dance techniques and practice and motivation methods, which meant the dissemination of the Soviet style. These seminars were free of charge for the participants, people were given permission to leave their work place with continuation of full salary payment, and they were even given additional pocket money for the time they were staying away from home, not to mention free accommodation and transport.

And again, in practice the express political character of these seminars was very limited and even the organisers of the seminars often skipped direct political lectures, mentioning that all this had been heard a thousand times before at workplaces or in the culture house, while making the point in the corresponding bureaucratic report as "done" (Uno Veenre interview, 01:08:15).

The one-month seminars, especially, were set up as social events, with parties in the evening, getting to know new friends, drinking lots of alcohol, and also

with enough space to discuss "unofficial", flimsily political issues (Margus Veenre interview, 0:49:41). Participants simply had a good time besides improving their "folk dance" skills. And all of that was paid for by the state.

Apart from these seminars the "house of folk creativity" also published methodical material and exemplary work experiences of model groups, and provided advice to amateur artists in personal consultations, and via phone or mail. Furthermore, staff members were touring across the countryside, especially prior to the big song and dance festivals, in order to give assistance on the spot. The relation between assistance, political interference and control was fluid and depended very much on the individual person in charge and his or her flexibility.

As already mentioned, one political aspect of the amateur art system was to keep people busy. Therefore, a characteristic of amateur art was the permanent engagement of the groups in constant competitions, so that there was always an event at hand to prepare for. The most important and mass event in the case of "folk dance" was the "all-Estonian dance festival" that took place every five years, parallelly to the song festivals. As the number of groups given access to the festival was limited, the participants had to compete in a hierarchical system of competitions, starting at the local level and continuing to the regional and on to the national level, in order to make it to the festival. Similar events were held annually on the district and on the local level. As these festivals had the character of a common homogeneous mass performance with a single repertoire and choreography for all dancers, the groups had to rehearse the prescribed (and carefully selected) dances, thereby distributing a common (Soviet style) repertoire.

Another type of competition, where group leaders could freely choose their repertoire, although having been given a "recommendation", was the so called "overview" [Estonian: *ülevaatus*, Russian: *smotr*], a mixture of control and competition. Similarly to the competitions in the course of the dance festivals, the winners were determined by performing in front of a jury, consisting of acknowledged dance activists, scholars, staff members of the house of folk creativity, local culture workers, and/or members of Party and state administration. Depending on the dimension of the particular event, the competition could include several levels. The largest such "overview"-type event was the "all-union amateur art festival" [Estonian: *üleliiduline rahvaloomingu festival*] bringing the winners of the national competitions to the stages of Moscow. These "overviews" were a constitutive part of the amateur art system covering the Soviet Union and the Estonian SSR respectively geographically (who is the best amateur artist in a certain region?), by genre (which is the best folk dance group, choir, etc.), or by profession (for example, which is the best amateur art group in the fishing industry).

Groups were thus attracted by many such competitions and were occupied most of the time with the preparation for one or the other. As it was connected to

social prestige, people participated in these competitions willingly. Being a good amateur artist was in fact a sign of personal success and was highly esteemed in society.

The third field of public performances was related to the service character of the amateur art groups, providing a programme at their own cultural institutions and at neighbouring or partner institutions. Groups were engaged in the celebration of the manifold holidays with a clear political message, such as the First of May, the anniversary of the October Revolution, Soviet Army Day, the anniversary of the Estonian Socialist Soviet Republic, Victory Day or election days, but also events that were less political at first sight, including summer or village celebrations and personal holidays, such as registrations of birth, celebrations on reaching old age, marriages and anniversaries. Amateur art was therefore an integral part of one's personal life and identity.

In addition to all costs being covered by the state, a broad system of awards, titles and material prizes at the competitions was introduced, bringing prestige and material advantages for the group leader, for the group itself and also for the cultural institution to which the group was affiliated.

These institutions as a whole, as well as the economic enterprises, which contributed financially and materially to the functioning of the amateur art system, were part of a similar system of hierarchical competitions, the so-called "socialist competitions". A successful amateur art group was therefore important for the general performance of the cultural institution as a whole, which for its part contributed, together with the activities of the enterprises, to support cultural work in the best interest of the whole region and its prestige. This network of interdependence would guarantee a common/collective feeling of responsibility for the overall result, and individuals as well as institutions spurred each other on to do their best, in order to advance amateur art and Soviet culture and society as a whole.

By broadly reporting about the events and competitions of the amateur art system – the ongoing preparations, the actual course of the competitions and the subsequent allocation of awards – and by conveying the corresponding ideological message, Soviet media largely contributed to the internalization of that system and the ideological message. At the same time, the national (Estonian language) media reported strictly on an Estonian level and only very rarely crossed the borders of the republic. Even in events like the "all-union amateur art festival", news concentrated on the performance of Estonian groups, barely mentioning the amateur art of the other republics. The same was valid for media coverage inside the Estonian SSR itself, where ethnic (Estonian-)Russian amateur art groups were hardly mentioned specifically. Therefore, although transmitting socialist ideology, media coverage assisted in the creation of an image of the amateur art system being something (socialist) Estonian.

Although Estonia, unlike almost all other union republics and socialist states, did not have its own professional state folk dance ensemble for reasons that remain unknown, the role of these state folk art ensembles was filled in Estonia by the amateur groups themselves. Corresponding to the award system in amateur art, some groups, like "Tarvanpää", "Kullaketrajad", "Kuljus" or "Sõprus", celebrated in the media for their technical precision and their "educating" and captivating repertoire, reached a somewhat elite-status. Although not professional and fully integrated into the system of amateur art, these groups carried out the function of show-casing Soviet Estonian "folk dance", getting special attention in the media and touring in and outside the USSR and the communist block. Additionally to the general prestige, these groups were involved in the educational seminars of the houses of folk creativity, thereby distributing the ideal Soviet style.

Although weaker and smaller groups were far from being able to reach such technical perfection and artistic expression, it was clear what perfect Estonian "folk dance" had to look like. And people, adoring the groups' professionalism, were orientated towards these models.

By the end of the 1960s, this Sovietised type of "folklore" and the corresponding amateur art system, as the institutional framework in which it was cultivated, became the unquestioned expression of (genuine) Estonian "folk art", offering a rare opportunity to live out (publicly) one's national Estonian identity. When looking a the political circumstances, it becomes clear that this officially permitted and even promoted cultivation of a (socialist-)national Estonian identity in the framework of the amateur "folk art" was indeed a field where, on the one hand, these feelings could be channelled and controlled by the regime, but where, on the other hand, national identity could still be kept alive and could then, when the stability of the Soviet rule started to tumble, be implemented against the regime.

Especially the increasing tendencies of Russification in Estonia, including massive immigration of Russian-speaking workers with the forced industrialisation[6] and the ever- intensifying claim to install Russian as the second official language on an equal footing with Estonian, created a feeling of threat for Estonian national identity and the sheer existence of the (numerically small) Estonian nation. Examples from other peoples of Finno-Ugric origin living inside the USSR, such as the Ingrians, the Veps or the Livonians, who in fact ceased to exist, created the horrifying scenario of the fate to come for the Estonian nation. Especially the major nationwide song and dance festivals and the engagement in "Estonian folk art" in the framework of the amateur art system in general, offered a place where this felt threat could be compensated for by the cultivation and celebration of a strong common national identity – although not necessarily an anti-communist one.

[6] The percentage of ethnic Estonians living in the ESSR went down from more than 90% before the war to 60% in 1989 (Saar; Titma 1992:5).

One of the most important and impressive events of the amateur art system in this context of keeping national identity alive was the song festival of 1969 in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the song festival tradition in Estonia, which was celebrated as a big national event, entering the Estonian collective memory as a crucial experience for keeping alive national identity in the years under Soviet rule to come. It was already embedded then at a time when a general "back-to-the-roots" movement was gaining ground, and had strong implications for the cultivation of "folk art" in the amateur art system.

Inventions of a "Back-to-the-Roots" Folklore Movement

The "back-to-the-roots" movement in amateur art started in Estonia at the end of the 1960s in total consonance with international trends in reaction to the processes of modernity that were, with a certain delay, actually quite the same in the West as in the socialist East, emphasising the return of the social function and style of old, "authentic folklore". Although cut off from direct contacts with the western world, there was an interrelation through different mediators. Most influential in the Estonian case were their colleagues in Lithuania, where the movement started somewhat earlier, was generally more numerous and more radical in its political dimension (Šmidchens 1996:53–55).

However, influence also came from the socialist states of Eastern Central Europe, for example from the Hungarian "Tanzhaz" movement, and from folklore festivals in Czechoslovakia, where more "authentic forms of folklore" had been able to re-establish an equal position beside the "Sovietised" forms even some years before (Novák 1994:160), providing a source of inspiration for their visiting Baltic friends.

This general "back-to-the-roots" trend covered not only "folklore" and not only the Baltic republics of the USSR. The same was actually taking place in the other republics, including Russia itself. In addition to a very similar folklore protest movement (Olson 2004), the village-prose movement gained ground in literature, officially supported by Soviet cultural policy (Brandenberger 2002:243); and also in classical music Soviet composers, similarly, for example, to Veljo Tormis and Arvo Pärt in Estonia, turned their attention to ancient folk singing techniques, to religious motifs and to ritual songs, and arranged them in new compositions offering fresh and interesting sounds and interpretations, while at the same time not openly violating the officially accepted and permitted boundaries of "Socialist Realism", since their music was based on "folklore" (Schwarz 1982:861–862). In the Estonian amateur art system this renewed attention and appreciation of "folk art" found its expression in two ways: the interest in "folk art" grew rapidly and new groups were founded, especially in the countryside, bringing people

together just to have fun by playing "folk music" without much attention to its artistic quality. Every sound-making tool was used as an instrument, regional unpublished repertoire, remembered by the older members of the communities, was resurrected, and everybody played as they thought was correct, without any orchestration or sheet music. However, from the viewpoint of the dominating taste, these developments were regarded as quite inferior, and cultural workers started very quickly to offer assistance on how to improve and play more nicely, thereby reintegrating these groups – that were actually quite close to a traditional functional interpretation of "folklore" – into the Soviet ideal conception of "good folk art", which was aimed at technical and artistic virtuosity. Thus, this more or less unconscious and apolitical part of the folklore movement was warmly welcomed by the regime, as it brought new people to the amateur art system. This was precisely the propaganda goal of the amateur art system: to show the blossoming of "folk art" under socialist conditions and the assistance that the Soviet rule was generously granting to the "folk art" of every single Soviet nation, advancing Soviet culture as a whole – "national in form and socialist in content".

Another outcome of this "back-to-the-roots" atmosphere in the late 1960s – already eyed with reservation by officials – was the emergence of a small group of activists that very consciously and with a certain political message turned towards "authentic folklore". They tried to re-establish the "traditional way" of folklore both in form, using the scarce remnants still existing in the countryside and especially falling back on the large collections of Estonian folklore preserved in archives, but also by re-establishing its social function. The key word of the movement was that of "authenticity" (Boiko 1995:350), and it stood in contrast to the Sovietised style of "folklore", which was perceived by the protagonists of the protest movement to be artificial and fake.

The strict division by expressive domains introduced in the amateur art system, referring to the system of classical arts, was rejected in favour of an integrated approach, combining folk dance, singing, music-making, folk games and folk theatre plays in the activities and performances of a single group. The same was done with the standardized-way of performing (based on fixed choreographies and music arrangements), which was replaced by free spontaneous improvisation and the rejection of stage performance before a passive audience. The movement's activists tried actively to involve people in the current event, following at the same time as closely as possible the "original" models of old folklore. More important than the artistic value, stressed so much by the culture workers of the amateur art system, was the social character of the concrete event. Everybody should be enabled and permitted to take part, without limits on age or technical skills, imitating the ancient village community.[7] That approach towards "folklore" included

[7] This approach of including everybody, as Mats Lindquist states (2003:230), was in fact limited to one's own ethnic group and did not cover Russian inhabitants.

an alternative culture, stressing the appreciation of nature, common Estonian and generally Finno-Ugric origin, family and "traditional" (pre- or non-communist) values, all of which were to be found in "authentic folklore". Especially the connection to a common Finno-Ugric heritage offered an opportunity to expand one's identity from a quite narrow feeling of belonging to the (small) Estonian nation to an Estonian but, at the same time, also Finno-Ugric identity, covering millions of people, and thereby offering a much stronger anchor against the tendencies of Russification.

Although based on the traditional culture of Estonian peasants (of the past, 19th century), the bearers of the movement were not from the countryside, but instead a small group of young, urban intellectuals, partly rooted in ethnographical science. Although small in number, due to their occupations and their scientific and practical expertise, they had access to important channels of communication and to the administration of the amateur art system itself. They were part of overview-competition juries, acted as teachers at the seminars of the houses of folk creativity and participated in the planning committees of the dance festivals. Through this, and due to the fact that many young people had taken part in the activities of these groups over the years, their ideas influenced the general appreciation of "traditional folklore", offering for the first time an alternative interpretation to "Sovietised folk art", while at the same time not questioning the framework of the amateur art system itself.

The groups in the movement were subjected to the same rules as ordinary amateur folk art groups. They took part in the overview-competitions, had to fulfil the same bureaucratic procedures, were obliged to include non-Estonian repertoire and generally acted within the framework of the amateur art system. Not corresponding to official Soviet folk art policy, the movement did not stress the further development of "folk art" to a technically high-standing equivalent to classical art but, on the contrary, aimed at re-establishing the kind of "folklore" performed in pre-Soviet times, neglecting the "achievements" of Soviet rule in this field and very consciously stressing the Estonian identity, which clearly differed from the Russian one. It was this aspect that made the movement politically suspect in the first place, not so much to the high party officials themselves, but to the culture workers and bureaucrats on the ground, as the movement's groups did not fit the models of amateur art that were in place, with their strict separation by genre, the claim for artistic advancement, the sporty-athletic, ballet-like form of dancing, etc.

Although the mass of folk dance groups clearly stayed within the norms of the "Sovietised folk art", more and more groups incorporated at least some elements of the movement's ideas. For instance, individual solo musicians playing in a more traditional way were again more appreciated and, over time, a series of local

folklore festivals and village celebrations was initiated, where these traditional forms found more and more followers.

The breakthrough of the folklore protest movement came about with the decision of the Soviet leadership to host a conference of the CIOFF, the "International Council of Organizations for Folklore Festivals and Folk Art", in Tallinn in 1985 and to organize an accompanying folklore festival, "Baltica", to be held from 1987 in a different Baltic republic each year, which was part of the general attempts to intensify contacts with the West. The folklore protest movement groups gained a dominant position at these folklore festivals. From then onwards, groups aiming at "authentic" folklore mushroomed, growing to a mass movement largely influencing the atmosphere of the so-called second national awakening in the second half of the 1980s.[8] Wearing costume as everyday dress became popular and the ancient way of singing – of the so-called "runosongs" – spread and made its way into the mainstream, eventually even being used in pop songs with a direct political message. As this type of singing had practically no place in "Sovietised folk art cultivation", it was especially suitable to transmit a (non-Soviet) national identity. It was connected to pre-Soviet, ancient Finno-Ugric, that is, non-Slavic and non-Russian times, respectively. Combined with the relatively monotone, almost ruminant style of singing, with a lead singer and the repetition of the stanza by the rest of singers, which made it possible for everybody to participate even without knowing the text, "runosongs" were the perfect medium to transmit a collective feeling of belonging to the Estonian nation.

Conclusion: Old System and New Meanings

At the same time, parallel to the folklore movement gaining momentum, the amateur art system remained the same as ever but was also influenced by the general trend of the "second national awakening". Especially at the massive song and dance festivals, which had become an important national tradition in their own right, the "authentic" folklore of the protest movement – with its emphasis on improvisation, individuality and small intimate groups – did not find its place, for simply practical reasons. These mass events needed the standardized modes of "Sovietised folk art", guidance by a conductor and a common choreography. As "Sovietised folk art" was also generally accepted as "true Estonian folk art", it could – at least during the second national awakening and the fight for independence – fulfil the same principal function as the "authentic" interpretation of the folklore protest movement – to show one's "Estonianness".

Although amateur art, including these festivals, was a main tool of the Soviet propaganda machine, it was nonetheless perceived as something positive, both

[8] For details on the folklore protest movement see Šmidchens 1996.

during and after Soviet rule. Besides the practical implementation of the system, which led people to ignore its political character, many private (success) stories, personal experiences, and a feeling of joy and strong social linkages existed, which made amateur art part of one's own life story, creating a feeling of belonging. And it was seen as something Estonian, though possibly Soviet-Estonian, but nonetheless as *oma asja*, as it is called in Estonian, i.e., as "one's own". The interrelation between that personal identification and the function of cultivated "folk art" in the framework of the amateur art system, as (almost the only) place where it was possible to show and live out Estonian national identity publicly, created the potential of that system to be used in the fight for independence in the late 1980s.

In the situation of the "second national awakening" it was then easy to expel the most visible, and clearly Soviet parts of the amateur art system, such as the red flags, the openly ideological repertoire and requi rements of the "friendship among the peoples", at the same time claiming that the song and dance festivals especially and the amateur "folk art" in general, had always functioned as a platform of keeping "Estonianness" alive during Soviet rule. Although still quite Soviet in style and to a large extent a product of Soviet national policy itself, it was therefore not in contradiction to the new national ideology and there was no serious reason for it being abandoned.

Just how important these events of the amateur art system actually were for an Estonian identity is shown by the fact that even some groups of the folklore protest movement, who heavily criticised Soviet style "folklore" otherwise, took part in these events as well, therefore consciously accepting the inevitable need to rehearse Sovietised "folk art" techniques (Järvela interview, 01:07:04). The prevalence of the dance festival tradition particularly, which actually took its shape and dimension only during Soviet times, is a guarantee that Sovietised "folk dance" style will survive.

However, not only the visible surface of Sovietised "folk art" stayed alive after the break-up of the Soviet Union, but also some of the (unconsciously internalized) ideological components. For example, the word commonly in use for an amateur art group is still "collective", reflecting the political message. Another example is, for instance, that all my interviewees, despite their very different backgrounds have, up until now, found positive aspects in the "friendship among the people" policy, which was clearly seen as a part of Soviet propaganda but is, nonetheless, still appreciated as widening the personal horizon and the technical skills of the dancers. A third example is the repertoire itself. By now, the then reputable Soviet-Estonian "folk dance" choreographs, who created the new Sovietised Estonian "folk dances" for the amateur art system and who helped to spread the ideological message, are still appreciated and performed today, twenty years after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. The titles awarded during Soviet times are proudly mentioned to this very day, and "elite"–amateur folk dance groups, which were

openly used as propaganda tools and profited from the system to a great extent, were not abandoned, but continue to practice to this day, adored for their technical virtuosity, some of them even keeping their "socialist" names, as, for example, the "Sõprus" ensemble (meaning "friendship").

In conclusion, participation in "folk art" cultivation during Soviet times was and is perceived very positively down to the present day, connected to personal pride, success and social prestige. Although there was a clear political and ideological message connected to and implemented by that amateur art system, which definitely left its traces in people's minds, this policy was implemented in practice in a quite soft way, leaving enough space for people not just to accept it unquestioningly but personally to identify with it by adopting the system according their own needs and values. Thus, "folk art" has kept its potential to transmit an Estonian national identity, even in its Sovietised form and with all the inclusions of Soviet ideology. The continuous expression of this potential was assisted by Soviet national policy itself, which allowed and consciously supported that approach as long as it stayed within certain borders, since such an approach promised popular support for the communist regime in general. For a long time, this policy was quite successful in reaching its concrete goals, but when the general political situation changed and communist rule started to tumble, it was quite easy to highlight this national component of the amateur art system in the course of the national revival and to neglect its Soviet content at the same time – although it was still there – by eradicating its most obvious expressions. With the image of an important tool to keep national identity alive during Soviet times, it became part of the national discourse of the new state itself. Therefore, there was not seen to be any need for a fundamental change.

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"OBLIKOM NACIONALAN I SADRŽAJEM SOCIJALISTIČKI" ILI RADIJE "OBLIKOM SOCIJALISTIČKI I SADRŽAJEM NACIONALAN"?: "SUSTAV AMATERSKE UMJETNOSTI" I KULTIVIRANJE "NARODNE UMJETNOSTI" U SOVJETSKOJ ESTONIJI

SAŽETAK

Začuđujuća činjenica da neka današnja velika folklorna događanja u Estoniji jako nalikuju onima iz sovjetskoga doba i da je "folklor" u cjelini veoma visoko vrednovan, osnova je ovoga istraživanja. Razmatrajući svakodnevnu praksu kultiviranja narodne umjetnosti unutar institucionalnog okvira "sustava amaterske umjetnosti" u sovjetsko doba, osobito 1970-ih, članak nudi objašnjenje o tomu zašto je "sovjetizirana narodna umjetnost", unatoč cjelokupnoj komunističko-internacionalističkoj propagandi, zadržala potencijal za stvaranje nacionalnog identiteta. Na temelju de Certeauove teorije prakse, iznosi se teza o transformaciji (za)danog institucionalnog i ideološkog okvira u nešto što su ljudi mogli prihvatiti kao vlastito, i to u dvostrukom smislu: u smislu pripadnosti osobnim životnim