



Hungarian Folk Music from the Kis-Küküllő Region of Central Transylvania, Romania



ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4035

Hungarian Folk Music from the Kis-Küküllő Region of Central Transylvania, Romania

Collected and Annotated by László Kürti

SIDE ONE

- Band 1. Songs of Samu Nagy Miklós
- Band 2. Magyaros Dance Tune
- Band 3. Csárdás and Zsiros Dance Tunes

SIDE TWO

- Band 1. Rigó nótája
- Band 2. Juhász nótája
- Band 3. Féloláhos Dance Tune
- Band 4. Magyaras
- Band 5. Féloláhos Song and Zsiros with Orchestra
- Band 6. A Complete Set of Five Dances
- Band 7. Ózdi szegényes
- Band 8. Magyaros Dance Music



**Archival Property
Smithsonian Institution
Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Public Service**

(P)© 1985 FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP.
632 BROADWAY, N.Y.C., 10012 N.Y., U.S.A.

Hungarian Folk Music from the Kis-Küküllő Region of Central Transylvania, Romania

Collected and Annotated by László Kürti

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4035

Hungarian Folk Music from the Kis-Küküllő Region of Central Transylvania, Romania

Collected and Annotated by László Kürti

INTRODUCTION

This collection of Hungarian folk music is an attempt to introduce an area little known to the outside world. The recordings on this disc were made in May 1984 on two trips that I made to the counties of Mureș and Alba in the Socialist Republic of Romania. This music is not the only folk music of the region; the German speaking Saxons, the Romanians and the romany speaking Gypsies all have their respective musical traditions. Hungarian villagers also possess dances and songs, notably western-style ballroom dances and recent urban-style popular music, that are shared by all the ethnic groups in Central Europe. The Romanian nation-state is undergoing the same kind of socio-economic and technological developments that are affecting much of East-Central Europe. The regional and local aspects of these communities are giving way to a more unified popular/urban style culture. This cultural exchange is constantly being reinforced by the state-controlled media and the developing tourist industry. However, Romania today, especially the northern one-third of the country, known as Transylvania, maintains many of its former folk traditions; the severeness of geographical conditions and the cultural and ethnic barriers have preserved many isolated cultural traits. These recordings are a sampling of the Hungarian ethnic group and may be useful towards an understanding of certain ethnic processes and cultural patterns.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING

There are many Magyar (Hungarian) settlements in the central part of Transylvania. The region represented in this recording is known in Hungarian as *Kis-Küküllő* and *Tîrnăveni*, from the only city in the area, *Tîrnăveni* (or *Dicsőszentmárton* in Hungarian), in Romanian. The Mureș river in the north and the *Tîrnava Mare* in the south borders the area; while the cities of Aiud to the west, and Sighișoara, to the east, indicate the geographical location of our region. Hungarian ethnographers and folklorists have often referred to it as the Maros-Küküllő dialect (Martin 1982), because of its distinctive and special features exhibited. This can be seen in the various forms of folk art

products (embroidery, textiles, folk fashion, dances, music etc) that are native to the Kis-Küküllő dialect. Romanian folklorists refer to it as the central Transylvanian dialect, with particular local styles around major communities such as *Tîrnăveni*, *Luduș*, *Mediaș* and *Rupea* (See, Bucșan 1971: 56, 88).

There are several smaller ethnographic sub-dialects, however. Proceeding from east to west, the Maros, Hegyemegett, Vizmellék and the Nagy-Küküllő can be distinctly separated as having characteristics of their own. In this study we are concerned only with the Hegyemegett and Vizmellék, the former north of the river *Tîrnava Mică* and the latter right next to it (hence the name 'Along-the-River').

This ethnically heterogeneous region has been known throughout the century as an excellent wine-producing country-side. Still there are villages, *Dimbău* and *Craiești* among them, that produce wine for both national and international consumption. Most people, however, find work in industry and to a lesser degree in local agricultural cooperatives. The main pattern, men working in nearby factories (in *Tîrnăveni*), women and the elderly find work at home or at the cooperatives, is general not only to this area but to the whole of Transylvanian village life (Cole 1981, Verdery 1984). There are three communities represented in this recording: *Királyfalva* (Craiești), *Küküliődombó* (Dimbău) and *Magyarsülye* (Șilea). The people of Dimbău belong to the Unitarian Church, while the others to the Hungarian Reformed Church; all the Romanians are, of course, Romanian Orthodox.

MUSIC AND DANCE

While there are some small booklets published on folk music of this area, unfortunately only in Hungarian (See, for example, Horváth 1971, Szenik, Almási and Zsizsmann 1957), it is true that this part of central Transylvania is still largely unknown to ethnomusicologists and folklorists. This is also true to a certain extent in the case of dance and folk customs (Karsai 1958, Martin 1982). The Hungarian musicologist, János Jagamas, in a seminal article, called attention to the richness and the "striking individual features" of the music of the Kis-Küküllő (1959:477). The prominent dance folklorist, György Martin, also argues, and justifiably so, that the strong adherence to the dance traditions and the development of a distinct local style of dance forms make this region especially valuable for scientists to study (1982:183-184). An intention of this collection is to introduce the particular basic stylistic tendencies and the

variety and brilliance of Kis-Küküllő music. To this end, it seemed feasible to emphasize the nature of authentic and live musical practices and to seek out music which best represent this region.

Most of the pieces presented here are songs, dance songs and instrumental melodies. While singing the tendency is to keep a somewhat slow tempo, even if the song is a dance tune. I have observed that during singing, both at weddings and at prearranged recording sessions, men prefer to sing in an extreme high pitch and forced manner. With women this practice seems less evident. In group singing harmonization is always avoided; and the whole party sings the same notes with sometimes minor changes in the word order. At a wedding that I observed, in the community of Királyfalva, some of the couple dance tunes were accompanied by singing. But this was not continuous and predominant. Rather during break-time, or between dance-cycles, the musicians played slow "hallgatók" (literally 'listening-songs') that were requested by the people at the tables. Many of these belongs to the classic category of folk songs. Others are from the written urban tradition of popular style music.

When asked, singers never referred to their repertoire and pieces as 'folk song,' 'folk ballad,' 'soldiers' song' or 'wedding song' and other labels used by researchers and scientists. In their native terminology only a few terms exist to order their musical system. Such an expressions, as for example, "nóta" or "ének", simply mean 'song' and used for almost all of the songs one possesses. The only exceptions seem to be the dance tunes where the proper dance names are used to identify certain kinds of songs. Most of the time singers will remember songs by their first lines, or by the melody whistled to them.

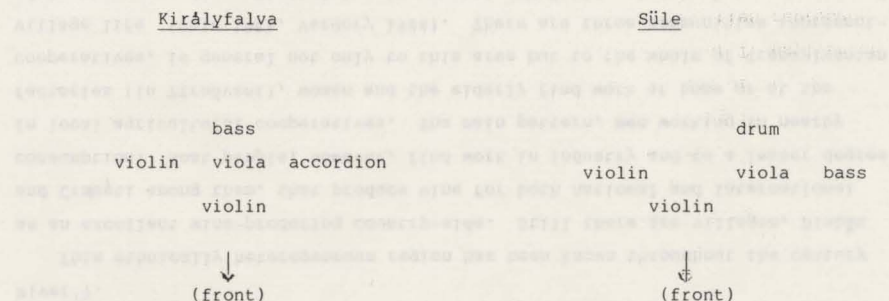
Weddings that I observed, it became evident that their forms, structure and organization underwent some serious, if not fundamental changes from their earlier counterparts. Not counting the popular and widely used tune of the "Rákóczi March" there were no other ritual tunes utilized. After the church ceremony the young couple is greeted by this melody. Ritual dancing front of the church was also absent (for comparison, see my recordings from the Kalotaszeg region, Kürti 1983). After certain ritual functions, such as bringing food to the wedding party or at the traditional midnight 'bride-dance,' general dance tunes were played. Such a loss of ritual elements and music seems to be in line with the abandonment of other earlier elements, such as wearing traditional clothes that one can observe in the nearby reagions of Mezőség and the Székelyföld (See, Kós, Szentimrei and Nagy 1978).

Another facet of the Kis-Küküllő musical culture that is unique is the great diversity of instrumental and dance music. Most of the musicians are Gypsies. There are, however, a few outstanding non-gypsy players as well; one such prominent figure is the Hungarian Ferenc Benedek 'Pecó', born in 1927, and now lives in Tîrnăveni. He was a respected band-leader for several

decades and played with his son in many of the close-by settlements. Most of his recorded material was erased, unfortunately, in the field. Interestingly, many of the gypsy musicians live in Adámos (Adămuș), although there are a few bands in other villages as well.

According to older band leaders, formerly only the first-violin (primás), viola (brácsás) and double-bass (bögös) made up a band. Sometimes two violins and two violas were used to amplify sound or to take off some of the burden from other musicians. Cimbalom and clarinets were not in demand. In the past two-three decades a new instrument, the accordion (harmonika), was added. Only recently, four-five years or so, a drummer (dobos) and an electric guitar have appeared on the scene. During dances, balls and weddings the demand is great for popular and rock music for the younger audiences. Electro-technology is also making its slow debut in this region, for primitiv and home-made amplifiers and microphones can be seen here and there. The dubious and prehistoric sounds that come out of these gadgets do not seem to bother the youth who enjoy dancing some free-style dances, variously called as 'rock' and 'shake.'

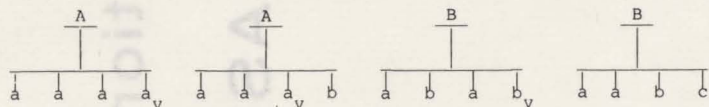
Bands are always placed on a specially erected platform of the hall, house or tent. Always in one of the corners, never in the center of the area. The general formation of the band can bring various arrangements of the players. At the two weddings these were the set-ups.



The number of dance forms, and their diverse local variations, makes this area a special one in the central part of Transylvania. The stylistic influences of the neighbouring regions, on the north and east the Székely sub-dialect, on the west the Mezőség, and on the south the largely romanian inhabited Hațeg, Țara Bîrsei and Fogăraș areas, can be felt in many ways on the Kis-Küküllő dances and dance music. The general couples dances of the area are the medium tempo "csárdás" and its faster relative, variously called as "friss csárdás" "szökös," and "zsiros" (literally 'fatty'). Both of them are turning couples dances that sharply differ from the romanian "invîrtîta" and the faster "hațegana" (Bucșan 1971, Martin 1982). The dance tradition of the people of

Küküllődombó is more complex than those of the nearby villagers'. Here there are two more couples dances that round the picture: the highly improvisative "székelyverbunk", that exists both as a man's solo and as a couples dance, and the "féloláhos" (translates as 'half-romanian'). This latter is different from the general "csárdás" in that there are more turning variations, men may ornament their dancing by slapping their boots, and using various jumping steps. It was fascinating for me to see that while the musicians play all these dance tunes in other villages as well, it was only in Küküllődombó where people danced the pertinent dances to them.

The major dance form, that everyone is talking about in this region, is called by two names: "magyaros" ('the Hungarian') or the "pontozó" ('pointing' or 'dotting'). Generally this is always the first number in the order of dances. It requires skill, energy and talent from the men who are willing to perform it front of the audience. It is both a solo and a group men's dance. Men, close relatives, friends and those of the same age category, sometimes try to harmonize their steps when they dance. Otherwise, they all try to outdo each other with their showy and fast foot-work. Men line up one by one and follow each other front of the orchestra (for a comparison, see my collection of the Kalotaszeg 'bachelors' dance', Kürti 1983, 1983a). The "pont" refers to a musical phrase, marked with the letter "A", during which the dancer can perform four ponts (three which are the same and the fourth one closing the whole phrase), for example "a a a b." Thus, if we take one "pontozó" tune which is composed of two melodies both of them repeated twice, this is the formula: A A B B or, perhaps, A A_v B B_v. To the length of these four musical phrases the dancer will execute four movement phrases, or 'ponts.' Using capitals for the music and lower case letters for the movements, while showing the major forms of the ponts, this is what the dance and music structures looks like together.



The "magyaros" or "pontozó" is a close relative to the other men's dances that exist in this part of Transylvania (for more on the "pontozó" see, Kürti 1980, Martin 1982). There is one thing, however, that makes this variant especially intriguing. Namely, that here a couples dance is also performed to the same music. The dance is the same as in the general fast "csárdás" but the tempo is faster which makes it much more difficult to dance. Men who do not participate in the solo competition perform the "magyaros" with their partner.

In the Hegyemegett area, or as the locals sometimes call it the "lyukak"

(literally 'the holes' because these settlements are in the isolated pockets of mountain valleys), there exist a slower version of the "pontozó". Mostly performed by older men and to a much slower tempo, it is called the "öreges" ('the elderly') or the "régies" ('the old-time dance'). Many of the dance melodies for this dance do, in fact, refer to famous, now deceased, 'old-timers' who are remembered for their excellent dancing abilities. Such a dance tunes as the "Rigó nótája" (the 'song of Rigó', see musical selection) and the "Medvési Bicskiri Pistájé" ('the one that belongs to Pista Bicskiri of Medvés') are still asked from musicians by some old-timers. The "öreges" is never a part of the regular order of dances, but done at special requests. The one thing that is important to mention still is the dance-order or dance-cycle as played by the musicians in the three villages studied. The general patterns are:

Királyfalva (Crăiești)	Dombó (Dimbău)	Süle (Șilea)
magyaros/pontozó	magyaros/pontozó	magyaros/pontozó
lassú csárdás	lassú	lassú
friss csárdás	féloláhos	sebes/friss
	székelyverbunk	...
	szökös/zsiros	lassú/öreges/vénes

NOTES ON THE SELECTIONS

SIDE ONE

Band 1. Songs of Samu Nagy Miklós. The singer was born in 1912 in the village Küküllődombó (Dimbău) where he still lives. Originally living as a sharecropper, he earned his living later as a factory worker until his retirement. His talent and brilliance as a singer can be heard from these few pieces included. He has a little, hand-written notebook where he put down the first-lines of the songs he likes. During the recording he kept referring back and forth to refresh his memory. Samu Nagy Miklós is not only an outstanding singer but he is also a prominent dancer. He taught many of the younger dancers in his village. His love for dance also shows, for he possesses a great repertoire of dance songs and melodies.

A) "Szöke kislány..." (Little blondie where is your maidenhood).

B) "En az éjjel..." (Last night I have not slept an hour).

C) "Hol van az a betyár..." (Where is that bastard). This is a dance tune and belongs to the "féloláhos" dance form. During the weddings participated, this tune was played several times, with many different verses, some quite unlike this one here.

D) "Kolozsvár nincs bekerítve..." This is also a "féloláhos" dance song. It is unique because half of it is in Hungarian and half of it is in Romanian (for a comparison, see Horváth 1971:385). The first line is always the Hungarian part and the following is the Romanian (in the text the latter in underlined):

Kolozsvár nincs bekerítve, Szlobodin drumos.

Ki lehet menni belőle, Nu vátel grundos.

Csak egy rózsza maradt benne, Lásze remuje,

Kiért holtig fáj a szivem, Asá trebuje.

E) "Búra, búra, búbánatra születtem..." (I was born for eternal sadness). A haunting and beautiful melody, this tune belongs to the "lassú" couples dance category.

F) "Erdély be vagyon kerítve..." (Transylvania is completely surrounded). Composed of four verses, this sad historical soldiers song tells about the difficult lives of army-men far away from home.

G) "Tiltanak babám, tiltanak tőled..." (They are against my love to you). This is the song of the "lassú" dance category.

H) "Kispejlovam megérdemli a zabot..." (My bay colt deserves plenty of oat). Built up of three different verses, some relating to the nomadic life and others to romantic involvement, this is also of the "lassu csárdás" category.

I) "Édesanyám sok szép szava..." (The many warning words of my mother). Another "lassu" dance song in which non-sensical syllables fill up the remaining musical notes, a practice common in this part of Transylvania.

K) "A dombói nagy hid alatt..." (Under the big Dombó bridge). This is another "féloláhos" dance tune quite popular in the Maros-Küküllő ethnographic dialect (See, also Horváth 1971:364). Most of the Hungarian villagers in the area sing this song and believing this is their own song, for always their villages' names are substituted. There are many verses to it. This one is different from the one in selection "I", for there are no non-sensical syllables for the remaining music. This one is sung in SIDE TWO Band 5, with orchestra.

L) "Esik eső nagy sár van az uccán..." (Rain's falling, the streets are mucky). This song, describing the separation of two lovers, is a beautiful example to show the particular styles in this region. It is composed of three musical lines the second and third being identical, a rule that is followed in the text of the song as well. According to Jagamas these are "either borrowed from Rumanian folk songs or else are the products of Rumanian influence (1959: 475). Another musicologist, Lajos Kiss, makes a somewhat different observation by saying that these kinds of songs are popular in other parts of Transylvania and among Romanians (Kiss 1982:10).

Band 2. "Magyaros" dance tunes played at the wedding in Királyfalva. The gypsy band

from Ádámos plays two different "magyaros" or "pontozó" tunes with the total phrase structure ABB, ABB, AA_vBB, XX, ABB, ABB. Here the "X" refers to the part known as "cifrája" or "aprája" ('the ornamentation'), which is utilized by band leaders to show off and, perhaps, to think about the new melodies to come. The band is led by Pista Didi (born in 1923 in Ádámos) and his son, with József Kozák "Muckó" (born 1949 in Ádámos) on the viola, Salamon Dömötör (born 1929 in Ádámos) on the bass, and a Romanian gypsy accordionist. The set ends with the traditional three-chords closing formula.

Band 3. "Csárdás" and "Zsiros" dance tunes. This was extracted from a larger slow and fast "csárdás" set played by the same band at the same wedding. The medium tempo is in 4/4 and accompanied by the fast "düvő" technique (both the viola and double-bass play fast quarters); and the "zsiros" is in 2/4 and accompanied by the "esztam" or upbeat rhythm. This set is particularly valuable since father and son both play first violin and the various ways of ornamentation and improvisation can be studied.

SIDE TWO

Band 1. "Rigó nótája." (The song of Rigó). This is a special "pontozó"/"magyaros" tune, in the AABB pattern, played in the earlier orchestration (violin, viola, bass). The viola accompaniment is rather strong and accented, a style that is preferred both by the dancers and the musicians. The viola's playing pattern is as follow: $\begin{matrix} \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot \\ | & | & | & | \end{matrix}$ with the second notes more punctuated. The musicians are from the earlier band: Didi, Kozák and Dömötör.

Band 2. "Juhász nótája." (Song of the shepherd). Played by the same three musicians just outside the church, when they were waiting for the crowd to come outside. Béla Bartók, in his now classic work, Rumanian Folk Music (1967, Vol. 1, p. 55), observes that this music, always in two parts, tells the story of a shepherd who is lamenting his lost sheep (melody A) and, then, becomes happy when he finally finds them (melody B). He also notes that this "genre is spread well over all the Rumanian territory" (ibid). My feeling is that it is common in most of East-Central Europe (See, further, Pesovár 1984). In some of the Hungarian speaking areas a curious pantomimic dance is performed to this piece.

Band 3. "Féloláhos" dance tune. The same three men's band played this dance tune after the above piece. When I asked the musicians they did not know any words to this song and claimed that this is a strictly instrumental piece.

Band 4. "Magyaras". This dance music was also recorded at the same wedding in Királyfalva, but with another gypsy band from the village. This band belonged to the bridal party, while the earlier band played at the groom's party. It is a kind of family band, for most of the members are from the same family: Lajos Lukács (born 1936 in Királyfalva) on violin, Ernő Lukács (born 1944) on bass, Ferencz Lukács on viola and a Romanian gypsy accordionist. The melodic pattern is rather strange, for it is composed of four different tunes as follows: AA,B,CC,D,A. There seems to be a curious hierarchical order among gypsy musicians, of whom the older generation always claims to be 'Hungarian gypsy' and speaks perfect Hungarian and, which is astonishing, never play the accordion. In contrast, the younger gypsy musicians speak poor Hungarian, sometimes identify themselves as Hungarian or Gypsy, rarely Romanian, and have a greater knowledge of Romanian folk and popular music. They are also outstanding accordionists.

Band 5. "Féloláhos" song and "zsiros" with orchestra. This set was played by the above band. It was a rare occasion. The village just received a new priest who was invited to the bridal party at the wedding. This song, which the people of Királyfalva value a lot, was meant as a greeting for the newly appointed priest. This kind of singing, however, is common later in the night and in the early morning hours. The melody is the same as song "K", in Band 1, SIDE ONE, but the words differ. To my knowledge, this is the only dance song with so many verses from this area. The part included picks up about the middle of the song.

Band 6. A complete set of five dances. This is a full dance-order performed by the trio in Band 1; it includes the five dances: "magyaras," "lassú," "féloláhos," "székelyverbunk," and "zsiros."

Band 7. "Ózdi szegényes." (The slow pontozó from Ózd). The same orchestra are invited to other villages of the 'holes,' such as Ózd (Ozd), Bükkös (Bichiş), Istvánháza (Iştihaşa), Szentbenedek (Sînbenedic), Medvés (Medveş) and others. As I mentioned earlier in this sub-dialect there exist the slow version of the "pontozó". In the village of Ózd they call it "szegényes" (literally 'poorish'), which really refers to the fewer movements in the dance and slower accompaniment.

Band 8. "Magyaros" dance music. This set was recorded a week later at another wedding in Süle (Şilea), one of the communities of the 'holes.' The band was from Ádamos and led by the famous violinist József Czir. The first violin was poorly amplified and the noise, as well as the dancing level fairly high. Thus, the recording is not as clear as some of the earlier ones. Men constantly yell words and short dance-calls to the dancers.

REFERENCES CITED

- Bartók, Béla.
1967 Rumanian Folk Music. Vol. 1. Ed. by Benjamin Suchoff. The Hague.
- Bucşan, Andrei.
1971 Specificul Dansului Popular Românesc. Bucuresti: EARSR.
- Cole, John W.
1981 "Family, Farm, and Factory: Rural Workers in Contemporary Romania," In Daniel N. Nelson, ed., Romania in the 1980s, (Boulder: Westview), 71-116.
- Horváth, István
1971 Magyarózdí toronyalja. Kolozsvár: Dacia.
- Jagamas, János.
1959 "On Dialect Problems of Hungarian Folk Music in Rumania." Separatum from the Studia Memoriae Belae Bartók Sacra, Budapest: Akadémia, 461-492.
- Karsai, Zsigmond.
1959 "Táncalkalmak és táncos szokások Lőrincrévén." Táncstudományi Tanulmányok, 117-132.
- Kiss, Lajos.
1982 Lőrincréve népzeneje - Karsai Zsigmond dalai. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó.
- Kürti, László.
1980 "Hungarian Dance Structures: A Linguistic Approach." Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human Movement 1, 45-62.
1983 Transylvanian Wedding Music. Record Set. Folkways FE 4020.
1983a "The Bachelors' Dance of Transylvania." Arabesque 8/4, 8-14.
- Kós, Károly, Szentimrei, Judit and Nagy, Jenő.
1978 Kis-Küküllő vidéki magyar népművészet. Bukarest: Kriterion.
- Martin, György.
1982 "A Maros-Küküllő vidéki magyar táncdialektus." Zenatudományi Dolgozatok, 183-204.
- Pesovár, Ferenc.
1983 A juhait kereső pásztor. Székesfehérvár.
- Szenik, Ilona, Almási, István and Zsizsmann, Ilona.
1957 A lapádi erdő alatt. Bukarest.
- Verdery, Katherine.
1984 Transylvanian Villagers. Three Centuries of Political, Economic and Ethnic Change. Berkeley: University of California Press.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT I would like to thank the many people who aided my research. Many thanks to the people in the three villages where research was done. Perhaps the greatest help of all came from K. Csilla who accompanied me in the field and proved to be an invaluable colleague and friend. This recording is dedicated to her.

For Additional Information About
FOLKWAYS RELEASES

of Interest

write to



**Folkways Records
and Service Corp.**

632 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10012

