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In Defence of the Term and Concept of Traditional Music

ABSTRACT
Regardless of Eric Hobsbawm's negativistic understanding, 'tradition' is a powerful and dynamic (and in no way traditionalist) concept in academic folkloristics. The widespread scepticism against 'traditional music', both as a recognizable field of research and a matter of theoretical thought, is based on an insufficient and sometimes stereotypic understanding of a term and concept with a fascinating history. I argue that there is good reason to maintain a term which is intrinsically linked to core issues of ethnomusicology, among them community-based music, cultural innovation, oral/aural transmission, sonic orders, and stylistic pluralism.

KEYWORDS
Ethnomusicology
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Traditional music

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> "The interest evinced, since the beginning of the present century, by several European nations in the popular songs, folk-lore, and other monuments of the mental condition of man in different parts of the world, is therefore a sign of progress not less delightful than the most important discoveries which have been made through the agency of practical science."
>
> Carl Engel (1866: vii)

Definitions always have something suspicious about them, especially when we consider the impressive rise of 'inclusiveness', both as a social ideal and a rhetorical figure. There is no identity—be it of phenomena or of groups of humans—without exclusion. That is why, in my conviction, group identity should not be emphasized too much, and for the same reason 'identity politics' is in the focus of most critical intellectual debates nowadays (see Francis Fukuyama, Steven Pinker, Slavoj Žižek, Jordan Peterson, Alain Finkielkraut, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Bari Weiss, to name a few). Less problematical (in terms of ethics, but not necessarily methodology) is the categorization of things, processes, and ideas, including processes and ideas related to music. When we talk about 'popular music', we presuppose that there are other styles and genres of music not covered by this concept—which does not mean that they cannot be popular. In the first case 'popular' is used as a classifying, in the second, as a qualitative adjective.

Do we need classifying adjectives to distinguish one type of music from another? This is probably the case in many different encounters within the world of music, for practical reasons alone—when a connoisseur of a certain musical genre enters a CD shop or a music library, or when a musician looks for fellow musicians. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that a considerable part of musical performances cannot be subsumed under common categories. Do musicologists in general, and ethnomusicologists in particular, need a concept of 'traditional music'? To answer this question, I will try to briefly outline both the concept of tradition and of traditional music in ethnomusicology, as well as in neighbouring academic fields.

Concepts of *tradition*

Concepts based on the notion of 'tradition' have a long history in ethnomusicology and folkloristics, but the first discipline to establish *traditional* as a classifying adjective is

sociology, with its concept of 'traditional society'. Furthermore, according to Ewa Dahlig-Turek, "Polish cultural sociologist Jerzy Szacki suggests three possible meanings of 'tradition': (1) process of transmission, (2) object of transmission, and (3) evaluative attitude towards the transmitted content." (Dahlig-Turek, 2012: 313). All three of these meanings should be considered in the present discussion.

Sociology

Far from being universally acknowledged in sociology, the concept of *traditional societies* is opposed to *industrial societies* or (more frequently today) to *modern societies*. When Reinhard Bendix pointed to "the ideological implications of the ideal-typical contrast between tradition and modernity" (1967: 320), he was aware of the risks of the "evaluative attitude" (Jerzy Szacki, see above). Consequently, he warned against "contrasting the liabilities of the present with the assets of the past" (1967: 320). From his balanced position, he gave the following characterization:

> "Typically, traditional societies achieve intense solidarity in relatively small groups isolated from one another by poor communication and a backward technology and that also tend to create for their individual participants an intensity of emotional attachment and rejection which modern men find hard to appreciate and which they would probably find personally intolerable. Typically, modern societies achieve little solidarity in relatively small groups and by virtue of advanced communication and technology these groups tend to be highly interdependent at an impersonal level. In this setting individual participants experience an intensity of emotional attachment and rejection at two levels which hardly exist in the traditional society, namely in the nuclear family at its best and its worst, and at the national level" (1967: 320).

Folkloristics

Folklore, according to a widely accepted definition, is "artistic communication in small groups" (Ben-Amos, 1972: 13). Henry Glassie locates the social framework of such groups similarly to the way sociologists define traditional societies:

> "The "small group" is like the "traditional society," a human aggregate assembled by customary conduct. Its order derives from powers held among its members that remain theirs to enact, modify, or discard in the moment. The opposite of the traditional society is the society governed by codified law and controlled by powers vested in the state" (Glassie, 1995: 401).

One reason for the attractiveness of traditional societies for folklorists, as well as for anthropologists, is the "intensity of emotional attachment" that Bendix observed in small-scale communities. During extensive fieldwork experience, folklorists develop a passion for the quality of social relations, the value of hospitality, the power of shared feelings (Hondrich, 1996), and, of course, for the quality of artistic expression. Naturally, folklorists' understanding of tradition can differ in many ways from that of the sociologists, who tend to describe "premodern" societies as uniform, entirely ritual-bound, and directed towards the past, when it comes to their cultural expressions. Without aspiring to a definition, Glassie nevertheless devised an intellectually productive concept of tradition:

> "Accept, to begin, that tradition is the creation of the future out of the past. A continuous process situated in the nothingness of the present, linking the vanished with the unknown, tradition is stopped, parceled, and codified by thinkers who fix upon this aspect or that, in accord with their needs or preoccupations, and leave us with a scatter of apparently contradictory, yet cogent, definitions" (Glassie, 1995: 395).

In Glassie's understanding, tradition (1) points to the future, "its character is not stasis but continuity" (1995: 396), (2) it is about human creativity, "a generative process", as Colin Quigley (2012) later puts it, (3) it is exposed to the threat arising from normative claims to codify aspects of tradition, selected by outsiders, who "drifted into dreams of a mythic time before change, and invented natural, static, functionally pat cultures" (Glassie, 1995: 398). In other words: Glassie defends tradition from traditionalism.

Unlike most sociologists, Glassie makes a case for the creative individual in traditional societies:

> "[…] culture and tradition are alike in that they are constructed by individuals and people who, as a consequence of interaction develop ways that, being shared to draw them together, while distinguishing them from others" (1995: 398-399).

Later Glassie's students developed his performer-centred approach, fundamentally abandoning the opposition between the individual and the tradition, so extensively debated in earlier folklore studies: "the individual and tradition are inseparable and mutually constituting" (Cashman et al., 2011).

Glassie concludes his philosophical essay by putting the versatile nature of tradition in a functional context of history and human culture:

> "As resource and process, as wish for stability, progress, or revitalization, tradition—or something like it with another name—is the inbuilt motive force of culture. […] The big patterns are the yield of small acts. History, culture, and the human actor meet in tradition" (Glassie, 1995: 409).

Folklorists' passion for artistic creativity in small groups may evoke a somewhat idealistic picture of tradition. According to Glassie, "its opposite is not change but oppression […]. Oppressed people do what others will them to do. […] Acting traditionally, by contrast, they use their own resources" (1995: 396). This may be the case in the field of expressive culture—to name only the traditions of women's songs and ballads as an individual or collective response to the hardships of pre-industrial patriarchal society, slave songs in 19th-century USA or in contemporary Mauritania. From a sociological and historical perspective, however, it would be hard to draw a strict border between tradition and oppression. We have no reason to fall into the trap of traditionalism, downplaying or justifying the existence of oppressive regimes in traditional societies—with regard to women and socioeconomic and ethnic minorities with their sometimes very limited resources.

In addition to Glassie's criticism of the intellectuals' normative claims towards culture, one cannot overlook traditionalist discourses and ideological directives which can emerge from within cultural communities—sometimes with harmful consequences. One example is the dramatic reduction of Spanish lessons in Catalonian schools—the language of half of the Catalonian population and the precondition for cultural participation and economic success in Spanish society (Held, 2018). In a similar way, both white romanticism and indigenous traditionalism, according to journalist Jonathan Kay (2018), can be a serious obstacle for social development in some communities of the Five Nations. The situation in the Andean region in the first half of the 20th century was slightly different: according to Julio Mendívil, it was not local communities, but Spanish-

speaking intellectuals of the *indigenistas* movement that opposed Spanish language education for children of indigenous peoples.[1]

To return to the post-ideological mainstream of theoretical folkloristics, we should admit that for all the fundamental significance of tradition to folklore, folklore is dependent, however, neither on the concept of tradition, nor of traditional society. American folklorist Richard Dorson (1916–1981) could move easily between folklore of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, urban legends, and folklore of recent immigrant communities, hardly to be described as "traditional societies". Following Alan Dundes, "the American folklorist can be interested in collecting American Indian tales one day, and the games of primary school children the next" (1966: 232). Similarly, Russian folklorist Konstantin Shumov (b. 1959) is a specialist of traditional Russian tales and epics in the Perm region, as well as tales of tourists, and the customs of cigarette smokers.

Eric Hobsbawm

In anthropological writings, at least until recently, the concept of tradition has been frequently associated with Eric Hobsbawm's idea of "invented traditions". The title of the rather short introduction (Hobsbawm: 1983: 1-14) is far more frequently cited (typically garnished with a stereotypic reference to Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities") than its content. In 1983, the idea of purposefully created and ideology-driven traditions might have been new to most historians, but not to folklorists (Baker, 2000: 107; Bendix, 2009: 253), nor to sociologists (Bendix, 2009: 211). The focus of folklorists and anthropologists, however, is less on what Hobsbawm defined as tradition: "'Tradition' in this sense must be distinguished clearly from 'custom' which dominates so-called 'traditional' societies" (Hobsbawm, 1983: 2). For good reason, a Hobsbawmian concept of tradition is hardly productive in theoretical folkloristics: "From a folklorist's perspective, however, this notion that tradition is characterized by invariance, while custom 'does not preclude innovation' (Hobsbawm and Ranger [to be precise: only Hobsbawm], 1983: 2), is unconventional since most folklorists view customs as tradition and tradition as dynamic" (Baker, 2000: 107). Paradoxically Hobsbawm himself, six pages later, distinguishes "invented traditions" from "the strength and adaptability of

[1] I am indebted to Julio Mendívil who directed my attention to his book *Cuentos fabulosos: la invención de la música incaica y el nacimiento de la música andina como objeto de estudio etnomusicológico* (2018) where these issues are critically discussed.

genuine traditions" (Hobsbawm, 1983: 8). Whatever "genuine traditions" are for Hobsbawm, they seem to be closer to traditional societies: "Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented" (1983: 8). This is actually not new for anyone who is interested in the expressive culture of face-to-face groups in traditional or modern societies. We cannot blame a Marxist historian (concerned about the workers' solidarity with the nation state and their weak enthusiasm for revolutionary adventures in times of mass prosperity) for his lack of interest in humans' artistic creativity. However, it is disturbing how easily Hobsbawm misconceives the corresponding intellectual discourses:

> "Nevertheless, a general hostility to irrationalism, superstition and customary practices reminiscent of the dark past, if not actually descended from it, made impassioned believers of the verities of the Enlightenment, such as liberals, socialists, and communists, unreceptive to traditions old or novel" (1983: 8).

Folklore, even more than literature and 'art music', is a field that reveals Hobsbawm's low competence in the history of ideas with regard to tradition. A short glance at the Hall of Fame of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment folklorists in different European countries may show the following:

- Russian polymath and enlightener Nikolay A. L'vov (1753–1803$^{jul.}$/1804$^{greg.}$) was the author of the first scholarly folk song collection in Russia (1790).

- Joseph Sonnleithner (1766–1835), a key figure in the Viennese court and a progressive agent of Enlightenment values in culture and education, initiated an unprecedented folk music collection in most parts of the Austrian Empire.

- Archduke John of Austria (1782–1859) played a major role both in the modernization of education and the industrial development of Styria, as well as in the collection, preservation, and revival of local folk music.

- Pavel Rybnikov (1831–1885) was a member of a democratic circle in Russia and the founder of fieldwork-based epic studies as well as of performer-centred research; many of his followers, to mention only Aleksandr Gil'ferding, were of firm liberal convictions.

- Evgeniia Linëva (Eugenie Lineff, 1853 jul./1854greg.–1919), an opera singer who kept a conspirative correspondence with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, is more famous as a passionate and highly innovative fieldworker and the author of the first collection of Russian folk songs based on phonogram recordings.

- Another key figure in Russian music anthropology, Sergei Rybakov (1867–1922), more loyal to the cultural politics of the Tsarist regime, saw his military service in the Southern Ural in the context of Enlightenment values. An agent of social progress, he criticized local religious fanaticism and patriarchal oppression no less than cultural arrogance as well as economic and ecological exploitation by his Russian compatriots.

- The initiator of the first English folk revival, Cecil Sharp (1859–1924), was a Fabian socialist, and his temporary collaborator, the dance teacher Mary Neal (1860–1944), was a suffragette and progressive social worker. Albert L. Lloyd (1908–1982), a leading figure in the second revival, was an active member of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

- One may also mention the paradoxical nationalist cult of traditional North Russian epics in the Stalinist era (Ziolkowski, 2013).

All these enthusiasts (and professionals in many fields) valued traditional expressive culture, but never identified themselves with the old way of life of a pre-industrial patriarchal society, or even strove to restore it: "to praise traditions does not necessarily mean that one wants to revive traditional society or that one is against modernity" (Ronström, 1996: 17 cf. Morgenstern, 2017: 279). Such traditionalist agendas evolved later, in the context of certain antimodernist and overtly reactionary trends, notably in European life reform and the late romanticist youth movements of the late 19th/early 20th century.

Concepts of *traditional music* in ethnomusicology

Nowadays, at least in a European and American perspective, traditional music is often used as a synonym of folk and peasant music (Quigley, 2012: 47); the latter is less common in recent ethnomusicology. According to Quigley, "the term 'traditional' doesn't seem to occur all that often as a modifier together with music" (2012: 47). I was therefore

surprised to find this modifier ('traditional' as a classifying adjective) in the *Proceedings of the Musical Association* (Terry, 1914), with a strong conceptual emphasis, to which I will return. But it turned out that the concept is even older.

The English term "traditional music" evolved in the British intellectual environment of the mid-19th century and was adopted by other languages considerably later. It may have been introduced by Scottish lawyer and musicologist George Hogarth:

> "The great importance of what is called National Music, or, in other words, the popular or traditional music of different countries, not produced by regular composers, but handed down among the people from generation to generation, is now recognized" (Hogarth, 1839: 54).

The adjective 'national', in the cultural thought of that time, referred less to the nation–state, but to ethnic groups, very often to those, whose expressive culture is different from the cultural mainstream of the cosmopolitan elites (see below)[2]. What is interesting is the comparative approach, and therefore the case for diversity in Hogarth's statement, and its general recognition in the intellectual discourse. Thus, the first mention of "traditional music of all countries" takes up the long tradition of European perspectives on the musics of the world, going back to the works of Charles Burney (1726–1814), William C. Stafford (1793–1876), and François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871), to name only the most popular authors of their time.

[2] The equation of 'national' and 'folk' was also widespread in German musical discourse. See Felix Mendelssohn's famous invective: "No national music for me! Ten thousand devils take all folkishness!", in translation by Matthew Gelbart (2013: 4).

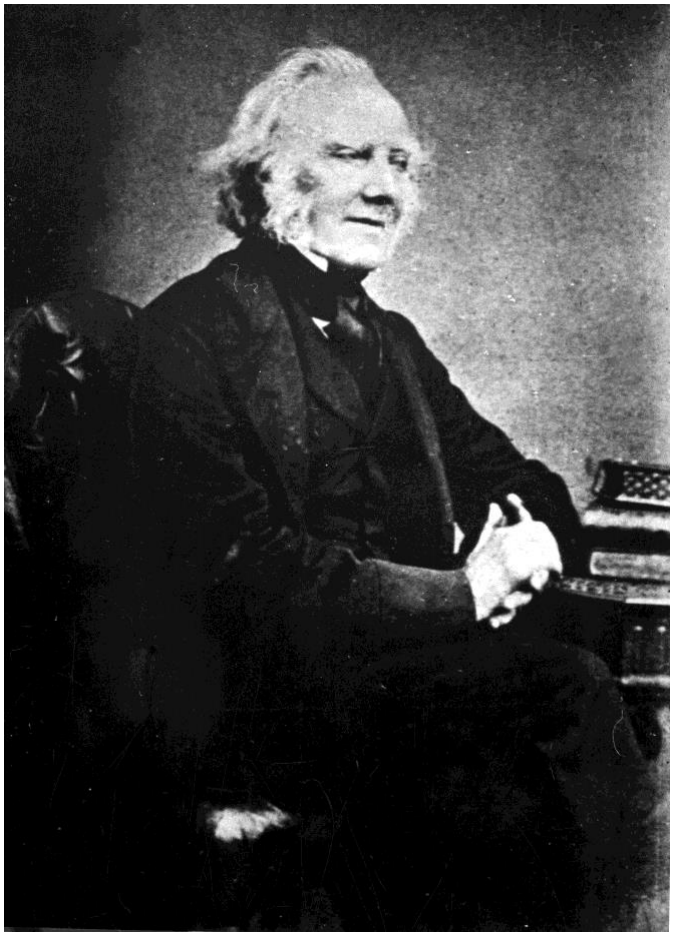

Figure 1. George Hogarth (1783–1870), Scottish lawyer, musicologist and the possible inventor of the term "traditional music" https://www.alamy.com/george-hogarth-image268813817.html (used by permission)

The concept of traditional music is in line with both of the key issues of early academic folkloristics: the focus on the lower classes and the paradigm of orality:

> "For a National Music is a Traditional Music. It is handed, or rather it floats down from age to age, solely by the strong hold it has upon the feelings and associations of the humbler classes of society; for, by the humbler class of a nation, not only national airs, but national legends and national customs are preserved" (Doubleday, 1857: 19).

English musicologist Richard Terry (1864–1938) also points to the variability of traditional music—a necessary characteristic of vernacular music from oral/aural transmission: "Shanty music being traditional music it is always alive. Two sailors never sing a Shanty exactly alike" (1914: 136). In line with progressive folk song scholars, such as music theorist Wilhelm Tappert (1830–1907) and philologist John Meier (1864–1953), he understands vertical transfer processes as a natural phenomenon in traditional

music: “Many a Christy Minstrel melody was adopted on board ship, for anything could be made into a Shanty” (1914: 137). In the spirit of the post-romanticist, realist turn of European folk music research (Morgenstern, 2018: 13–15), Terry (unlike some enthusiastic, but selective folksong collectors of his time) was ready to acknowledge the coexistence of different style strata in traditional music:

> “Like all traditional tunes, some shanties are in the ancient modes, and others in the modern major and minor keys. It is the habit of the 'folk-songer' (I am not alluding to our recognized folk-song experts) to find 'modes' in every traditional tune. It will suffice, therefore, to say that shanties follow the course of all other traditional music. Many are modern, and easily recognizable as such. Others are modal in character […]. Others fulfil to a certain extent modal conditions, but are nevertheless in keys, e.g. ‘Stormalong John,’ No. 10” (Terry, 1921: viii).

In the late 19th century the term traditional music was rivalled to a certain extent by its quasi-synonym *national music*, as defined by German-British musicologist Carl Engel (1818–1882): “National Music in a more strict sense of the term” (Engel, 1879: 1), as opposed to “the elaborate productions of distinguished composers” (Engel, 1879: 1) he understood as “the popular songs and dance-tunes traditionally preserved by the country-people and the lower classes of society, which form the great majority of a nation” (Engel, 1879: 1). Interestingly, Engel himself was not very convinced of his term, contrasting it with a well-established concept in his native language: “The Germans call it *Volksmusik*, a designation which is very appropriate, and which I should have rendered *folk-music*, had this word been admissible” (Engel, 1866: 1).

In an atmosphere of growing nationalist sentiments in late-19th century Europe, the Herderian concept of the national as an expression of culture, rather than a political claim, Engels’ concept of *national music* (as an English pendant to *Volksmusik*) had little chance of survival—especially as “the elaborate productions of distinguished composers” themselves were increasingly inspired by national ambitions and agendas. While *traditional music* remained a key concept of British academic musicology (Terry), a new cultural-political movement with strong pedagogical aspirations asserted the concept of *folk music*. This was the time of the first English folk revival with its leading figure Cecil Sharp, the co-founder of the Folk-Song Society (1898) and founder of the English Folk

Dance Society (1911). His collaborator Maud Karpeles (1885–1976) was a key figure in the foundation of the *International Folk Music Council* (1947).

In 1981 the Council was renamed the *International Council for Traditional Music*. Philip Bohlman suggests that "the change was not so much a result of believing in traditional music as of losing the faith in folk music" (1988: xiii). At the same time, as early as 1965, the *Archives of Folk and Primitive Music* at Indiana University was renamed *Archives of Traditional Music*. Obviously, the concept of traditional music was more inclusive to ethnomusicologists studying Asian music of social elites, such as classical Iranian music. As Bruno Nettl informs us, the latter "is denoted by the word *sonati*, which means 'traditional'" (Nettl, 2015: 294). Thus, 'traditional music' can be an emic term. One can argue that 'folk' is not less inclusive than 'traditional', as "[f]or the contemporary American folklorist in the 1960's, the term 'folk' can refer to *any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor" (Dundes, 1966: 232). However, this fruitful concept is limited to North American folklore theory and will hardly be accepted by the rest of the world. Since the Enlightenment, the attribute 'folk' is generally understood as a specific social location in the vast majority of a pre-industrial society (the 'common people'), and folk music refers to styles and genres, historically related in one way or another to these social formations (Morgenstern, 2014: 177f.)

It is obvious that the concept of traditional music is well-established, and that no alternative term has been seriously proposed. It is also obvious that it is continually met with scepticism: "The concept of 'tradition' is problematic in ethnomusicology" (Quigley, 2012: 46). Max Peter Baumann understands "traditional music" as a "programmatic term" (1991: 23) in the context of other "operational principles" (1991: 23), which "have become international and label reality more or less clearly, but at the same time they articulate leading interests and specific group viewpoints" (1991: 23). Baumann's scepticism does not arise from the very concept of traditional music, but from its possible associations with "value attributes such as 'authentic' or 'original'" (1991: 23). Oskár Elschek is even more sceptical. Acknowledging that "traditional Music" has the capacity to replace hierarchical terms "such as 'primitive music,' […] "music of High Asian (and also High American) cultures" (1993: 34), he doubts that

> "what have come to be termed "traditional music cultures" are more static, more persistent and more bound to tradition than those of e.g. European art music. I am somewhat critical of these trains of thought since they do not imply opposites but rather a difference of degree, a different time and space dynamic, a different transparency of change and an emphasis on micro- instead of macro-changes" (1993: 34).

Regardless of his reservations about the term 'traditional music', Elschek admits that "we at present have no alternative term" (1993: 35).

Discussion

The concept of 'traditional music' is quite understandable for most musicians, listeners, researchers, and cultural entrepreneurs. It is also a categorization frequently used by festivals, competitions, and cultural foundations—and, last but not least, it is used in the current names of a sound archive and the largest international organization of ethnomusicology, the ICTM.

Scepticism about this term and concept arises from five interrelated sources:

1. The misreading of 'traditional' as a qualitative rather than a classifying adjective.
2. The equation of 'tradition' and the purist imperative of 'traditionalism'.
3. A collectivist reading of 'tradition'.
4. The assumption that the concept of 'tradition' is based on a static understanding of culture.
5. The expansion of Hobsbawm's criticism of 'invented traditions' as a project of modern nationalism to any kind of tradition.

Ad 1.
Any music is in some way 'traditional', otherwise it would not be recognizable as music. There is no musical invention without reference to previous musical experience. The discussion below may show how continuity, as well as the social process of predominantly aural/oral transmission, are more typical for styles and genres referred to as 'traditional music'.

Ad 2.

The confusion of *tradition,* as a theoretical concept and cultural reality, with reactionary *traditionalism*—with its naïve and dangerous idealization of everything attributed as traditional—is based on an uninformed resentment. Normative claims to tradition as a value criterion, which Regina Bendix calls "the scholarly practice of separating the genuine from the fake" (1997: 212) have been the subject of critical discussions in both folkloristics and ethnomusicology. Ideological claims of traditionalism and purism are generally more anchored in populist and pedagogical agendas, than in academic scholarship (Morgenstern, 2018: 21f.).

Ad 3.

Considering the existing theories on the creative individual in tradition (Glassie, 1995; Quigley, 2012; Cashman et.al., 2011), it is not possible to equate the concept of tradition with an understanding of culture as something homogeneous. The long history of performer-centred research in folkloristics and ethnomusicology (Morgenstern, 2018 17f.) shows the opposite.

Ad. 4

The very idea of tradition is indicative, by nature, of a process taking place in society. Theorists of expressive culture have plenty of evidence and grounds to make a case for tradition as a dynamic and creative process.

Ad. 5

Hobsbawm's not entirely new "observations about invented tradition of the period since the industrial revolution" (1983: 9) are restricted to ideological agendas from a very specific (neo-Marxist) perspective. As far as they were not developed earlier by folklorists, they can be of some use for revival issues. The general significance of Hobsbawm's largely negativistic understanding of tradition is of limited use for the study of the world's musics.

Below I will discuss aspects of what is generally called "traditional music", to make clear the justification and perspectives of this concept in modern ethnomusicology, as well as its inherent ambiguities and limitations.

Shared styles and repertoires (community-based music)

Traditional music is more present in societies with less perspectives for 'choice', 'affinity', and 'belonging', to use Mark Slobin's key words for the study of subcultures[3] (1993: 55–57). For instance, European folk music, in a historical perspective, while often differentiated according to age, gender, and social status, was fairly understandable for all members of a given population. The integrative power of traditional music is inseparable from the intensive communication of the generations, which is of crucial importance for the very concept of tradition. In Central-Eastern Europe, instrumental music has been, or continues to be, in the hand of family ensembles, in particular of semi- or fully professional wedding bands with the leading figure of the first violinist. In Austria, since the interwar-period, quasi-dynastic folk-music families have been a driving force, such as the Derschmidt family in Upper Austria or the Windhofer and the Dengg family from Salzburg. They are of crucial importance for the social location and cultural sustainability of traditional music. Networks in popular music are fundamentally different and are very often associated with a specific subculture with lower potential for social integration (in which subcultures are usually not interested). We know 'folk-music families', klezmer dynasties, and 'blues families', but I have never heard of "rock'n'roll families", let alone 'punk families'. These genres are more bound to the specific experience of a distinct social setting and (at least in their heydays) practiced more within or for one age group. This is one of the reasons why we don't label rock'n'roll and punk as traditional music.

Tradition vs. innovation

Speaking generally, traditional music is about musical communities valuating change of styles and genres (as the intersection of structure and function) to a lesser degree than others do. One would hardly qualify music played at festivals like *Wien Modern* or *Nordic Music Days* as traditional music. In Western art music, the audience expects a composer to create pieces of music significantly different from those composed a generation ago. The same holds generally true for popular music. An exception to this rule may be revival movements with explicit reference to the original style.

[3] Subcultures, in a narrower sense, are countercultures, opposed to the values and habits of the societal mainstream. Musical subcultures are typical phenomena of musically pluralistic societies.

One may admit that the claim for innovation is ubiquitous in many music cultures studied by ethnomusicologists and folklorists. Thus, popular German broadside ballads from Early modern times are very often entitled 'A new song' (often sung to an older melody). Austrian folklorist Hans Commenda has observed a general and deeply rooted preference for new, rather than old songs, in traditional settings in Upper Austria (1960: 18). According to Sergei Rybakov, among the Muslim Bashkirs and Tyeptyars of the Southern Ural, songs lived "not longer than a lifetime, replaced with a new generation by a new song cycle" (1897: 198, original in Russian). This phenomenon is in some way reminiscent of personal songs in Native American communities.

All this evidence for musical and poetic inventiveness as a social value does not exclude a pre-existent stylistic frame. The generally lower intensity and slower tempo of change in traditional music ensures that the inventions are recognizable and understandable for the community. That doesn't mean that a change of musical styles and repertoires cannot trigger generation conflicts in traditional societies. In the 18th and 19th century, the arrival of the violin, and later, of the accordion in some European regions was not always welcomed by the older generation, not to mention that couple dances, such as the *Waltz* and the *Polka*, were largely considered to be immoral. But these conflicts, as a rule, subsided after some time, and the innovations were soon considered an integral part of local tradition.

Traditional societies

A great deal of what we call traditional music is directly associated with traditional societies (in the sociological sense), or at least originating from them. In the 19th century, "pre-modern" communities of peasants, herdsmen, and hunters, were the preferred settings for field studies by folklorists and ethnomusicologists. North American post-war folklorists increasingly turned also to modern urban societies and minority and applied issues, later followed by ethnomusicologists (cf. Morgenstern, 2018: 21f.). This is fertile soil for studies in social and musical change, as well as in the persistence of traditional expressive culture in a modern society. A good example is the *Horon*, a circle dance, deeply rooted in the East Black Sea Region of Turkey. It is an indispensable part of the wedding ceremony and other meaningful social events, shared by generations and often by both sexes. The instrumental component of this dance can vary, according to the local

preference for the bowed lute—*kemençe*, or the bagpipe—*tulum*, but in some regions this may be of secondary significance, as recognisable dance music can be performed on both instruments. In the Rize Province, at one time the *kemençe* was more in favour than the *tulum*. However, the situation changed in recent years, and the bagpipe, formerly associated with the shepherd culture, regained popularity in the local community.

This is not an issue of revival, as there is a continuous social demand for performing a *Horon* at weddings. Revival movements emerge as countercultures in the modern world and are an integral part of it (Ronström, 1996). The participants of the *Tulum ve Horon Kurultayı* (*Tulum* and *Horon* Assembly) in Çamlıhemşin[4] were neither countercultural revival enthusiasts nor typical representatives of what can be called 'traditional society', many of them working in different spheres (Metin Gültan, businessman; Nihat Ataman, mining engineer; Remzi Bekar, 'Divan' City hotel head waiter), remote from traditional occupations of the pre-industrial age, in which the *Horon* and the *tulum* are historically located. And it can be taken for granted that most of the participants of the *Kurultay* are also used to listening to and performing musics that differ from this ancient repertoire.

Not all music used in more traditional settings is commonly referred to as traditional music (I will return to stylistic pluralism later). On the other hand, the concept of traditional music encompasses a great deal of highly elitist music, initially located far from traditional societies.

Non-Western art music

While ethnomusicology may occasionally focus on practices of Western art music, there is no doubt that music associated with or (formerly) restricted to the social elites in East and South East Asia and in the Middle East and North African is of much higher priority in the discipline. Why may scholars in this field feel more comfortable with the notion of traditional music? I think the reason is the more conservative nature of most of these musical systems, if compared with both Western folk and art music. A cursory comparison between the history of the Japanese *gagaku* ensemble and the development of musical instruments in Europe since the Middle ages will confirm this. Similarly, the

[4] I was privileged to visit in September 2018, thanks to the generous invitation of the Editor in Chief of this journal

history of the Persian *radīf* is indicative of a highly canonical musical system, based on aural/oral transmission over a lengthy training period.

Orality paradigm and orality bias

The significance of oral/aural transmission is fundamental to non-Western art music, as well as to European folk music. Artur Simon even comes to the (not entirely convincing) conclusion that "in all musical cultures studied by the ethnomusicologist music is transmitted and learned by ear"[5] (Simon, 2008: 44). As a matter of fact, *notation* can be a crucial part of ethnomusicological studies in non-Western musics (Ellingson, 1992). The folklorists' admiration for artistic achievements (both musical and poetic) not necessarily depending on staff notation and printed texts is the starting point for the paradigm of orality, seminal for the concept of traditional music from the mid-19th century. For a long time, however, researchers tended to underestimate the role of notation in traditional music—for instance, the fact that numerous vernacular fiddlers in Central Europe, Scandinavia, and in the British Isles were musically literate. In Austrian folk music research, 18th/19th-century musical manuscripts play a much more important role than fieldwork-based transcriptions. Bruno Nettl has addressed what we can call the 'orality bias' with subtle irony, reminding the "dear reader" of his or her own experience. "Ethnomusicologists and folklorists used to distinguish easily between 'oral' and 'written' cultures" (Nettl, 2015: 295) but "Music is transmitted to almost every individual in many ways" (Nettl, 2015: 295).

Sonic orders, stylistic pluralism, and the *mediascape*

Arthur Simon, starting from John Blacking's "sonic order" (Blacking, 1973: 11), defines the goal of ethnomusicology as "the study of the sonic orders of all ethnic systems, the intercultural comparison of their elements and their mutual influence in interethnic relations"[6] (Simon, 2008: 45). This is close to Max Peter Baumann's older concept of the "music-ethnic group" (*musikethnische Gruppe*). While many of Baumann's criteria seem outdated, it is true that ethnomusicologists often deal with groups of people sharing

[5] "In allen vom Ethnomusikologen studierten Musikkulturen wird die Musik nach dem Gehör tradiert und erlernt" (All translations by the author)
[6] "die Erforschung der sonischen Ordnung aller ethnischen Systeme, der interkulturelle Vergleich ihrer Elemente und deren wechselseitige Beeinflussung in den interethnischen Beziehungen" (All translations by the author).

"goals, norms, and emotional interrelations" (Baumann, 1976: 69), which can be established only under the condition of "a certain durability" (1976: 69) of these social entities. We may assume that shared musical norms and expectations of such groups demand a certain aesthetic quality and complexity, not always accessible to the outsider. According to Rudolf M. Brandl "it is considered an ethnomusicological rule of thumb that the aesthetical aural parameters are wrongly chosen if in the analysis of an alien music style appears to be simple"[7] (2008: 302).

Brandl's "rule of thumb" is grounded both in anthropology and in humanistic ethics. However, it is hardly valid for any musical expression of any social group. For instance, a chanting group of football fans (however distinct their repertoire is from the fans of competing teams) cannot be referred to as a musical culture. They do not form a "music-ethnic group", as football fans would hardly mention chants when asked about their preferred musical style. To be sure, ethnomusicologists deal with ritualized genres, similar in one or another way to football chants, highly effective in the given context by virtue of expressive qualities, but lacking an aesthetic function. Nevertheless, in all musical cultures we also can find genres directed towards competent and attentive listening and appreciated for their aesthetic qualities. These are at the core of Blacking's "sonic order".

Mark Slobin has offered an alternative approach with his seminal concept of *micromusics*:

> "Once it was easy to say that a "culture" was the sum of the lived experience and stored knowledge of a discrete population that differed from neighboring groups. Now it seems that there is no one experience and knowledge that unifies everyone within a defined "cultural" boundary, or if there is, not the total content of their lives" (Slobin, 1993: 11).

What Slobin insists on is the reality of musically pluralistic societies, providing opportunities for *choice*, *affinity*, and *belonging* (to reiterate his key concepts). The brief example of the Black Sea *tulum* players mentioned above indicates that traditional performers may feel comfortable in pluralistic societies. Dietrich Schüller and Helga Thiel (1985) have shown in detail how folk musicians in rural regions of Austria show a high

[7] "Es gilt als musikethnologische Faustregel, dass die ästhetischen Hörparameter vom Forscher falsch gewählt sind, wenn in der Analyse ein fremder Musikstil in seinen Konzepten schlicht und einfach erscheint".

diversity of musical tastes, sometimes dramatically differing from their folk music activities—let alone the preferences of some conservative folk music instructors.

There is no contradiction between the recognition of distinct local traditions and stylistic pluralism (or *stylistic plurality* after Schüller and Thiel). A cursory glance at Russian traditional instrumental music may demonstrate this. As so often in traditional music, any issue to be discussed depends on genre. In most regions of European Russia, a dominant genre, associated with walking, sitting together, but not with dance events, is based on a typically polyphonic interplay of a leading instrumental part with performance of short songs (quatrains). The regional and local manifestations of this genre are highly diverse. In the central Pskov Province of Northwest Russia, until recently, every micro-area had its own, very sophisticated tune, which as a rule was not played (or played only in a schematic manner) by the musicians in the neighbouring areas (Morgenstern, 2013). Most singers were completely unable to join in a tune of this genre played by a non-local musician. The compatibility of dance repertoires is different. Any dancer from that region would be able to perform an improvised solo dance (*pliaska*) at any traditional dance event, for example in the Ural region. The local participants would probably notice some regional patterns, but the dancer could feel comfortable in the performance situation. These dances belong to a Russian "superculture" (Slobin), alongside with late 19th century romances, and Soviet folk-like songs from the repertoire of Lidia Ruslanova and Liudmila Zykina. An average dancer from the central Pskov Province would be also able to perform a *Polka* when not at home, but would probably not do so in Belarus or Poland, where this dance is more diversified in terms of style and function, and more sophisticated.

It is interesting to see how the traditional music from the Pskov Region entered the *mediaspace* (Slobin after Appadurai). Until 1987 the tune *Sumetskaia* was hardly known to anyone apart from the inhabitants of the Ostrov district (with its subdivision the Sumetskii rural council) and five other central districts of the Province. Then a record with field recordings by the Leningrad Conservatory (Mekhnetsov, 1987) was released, including the *Sumetskaia*, performed by the hitherto unknown balalaika player Aleksei Leonov (1927–2008). Soon the tune and the player became famous among enthusiasts of Russian traditional instrumental music, including myself. While the liner notes did not

reveal Leonov's home village of Fishikha in the Porkhov district[8], Leonov later became a 'star performer' (Cashman et al., 2011: 11–14) for me and other fieldworkers, and for the growing Russian folk music community. Nowadays, when the balalaika and the accordion can only very rarely can be heard in the villages of the Pskov region, the *Sumetskaia* is available in dozens of individual and local versions, essentially from late-20th century field recordings. It became a hit in the repertoires of countless revival and experimental ensembles all over Russia. In 2015 the folk-rock band *Otava Yo*'s recording of *Sumetskaya* reached first place on the February video chart of the *World Music Network*, with more than 36 million views on *youtube*.

What about popular music?

The distinction of traditional music from other types of music is not always clear and strict, but it probably works in more fields of our study than it does not. It is not without reason that we usually think of different styles, genres, and repertoires, when we talk about traditional and popular music. Speaking very roughly (and perhaps too roughly for many of my readers), popular music, compared with traditional music, is directed on the one hand at more narrow social settings and age groups, but, on the other hand, more towards international audiences (which rock guitarist wouldn't like to be a world star?). Pieces of music are more often commodified and brought to the listener through audio-visual media than through live performance. Pieces of popular music may be known to the majority of a society, but the number of true fans is much lower. For this reason, popular music is typically less integrative for a population as a whole. This is the type of music where 'choice', 'affinity', and 'belonging' (Slobin, 1993) come into play most strikingly.

There are many overlapping areas between traditional and popular music. One of them is revival movements of traditional music sharing repertoires and some stylistic features with their chosen reference culture, and many contextual functions and strategies of dissemination with popular music. The blurred relation between 'traditional' and 'popular' leads us to the relation between popular music studies and ethnomusicology.

[8] All local specifications of the recordings were kept secret by the editor of the record.

On the subject matter of ethnomusicology

Ethnomusicology is about *'music in culture'* or if you prefer, about the 'world's musical cultures', and culture cannot exist without tradition—at least when we understand culture as shared human experience, values, and expectations. In this perspective, culture corresponds more to the English "way of life" than to "lifestyle", as German anthropologist Christoph Antweiler (2020) puts it. The latter is more associated with personal idiosyncrasies and fashion which limits its capacity to connect generations and social formations within a society.

One problem remains concerning the intrinsic structure of a society. I am not going to reject the straw man argument about 'homogeneous cultures', but it is interesting to see how the idea of cultural diversity shapes recent conceptual changes in ethnomusicology. In the second edition of *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, Bruno Nettl stated that "[o]ur area of concentration is music that is accepted by an entire society as its own" (2005: 13). In the third edition, this phrase was removed. While Nettl did not abandon (in a radical postmodernist fashion) the idea of recognizable "musical cultures that are alike in some ways and different in others" (2015: 16) he gave more space for minority issues. Nevertheless, the definition of ethnomusicology as "the study of all of the musical manifestations of a society", not "*in* a society" (2005: 17) remained unchanged. It seems that in folklore theory, with its traditional emphasis on face-to-face groups (regardless of their location in minority or majority settings[9]) the question of how a society and a particular culture actually has to be defined is of less relevance, while it is still open in ethnomusicology.

Slobin has described the subject matter of ethnomusicology before the 1960s with the triad "Oriental, folk, and primitive" (1993: 4) in which the first is "Asian 'high cultures'" (ibid.), the third "all the 'preliterate' peoples of the world" (1993: 4), and the second "the internal primitives of Euro-America" (1993: 4). We have every reason to reject this triad for its geographical vagueness ('Oriental') as well as for its cultural arrogance ('primitive')—especially as traditional societies of Africa at that time had already experienced some progress in literacy. But the limitations of the triad were met with

[9] US folkloristics were initially minority-oriented, insofar as two of the five subdivisions of "American folklore" were "Lore of Negroes in the Southern States of the Union" and "Lore of the Indian Tribes of North America" (American Folklore Society, 1888: 3).

fundamental criticism just a few years after the introduction of the English term 'ethnomusicology': Willard Rhodes defined its subject as "the total music of man without limitations of time and space" (1956: 460, cf. Reyes 2009: 9f.). However, the claim of an authoritative ethnomusicologist is one thing, while the question "what do ethnomusicologists do?" (Reyes, 2009) is quite another.

In search of "a discipline recognizable as ethnomusicology" (Reyes, 2009: 13), it would be useful to not just repeat that any music can be studied with ethnomusicological methods, as seems to be the consensus today. A cursory look at the publication lists of leading ethnomusicologists, at the programs of the World conferences and study group symposia of the ICTM, at the meetings of the *Society for Ethnomusicology* and the *European Seminar in Ethnomusicology* may show that the "breakdown of this model" (Slobin, 1993: 4) has not been as dramatic as is seems—at least when translating the triad into contemporary language: *musics of the social elites in Asia*, *traditional (folk) musics of modern stratified societies*, *indigenous musics*). Certainly, we can observe an increased presence of popular music in ethnomusicology. However, Gerd Grupe's *Ethnomusicology and Popular Music Studies* (2013) may indicate that these overlapping fields of research are nevertheless conceptualized as being different. This is evident from the titles of contributions such as: "'Popular Music' versus 'Art' and 'Ethno'. Consequences for Musical Analysis" (Regine Allgayer-Kaufmann); "The *Mbira*/*Chimurenga* Transformation of 'Dangurangu'. A Music-Analytical Case Study from Zimbabwe at the Intersection of Ethnomusicology and Popular Music Research (Klaus-Peter Brenner); The use of Ethnography. On the Contribution of Ethnomusicology to Popular Music Studies (Julio Mendívil).

The thought-provoking claim that ethnomusicologists focus on "all of the world's music" (Nettl, 2015: 17) should not obscure the fact that there is something like a core business of ethnomusicology in terms of the musics under study. Bruno Nettl could never have ventured to turn towards "Mozart and the ethnomusicological study of Western culture" (1989) without a decade-long involvement with "ethnomusicological core business" in such different fields as traditional (and other) Blackfoot music and the Persian *radīf*. And without a firm basis in fieldwork on Central Asia and East European folk music, Mark Slobin could never have developed his influential theories on "micromusics of the West". Today, a professor in ethnomusicology would probably not reject a student's project on

football chants (which is probably more a core topic in folkloristics, cultural studies, and, of course, the sociology of sport). But this student will be more successful if he or she has profound experience in the main fields of ethnomusicological research.

Finally, a "discipline recognizable as ethnomusicology" (Reyes) has to clarify its main agendas in relation to the international scholarly organizations of its neighbouring disciplines in musicology, the *International Musicological Society* (IMS) with its stronger (but by no means exclusive!) background in Western Art music, and the *International Association for the Study of Popular Music* (IASPM). The presence of ethnomusicologists in these organizations, and also of IMS and IASPM members in international organizations of ethnomusicology, offer favourable conditions for such a debate. From my background in folk music research and European ethnomusicology, I may humbly suggest that the emphasis on method alone (fieldwork and the comparative approach without which we never could even think to recognize cultural diversity) is not sufficient to outline ethnomusicology's main subject matter.

One last point: while most ethnomusicologists study music cultures of the present day, culture cannot be properly addressed without history. Ethnomusicology needs history for many reasons (McCollum & Hebert, 2014). One reason is the very concept of traditional music: "*Tradition* denotes, after all, something that has been established over a longer time span—and, how would we know that something is a tradition if we did not know anything without its past?" (Strohm, 2018: 6). We can also turn Reinhard Strohm's fundamental question to dynamic processes in the world's musical cultures: How can we claim that "[c]ulture is stable, but it is never static" (Merriam, 1964: 162) without history? And this is not only vital for an adequate understanding of styles and genres, of 'music in culture', and for a deeper valuation of human creativity. It is no less vital for other issues that many ethnomusicologists study (perhaps even most of all): Without a historical perspective the notion of 'change' (so adored in 'critical humanities'—as if change is necessarily something good) becomes meaningless. Without profound historical knowledge, it is impossible to distinguish oppressive traditions from traditions of empowerment, to identify cultural innovation, and to ensure social progress.

Conclusion

The term and concept of traditional music can be fruitfully maintained and developed in ethnomusicology, as long as: (1) ethnomusicologists recognize tradition as a creative process (Glassie, 1995; Quigley, 2012); (2) their focus is not reduced to only one tradition but maintains an intercultural perspective (Hogarth, 1839); (3) if they do not bring tradition in opposition to the creative individual (in addition to Glassie and Quigley, s. Cashman et al., 2011); (4) if they recognize the limited value of Hobsbawmian "invented tradition" for most expressive cultures under study, and (5) if ethnomusicologists distinguish between *tradition* that "music cannot exist without" (Elschek, 1991: 34) as a matter of scholarship and *traditionalism*, as a value-oriented political and ideological agenda.

Until we find another term, *'traditional music'* can help to give us a better understanding of meaningful manifestations of music, based in a local community and shared by more than one generation, and which cannot be easily replaced by something fundamentally new.

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