

FOLK COSTUMES IN SOUTH-EASTERN MORAVIA TODAY*

Helena BERÁNKOVÁ*

ABSTRACT

This contribution discusses the current status of folk costumes in south-eastern Moravia. At the theoretical level, it categorizes levels of clothing culture as they pertain to folk costumes and further addresses the political, social and economic conditions and associations that enable, or even support, the parallel existence of these categories of folk costumes. Although folk costumes, in the strictest sense, are only worn these days by a small proportion of elderly women, their festive equivalents grace a great many people, across the generations, at various kinds of celebrations. New folk costume outfits are supplied by a specialist workshop in Uherský Ostroh, the activities of which are also described in the article. The workshop specialises in the manufacture of complete folk costumes, their maintenance, and the restoration of their parts. It was established with financial assistance from the European Union, in accordance with its policy of support for the diversity of European regional culture. Since then, submitting to the economic pressures of the free market, it has been forced to extend the range of its production programme. In the social and historical context of Central Europe, the term "folk costume" denotes clothing worn by rural communities largely engaged in agricultural work. Unlike some of the more familiar clothing worn in the past, folk costumes originate and develop anonymously, and are intimately linked to the geographical environment that supplies the material for their manufacture, of animal or plant origin. The environment also plays its part in the style of the clothing, while new elements and influences (e.g. population movements, changes in more routine historical clothing, military uniforms, etc.) are invariably adopted after some time. In the festival versions of folk costumes a major part is played by aesthetic and socially demonstrative components and by regional affiliations. In contrast, more archaic elements such as non-sewn components (Jeřábková 2007), are evident from the clothes of the poorest social classes, through working clothes and up to ceremonial garments. From simple clothing, the primary function of which was the protection from the elements, folk costume evolved into an intricately structured, multi-faceted phenomenon of fascinating complexity, a phenomenon that both explicitly demonstrates and implicitly conceals many of its meanings. The folk costumes in south-eastern Moravia hold a specific position in regard to the other regions of the Czech Republic. Several categories of clothing that relate to folk costumes exist there in parallel, blending into one another: actual folk costumes; their festival versions, chiefly intended for the younger generation and only worn for a few occasions a year; and modified, stylized folk costumes.

Keywords: South-Eastern Moravia, Photographic Archive, Folk Costume, Contemporary Situation, Folk Art Workshop.

GÜNÜMÜZ GÜNEY- DOĞU MORAVYA HALK KOSTÜMLERİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Güney- Doğu Moravya halk kostümlerinin mevcut durumu tartışılmaktadır. Makale teorik düzeyde, giyim kültürünün aşamalarını halk giysileri gibi kategorize eder. Dahası politik, sosyal, ekonomik koşullar ve işbirliklerinin halk giysileri kategorilerinin benzer varlığını sağladığını veya hatta desteklediğini belirtir. Halk giysileri günümüzde yalnızca küçük bir grup yaşlı kadın tarafından giyilmesine rağmen, çok sayıda insanın katıldığı festival benzeri çok çeşitli kutlamalarda nesiller boyunca muhafazakar bir duygu olarak yaşanır. Yeni halk giysileri ve onların donanımları, makalede çalışmalarına yer verilecek olan Uherske Ostroh'taki özel bir atölye tarafından sağlanır. Atölye, halk giysilerinin tüm takımının üretiminde, bakımında ve restorasyonunda uzmanlaşmıştır. Avrupa bölgesel kültür çeşitliliği için destek politikası çerçevesinde Avrupa Birliği ekonomik katkısı ile kurulmuş olan atölye, serbest piyasa ekonomisinin baskılarına bağlı olarak üretim programının aralığını genişletmek zorunda kalmıştır. Orta Avrupa'da "halk giyimi" büyük ölçüde tarım işi yapan kırsal topluluklar tarafından giyilen giysi anlamına gelir. Geçmişte giyilen daha tanıdık bazı giyimlerin aksine, halk giysilerinin köken ve gelişimi hayvansal ya da bitkisel kökenli malzemenin üretildiği coğrafi ortam ile yakından bağlantılıdır. Çevresel unsurlar da giyim tarzının bir parçası olarak etkindir (örneğin nüfus hareketleri, daha rutin tarihsel giyim değişiklikleri, askeri üniforma, vb). Festival için hazırlanan halk giysilerinde büyük ölçüde estetik ve sosyal bileşenler ve yöresel özellikler göze çarpar. Bunun dışında, giysi tamamlayıcısı gibi daha arkaik unsurlar yoksul sosyal sınıfların iş giysileri ve tören giysilerinde belirgindir. Başlangıçtan beri giyim öncelikli işlevi, koruyucu unsurlar taşımasıydı. Halk giyimi, büyüleyici karmaşık çok yönlü yapısı ile açıkça kendini gösteren aynı zamanda da çok sayıda anlamı gizleyen bir olguya dönüştü. Güney- Doğu Moravya halk kostümleri Çek Cumhuriyeti'nde diğer bölgelerden daha özellikli bir konumda tutulmalıdır. Halk kostümleriyle ilişkilendirilen giyim çeşitli kategorilerinde, biri diğerine karşı olarak ortaya çıkan durumda; gerçek halk giysilerinin festival versiyonları başta genç kuşak için tasarlanır ve bunlar yılda yalnızca birkaç kez giyilen stilize giysilerdir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Güney-Doğu Moravya, Fotografik Arşiv, Halk Giyimi, Çağdaş Durum, Halk Sanat Atölyesi.

* This study was presented as a paper at the "1st International Fashion and Textile Design Symposium" organized between the 8th and 10th October 2012 by the Department of Fashion and Textile Design, Faculty of Fine Arts, Akdeniz University.

* PhDr., Ethnographic Institute of the Moravian Museum, Brno, Czech Republic, hberankova@mzm.cz.

Folk Costume as a Necessity of Life: Lay observations and nostalgia lamenting the passing of folk costume in favour of dull town clothing appear in literature from the late 19th century onwards (Klvaňa 1918: 250). Everyday, festival and ceremonial variants of folk costume are currently worn in south-eastern Moravia by women around eighty years old. They combine inherited items of clothing with those bought in shops and, apart from natural materials, employ synthetics without interfering with the set configuration of components: the silhouette, colour scheme and decoration of folk costume. Significantly, the wardrobes of these women hardly feature anything else. In this case folk costume presents a continuously evolving structure, the preservation of which is influenced by the economic activities of these women (work in agriculture), as well as by their active religiosity (Brožovičová 2008:105). Men gave up folk costumes in favour of off-the-peg clothing around forty years ago; evidently the consistency and conservatism of the female holds true here, as in so many other fields. It may be presumed that after this generation of women, those who may be, without doubt, considered authentic wearers of authentic folk costumes, the apparel will disappear forever, consigned to exist in museum collections (a parallel with certain prognoses about the viability of folk music is obvious). However, this is far from universal: in this region, festival variants of folk costumes have become an inseparable part of the wardrobe of a large number of people across the generations, even the young.

Folk Costume as a Means of Social Differentiation: Festival, and in some cases ceremonial, variants of folk costumes may be worn for special occasions by those who don ordinary, mass-produced clothes for everyday life. This trend is quite clear and has intensified since the turn of the new millennium, associated with the series of political, social and economic changes occurring after the collapse of totalitarian socialism in 1989. The relief from imposed conformity, the creation of a “civil society” and the larger degree of independence granted to local authorities naturally generated a pressing need for self-identification. Folk costumes provided a highly convenient means to this end: they are geographically differentiated to an extraordinary degree; unique and distinctive in the given region; impossible to confuse with those from other locations; and may serve as clear and unambiguous signs and symbols beyond the geographical. Folk culture, as “the proletariat” they so painfully exploited, was falsely lauded and celebrated for decades by totalitarian socialist administrations, and the immediate post-1989 reaction was to denigrate and avoid it. This attitude is now largely thing of the past. Furthermore, the younger generation has discovered that, with a slight shift of perspective, there may be as much in the culture closest to them as in the phenomena generated in remote exotic cultures that appear in the global cultural mainstream after the prefixes “ethno-” and “world-”. Consequently, they respond in positive fashion to the folk music and dance, as well as to the clothing culture, of previous generations, a culture that they have come to admire, imitate, explore, experience, even protect and try to preserve. In contrast to the high individualism of the past two decades, the occasional wearing of folk costumes may be understood as a declaration of affinity to a regional or local community, a manifestation of a connection with a collective with a similar moral and aesthetic system of values and, at the same time, a confirmation and enhancement of one’s identity.

Reconstructed Folk Costume: Many elements of folk culture, including folk costumes, were used in the Czech environment as tokens of national identity and as evidence in arguments for national emancipation (Smrčka 2011: 115) as late as the end of the 19th century. The tenets of the Enlightenment movement dictated that folk costume be protected and supported by people far further up the social scale than those who wore it. The preservation and restoration of folk costumes were promoted, in the first decades of the 20th century, by members of the Czech intelligentsia as well as by patriotic associations. As a science, ethnography more or less distanced itself from these activities at first. It considered its objective to describe and interpret folk phenomena, not actively to participate in their development with its expert positions, resources and aesthetic views, so remote from the folk environment. Over the years, however, it transpired that the efforts to reconstruct folk costume as a national (regional, local) symbol should be assisted by specialists (Jančář 2001: 29).

Workshops participating in the restoration of folk costumes have existed since the 1920s. Applying techniques as sophisticated as specialist field research, they subsidised the producers of folk costumes and their components, and they also employed folk culture morphology in original art (Jeřábek 2007). In socialist Czechoslovakia, the activities of these workshops (e.g. Chodovia, Lipta in Liptál, Moravská ústředna and Slovač) were picked up by Ústředí lidové umělecké výroby (Folk Art Production Centre, ÚLUV). It produced the special fabrics required for folk costumes (brocade, print on canvas, blueprint fabric and others) that were no longer manufactured for the general market. The ÚLUV studios employed trained designers to direct the work. It also helped manufacturers market their products through its own network of shops (Krásná jizba). The institution’s activities were well-planned and highly competitive, even on the free market. Only a few years after the end of the socialist regime, in 1995, the institution was dissolved upon direct edict from the Ministry of Culture (sic) of the Czech Republic, unprofessionally and without a replacement, and its large and valuable archive containing, for example, detailed descriptions of technical and manufacturing procedures and plentiful photo-documentation, was divided between several museum institutions. The fact that this decision was considerably less than wise was confirmed by developments in the following years. The need for such research, production and commercial accessibility re-emerged – not only among those who had once purchased such products, but also in the form of pressures from European organs concerned with the regional diversification of European culture.

In the region of south-eastern Moravia, the society that has developed in the new political environment has re-traced the steps of traditional folk culture and now bases much of its identity upon tradition. Public presentation of folk costumes – the most important aspect, not the relationship to a garment as an object of everyday use – is associated with festive occasions. These sometimes follow and develop the traditional high points of the rural year (feasts on saints’ days, harvest festival, etc.) and religious fairs (often associated with pilgrimages). In addition, new occasions arise, from minor local events to nationwide celebrations (Habartová 2010). At these events, folk costumes (or rather, garments more or less inspired by folk costumes) are

de rigeur for many of the participants. The need for certain modifications and stylization of folk costumes was first dictated by the requirements of music and dance performances held by numerous ensembles. Moreover, reconstructions of folk costumes frequently occur in regions or locations where people stopped wearing folk costumes decades, even centuries, ago but where the social atmosphere calls for their revival. Consultations with specialists are a vital part of the process, and those interested sometimes organise their own research among older generations, seek iconographic records and specialist literature. Some of the reconstructions of folk costumes go back as much as two centuries. Nonetheless, the justification for these reconstructions, as well as stylizations in locations where folk costumes are alive and where they have continuously evolved (including south-eastern Moravia), is highly debatable and has yet to be addressed by specialist literature.

The Folk Traditions And Crafts Workshop in Uherský Ostroh: Some of the demand for the manufacture of folk costumes and their elements that emerged at the turn of the new millennium was filled by the Folk Traditions and Crafts Workshop in Uherský Ostroh (Uherské Hradiště district, Zlín region), established in 2006 as part of a project co-financed by European Union funds and state, regional and local institutions. Although its initial production programme was clearly outlined, it was also highly ambitious and, as it later transpired, impossible to implement in the light of a dearth of experience and expertise. Targets included the manufacture, sale and hire of folk costumes and accessories, the collecting of information about the history and development of folk costumes, the preservation and restoration of folk costumes in south-eastern Moravia, the preservation and development of traditional crafts, the promotion and presentation of folk costumes and traditional crafts, the publication of informative material about folk costumes and traditional crafts, the teaching of traditional crafts, and the organisation of exhibitions (that inspiration was largely derived from the wide spectrum of activities of ŮLUV is obvious).

The former outbuildings of a renaissance castle were reconstructed to house the workshop. Its director was a graduate of the University of Textiles, Pardubice; further seven local women (who had no initial knowledge of folk costume manufacture) are employed there. The production programme has been expanded by the maintenance of folk costumes, since washing and ironing them is highly demanding and requires specific knowledge and skills (before the mid-20th century, these skills were only mastered by a few women in every region, who would perform these tasks for their community and were paid to do so). The workshop also modifies and reconstructs old parts of folk costumes; this is very important, since authentic parts, as much as a hundred years old, are given new life, thwarting quick changes in aesthetic attitudes and curbing the adoption of new influences. When making costumes from their own area, known first-hand, the staff try to adhere to certain unique manufacturing procedures (special heavy starching, plisse tools, etc.) and special materials (camel fur for the decoration of bodices and waistcoats). Where this knowledge is lacking, they try to obtain information from authentic wearers or those who remember the particular costumes. However, the workshop does not specialize in the production of folk costumes from the area and the surroundings (as similar workshops once did); it has also produced costumes for folk ensembles and people interested in folk costumes from the entire Czech Republic, Slovakia, and even Austria. The workshop has its own archive: all products and accessories are documented as written and photographic records and stored in a computer database. It organises courses of sewing, embroidery and maintenance of folk costumes for the public; most of the participants are middle-aged and elderly women. The organisers face a serious problem here: what to teach, where to go into detail and where not to, as information is also a commodity. The economic situation has necessitated the expansion of the production programme: apart from folk costumes, the workshop manufactures women's clothes, religious robes and souvenirs. The enterprise is partially subsidised by local authorities, largely due to its recognised cultural and economic contribution (it employs locals, and also enhances the attractiveness of the location for tourists). The positive role in preserving traditions aside, the production and commercial concept of the workshop involves certain shortcomings. These chiefly include the vast range of products and enormous geographical scope which, given the lack of specialist and theoretical background, lead to the simplification of production procedures and standardisation; the aesthetic standard of the workshop's souvenirs also appears problematic.

The growing demand for folk costumes is also met by other workshops providing comprehensive services. There are four of them in central and southern Moravia- Blatnička, Bořetice, Němčice and Troubky, and many individuals who specialise. Czech ethnology, for which folk costume was one of the first study subjects, boasts a rich tradition in this respect and an abundance of excellent results, both in the general subject and its branches. Despite unfavourable prognoses for the viability of folk costumes, this phenomenon is far from a closed historical chapter. On the contrary, its development continues even in our globalised society in which it has sought and found its own place.

This article was financially supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic by institutional financing of long-term conceptual development of the research institution (the Moravian Museum, MK000094862).

REFERENCES

- Bogatyrev, P. (1937). Funkcie kroja na Moravskom Slovensku. Functions of the Folk Costume in Moravian Slovakia, Martin.
- Brožovičová, K. (2008). Sociální a kulturní kontext lidového oděvu na příkladu posledních nositelek lidového oděvu na Strážnicku. [Social And Cultural Context of Folk Costume on the Example of the Last Wearers of Folk Costumes in the Strážnicko Region.] Magisterská diplomová práce. Masarykova univerzita Brno.
- Dvořáková, H. (1999). Volkstracht als Zeichen nationaler Identifikation und Abgrenzung. Netzwerk Volkskunde. Ideen und Wege, pp. 391–398.
- Habartová, R. (eds.), (2010). Na paletě krojů. [On the Palette of Folk Costumes.] Uherské Hradiště.
- Jančář, J. (2001). Novodobá výroba lidových krojů. [Modern Production of Folk Costumes.] Národopisná revue, no. 1, pp. 29–32.

- Jančář, J. (2011). Proměny Slovácka (Changes of Moravian Slovakia.) Uherské Hradiště.
- Jeřábek, R. (2007). Lidová umělecká výroba. [Folk Art Production.] Lidová kultura. Národopisná encyklopedie Čech, Moravy a Slezska, p. 490.
- Jeřábková, A. (2000). Odívání. [Clothing.] Lidová kultura na Moravě. Vlastivěda Moravská, vol. 10. Strážnice – Brno, pp. 116–157.
- Jeřábková, A. (2007). Lidový oděv. [Folk Costume.] Lidová kultura. Národopisná encyklopedie Čech, Moravy a Slezska, pp. 498–500.
- Klvaňa, J. (1918). Lidové kroje na Moravském Slovensku. [Folk Costumes in Moravian Slovakia.] Moravské Slovensko. Praha, pp. 97–251.
- Křížová, A. (2001). Lidový oděv a historický kostým. Poznámky k terminologii, formě a funkci oděvu. [Folk Costume and Historical Costume. Notes on terminology, form and function of clothing.] Národopisná revue, no. 1, pp. 5–9.
- Nosálová, V. (1983). Slovenský ľudový odev. [Slovak Folk Costumes.] Martin.
- Švecová, S. (1977). Súčasná premena v odievaní. Príspevok z výskumov v jednej hontianskej obci. [Contemporary Changes in Clothing. From field research in a village in the Hont region, Slovakia.] Český lid, pp. 221–238.
- Tarcalová, L. (2000). Lidový oděv v Uherském Ostrohu. [Folk Costume in Uherský Ostroh.] Uherský Ostroh, Uherský Ostroh, pp. 299–312.
- Smrčka, V. (2011). Dějiny České národopisné společnosti čili Dějiny psané národopisem. [History of the Czech Ethnographers Society, or the History Written by Ethnography.] Praha.
- Stránská, D. [without the date of impression], Lidové kroje v Československu. [Folk Costumes in Czechoslovakia.] Praha. <http://www.kroje.cz/> (Access Date: 03. 07. 2012).
- <http://www.lidove-kroje.cz/lidove-tradice-a-remesla/krojova-vyroba> (Access Date: 03. 07. 2012).
- http://www.tradiceslovacka.cz/vyroba_kroju.php (Access Date: 03. 07. 2012).
- <http://mvstudio.cz/index.php> (Access Date: 03. 07. 2012).
- <http://kroje.ic.cz/> (Access Date: 03. 07. 2012).

PHOTOGRAPH LIST



Photo 1: Single girls and a man in a half-festive folk costume Uherský Ostroh, South-Eastern Moravia, cca 1910. Unknown photo studio. Private archive. **Photo 2:** Young woman in a festive folk costume. Ostrozka Nova Ves, South-Eastern Moravia, cca 1925. Photo: Amalie Kozminova. Photographic collection of Ethnographic Institute MZM Brno. **Photo 3, 4:** Contemporary festive and half-festive folk costumes – latest generation of women wearing authentic folk costumes as the life necessity. Hostejov, Pilgrimage, 2012, and Liderovice, Sunday Mass, 2008, both localities South-Eastern Moravia. Photo: Helena Beránková. **Photo 5:** Interior of the Folk Tradition and Crafts Workshop in Uherský Ostroh, South-Eastern Moravia, 2012. Photo: Helena Beránková. **Photo 6:** Youth in ceremonial folk costumes during the Feast on Saints' Day. Uherský Ostroh, South-Eastern Moravia, 2011. Photo: Zdenek Janacek.