



ORAL TRADITION

Festschrift for John Miles Foley

This article belongs to a special issue of *Oral Tradition* published in honor of John Miles Foley's 65th birthday and 2011 retirement. The surprise Festschrift, guest-edited by Lori and Scott Garner entirely without his knowledge, celebrates John's tremendous impact on studies in oral tradition through a series of essays contributed by his students from the University of Missouri-Columbia (1979-present) and from NEH Summer Seminars that he has directed (1987-1996).

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Changing Traditions and Village Development in Kalotaszentkirály

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This essay examines the overall health of a village community in the folk cultural region known as Kalotaszeg, the area immediately to the west of Cluj Napoca in central Transylvania. Such a broad topic may appear at first glance to fit oddly into a discussion of oral tradition. The argument for its relevance rests on five premises.

The first premise: the communities themselves generate, nurture, and maintain oral traditions. When communities die, the vestiges of traditional life are assigned in a hit-or-miss fashion to museums, archives, academic discussion and/or stage performance. The second premise: oral traditions are only one aspect of traditional life, with analogs throughout the culture. The oral performance of songs and shouts, for instance, is largely inseparable from occasions for music and dance. Music and dance, in the main, operate within the same parameters that we ascribe to traditional song. Indeed, the practice of oral traditions is but one element in a fabric of traditional life that embraces music, dance, customs, indeed all aspects of material culture: textiles and clothing, furnishings, implements, dwellings, and so forth.¹ The third premise: several features that distinguish oral traditions are also associated with other aspects of traditional life. Table 1 summarizes some of these features' patterns that are shared generally by the various forms of traditional life and contrasts them with the tendencies of post-traditional cultures. Although focused on oral traditions, with appropriate adjustments, the list of features may also be applied to music, dance, textile-working and other cultural activities.

Table 1: Traditional versus Post-Traditional Cultural Tendencies

Traditional	Post-Traditional
Oral transmission	Printed texts (or figurative equivalent)
Associative thinking	Symbolism and the application of logical thinking

¹ In examining a community in Kalotaszeg, I am returning to the folk cultural region whose men's dance furnished the example in Kraft 1989. In his editor's column, John Miles Foley characterized the article as "a comparative reinterpretation of folk dancing as a traditional idiom, adducing the discoveries made and theories formulated in the area of verse composition to provide a new perspective on the structures and meaning of the dance-performance" (272).

Metaphors have an inherent meaning, that is, a meaning based in convention or common agreement	Metaphors tend to have a conferred meaning, that is, one that the poet has conferred in order to surprise us with something new and original
The operation of traditional art forms is based in conventionality	Post-traditional culture demands originality
Convention implies a relatively closed community to which the set of conventions pertains	Literacy invites a relatively open audience of readers much less bound by shared conventions—throughout an entire language population and across the expanse of time
Oral traditions are sited in the community and presuppose community participation	Literature intended for reading is, on the other hand, generally a private pleasure
Oral traditions are manifested in live performance	Poetry resides in books
Traditional cultures practice improvisation so there is no concept of a “correct” version of a song or tale or other form of verbal expression	In post-traditional cultures, the fixed “text” is the coin of the realm and nothing less is acceptable

The fourth premise: no individual performance can be understood in isolation. Just as song, dance, music, and other forms are integrated into community life, so are they integrated into the life of any individual. An improvised dance sequence that is recorded by a researcher may, thus, not be considered a single work independent of its context, but must be seen rather as only “one part of an entire life’s work” (Felföldi 2005:28).² The fifth premise: ethnographic research methods recognize that the villagers themselves are the bearers of knowledge and expertise in Hungarian peasant culture. They are able to make intimate judgments about change, about challenges and, ultimately, about the viability of their communities. Moreover, just as the intellectual perspectives of ethnographers persist in a sort of disjunctive tension with life in village communities, so is there a critical tension between academic writing on oral tradition and the oral traditions that we study.

In short, the oral traditions that are the focus of our discipline depend on communities—for the fact of their existence and for their natural life span. Oral traditions and allied art forms must be understood as interdependent elements within highly complex village cultures and within the lives of each individual participant. The survival of traditional forms within a living, integrated culture depends not only on the choices of the villagers themselves, but also on the social fabric of their communities. Will the villagers choose to revive and conserve their

² Felföldi (2005 and also 2007) argues for the necessity of examining the dancer as well as the dance and for placing the individuality of the dancer in the context of the specific dance event and of the dance culture, and the dance community generally. Martin’s posthumous masterpiece (2004), coedited by Felföldi and Karácsony, is a realization of this approach, focusing on the life’s work and personality of a single Kalotaszeg dancer, István Mátyás, nicknamed Mundruc.

traditions? Are there reasons to expect that the villages themselves will endure as communities of families with a shared identity and shared sense of place?

International interest in Transylvanian Hungarian dance began in the 1970s as word spread of the urban *táncház* “dance-house” revival in the cities of Hungary, then in its early years. Although observers had spoken of the “final hour” of traditional folk life,³ some venerated practitioners of dance and music were filmed and recorded after World War II; some survived beyond even the fall of Ceaușescu into the 2000s. But over this span of years, the numbers of traditional musicians, singers, and dance informants have diminished greatly. I have been visiting Kalotaszentkirály with my wife and collaborator, Ildikó Kalapács, every few years since 1995. Our visits have provided us with snapshots of the community’s development during the two decades since the demise of Ceaușescu’s totalitarian state.

Under the Ceaușescu regime, Transylvanian villages had become increasingly closed off to outsiders. The fall of Ceaușescu in 1989 enabled an opening of those villages. On the one hand, this change had pivotal implications for the villagers themselves. On the other hand, outsiders have also taken advantage of the situation and used the freer access to explore Transylvanian village culture. Despite the opening of Transylvania and the return of land to peasants, village communities have faced new challenges to their viability. Kalotaszentkirály, the focus of the present study, is, no doubt, an exceptional village in many respects. At the same time, however, it confronts changes and circumstances that challenge community life throughout Transylvania.

Kalotaszentkirály (Sinclairu)⁴ is about six kilometers from Bánffyhunyád (Huedin) in the Hungarian folk cultural region called Kalotaszeg,⁵ 48 kilometers west of Kolozsvár (Cluj Napoca). The village of Kalotaszentkirály grew to absorb its smaller twin, Zentelke, and its population of some 450 households is predominantly Hungarian but with substantial Romanian representation as well. Roma presence is likely negligible or nonexistent, and Jewish habitation ended with the Holocaust. Most Hungarians belong to the Calvinist community; the Romanians are Orthodox. There is also a small Baptist church.

³ My colleague, István Pávai, confirms in personal correspondence (2012) that the earliest documentation of the “final hour” metaphor occurs in a letter Bartók wrote to Stefi Geyer on August 16, 1907, in which Bartók, writing from the Gyergyó basin of Eastern Transylvania in the course of ethnomusicological field work, expresses a certain exasperation about the displacement of old-style songs by popular and urban new-style influences. My own acquaintance with the “final hour” metaphor extends back to my Fulbright research year in Budapest (1986-87) in a discussion with my mentor, László Diószegi. In 1997-98, the Fonó Budai Zeneház in conjunction with the Musicological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Ethnographical Museum launched a major “final hour” project to record Transylvanian village musicians. The project produced an extensive archive for researchers and resulted in the publication of eighteen CDs in the series “Új Pátria: Az Utolsó Óra program gyűteményéből 1997-1998” (Kelemen and Pávai 1998-2004).

⁴ Because this essay focuses on Transylvanian Hungarian village culture, I shall give preference to the Hungarian form of the place names and provide Romanian forms in parentheses when relevant.

⁵ Kalotaszeg is represented well in the ethnographic literature as this sampling demonstrates: Jankó (1892) provides an early ethnographic sketch of Kalotaszeg. Vasas and Salamon (1986) discuss the oral traditions of Kalotaszeg associated with folk customs and holidays. Magyar (2004) collects a large number of folk sayings and tales from Kalotaszeg. Malonyay (1907) and Faragó et al. (1977) survey costuming in Kalotaszeg. Balogh and Fülemlé (2004) explore society, geography, and identity.

The inhabitants are peasant-workers, tending fields that have been returned to them since the dissolution of the collective farms in the 1990s but also seeking employment in cities within commuting distance and/or finding temporary employment in Hungary or beyond. In addition to cultivating various crops, the villagers keep animals (chickens, pigs, horses, and cows) in small yards and outbuildings adjacent to their homes. The cattle preferred by this village were water buffalo, which provided milk and also served as draft animals. In pasturing weather, a herdsman drove the cattle out of the village each morning after milking. Each evening, they returned to their individual stalls in each yard. Villagers used to deliver milk to a central collection point every morning and evening after milking.



Instruction at Kalotaszeg dance camp in Kalotaszentkirály (1995): András “Cucus” and Tekla Tötszegi from Méra are the best-known village dance teachers.

[http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture\(1\)](http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture(1))

The village’s ability to accommodate guests also led to its development of village tourism. Szeklerland, much farther to the east and with a very strongly Hungarian population, came to be a popular destination for Hungarian tourism from after the opening of Transylvania in the 1990s; Kalotaszentkirály became a stopover for bus tours to and from Szeklerland. Arrangements for village tourism place certain expectations on an entire community; the individual houses certified to receive guests must meet certain standards of comfort and convenience. Hosts must acquire a skilled understanding of hospitality as regards the expectations and treatment of paying guests. The village also has two small grocery stores; there have always been taverns, and some households offered small convenience items for sale, but retail activity is rather negligible. There is an ice cream shop near the village center. Certain villagers have, however, had

This village also found a niche in village tourism. A week-long summer dance and music camp for the Kalotaszeg region was established here in 1991. This village was chosen not because its own dance and music traditions had remained vital, but because the infrastructure of the village was most suitable for accommodating a few hundred guests. The camp has been held there ever since, for, as the camp grew, it became less and less feasible to move it. Thus, in the summer of 2011, Kalotaszentkirály hosted its 21st Kalotaszeg dance camp.



Welcome Sign, 2010

specialties of various kinds, including sawing firewood, slaughtering animals, artificial insemination of livestock, and grinding feed meal.

Farming has long been the foundation of such village communities, and Western visitors to this village might have sensed that they were enjoying a very authentic, old-fashioned experience—a step far back in time. In season, fresh food was abundant, including meat and dairy products. Villagers used horse- and buffalo-drawn wagons, water buffalo being this village's signature livestock. The sight of the great herd of water buffalo, leaving each morning with the herdsman and returning each evening, was awesome.



Water buffalo returning from pasture (2000): As the herd returns to the village, the buffalos and cows enter their own yards/barns for the night. By the time the sizable herd reaches the further end of the village, its numbers are already greatly diminished.
[http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture\(3\)](http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture(3))



Signage 1, 2007



Signage 2, 2007



Path marker, 2010

Small farming and village tourism, along with a revitalized cultural identity, seemed to define Kalotaszentkirály. More recent developments have begun to signal great change. For instance, in 2010 the village installed a new decorative welcome sign that perhaps responds to what local people think guests expect. There are also quaint new directional signs all around the village to help visitors conveniently find their way. At the edge of the village, walking and hiking trails also begin with their own special markers.



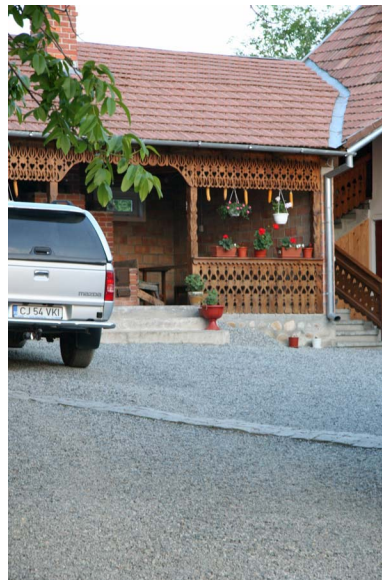
Decorative well 1, 2007



Decorative well 2, 2007



Decorative well 3, 2007



Guesthouse kitsch 1, 2010



Guesthouse kitsch 2, 2010

It is clear that things are happening in Kalotaszentkirály, and the dynamo of economic development is tourism. The brand-new sign that welcomes tourists through its well-kept streets is a model of tidiness that village tourism requires. Three surviving public wells have been restored very nearly to picturesque status, while spruced up guesthouses have taken a turn that may strike an urban observer as kitsch. Beside one guesthouse a decorative millwheel is, rather incongruously, a few yards from a tiki lawn table.

Until 2007, villagers used outhouses. At some earlier point in time, indoor toilets had been installed in many homes, but reliance on holding tanks rendered them mostly for show. The sewer system that was built in 2007 was a milestone project. Given the convenience of outhouses, however, they too are still in use. Later in 2010, the village was in the midst of a

project to channelize its streams and some of the storm water ditches. This was a very big project and, like the sewer installation, was undertaken with grant support.

The village has recently been able to establish a Hungarian-language grade school, named



Main school building and gate, 2010

for the Hungarian poet Ady Endre. The school serves Hungarian children from 13 or so villages, with the children from distant villages boarding at the school during the week and returning to their families on weekends. Most of the teachers live in the village. The Romanian children, too few for a school of their own, are bused to Bánffyhunyard. In sporting activities as in education there is a new civic initiative. Villagers also reported in 2010 that they expected to receive a grant to develop their soccer field into a stadium with seating and even with clubhouses including dressing rooms and showers for the teams.

The everyday social life of the community is centered in the village streets and in front of the village houses. Some decorative gates and benches have appeared recently in a style that is not native to this folk cultural area, but rather imitative of that of Szeklerland. In moments of leisure, villagers sit on their benches and interact with passersby going about their business. Villagers ask one another where they've been, where they're going, whom they've seen, what they're doing,



Bench in the style of Szeklerland, 2010

chat for a while, or just exchange a greeting. The villagers of Kalotaszentkirály are very proud that nearly all the homes are occupied by actual village residents. The occasional weekend home creates a space devoid of social life, a dead space in the village.



Peasant-workers have typically Bench and social interaction, 2010

held jobs outside the village, sometimes traveling far beyond the village to earn money. But the vitality and cohesiveness of a village's social structure depends heavily on the activity of farming. In the past, three generations of a family often lived and worked the farm together; some of these relatively successful family units were farming up to ten or twelve hectares as recently as 2004. Small farming looked to be doing well. State farms and collective farms had long since been disbanded; village lands had been re-privatized, returned to their original owners in the course of the 1990s. But villagers were worried that the rules of the European Union would complicate their lives and harm their prospects as Romania moved toward EU membership.

When we returned to Transylvania in summer 2007, we hoped to document that small farming was a success, that Transylvanians in the region of Kalotaszeg, by heavy investment of labor and low investment of other inputs, were able to grow locally, market locally, and eat locally. In short, we sought to confirm that small-scale farming was viable, still a source of income. We discovered instead that small farmers could no longer market their produce and had retreated to subsistence farming for household use only. Here is what had happened.

Before collectivization, a pattern of land ownership had developed by which each family owned narrow strips of fields, widely scattered. In the language of the Hungarian Transylvanians, they are called “trouser-belt” fields. When the farmland was collectivized, many a peasant is said to have buried large stones at the corners of his fields in the hope that he might outlive Communism and someday recover his lands. In point of fact, wherever practicable, families eventually did recover their old lands. Families once again came to own the same scattered, narrow strips of land that they had owned before World War II. The general insistence on the return of the old holdings was motivated partly by a not-unjustified fear of being cheated in the redistribution process. Each plot of land has its own potential. Nobody wanted to settle for inferior land and see their neighbor take their own good land. Nobody was inclined to enter into agreements to trade and consolidate.⁶

Holding scattered fields meant that it



Trouser-belt fields 1, 2010



Trouser-belt fields 2, 2010

⁶ Verdery (1996:133-67, 1999, 2003, and 2004) treats the problems of reprivatization of agricultural lands in postsocialist Romania with a focus on ethnically Romanian villages in Transylvania. Mungiu-Pippidi (2010) compares the fate of a “rebel” village that resisted Communism with that of the “model” village that was Ceaușescu’s birthplace.



Potato harvest work party, 2007



First day of potato harvest, 2007

was not economical to hire a tractor or combine, for the equipment would likely have to spend inordinate time traveling between fields. Additionally, the extremely narrow, “trouser-belt” holdings meant that a tractor might not even have room to turn around after a pass through the field, although a horse-drawn plough works just fine. But as farmers have become older and have gained income from non-farming sources, they have also begun to depend more on machinery where they can.

Gradually, farmers have discovered that they lacked the necessary inputs for successful farming, as well as suitable marketing networks. Small farmers have negligible capital on hand and are considered a poor risk for loans. Since they cannot get loans, they have little access to inputs such as seed stock, fertilizer, pest control, machinery, and so forth. Were they able to form cooperatives or partnerships and/or consolidate their holdings for more efficient farming, they might devise a

viable strategy. But in the era after forced collectivization, nobody seems to be in a mood to sacrifice his independence. Nobody is inclined to trust cooperative endeavors. Instead, in growing for their own use, they have scaled back on the various crops that they have been able to produce successfully—potatoes, onions, peppers, and other vegetables for the kitchen; corn, grains, and hay for feed. Harvesting chores are generally shared by a family work party and produce is brought in by the wagon-load. So, by 2007, individual families had reduced the land they were farming to two or three hectares—enough for domestic use—leaving another eight or ten fallow. Villagers who had shown themselves willing, even quite eager, to be the subject of video field recordings in the past asked not to be filmed in 2007, and also requested that we not use their names. Although these circumstances are general knowledge, no one wants to go on record, talking about the failure of small farming. When they do speak, however, the farmers voice the concern that they lack political power and are subject to economic forces beyond their influence. They place some confidence in their mayor as the sole representative of the village who has some political influence. He has been able to secure funding for several initiatives.



Herd and combine, 2010



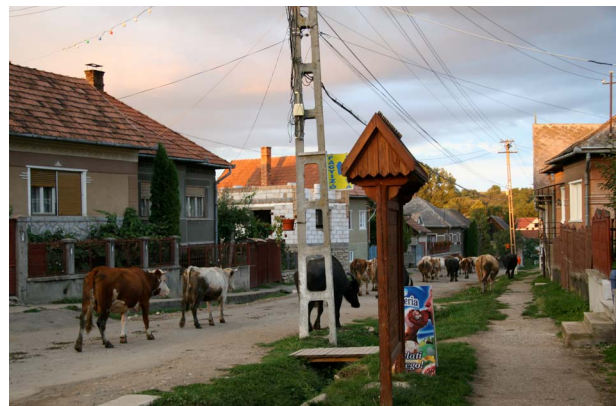
Herds return from pasture, 2007

With vast lands unfarmed, a sort of golden era for sheep grazing seems to have dawned, with outsiders tending large herds of sheep all around Kalotaszentkirály on land that is leased for the purpose. Also, because the European Union's rules for the dairy industry do not allow for the collecting of the milk from individual households, villagers can no longer sell surplus milk to a central collection point after morning and evening milking. The cattle herd is consequently smaller, and surplus milk goes to the pigs. The great herd of water buffalo, once the pride of Kalotaszentkirály, was gone by 2007. The relative proportion of cows to buffalo had reversed with cows far outnumbering buffalo. Water buffalo are superior draft animals and give rich milk, but who needs strong, temperamental draft animals when so little land is being farmed? When economic considerations favored cows, buffalo disappeared in very short order.

A donation from outside furnished the village with its own new slaughterhouse. There seems to be some mystery about its funding. The villagers celebrated its (near) completion, but it never opened. Perhaps the villagers lacked the necessary capital to run it, or it may have been the case that the village could not provide the economy of scale necessary to support inspectors and to meet other EU requirements. The slaughterhouse in the neighboring town of Bánffyhunyard has also closed down. The commercial slaughtering of an animal now requires transportation to Kolozsvár, about 50 kilometers distant. Villagers post signs on their gates, offering pigs on the hoof for sale, but the slaughtering and butchering are, of course, left to the buyer to solve.



Herds return from pasture 2, 2007



Part of the herd at dusk, 2007

The overall decline of village livestock has also reduced the market for hay and feed grains. The village flourmill has closed down, and the village's bakery is also gone. There is a farmers' market in Bánffyhunyard once or twice a week, but it is not actually "local." Peasants come mostly from farther away. They report that they now sell all-too-little for prices all-too-low. Unsure of why they are still trying, they seem to have no alternative way of securing even a little income. Informants say that there are fewer and fewer farmers' markets and that they have to travel further and further to reach opportunities for selling.

News reports in 2010 pegged at approximately 40 percent the amount of income that Romanians spend on food. Since food commands so large a portion of income, one might imagine that prices would be relatively high, and that local production and marketing could succeed. Yet local growers have not found a way to compete with grocery stores and with foodstuffs from the EU. Villagers understand that hygiene and health standards are necessary, but they also perceive that all the attendant factors are conspiring against them.

With the wider ownership of cars has come the decline of public transportation. And the loss of services in the villages (for instance, medical and postal) also forces greater reliance on cars. Young people tend to leave for the cities, with the mean age of village populations steadily increasing. In the past year or two, this process has been somewhat retarded by the economic collapse; young people who cannot find work in the cities stay in the villages. However, this forced choice does not equate with a willingness to adopt the farming lifestyle of the older generations.

People report that there is scarcely a vacant home in Kalotaszentkirály. In many surrounding villages, however, the population is said to have declined precipitously. Although the community is still close-knit, it appears that eventually more and more houses will become weekend retreats for urban folks. The traditional social fabric of village communities will deteriorate further. Vacation homes are still rare in Kalotaszentkirály, and, as noted above, the

few new ones are clearly not well integrated into community life.

Kalotaszentkirály is fairly bursting with progressive and good ideas. It looks like an open-air museum of village life and small farming. But small farming has collapsed. Foodstuffs increasingly come from the West where subsidized industrial agriculture undercuts the homegrown prices. Villagers bemoan the decline of community solidarity and mutual assistance, as community rituals like walking the milk can to the collection point at dawn and at dusk are vanishing.

To an outsider who has



Walking the milk can to the collection point (2000): This ritual ended as Romania began to conform to EU guidelines that do not allow for the pooling of milk from individual households.

[http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture\(23\)](http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture(23))

visited over the span of 15 years, the village appears more and more prosperous. Houses have been enlarged, repaired, and often somewhat renovated to suit more modern tastes. Village tourism clearly helps to support these changes. It is also evident that Kalotaszentkirály, anticipating visitors, has recast itself somewhat as the imitation of a village. Authenticity and a sense of community can run somewhat shallow, despite such cheery outward appearances.

There have been recent attempts to revive the cultural heritage and identity of the village, for instance, by establishing a culture house for youth and by teaching the village's own dialect of Kalotaszeg dancing. These efforts seem to have been inspired, at least in part, by the siting of the Kalotaszeg dance and music festival in the village. The village has dance groups for children as well as young adults. And a few couples from older generations form a dance group of *hagyomány őrzők* "tradition conservators."

The tradition conservators confront several challenges. Their own life-span is limited, and, for more than a generation, Western fashions and technological change have affected traditional life. The last surviving grand old man of Kalotaszeg fiddling, Sámuel (known as Sándor) "Neti" Fodor, who lived some distance away from Kalotaszentkirály in Kisbács near Kolozsvár, died in 2004.⁷ The most celebrated Kalotaszeg singer, András Gergely, lived across the mountains in a neighboring watershed in Türe.⁸ He, too, recently passed away.



Márton and Anna Bálint, dancing in heritage dance group (1995); the center couple are Márton and Anna Bálint.
[http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture\(24\)](http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture(24))



Márton and Anna Bálint, demonstrating Kalotaszentkirály's couples' dance.
[http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture\(25\)](http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/26ii/kraft#myGallery-picture(25))

⁷ Halmos and Szomjas (1996-2000) provide a portrait of the musician known affectionately as Neti Sanyi or Sanyi Bácsi in their documentary.

⁸ Halmos and Szomjas (1997) also provide a documentary portrait of András Gergely.



Villager shares his life story, 2010

The once rich and well-documented inventory of songs for the Kalotaszeg region included dance songs and shouts, ballads, songs about love, songs about the life of soldiers, songs to accompany new recruits, wedding songs, funeral songs, songs for various seasons and occasions, and a very special genre called *hajnali* (“dawn songs”), sung very late at the end of an evening of dancing, singing, and feasting.⁹ In addition to songs, other oral traditions include ceremonial verses for weddings, dances, name’s days, and holidays (Vasas and Salamon 1986) as well as assorted tales, sayings and anecdotes (Magyar 2004). Personal life stories also constitute a form of oral narrative. Within the community, the villagers are the storehouse of their own life stories and of those of all other villagers. A villager whom we found tending his sheep gladly shared with us his own life story. Kalotaszeg villagers once produced as a way of marking the

seasons.¹⁰ But, proceeding from the village’s success with the annual dance camp and from their development of village tourism, they have recently promoted a fall Rose Hip Festival. It is a community event created with outsiders in mind.

Occasions for singing must now be far more limited than in the old days when the village girls gathered in the spinning room to work and sing, when Saturday night dancing was the principal community entertainment, and when, of course, television, recorded music, and electronic instruments were unknown. Eurodisco and europop music has long since been in

⁹ Ökrös (1996) and his collaborators provide an hour-long sampling of dawn songs with Kalotaszeg singers Anna Meggyesi (Mrs. János Simon) and László “Türei” Lengyel, and with legendary fiddler Sándor “Neti” Fodor.

¹⁰ Vasas and Salamon (1986) discuss various rituals, and Wiegmann’s documentary (1995) of the measuring of the sheep’s milk on St. George’s Day in Méra is an exploration of a famous example.

fashion for weddings and other social gatherings, and hip-hop is on the ascent. Since weddings entail reciprocal obligations to others in the community, once the wedding guests come to expect the new music, their expectations must be honored, and it is hardly possible, in general, to turn back time for the old music and dances.

On the example of Kalotaszentkirály, we have explored the potential for initiative and innovation, and for adaptation to circumstances. It is obvious that not every Transylvanian village can recast itself as an official “European Village” catering to tourists; the villagers of Kalotaszentkirály have been both enterprising and lucky. Yet community life is confronting perils, and change can occur quite abruptly, as has already happened with the dramatic decline in farming and the rapid disappearance of the once-mighty buffalo herd.

For all its challenges, we may easily surmise that Kalotaszentkirály is in an enviable position. Advantages of infrastructure and tourism make its survival as a village community more promising than that of so many neighboring villages of Kalotaszeg where the flight of young people and consequent “geriatrification,” the gentrification as bedroom or weekend housing, and the loss of population contribute to the deterioration of community solidarity and sense of place. Ultimately, these oral traditions and their cultural analogs within village life are all subject to the setting of the sun, a sunset that has extended its final hour over the past century.

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