

## FOLKLORE FUNCTIONS IN THE CONTACT AND MASS COMMUNICATION CONTEXT

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Folklore as a whole represents one of the wider folk culture system sub-systems composed of material and spiritual values and relations "mutually interlinked in a given time, regional and social space of ethnic community more or less united, existing in the local groups and social strata as generally known, and in the form of local, regional or social variants traditionally considered as "obligatory" (Pranda, 1977, p. 33). Various contents and meanings are connoted to the term folklore not only in colloquial language or journalistic jargon but also in professional ethnological and culturology literature. However most frequently specific manifestations of oral, musical, dance and dramatic art connected with everyday life of small social groups, with practical activity and feeling of the bearer are connoted to this term. (Leščák - Sirovátka, 1982, p. 22).

Although the professional definitions of the folklore vary, nevertheless they are identical in several its signs, among which narrativeness of the folklore is dominant and to which other signs like collectivity, variability etc. are connected. From the point of view of communication theory, narrativeness in the creation and trading of the folklore means that the existence of folklore was in primary milieu connected to the first basic type of communication - to interpersonal or - direct communication (Dominick, 1990, pp. 10 - 11). At this form of communication the passer and receiver of communication are bodily present and in direct contact. In communication they use not only narrative and auditive but also visual ways (miming, gesticulation), or alternatively body contacts (touching, mutual holding at dance etc.). A very important part of interpersonal (direct) communication is also feedback - i.e. response in the form of agreeing or disagreeing reactions (laugh, expression of astonishment, verbal input etc.), or joining in common singing, dancing etc.

Folklore had thus existed in the oldest phases of its development and in primary milieu till today exists mostly only through people - its bearers, either in the latent form (in his conscience as a part of cultural memory of communities and individuals), or in so called manifested way (within formalised contexts, e.g.

ceremonies in which folklore was required, or within informal social entertaining contexts in which folklore manifestation was expected).

Within contact interpersonal communication folklore (or its relevant genres or types) had various functions, hierarchy of which was changing in accordance with historical and cultural development of the communities as well as in connection with the contexts within which it existed. To this sustainability and duration of various folklore genres which do not equally outlive in historical development is closely related. So e.g. extinction of incantations and magic formulas, which lose their importance together with the extinction of ritual and magic operations (in folk healing, love practices etc.), can be observed. From colloquial language traditional proverbs and sayings are fading away - though they have still its place in literature and journalism. Fantastic fairy tales are fading from folk prose but the importance of various memorate forms, humorist narration and anecdotes become even more important in folk narratives. Several genres of child folklore have been maintained, in some regions so called "walk about games" of Christmas - New Year cycle, folk dances - but most of all so far relatively rich and occasionally also manifested repertoire of folk songs.

Folklore collectors (especially during the romanticism period) often evaluated most of all the aesthetic side of folklore manifestations - their simplicity, beauty, poeticism, ability to express a whole scale of human feelings, moods as well as moral, ethical standards etc., through most simple expression means. Within contact communication the aesthetic function is only one of the whole scale of changing folklore functions - more dominant were non-aesthetic functions. Such is most of all the magic-ritual function of folklore, where folklore was an inert part of the family and anniversary rituals structure and its prevailing function was determined by the ritual itself (Bogatyrev, 1991, p. 115). Gradually by loosening the magic-ritual function of the rituals which were from a firm system of magic acts changed into occasional games of the village youth, folklore and some genres e.g. songs were "released" from the ritual structure and became independent from the ritual (e.g. some wedding songs, etc.) (Krekovičová, E., 1989, p. 91 - 101).

Then work function of the folklore can be mentioned, in which e.g. rhythm of specific rhymes or songs dictated the rhythm of work being done or other activity. Work songs were spread all over the Europe (Strobach, 1980, p. 47), but only fragments of them maintained in our area (e.g. from songs sung at hammering in the pillars to the river basin.). However songs which cannot be quite defined as work songs but are bound to some work activity were maintained such as hay collecting, harvest and "šichnické" songs, sung at raking hay on the mountain meadows, during the harvest, while picking forest berries and other work done in the forest.

Among other important folklore functions integrating, informative, amusing, social and regional (or local) functions can be mentioned and many others,

importance of which and relations have been and are changed in various periods and situations. In primary folklore milieu the folklore functioned and was judged according to its ability to fulfil concrete needs and express social problems, hopes and interests. Researchers very often find out that the aesthetic criteria of the folklore bearer and collector differ. The bearer in the folklore milieu e.g. denotes a song beautiful because he understands it as "ours" - he identifies the regional functions with aesthetical. As an aesthetic criterion is perceived a developed plot of the song. Also identification of the bearer with the social or moral attitude expressed in the work of folklore can be an aesthetic criterion. It can be stated that the aesthetic evaluation, aesthetic folklore function is often in primary milieu identified with non- aesthetic functions.

Folklore never created a firm, unchangeable system of elements, occasions and functions, but a relatively flexible system, which as a whole but also through its individual elements changed, varied, absorbed new incentives and annulled non-functional elements. New situation in folklore existence and trading has been gradually created along with the development of literature and book printing. Interpersonal communication enabled continual process of folklore's transition from latent into manifested form, creation of situational topical variants from invariable model latently stored in the memory of the community and individuals. The first written records of the folk songs, fairy tales, proverbs etc., however interrupted this process: they meant fixing of a concrete variant of the work of folklore, making the direct feedback unable, separating folklore from its interpreter and receiver. Folklore thus could exist and since has been existing also beyond man - its previous bearer. First written records of folklore, especially songs date from the 16th century. First they were rather random written records. With the time the number of hand-written books of songs of various kinds had increased as well as hand-written collections of tales, proverbs, forecasts etc., which later formed a rich source of folklore material for printed collections of Slovak folklore especially in the 19th century.

Since the existence of the first hand-written records and later issued collections of folklore material we can speak about the creating process of dual existence of folklore:

1. In primary, authentic milieu, in traditional forms and contexts within the contact interpersonal communication.
2. In secondary forms and functions, where contact communication is less used and folklore is mediated via press and audio-visual media. The elements of traditional folk culture are getting into new context and are being used by various ways in contemporary cultural systems.

This process did not last for a short period and is ongoing even in the present times. Prime existence of folklore was dominant in Slovakia for quite a long time until the beginning of this century. However gradually many folklore elements were changed, general subject, hierarchy of its functions and traditional folklore

contexts and connection to local or regional traditions were impaired. Gradual speeding impairing of traditional context and connections, their interlinkage with secondary forms of folklore existence were closely related with general process of society development but mostly with: some political and historical events and processes (e.g. wars, great colonising waves and migration of inhabitants etc.) economic development (development of industry, transport, agricultural reforms, in the after-war period in our country disintegration of traditional Slovak village due to collectivisation etc.) development of culture and general education abrupt penetration of massmedia into everyday life of society especially in the after-war period.

At present time it can be stated that even nowadays the primary existence of folklore is still of some importance as the folklore still exists as an integral component of the life and culture of small social groups within contact interpersonal communication. However so called second existence of folklore is prevailing also in Slovakia and folklore is being used also in other newly formed contexts, connections, artistic and functional shiftings in the system of national culture. For this whole complicated and long-lasting process German researchers Hans Moser and Hermann Bausinger in the 1960s introduced not quite corresponding but till now used term folklorism. (Bausinger, H. 1961, Moser, H. 1962). This term is understood as secondary mediation and demonstration of folk culture phenomena in changed conditions and functions, use of these phenomena as inspiring source of artists, as well as for extra-artistic aims, e.g. for representing, advertising, in tourism etc.

Folklorism has nowadays in Slovakia various forms and manifestations within which folklore occurs in various degrees of amendments, shifting and changes. Forms of current folklorism can be following:

1. Scenic folklorism - folklore quotation or use of some folklore motives and themes as well as rituals, folk costumes etc., in Slovak dramatic work

2. Stage or ensemble folklorism - various types of amendments of folk songs, dances and music, staging of customs, genre pictures from the village live by the folk groups and ensembles. Shifting in folklore processing can be observed on various stages: from exhibits of local customs with songs and dances interpreted by the village folk groups to authorised works of musical composers and choreographers in the programmes of the most important ensembles such as e.g. Lúčnica and Slovak Folk-Art Ensemble (which are especially abroad characterised as national ballet).

3. Musical and graphic folklorism introduces an abundance of inspiring spurs of folklore motives not only in the works of important Slovak musical composers not any longer alive (e.g. A. Moyzes, E. Suchoň, J. Cikker), but also in the works of current composers (T. Salva, I. Zeljenka and others). Similarly this can be found in graphic folklorism where dozens of older (Benka M., Fulla L.) and current artists (Laluha, Kompánek and others) can be mentioned.

4. Literary folklorism represents a wide scale of relations of Slovak writers to folklore and inspiration by the folklore. Close linkage to folklore is evident especially in the period of romanticism (not only in our country but in the whole Europe) but during the whole period of existence of Slovak literature these relations can be with some writers observed. It is not only "re-narration" or adaptations of folk tales and fairy tales or utilisation of some external folklore elements and motives or basic internal aesthetic and ethical principles of folk creation in the works of older writers but also in the work of very current ones. (M. Rúfus, V Šíkula, A. Chudoba and others).

5. An interesting and in the Slovak ethnology so far unsolved problem is the utilisation of folk tradition and thus folklore for commercial use, especially in advertisements and tourism. In the seaside or the Alpine countries where tourism forms an important part of the economy this problem has been investigated by many scientific fields including ethnology (e.g. Boškovič - Stulli, M. 1971, Potter, B. 1994 and others).

6. Most interesting for us is massmedial folklorism. From the point of view of communication science mass communication is a process in which a whole organisation by means of technical equipment produces and transmits information and programmes addressing a numerous and heterogeneous public (Dominick, J.r., 1990, pp. 15-19). Massmedia form a part of this type of communication which is diametrically differs from interpersonal communication not only by the type of communication but also by the time of its origin, scale of diversion of information, variety of genres etc. However mass media also use some folklore genres and principles which can be followed in several levels:

6.a First level can be briefly defined as folklore in mass media. Demonstrations of folk culture and folklore are cultural facts and they can be introduced in mass media the same way as other cultural facts through various for mass media characteristic genres. E.g. periodicals in Slovakia quite often publish in corresponding seasons descriptions of annual customs (at Christmas, Shrovetide, Easter, etc.), with songs, congratulatory rhymes and other folklore forms. Majority of dailies gradually publish weather forecasts bound to certain days or season of the year. Lately various recipes of folk and herbal healing can be found in the press. Folk tales, rhymes and songs are not rarely found in the children magazines. Contributions from travels are usually complemented by descriptions of garments, customs, food and folklore in far countries. Periodical press thus directly publish folklore texts, describe various manifestations of folk culture or inform about them. It is so called "mediation" from the "second hand". Sometimes we can speak about the "mediation of the mediated" e.g. when we read in the paper about folklore festivals and celebrations, exhibitions of folk art, expositions in the museums etc.

Even nowadays folklore has an important role in the radio broadcasting, especially folk songs, music and genres of folk narration. Radio as a sound medium has the advantage with regard to the press to record with high fidelity

not only texts but also tunes of songs, interpretation as well as sound contexts of folk manifestations. Broadcasted folk music and songs are taken from various sources and broadcasted within various genres: commented recordings of materials from terrain, broadcast commentary on customs, profiles of folk artists, broadcasting of foreign folk music, live broadcasting from the performances of ensembles and folk festivals. Folk song is used not only in specific broadcasts but also in various entertaining and especially in dedications to listeners (e.g. *Pozdravy jubilantom* - Dedications to Jubilees).

Besides musical folklore folk narration plays an important role in the radio broadcasting. It is not so frequent in interpretation of original bearers. More often only motives from folk tales and legends and their application in dramatic production especially for children broadcasts.

Audio-visual medium such as television has even wider scope of folklore utilisation in its TV broadcasting. It can transmit not only sound but as well to show folklore interpreters, elements of movement, natural, social and folklore milieu, folklore contexts, occasions etc. It enables the viewers "as if" they directly took part at some folk occasion. In the past our television took this opportunity quite often namely in some specific broadcasts, popularisation films, dramatisation of fairy tales as well as in entertaining and competitive broadcasts as were *Spieva celá rodina* (All family sing), *Príležitosť pre talenty* (Chance for Talents), etc. At present folklore occurs in the Slovak TV broadcasting rarely except for the annual celebrations (especially Christmas). (Droppová, L., 1992).

In all above mentioned cases it is the transmission of traditional folklore manifestations on the pages of periodicals, in television and radio broadcasting. The basic form of the folklore manifestations is not changed (e.g. content and main heroes of the dramatised fairy tale, text and motive of the song, basic dance elements) but various forms and stages of wording, adaptation, or quotations are of course applied too. It depends from the type of mass medium but also from the author's intention in relevant broadcasts or articles. The functions of folklore have however changed considerably. Even in cases when folklore is demonstrated in original milieu, in original social and folklore contexts it is always a certain form of staging folklore for the needs of relevant mass medium. Massmedial functions become dominant. The original folklore functions fade out or are shifted to a different position. For example information and socialising function belong among the basic folklore functions which are characteristic of mass media, too. (Dominick, J. R., 1990, pp. 31 - 45; Purer, H., 1990, pp. 66 - 67). With regard to mass media these primary folklore functions become minor. In mass media are important not only information and value orientation directly encompassed in folklore but also information about folklore as a specific cultural phenomenon which in the mass media has a relevant place in the system of cultural values.

Similarly entertaining function is common for the folklore and mass media. The viewer of television or the listener of the radio broadcast is not an active

participant in the fun but only a passive observer of demonstrated or staged entertaining occasion. One does not get acquainted with the folklore through personal experience and impression but through a mediated view of broadcast author and through specific means of relevant medium. We can thus speak about specific forms of "massmedial folklorism". It can be applied to a greater extent in the radio and television as these institutions transmit in broader scale also non-journalistic contents, production and broadcast.

6.b Other level of the folklore and mass media relation can be observed at following of human communication as a continuous process, at which various contents, elements and structures can be transferred from one type of communication into another or older types of communication can be substituted by newer ones. This phenomenon is not new and unknown, as researchers of several science fields long time ago stated transmission of plots and motives, fairy tales, facetiae, anecdotes, ballads not only in time and space but also in various genres of folklore and literature from medieval times.

Currently this question becomes topical especially with regard to audio-visual media - film, television, video clips. As early as 1925 Karel Čapek prophesied in one of his essays with the title *Věk očí* (The Age of Eyes): "Man must have been slightly re-educated. Man sitting in the cinema must have found some shortcut between eye and brain My passed away Granny had to read to herself aloud for the word had been for her only a sound not a visual image yet. A more trained reader cut the detour of hearing and could understand the word signs. In the film even the word meant a detour and we are learning to understand without words". Čapek further reasoned that the film educates a new type of people - visual instead of audio, who are impatient and who "want to empower situation with one glance, understand the story without its lasting and to see again something new". (Čapek, K., 1957, pp. 41 - 44)

David Riesman in his study on changes of American character called *Lonely crowd* showed this problem from a different standpoint. In the part dedicated to the socialising function of narratives and stories he understands various mass media genres as direct successors of these traditional folklore demonstrations. (Riesman, D. 1968, p. 86) He points out that in spite of incomparably wider selection of material, patterns and possibilities within mass media their disadvantage is its impersonal character, impossible feedback, possible wrong orientation of percipient, greater amount of information buzz which may represent some danger especially for very young recipients.

At present there exist side by side various types and ways of communication - from interpersonal to mass one. Within all these types of communication (or at least in most of them) folklore is made use of or some of its elements, principles or information about it. Folklore contexts are much broader and heterogeneous than in the past but in spite of this (or maybe because of it) folklore is in primary milieu less used in contact communication and it seems as some of its function

were taken over by mass media. Instead of singing songs at work usually radio is switched on. Instead of telling stories during neighbour debates and family sessions TV is switched on which very often substitutes for common exchange of information acquired by one's own experience. This is not a nostalgic grief for the past but statement of reality ethnology has to face and continuously carry out its monitoring and evaluation.

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## FUNKCIE FOLKLÓRU V SÚVISLOSTIACH KONTAKTNEJ A MASOVEJ KOMUNIKÁCIE

### Resumé

Odborné definície folklóru sa síce v mnohom líšia, no predsa sa zhodujú na niektorých jeho znakoch, medzi ktorými dominuje ústnosť a ústne tradovanie (s tým súvisia aj ďalšie znaky ako variabilita, kolektívnosť a i.). Z hľadiska teórie komunikácie ústnosť pri tvorbe a tradovaní folklóru znamená, že existencia folklóru bola v primárnom prostredí viazaná na prvý základný typ komunikácie - na **interpersonálnu, alebo priamu komunikáciu**. V jej rámci mal folklór rôzne funkcie (magicko-rituálnu, pracovnú, integračnú, informačnú, estetickú a i.), ktorých hierarchia sa menila spolu s historicko-kultúrnym vývojom spoločností, ale aj v súvislosti s kontextmi, v rámci ktorých existoval.

S rozvojom tlače a postupne i ďalších médií je však možné sledovať aj iné formy existencie a šírenia folklóru a to v procese tzv. **masovej komunikácie**. Folklór sa tu prezentuje ako ktorýkoľvek iný kultúrny jav prostredníctvom špecifických masmediálnych žánrov. Vždy je pritom nevyhnutná určitá forma štylizácie folklórneho prejavu, no niekedy sa mení aj pôvodný žáner folklóru (napr. ľudová rozprávka dostáva podobu rozhlasovej hry) a výrazne sa menia aj funkcie folklóru. Pôvodné funkcie sa presúvajú do inej polohy, alebo celkom zanikajú a dominantnými sa stávajú masmediálne funkcie.