2 Bartók and folk music

STEPHEN ERDELY

Early impressions, the *verbunkos*

At the turn of the nineteenth century a growing national consciousness permeated the political and cultural life of Hungary. Men of letters envisaged programmes which included the creation of national art built upon the foundations of national customs and folklore. The call went out to members of literary and scientific societies asking them to collect folk tales and folksongs, and the response was so great that by mid-century the material gathered was large enough to fill several volumes.[1] As good as the intentions of these early collectors may have been, they saw the literary value alone in folksongs and printed only their texts without the music. This unfortunate omission was partly remedied by folksong collectors of the second half of the century. Not knowing, however, the difference between the songs in oral circulation, they uncritically took up in their collections popular tunes, patriotic songs and school songs intermingled with folksongs. Not even the most important publication of the century, István Bartalus's seven-volume collection, *Magyar Népdalok, Egyetemes Gyüjtemény* [Hungarian Folksongs, Universal Collection], was free of its predecessor's mistakes.[2]

Misconceptions about folksongs during the nineteenth century were also strengthened by the popularity of two rapidly growing musical trends: the *verbunkos*, or recruiting dance – a tempestuous, flexible, appealing, sentimental type of instrumental music which took its origin from folk music, before becoming transformed in the hands of gypsy musicians; and the popular art song – a pseudo-folksong product of dilettante composers, flooding the urban musical scene during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The *verbunkos* (a Magyarized form of the German word, *Werbung*), a soldier's dance, became part of the recruitment into the imperial Austrian army between the years of 1715 and 1867. Soldiers skilled in fancy dance steps, even acrobatic movements, were specially assigned to lure young men into the service. The music was provided by gypsy bands which were always available for such events. Historians are of the opinion that the gypsies used folk tunes known to the people, giving the local Hungarian tradition primary emphasis. But throughout the development of this dance music many foreign features were also absorbed. The oldest musical

elements may have been carried over from the *Heiducken* dance – a heroic dance of sixteenth-century mercenary soldiers – indicated by the motivic construction and the trumpet-like fourth jumps in the tunes. In the hands of the gypsies, however, the folk melodies were overlaid with ornamentation, scalic flourishes, augmented seconds and Phrygian cadences – the Balkan or Eastern heritage of the gypsies – and were set into a harmonic texture by the use of the cimbalom, a probable influence of Western practices. Nevertheless 'the clicking of the heels' and certain stereotype cadential formulae, triplet figures and other rhythmical features made the *verbunkos* unmistakably Hungarian. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the national characteristics of the dance were well developed and every layer of society could identify with them.

While the term *verbunkos* is hardly mentioned in the documents before 1800, the dance named *Magyar* appears in the order of ballroom dances among the *Allemandes*, *Françaises*, *Polonaises*, and *Anglaises.* Hungarian poets of the period describe the *Magyar* as a slow dance with a gradual increase of tempo without ever changing its serious, stately nature, thus fitting the dignity of the noble men who danced it. The fast part, *friss*, was regarded as a distortion, an element from folk tradition that did not suit the ballroom style. The slow, stately dance was also called *palotás* (palace dance) and the fast dance, *csárdás* (tavern dance).[3]

The *verbunkos* was diffused throughout the country in numerous forms. It grew from dance music into a musical style, reaching its zenith between 1810 and 1840. During this great period of national awakening it was elevated in the hands of brilliant and inspired violin virtuosos (such as János Bihari (1764–1827), János Lavotta (1764–1820) and Márk Rozsavölgyi (1789–1848)) into art forms, which include fantasies, rêveries, rhapsodies and fancies, and was further popularized in numerous publications noted by minor German composers. In its final stage of development, mixed with Italian and German melodies, the *verbunkos* style was taken up by Ferenc Erkel (1810–93), in his historical operas, by Mihály Mosonyi (1815–70), in his orchestral and choir works, and by Franz Liszt (1810–86) in his symphonic and piano compositions, and it became known in the West through Hector Berlioz's *Rákoczy March* and Johannes Brahms's Hungarian Dances.[4]

Popular art songs were coming into vogue from the middle of the nineteenth century. Their composers were dilettante musicians whose aim was to provide the growing urban population with songs resembling folksongs but 'on a higher level'. This was a society that had already outgrown folk culture but did not yet reach the standards of higher culture. The songs were circulated orally and were spread by folk theatres and gypsy bands on the lips of those fond of singing. They also penetrated the villages where

they endured smaller or larger changes stimulating the development of newer, so far unknown, forms.[5]

At the end of the nineteenth century Hungarian music echoed the heritage of the *verbunkos* in both its art and oral traditional forms. *Csárdás* tunes and popular art songs reverberated throughout the country, overshadowing folk tradition. The general public regarded the sentimental urban song, the *Magyar Nóta* (Hungarian tune), as being the true Hungarian tune, and gypsy music the tradition. But in fact both were folkloristic products of an age that did not learn the true meaning of folksongs.

The turn of the twentieth century, which marks the beginning of Béla Bartók's musical career, witnessed a Hungarian society divided from the point of view of its musical taste into three distinct layers: the upper classes (which included the nobility, the urban financiers, industrialists and bourgeoisie) turned to the West for their musical needs; the gentry and the urban middle class found satisfaction in the music of gypsy bands and in popular art songs; it was only the agrarian folk who lived with its folksongs and musical customs, isolated from the rest of society.

Bartók obtained his childhood impressions of Hungarian music from his provincial urban environment. His mother recalls those special occasions 'when the gypsy bands were in town and the sound of music reached his ears, he nodded that we should take him there, and he listened to the music with amazing attention. At the age of four he could play with one finger on the piano the folktunes familiar to him: he knew forty of them'.[6] When Bartók entered the Academy of Music in Budapest in 1899, he had no better knowledge of his country's folksongs than that of the general public. But the early impressions struck deep roots in his memory. Music of the nineteenth century became his first musical mother tongue. In his compositions of the period between 1902 and 1907 he expressed his Hungarianness unconsciously, continuing in the Magyar idiom of Liszt's late creative period. And when he relinquished the Romantic Hungarian style, the *verbunkos* spirit continued to surface in his music throughout his life.

It should be remembered that the *verbunkos* was a performance art during most of its history. It had heroic roots, evolving the national characteristics in dance and music; it had its dignified, noble side as well as its joyous tempestuous forms; it lived in the slow, stately *palotás*, and in the fast *csárdás*; it was echoed in brilliant fantasies and rhapsodies of inspired fiddlers and rose into operatic, church and instrumental music of composers at home and abroad. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the style showed its limitations.

In Bartók's music the *verbunkos* element becomes a symbol of the nation, of its moods and expressions, at times in passionate outburst,

other times in calm reflecting mood, and at yet other times with a dignified pose or echoing the historical spirit. It is never how it was, but how it could have been if, in those promising times of national awakening, Hungarian music had evolved out of the roots of folk tradition.

Fieldwork

The early years of Bartók's career fall into a period of Hungarian history filled with political tension and unrest. The 1848–49 War of Independence and the years of oppression that followed were still vivid in the memory of the Hungarian people. Although the Compromise pact with Vienna in 1867 granted many of the demands of the Independence Movement it remained a confirmation of the Dual Monarchy. The Hungarian Parliament was divided over the Compromise; the Liberal Party was in support of it, but the Independent Party viewed the pact as an acceptance of Vienna's domination in the Dual Monarchy.[7] Amidst raging debates the Independence Movement gained strength, calling for the display of the Hungarian coat of arms, for the Hungarian hymn, in place of the Austrian national anthem 'Gott erhalte', and most emphatically, for the use of Hungarian language commands in the Austro-Hungarian army. And when the emperor denied this last demand the Movement reached revolutionary pitch.

Bartók supported the aspirations of the Independence Movement. He wrote to his mother, 'Every man, reaching maturity, has to set himself a goal and must direct all his work actions toward it. For my part, I shall pursue one objective all my life, in every sphere and in every way: the good of Hungary and the Hungarian nation'.[8] He wanted to be progressive as well as Hungarian in his art. The *verbunkos* and the post-Romantic musical idiom were not compatible.[9] 'I recognized that the Hungarian tunes mistakenly known as folksongs – which are in fact more or less trivial folkloristic art songs – offer little attraction, and so in 1905 I began to search for the music of agrarian peasantry which was up till then completely unexplored', Bartók wrote in his autobiography (1921).[10]

The incident marking the turning point in Bartók's career and motivating him to take up folksong collection occurred in the summer of 1904 at Gerlice puszta, where he heard for the first time an authentic Transylvanian folk tune sung by a young maid. He wrote to his sister, 'I have now a new plan: I shall collect the most beautiful Hungarian folksongs and raise them to the level of art songs by providing them with the best possible piano accompaniment'.[11] And with this idea in mind Bartók applied for a grant to study the music of the Székely people for which he received 1,000 crowns.

Bartók gained further support for his plans from Zoltán Kodály, whom he first met in the home of Mrs Emma Gruber in 1905. Kodály, a composition student at the Music Academy, was also a doctoral candidate in linguistics with a special interest in folklore at the University of Budapest. At this meeting, Kodály recalls, Bartók was intensely interested in his first published folksong collection and in his dissertation on the *Strophic Structure of Hungarian Folksong*, and questioned him about the way contact was made with the folk, and how the collecting was done.[12]

In the summer of 1906 Bartók set out on his field trips. At first he was looking for beautiful songs which he could use in his compositions. Scientific questions pertaining to folksong research did not enter his mind. He toured the counties of Pest, Fejér, Tolna, Zala, Vas, Csongrád, Békés, Csanád, Hajdu and Maros Torda (see Fig. 2.1 on p. 30), eager to gain an overview of his country's folk music.[13] The two composers planned their trips in a complementary way, dividing the field to cover the widest possible territory.

Folk-music tradition in the villages was competing with urban pseudo-folksongs which were popularized throughout town and country by travelling theatre troupes and gypsy bands. A valuable part of the musical folklore repertoire was heard only from an older village generation and the danger that the songs would die out with them was real. Facing the possible loss of this musical treasure, Bartók and Kodály appealed to the public and to the government for support of their plans to collect and preserve the folksongs in the interest of national culture.

Contemporary politicians and cultural leaders did not take folk-music research seriously, nor did they understand what musicians could possibly contribute to the cause of folklore. The applications of Bartók and Kodály remained unanswered. Cultural prejudice against a semi-educated agrarian peasantry and chauvinistic political attitudes against nationalities were impeding their projects.[14] Indifference and, frequently, even a hostile attitude on the part of government and cultural institutions stood in Bartók's way of attaining the success or recognition for his folksong research throughout his lifetime.

Bartók's prime objective was the recovery of old Hungarian folksongs before they faded into extinction: 'in our search for the new, the unusual, the outstanding we are not only advancing our times but we direct our steps into long passed centuries . . . And true peasant music is nothing else than the portrait of a musical culture that has been long time forgotten'.[15]

Villages on the periphery of the country, which were least influenced by urban life, held the promise of finding the survivals of an older musical tradition. But to reach these places Bartók had to face many discomforts, for such communities were as much as 60–70 kilometres away from the

closest railway station, accessible only by peasant carts, through mountains, gravel roads, or no roads at all. And then they were often in a medieval state, without a school, a priest or even a tavern. He had to make his headquarters in peasant huts, live with the whole family in one room, and sleep, in place of a bed, on a straw-sack or a bench.[16] On a postcard from Bánffy Hunyad, one of such villages in Kolozs county, Transylvania, Bartók reports: 'Daily rain storms, hardly bearable heat, astonishing folk costumes. Moroccan dirt, and disorder on the streets, and the comfort for the pleasure of Europeans is missing.'[17] But Bartók's difficulties did not end with those bumpy trips to the villages; the real problem came when he had to tell the people why he wanted their tunes. In general, the peasants behaved with suspicion towards city folk; they were worried that their tunes would be 'taxed' or used for commercial purposes. When, a few years later, Bartók was interviewed on the radio, he described his task:

> The nature of collection required that I turn to older people, mainly peasant women, because they were the ones who knew the old songs. They had to sing into the phonograph and I transcribed the music. The Hungarians and Székelys understood quickly what the collection was all about. They smelled some money but did not ask for it out of modesty or gentlemanliness. But how difficult it is to bring an old woman to sing! That she should decorate her tune with the usual fiorituras so that the men should not make fun of her. Everybody had some strange idea that there was a trap set and nobody wanted to fall into it. We had to be shrewd and talk and talk . . . Finally the old woman comes around and starts to sing, then stops suddenly . . . Why? A new approach of persuasion had to be used, now from another angle . . . finally the woman gives in and the recording can be completed.[18]

Bartók's letters contain many pleasant field incidents as well. One of his funniest stories – and worst field experiences – is reported from Darázs, a small community in Nyitra county:

> This dear, naive, primitive folk! The way they stand around the phonograph, the way they strive to put more songs into that machine! Of course they are not interested in the results of the collection, only in the big 'tuba' . . . And how inexhaustible they are in songs! [. . . even though] Darázs is a small community, about 1,000 inhabitants . . . I stay and collect here in a small peasant hut, Tuesday was a holiday; around 4 o'clock the people began to march in, the small ones and the big ones. And the songs began to pour. A charming episode occurred as I placed a good hunk of a man in front of the phonograph: he respectfully donned his hat in front of the horn. The people broke out in laughter! Then a young girl began to sing a love song about Hansel. I did not quite get the name, but the others did and shouted: Martin, Martin should be in the song! It was her sweetheart's name . . . From the thirty people exhaling in that small room, the walls, the floor, my bed were dripping wet. I began to congratulate myself: cold room, soaking floor, wet

Figure 2.1 Counties of Hungary before 1919 and dialect areas.

> walls and, on top of it, wet sheets! . . . I put my winter coat on the bed and slept with my clothes on, covering myself with my blanket. This is the way the first day ended in the village of Darázs. And I must say, I endured all that and many other hardships.[19]

Bartók used the term 'peasant music' as an antonym to urban popular art songs although Kodály was never completely comfortable with that term; in his view every layer of society participated at one time or another in the creation of folk music. Kodály's experiences of field collection revealed that folksong does not have a 'genuine' form of the kind that amateur collectors hoped to discover in perfect, most beautiful shape; for the genre lives and spreads in variant forms which may show greater or lesser similarity. The tune or poetry may remain stable in one village and appear in diverse forms in the next. Melody, rhythm and structure may endure or show unusual diversity, for folksong is basically an idea which is re-created anew in each performance and by each performer.

Székely folk tunes collected in Csík county in 1907 were Bartók's first proofs of the survival of an ancient musical tradition. Kodály writes: 'He came back with such a pile of pentatonic melodies that, in conjunction with my own simultaneous findings in the north, the fundamental importance of this hitherto unnoticed scale suddenly became obvious. Yet we waited ten years, collecting and examining further data, before we considered it time to publish this discovery'.[20]

From the outset of his fieldwork, Bartók showed an interest in the music of nationality groups living within the geographical boundaries of pre-World War I Hungary (see Fig. 2.1[21]). Although chauvinistic politics claimed superiority for Hungarian culture and oppressed any attempt at national expression by minority groups, Bartók remained unaffected by these short-sighted political attitudes. He had already collected folksongs in Slovak-inhabited villages neighbouring Gerlice puszta, in Gömör, in 1906. We read in one of his letters: 'I have transcribed 120 songs, of which one third are definitely Hungarian melodies with Slovak texts . . . this is such an interesting question that it requires further investigation on the localities near the language border'.[22]

Bartók encountered a similar phenomenon among the Romanians in the Belényes-Vaskoh area of Bihor county a few years later. He writes to Jan Buşiţia, his Romanian guide and friend:

> I checked again the collected material, and I must say there are unusually interesting things in them . . . it is unbelievable that out of the same text rhythm (which consists exclusively of seven- or eight-syllable lines) such marvellous rhythmic variations are created . . . Having said that, you may not take it as an offense if I single out twenty to twenty-five melodies which were taken over from the Hungarians, presumably already in olden times. Such melodic borrowings are inevitable among neighbouring people. Naturally, a way out of such chaos can only be found by a scholar who has studied both people's musical folklore.[23]

From these and similar comments one can understand that Bartók found the study of neighbouring people's musical folklore imperative not only for the study of mutual influences, but also for his purpose of sifting out the indigenous features in Hungarian folk music and identifying the borrowed forms. He was an astute student of languages, learning Slovakian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Arabic, and some Russian beside, of course, German, French, Spanish and English; even if he did not speak them fluently, he mastered them well enough to be able to transcribe the folksong texts.

Bartók's folksong collecting years were between 1906 and 1918. However, amidst his concert tours, teaching and composing activities the time he was able to devote to fieldwork was limited and sporadic (see Fig. 2.2). After 1907, when he became full-time professor of piano at the Academy of Music in Budapest, he could only take time off during periods of academic recess. Christmas and Easter vacations were usually spent under adverse conditions in remote and primitive villages as the dates and places of his letters clearly indicate. Although the Hungarian Ethnographic Museum and the Romanian Academy of Sciences paid for the phonograph cylinders and his trips during 1913–14 when he was collecting in Romanian villages, his expenses were never fully reimbursed.

The dates of Bartók's field tours in Figure 2.2 are compiled from Béla Bartók Jr.'s account of his father's life, and from János Demény's excellent and detailed biographical studies.[24] The dates tell us the history of his collecting trips: he visited the counties of current Hungary in 1906–07 and then again during the war years when his travels in Transylvania were curtailed; he collected in the northern counties over a period of twelve years; and in Transylvania and the southern counties between 1909 and 1914. Within these counties Hungary's nationality groups were living in the same neighbourhoods as Hungarians. Villages and towns were often of mixed ethnicity, but some eventually became completely Romanian or Slovak, even if they were only a couple of kilometres apart. Fascinated with the music of Transylvanian Romanians, Bartók returned to their villages some twenty-five to thirty times, covering over 130 communities of this nationality group alone. In 1913 he made an expedition into Biskra and the vicinity of Algeria, recording Arabic folk and instrumental music.[25] During World War I Bartók had to alter, and even drop, some of his field plans, and after 1918 he stopped collecting altogether. In 1936, upon the invitation of the Turkish government, he went once more into the field in Anatolia, in search of tune types related to Hungarian songs.[26]

Bartók questioned his informants about how, where and from whom they obtained their tunes in order to acquire data about the music and knowledge of its association with folk customs and practices. But his primary interest was the music, instrumental or vocal, and, ultimately, its precise documentation by transcription. Example 2.1 is just one example of many that shows how, by the 1930s, his sophisticated notation turned his transcriptions into musical portraits of the singer or instrumentalist. No note, however slight, no vocal slide, pitch inflection, rhythmic nuance, tempo or articulative detail escaped his attention.

Yet, with all the skills at his command, Bartók firmly believed the phonograph to be an essential prerequisite for musical folklore work. He developed the technique for quickly noting the melody during the singer's performance while also recording it and later compared his own notes with the recorded version. According to Bartók himself, financial considerations forced him to devise such procedures. In America, as he began to study the four- to five-hour-long recordings of Southslavic epics, which the Harvard professor, Milman Parry, made in 1935, he recollected with regret the technical limitations of his own times:

> We poor scholars of those Eastern countries had to economize on time, on blanks, on expenses, on everything. So we generally had to confine ourselves to the recording of the first three or four stanzas, even of ballads as long as forty to fifty stanzas, although we knew quite well that every piece ought to be

	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
East of the Danube													
Pest	1906	1907							1914	1915			1918
Jász - Nagykun		1907											1918
Csongrád	1906												
Csanád	1906												
Békés	1906											1917	1918
Hajdu	1906												
Transdanubia													
Fejér	1906												
Tolna	1906	1907											
Somogy	1906												
Zala	1906												
Vas	1906												
Komárom					1910								
Northern counties													
Gömör	1906												
Nyitra		1907											
Hont					1910			1913	1914				
Zolyom										1915	1916		
Bars													1918
Transylvania													
Csík		1907											
Maros Torda	1906			1909			1912		1914		1916		
Bihar				1909	1910	1911	1912		1914				
Bereg							1912						
Ugocsa						1911	1912						
Szatmár							1912						
Máramaros						1911		1913					
Szolnok Doboka				1909	1910								
Kolozs			1908		1910						1916		
Torda Aranyos				1909	1910	1911							
Also Fehér					1910	1911							
Arad												1917	
Southern counties													
Torontál					1910		1912	1913					
Temes							1912	1913					
Hunyad								1913	1914				
Krasso-Szörény												1917	
Africa													
Biskra and vicinity								1913					
Turkey													...1936

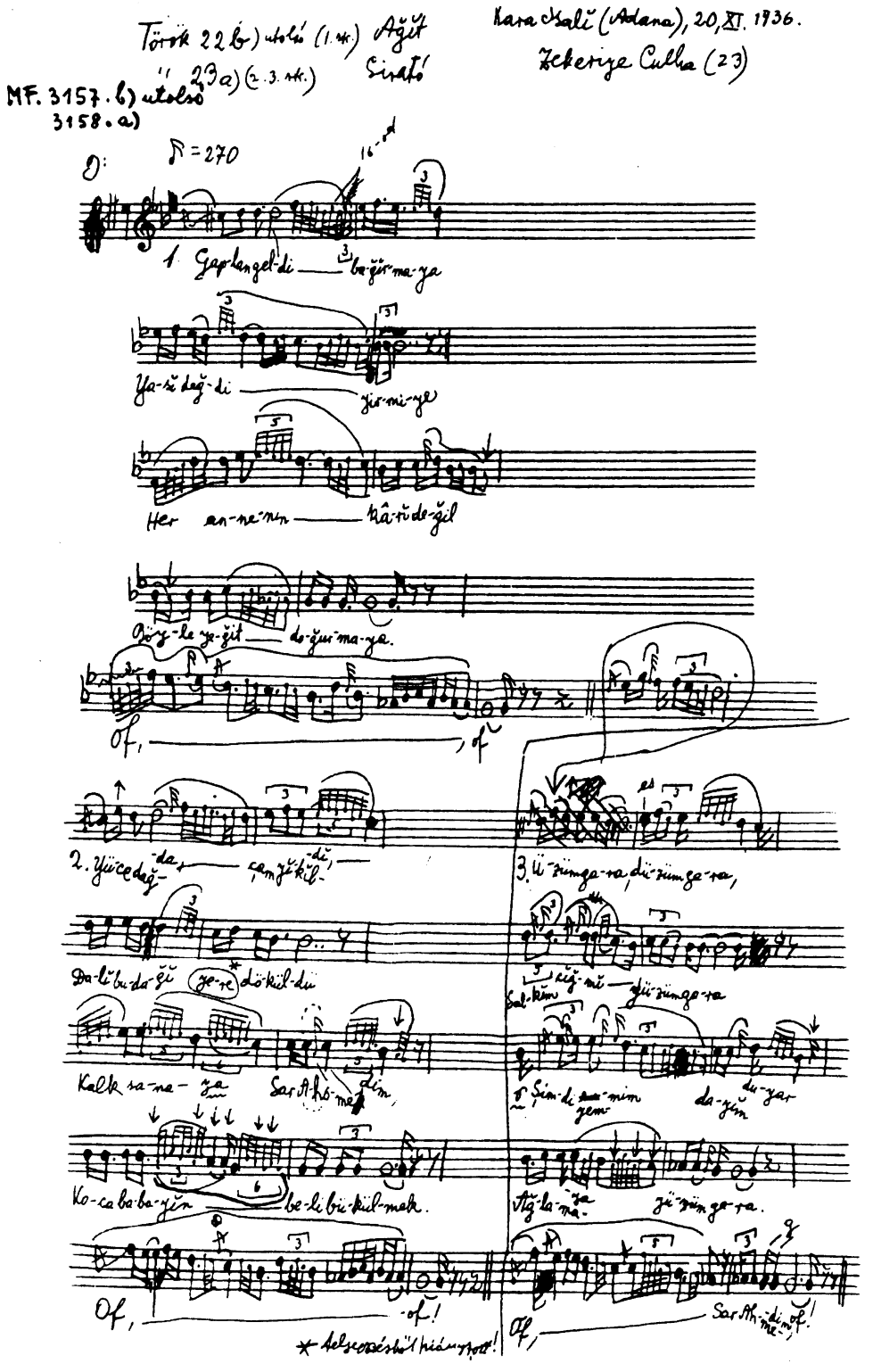
Figure 2.2 List of counties Bartók visited in different regions, with dates.

> recorded from beginning to end . . . I have some melancholy recollections of our worries and troubles, when after each two-and-a-half minutes of singing the business had to be stopped, the ready record taken off, then a new blank put on, and in the meantime, the singer generally forgot where he left off.[27]

In his study 'Why and How do We Collect Folk Music?'(1936), Bartók summarizes his field experiences:

> The ideal musical folklorist must be indeed a polihistor. He must have the knowledge of language and phonetics in order to observe and note the smallest nuances of the dialect; he must be a choreographer, to be able to indicate the interrelations between folk music and folk dance; only a general

Example 2.1 Turkish folksong transcribed in 1936



> knowledge of folklore enables the collector to ascertain the connections between folksongs and folk customs; he must be trained in sociology, to observe the changes disturbing the collective life of the village and its influence on folk music. And if he wants to make final inferences he needs historical information, primarily about the settlements . . . But above all it is indispensable that he should be an observing musician with an excellent ear.

Then he adds, 'To my knowledge there has never been and perhaps never will be a collector who embodies all those qualities, understandings, and experiences. Therefore folk music research cannot be carried out by one person at a level that would satisfy, by our current standards, all scientific demands'.[28]

With these remarks Bartók opened the gates for other disciplines to take folk music into their domain, and investigate it with their own methods. He also devised his own rigorous system of classification, thereby elevating the study of folk music into a scholarly discipline.

Method of order, classification and synthesis

During the years of intense fieldwork Bartók collected an astonishing variety of folksongs among Hungarian, Slovakian and Romanian peoples. As he began to prepare some of the collections for publication, his attention turned towards the organization of the material. Bartók's objective was to prove which of the songs were indigenous forms, and which were borrowed, old or new formations in the traditions. Such questions could only be answered by analysing and assorting the folksongs according to their musical characteristics. The search for a system, which would provide the tools for both the analysis and classification of tunes, prompted Bartók and Kodály to study existing folksong collections. After experimenting with several systems of order they found the Finnish folksong publication, *Suomen Kansan Sävelmia* (vols. II–IV, 1904–28), introduced by Ilmari Krohn, best suited for classifying Hungarian folksongs.[29]

Krohn classified the Finnish melodies by variants. The relationship of variants was determined by the similarity of their melodic contour, syllabic rhythm and overall structure. An interesting new principle, previously unknown in methods of classification, grew out of Krohn's observation that the ending note of a melody line is equally important in determining its character – at least to the same degree as the opening melodic formula. The innovation of Krohn, however, was the double system of classification based on the syllable order, or 'quantitative property', and the cadential order, or 'qualitative property', of melody lines.

The possibilities embodied in these musical principles enriched

Bartók's and Kodály's imagination and they adopted the Finnish system with certain modifications. Their version reads as follows: 'the arrangement of the song collection must be solely a musical one, made purely from the point of view of the characteristics of the melody, and of a dictionary-like order, so that the related songs, when placed next to another, show the main species clearly.' The gist of the system was described as follows:

> every tune is reduced to a common final to end on g´. As the number of melody lines is mostly four, only three of the line endings are considered here. Of the three the most important is the second one . . . All those songs to which this note is common are placed together. Within the groups originating in this way, sub-groups are formed according to the final note of the first line and, within the latter, according to the final note of the third line.
>
> Traversing this classification is the order of rhythmic groups: each category starting with the shortest tunes followed by the longest ones.
>
> And finally, the tunes are aligned according to their ambit, headed by the ones with narrow range and followed by those with wider range.[30]

The collection of Hungarian folksongs was then analysed in this manner and each element of the tunes to be classified (cadential structure, syllable numbers of the lines, melodic content and range) was indicated by letters and number symbols. The system gave rise to two further forms of classification, differing in method and purpose. In the 'lexicographical order' the songs are classified by one principle – usually the cadential structure of line-ending notes – as in a lexicon or dictionary. The advantage of this method is that the tune can easily be located; its disadvantage, however, is that even the slightest difference in the cadential structure of the tune will separate it from its variants and will not indicate the type or style of the melody. The 'grammatical order' assorts the melodies which belong in the same family, type or style, but uses a more complicated classification, changing the priority of musical principles.

Bartók developed the grammatical method of classification with several new melodic elements introduced into the system: (1) section structure (a section referring to the melody and text-line); (2) metric structure (a metric unit corresponding to two or three syllables); (3) rhythmic character of the line (e.g. *parlando rubato*, or *tempo giusto* method of performance); (4) cadential structure of the strophe; (5) range; (6) scale notes of the melody; and (7) melodic content of sections.

He also altered his system more than once, changing the priority of principles. 'In all likelihood every folklore material of specific character requires the construction of a special system of order to suit its needs',[31] Bartók stated. It is in the classification of folksongs that his scientific bent of mind is best demonstrated.

The Romanian Folksongs from Bihor County[32] was Bartók's first major folksong publication. By grouping the songs according to cadential and rhythmical order rather than genre, Bartók admitted that he overlooked one of the most important features of Romanian musical folklore. In his next publication project, *Volksmusik der Rumänen von Maramureş*,[33] completed the same year but published only in 1923, he assorted the songs into four major categories (at the time of this publication he had insufficient examples to give a complete classification of *colindă* presented in category (a)):

(a) *colindă* or Christmas songs;
(b) laments or *bocete*;
(c) songs not connected with customs, *doinas*; and
(d) dance tunes.

The laments are classified further into: (a) songs for the funerals of young people, and (b) songs for older people. The former are two-line melodies, sung in recitative manner on three notes (c♯″–b♭′–g′); the latter are four-line melodies, sung with ornaments in *parlando* tempo.

The *doinas* are divided into two sub-groups: (a) *hora lungă* melodies, and (b) newer *hora* songs. The *hora lungă* melodies have no fixed form; they are completely improvisatory. Nevertheless, one can distinguish three parts in their structure which are repeated or interchanged without any rule: (1) a sustained phrase opening on two notes (c″ and d″); (2) an improvised middle part decorated with fiorituras; and (3) a recitative type of ending on the final note, g′. Related to the *hora lungă* are the Ukrainian *dumy* songs. The newer *hora* is a four-line tune sung to a lyric or epic text in strict *tempo giusto*.

The dance music is also divided into two sub-groups: (a) tunes in free form composed of little two-bar motifs which are combined freely, and (b) tunes in closed forms, resembling stanzaic structures. Further division of sub-groups is based on the order of cadential notes and on the rhythmic and melodic content of lines. The classification brings several musical characteristics of the genres into focus: both the lament and the *hora lungă* are variants of a specific melody; the newer *hora* tunes, particularly the three- and four-line in the Maramureş tradition, resemble Hungarian and Slovakian melodies but differ in their cadential endings which indicate that they are direct borrowings. Only certain elements were taken over and restructured in the Romanian style.

The Romanian *colindă* melodies are based on a different method of classification. In the 1935 volume *Die Melodien der Rumänischen Colinde*,[34] Bartók deals with one specific genre and its many musical forms. In his introduction he describes Romanian folksongs in general as not being strophic in structure. Their lines consist of eight or six syllables

divided in four or three metric units of two syllables. If the last syllable of the line is swallowed or missing, and the line contains seven or five text syllables respectively, the singer adds a non-essential vowel which may differ from region to region. The *colindă* are assorted into three major groups: Class A, six- or five-syllable lines, Class B, eight- or seven-syllable forms, and Class C, indistinct forms. Sub-groups of Classes A and B are determined by the number of lines of the songs and each sub-group is further divided according to cadential endings, rhythm and range of lines. Tables of scales, range and melodic content offer further overview of the *colindă*. The tunes in this genre have no uniform characteristics as Bartók's tables indicate. Individually they show certain influences of peasant, religious or neighbouring people's music, and similarities with folksongs of a particular musical dialect region.

The experiences gained by changing the priority of musical principles and by using multi-level classification led Bartók to one of his most successful methods: the classification of Hungarian folksongs by style. In his book, *Hungarian Folk Music*, he applies his hypothesis of primitivity and complexity as a basis for chronology in the evolution of folk music, to (a) melodic construction, (b) rhythmic structure, (c) syllabic structure, (d) range, (e) scale system, and (f) function of folksongs.[35]

(a) Stages in the evolution may be melodies composed of small one- or two-bar motifs (children's game songs and certain forms of instrumental folk music, like bagpipe tunes, fall into this category); single lines, as in laments, or stichic formations, as in epics; closed three- or four-line tunes without architectonic structure; and finally closed stanzas (for example, ABBA or AABA forms) as found in the majority of Hungarian folksongs.

(b) Stages in the evolution of rhythmic forms may be *tempo giusto* patterns in rigid, equal time values that turn into *parlando rubato* rhythms, and then again into *tempo giusto* formation of a more complex nature as frozen forms of *parlando rubato* rhythms.

(c) Melodic lines with few syllables are assumed to be earlier structures than the ones with many syllables; the division of lines into symmetrical sections is believed to have occurred prior to the division of asymmetrical divisions, and strophes formed of isorhythmic or isometric lines indicate older formations than those formed of heterorhythmic or heterometric lines.

(d) Melodies with a narrow range are considered more primitive than those with a wide range.

(e) Scales with missing degrees (for example, pentatonic) point to an older developmental stage than heptatonic scales, and the latter are an earlier form than scales with chromatic notes.

(f) The stages of development are also manifested by the separation of

melodies into different functions. In an ancient state probably all songs represented one category. The separation of songs into customs – such as ritual songs, calendar-day songs, funeral, wedding, work songs and folksongs – occurred later with the division of social functions.

The Hungarian folk-music repertoire is assorted into three style categories: Class A represents the 'old'-style tunes, Class B the 'new'-style tunes, and Class C the 'mixed genera'. Each style has its own musical characteristics. Folksongs in the 'old' style comprise melodies with isosyllabic lines, pentatonic tonality and gradually descending melodic construction. Other characteristics are *parlando rubato* method of performance, and rich ornamentation. Subclasses are four-line stanzas of six- to twelve-syllable lines which are further classified by their cadential structure, melodic content and range of lines. 'New'-style melodies have closed 'architectonic' forms, equisyllabic lines of six to twenty-five syllables; their method of performance is *tempo giusto*, adjusting to the quantitative property of text syllables, and heptatonic tonality. Folksongs that do not fit the description of either class are placed into Class C 'mixed genera'.[36]

Comparative musicology

The division of Hungarian folksongs by style and the delineation of the 'old' and 'new' styles were the achievements of Bartók's method of classification. The changes in Hungarian folk music and the influences of the two styles could only be conjectured on the basis of comparative research. Kodály studied the musical folklore of the ethnically and linguistically related Finno-Ugric Cheremiss and Turco-Bolgar Chuvash people and compared their characteristic features with those of the 'old'-style tunes, while Bartók investigated the folksongs of the Hungarians and their neighbouring peoples in order to obtain a better understanding of the forms of borrowings and mutual influence affecting their musical tradition.

Hungarian tunes sung by young Slovakian and Romanian men, which Bartók had already discovered during the first years of his fieldwork, showed him that melodies do cross language borders. He observed that the *hora lungă* melodies of the Romanians and the *dumy* melodies of the Ukrainians belong to the same melody family, and pointed to the rhythmic relationship between the *kolomeika* tunes of the Ruthenians and the swineherd dance of the Hungarians. Closer investigation of native and borrowed forms in the music of nationality groups required the knowledge of musical traditions. Having already collected and classified Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian and Ruthenian folksong types, Bartók

was now in a position to compare their folk music. His monograph, *Folk Music of the Hungarians and Folk Music of its Neighboring People* (1934), summarizes the results of his research.[37]

The term 'comparative musicology' was already in use by Western scholars for studies of orally transmitted music, mostly from non-European, Oriental and non-literate peoples. To lend scientific credence to the field and bring it into the realm of musicology, scholars used acoustical devices for measuring pitch and scale relations without, however, organizing or classifying the material at hand according to further viewpoints. Bartók's idea of comparative musicology was based on field research and the comparison of musical traditions. His concept of methodology followed along the lines of comparative linguistics.

Whether a particular folksong type is borrowed or indigenous to a given musical tradition is based on three aspects: (a) its geographic distribution, (b) its percentile representation in the entire tradition, and (c) its musical characteristics. Following this reasoning Bartók states that the 'old'- and 'new'-style folksongs of the Hungarians are generally known throughout Hungarian-speaking territories; they represent close to 50 per cent of the entire Magyar musical folklore and have evolved in a number of variant formations. Although songs of the two styles have penetrated the musical folklore of neighbouring nationality groups their appearance remains sporadic. What accounts for the Magyar origin of the two styles and for their borrowed forms in the music of nationality groups is argued on musical grounds.

The 'old'-style songs were taken up by the Romanians in the neighbourhood of the Székely people, but mainly in their eight-syllable forms which match the form of Romanian folk poetry. For similar reasons the Croatians have taken over only the six- and eight-syllable structures. In the music of the Slovak people, however, the 'new' style took hold in surprisingly large numbers, even beyond the language borders. This fact brought into question the Hungarian origin of 'new'-style songs. Bartók's argument that the 'new'-style songs are originally Hungarian is based on the observation that they appear mostly with corrupted forms in the Slovak tradition; for instance, the typical four-line ABBA stanza is corrupted into a three-line ABA form, and the so-called 'adjusting' *tempo giusto*, a peculiarity of 'new'-style songs – adjusting the musical rhythm to the quantitative values of the text – becomes fixed and rigid in the performances of Slovak singers.

There are, however, suspect musical elements in the Hungarian musical tradition which point to Slovakian, Moravian and Czech influences. A large percentage of the 'mixed genera' suggests foreign musical borrowings. Songs of German origin reached Hungary through

Czech-Moravian mediation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; their further diffusion was probably blocked by the rise of 'new'-style folksong in the nineteenth century. Surprisingly, however, no influence was detected of the music of the neighbouring Austrian people on the Magyars. Bartók also found that the *hora lungă* tunes, which Romanian folklorists of more recent times claim to be widely diffused throughout their country outside the Carpathian Basin, had no influence on Hungarian folk music. Neither did the Slovakian *valaska* tunes that Bartók unearthed – one of the indigenous types of Slovak musical folklore in Mixolydian tonality, *parlando rubato* tempo, with shepherd or outlaw subject matter – show any influence.

As a general observation, Bartók remarks that he could find the same kind of melodies and style differences in the songs of Slovakian, Ruthenian and Hungarian peoples, moving from one village to another, whereas the traditional repertoire among the Romanians differed greatly from one region to another. The diffusion of tradition seemed to be vertical among the former, and horizontal among the latter.

Folk Music of the Hungarians and Folk Music of its Neighboring People is 'a documented statement of the common and inseparable destiny of the Danubian people who had been roused one against the other'.[38] By 1934 Bartók's nationalistic aspirations towards 'the good of Hungarian people' had changed. 'My own ideas,' he writes, 'of which I have been fully conscious since I found myself as a composer, is the brotherhood of peoples, brotherhood in spite of all wars and conflicts'.[39]

His involvement with folk music changed his amateur collector's approach to that of a rigorous scientific investigator; it changed his musical thinking, his language of music; he experienced through musical folklore the human creative impulse, the 'natural force' which enriched his own musical imagination; it changed his entire world view: through his artistic intuition he has visualized unsuspected ties between past and present civilizations:

> We have arrived at the most exciting chapter in the history of folksong research, the chapter which I would call 'pragmatic musical folklore' . . . The ancient cultural relations of peoples who have been scattered far and wide, could and should be discovered. There is much to be revealed about ancient settlements and the, as yet unsolved, problems of history. It is now possible to discover what contact there was between neighbouring peoples, in what way they were linked or perhaps separated, by spiritual beliefs.[40]

Yet with all the contributions he has made to the field, Bartók never enjoyed full recognition. In his country his discoveries were viewed with scepticism and subsequent rejection, and among the nationalities, with chauvinistic attacks. His major collections – *Serbo-Croatian Folk Song*,

Slowakische Volkslieder, Rumanian Folk Music, *Turkish Folk Music from Asia Minor*, and his *Catalogue of Hungarian Folksong Types* – are all posthumous publications, historical references of a growing field.[41] The intellectual thought, energy and sacrifices Bartók made to raise musical folklore to a scientific discipline have yet to be recognized. He stands in this field today as a historical figure with scientific methods and artistic visions from which future musical folklore can greatly benefit.