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# Communist Politics of Archives: The Case of the Ethnomusicology Archive at the Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Constructive identity strategies articulated by cultural elites and cultural policies, starting with the nationalist movement of the nineteenth century, have instrumentalized tradition to communicate local identities within a multicultural world. This is why reactions in favor of the initiation of cultural policies for the collection and preservation of tradition, such as the archives, have increased with the establishment of these valuable nationalist sectors. In this study I focus on the role and dynamics of the ethnomusicology archive at the Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana between two political epochs: communism and postcommunism. I discuss the politics of culture and the importance of the archive under the communist regime as it made the object of special attention from the government. In this context a reciprocal relation was established, between the archive activities and the state funding for the dissemination of Marxism-Leninism, the national-communist ideology. Ultimately, I depict how the Soviet paradigm and the methodology continued also after the fall of communism, and how some young scholars, ethnologists and ethnomusicologists attempt for a paradigm shift (Roth 2014).

## KEYWORDS

Cultural policies, Albanian folklore, Institute of Folk Culture, archival politics, national-communism.

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## Comparing the paradigms of folklore during communism. Albania versus the Balkan states

The presence of folklore studies in Albania is primarily related to the nation-state building tradition, as part of a large movement in the European history of the eighteenth century. The nation-state building process in Albania, between the end of World War II and when the communist regime came to power in the region, unfolded in parallel with similar processes in Eastern Europe and in the Balkan states.

This was a time when the “Nation” defined the political context and the epistemological framework, with strong references to “nationalist folklore,” encouraging anyone

who studied the history of the discipline to consider the matter.

In all Soviet countries, the second reformation generation, namely the “nationalist communists,” took the place of the first generation of Stalinist orthodox leaders (Johnson 2001: 190). Along with this new vision, the international engagement of the proletariat was abandoned and national interests were placed in the foreground.

While in the Yugoslav case in order to forbid hostile nationalism, the strategy headed for a controlled version of socialist federalism, later on, after the late 1960s, party elites of each republic began to turn to a flamboyant advocacy for their nations.

In the meantime, in Romania, the link between communism and nationalism had different initial dynamics, more specifically it was developed by Ceaușescu in what some

scientists consider to be “the most eccentric form of national Communism” (Johnson 2001: 191).

In Bulgaria, by the end of the 1950s, there appeared to be a softer version of it because the country remained a reliable satellite of Moscow, and in these circumstances the level of nationalism allowed was much more limited. Although differently instrumentalized, *national communism* was a socialist phenomenon across countries.

The emergence of the nationalist ideology in socialist countries required a revision of the national agenda, which provided “folklore” as a science that was deeply connected with nationalist issues. In this way, with the most complex and comprehensive methods, the “nation” was at the heart of the discipline and the identity of its practitioners—and in some countries it continues to be.

As a result, new institutions were built and new political slogans were established. These products directed the discipline towards a new “folklore,” but mainly a new folklore of the proletarian people. Officially everything focused on folk culture and traditions, fueling national communism. In this way, “folk production” was initiated under the strict control of the Party, but always with the help of folklore experts. At the time, the European scholars of the Soviet Communist bloc (Romanian, Yugoslav, Bulgarian, and Albanian) focused on examining the culture of the working class, youth movements, and the collectivized peasantry. These were the three main categories of a people’s values to which the Party gave a prominent place in studies. Hence, it was hoped that these categories would furnish experts in their efforts to modernize the socialist state.

In Albania, the discipline was born as an interest in self-legitimization. It was initially developed as a “national science” out of an apparent need for conceptual tools to make an analysis of the people inhabiting this particular land. Thus, unlike the British case of Tylor or the American case during Morgan’s time, where the discipline was formulated as “science of culture,” in Albania it was for-

mulated as the “science of people,” i.e., ethnology. In essence, it was meant to stand for a true, valuable and natural connection between the people and the land they lived in. Scholars were tasked with the mission to express the “soul” of the people as found in arts, myths, beliefs and rituals (see the directives of Hoxha in *Kultura Popullore* 1985: 19-74; Filja 1989: 14-152).

Nationalism and the nationalist movement were to be developed not only in the political context, which by changing its image needed to produce a “nationalist science,” but at the same time the position and the role of “nationalist scientists” characterized strongly their functional peculiarities. This is reflected in Slobodan Naumović’s thesis of “the double insider syndrome” (1997: 2), where scientists consider themselves to belong to the group with which they share the same language, tradition, essential values, and the same political interests. As a consequence, folklorists do not face *the distance of the profession*; a kind of distance that does not have a positive effect on participant observation in the long term. On the contrary, it is assumed that folklorists, who observe the views of the people, should avoid emotions and not form affections. They should keep their distance from the informants in order to better understand them (Iosif 2008).

In this context, folklorists perceived themselves and were simultaneously perceived by the public as part of the intellectual elite of their country, and consequently society tasked them to study, consolidate, invent, and finally defend the “cause” of the social group they belonged to. This double insidership aspect is a powerful factor of the folklore discourse ideologization. The only difference is that the folklorist may, on one hand, engage in ideologization, but is not entirely aware of this fact, and on the other hand, the folklorist ideologizes his own discourse in a deliberate way. In reality these two ideologized cases do not exclude one another. On the contrary, the combination of the ideologization effects in these coun-



tries is the result we are talking about. Precisely “this mutual stimulating combination of unconscious and at the same time intentional ideologization” was what the Serbian anthropologist termed “the double-insider syndrome” (Naumović 1998: 14). This syndrome explains the fact that in any of these Balkan countries folklore/anthropology has not engaged in post-national criticism the same way the west has done with post-colonial anthropology (Todorova 1997).



### **Institutionalizing criticism in the Albanian context: the new generation as the only salvation**

In 2012, the German-British anthropologist, Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers published an article about international challenges of Albanian ethnology in postcommunism. As a scholar of Albanian Studies, she argues and simultaneously is concerned about the fact that Albanian ethnology remained unaffected by the political changes during the period of democracy. Schwandner-Sievers underlines that after decades of isolation and separate development, the relationship between foreign and local scholars, as well as the contact with new theories could have already echoed in the interpretations of Albanian ethnology and its role as archivist of ethno-national traditions and culture. In this context, Schwandner-Sievers raised the question whether Albanian scholars had accepted the challenge of the discipline internalization, finding response in young scholars (Schwandner-Sievers 2012: 219-255).

And indeed, fifteen years after the fall of communism, young scholars living in Albania started to contribute to an increasing number of publications and scientific activities highlighting a critical perspective on the discipline of folklore or ethnology as it developed under the nationalist communist ideology in Albania (Hysa 2010, 2011, 2013; Kodra-Hysa 2014; Dalipaj 2008, 2012; Shkre-

li 2009; Shkreli 2011; Shkreli, Sirbu 2010; Sirbu-Iosif and Shkreli 2015; Doja 2015; Abazi and Doja 2016; Bardhoshi and Lelaj 2018).

The two-volume edition *Studying Peoples in the People's Democracies: Socialist Era Anthropology in South-East Europe* (Hann *et al.* 2005; Mihăilescu *et al.* 2008) was a high influence on the postcommunist generation of ethnographers and folklorists. The analyses of folk studies as a nation-state project developed under Marxist ideology were very revealing for the young generation. On the other hand, the debate about the notion of *Volkskunde* used to define the discipline as it developed in postcommunist countries caught their attention as a response to many issues which were found in the early years of their work at the Institute.

These scholars, particularly those who enrolled at the Institute of Folk Studies after 2002, had to follow a long and difficult route before they could disseminate their studies. The communist tradition of isolation and the conceptualization of the discipline as a political instrument of communist propaganda had already established them as a marginalized community of scholars in Albania. As a result, the new generation in the Institute found themselves deeply divided from the rest of the world (Kodra-Hysa 2014: 29). The heritage of the regime's self-isolation gave rise to multiple difficulties, from collecting theoretical and methodological knowledge and literature on social anthropology to network-building. The works referenced above, by Armanda Kodra-Hysa, Gerda Dalipaj, Nebi Bardhoshi, Inis Shkreli, constitute an essential contribution and illustrate these authors' perseverance in changing the paradigm of folk studies and ethnology in Albania from within. In 2004, this group of young researchers from the Institute of Folk Studies, who gathered in the Ethnology and Ethnomusicology Departments, openly rejected the ideologized “old-fashioned” paradigm embracing instead a trend toward cultural anthropology.

As new enrollees, their duty was to work as apprentices or successors of their su-



2)The conference Socialism and Albanian Society took place at Universitas Fabrefakta Optime (present Albanian University of Tirana), organized by the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Department of Social Sciences, in April 2010. The ethnomusicologist Corina Iosif Sirbu and I presented a paper on the topic "Cultural Policies and Folk Studies in Communist and Post-communist Albania" (see also Sirbu-Iosif and Shkreli 2015).

pervisors who were senior scholars working in the Institute's different departments. The sources of information in the libraries were very limited and available only in Russian and other Slavic languages; very few monographs could be found in French or German. But given the political environment in which this new generation grew up, that is after the break off of diplomatic relations between Albania, Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, they didn't receive an education in Russian as the senior scholars had and therefore lacked knowledge of Slavic languages. From 2006, several international scientific activities relating to social anthropology took place at the Institute, organized by these young scholars; furthermore, they published their views in several journals and publications (*Revue Ethnologie Française*; *Journal of Urban Anthropology*; *Ethnologia Balkanica* edited by International Association for Southeast European Anthropology which for them became a crucial reference for networking and dissemination) that were part of the European Ethnology network. These papers and articles focused on reflections and criticism arising from analyses of the communist nation-building ideology based on "folk culture" or "peasant studies" approaches ranging from sciences to literary criticism; the papers treated different aspects of the discipline (in ethnology and ethnomusicology) in detail. While these studies tend to come close to western cultural or social anthropology, the old principles taught at the Institute of Folk Culture are still present and continue to influence the paradigm shift (see also Kodra-Hysa 2014).

The young scholars' academic degrees were associated with different disciplines in psychology, law, history, musicology, philology. At least 10 per cent of the scholars had attended ethnography or folklore courses. Once in the Institute, they had to follow the tradition as they were introduced to the discipline with readings about local ethnology and empirical folklore studies within the frame of "ethnology at home." Their first duty was to read Albanian ethnographical

notes, focusing mainly on the collection of journals published by the Institute of Folk Culture which did not include anthropological theory; *Etnografia shqiptare* (Albanian Ethnography), *Kultura Popullore* (Folk Culture), *Çështje të folklorit shqiptar* (Questions of Albanian Folklore).

In 2010, the Department of Social Sciences at a nonpublic university named Universitas Fabrefakta Optime (shortly UFO University) organized a conference on socialism and Albanian society in Tirana,<sup>2</sup> targeting the anthropology of socialism. The conference gathered Albanian scholars working in Albanian research institutes and universities, as well as researchers who were attached to western universities. It was clear that the discipline in Albania was on its way to shifting from Marxist ideological and theoretical grounds to the western paradigm of cultural anthropology. Critical perspective and analytical debate were the focuses of the debate, how the Stalinist-Soviet paradigm and methodology were utilized in humanities for ideological and political purposes (Roth 2014: 3). The papers took a close look at the Marxist ideology and Herder's theory, discussing on how it affected humanities, mainly the disciplines of folklore and ethnology and the tradition.

In the following years, when the post-communist generation became part of the Institute's leadership, the discourse started to be integrated in the Institute's activities and publications.



### **The Institute of Folk Culture, the archive of the peasant music collection: the construction of folk culture institutionalization**

*The sound of national identity in the audio-visual archive*

Audio and video collecting processes of urban and rural Albanian music in modern Albania go back seventy years and cover the

most important political and historical periods of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The diachronic institutionalization of the archive corresponds to the perspective of political decision-making in the Albanian state. Regardless of the impact it had on different political and historical contexts, the politics of culture and the importance of the archiving tradition during the nation-building process were specific concerns of governments, whether before, during or after communism (Kultura Popullore 1985: 19-74). Under both King Zogu I and communist leader Enver Hoxha, traditional culture was the only form of power for the new nation state, so it had to be investigated, collected, documented, classified, preserved, and disseminated. During the twentieth century, the nationalist paradigm was an appropriate method to approach the disciplines of history, linguistics, archeology and culture, leading to the scientific label: Albanological Studies (Studimet Albanologjike).

The twentieth-century nationalist approach was the continuance of the nineteenth-century nationalist movement in Southeast Europe, with the Albanian elite being also oriented toward the patriotic essentialist paradigm of the time (Schwandner-Sievers 2012: 222). The movement, namely, the Albanian National Awakening/Revival (Rilindja Shqiptare) and the elite involved, Rilindasit (mainly historians, writers and poets), were strongly influenced by Johann Gottfried von Herder's nationalist and Romantic view of promoting culture and language.<sup>3</sup> With political desire for national determination and nation building, Rilindasit clung to the paradigm of essentialist patriotism which held centrally the virtues and the origin of the people, and their very task was that these ideas be effectively articulated and also spread (Schwandner-Sievers 2012: 224-228; Pujol 2013: 50). Following these views, through historical references to the roots of ancient Ilirians, they tried to prove the evolution of Albanian society using the ethnogenesis thesis.<sup>4</sup> Led by Herder's theory, Rilindasit aimed to depict Albanians

as a great civilization and, by adding to it the Pelasgians thesis, they strengthened the claim to and recognition of racial supremacy, connecting Albanians with the Indo-European race (Indo-Iranian, Arian) descent (Ceka 2007: 106). Of course, in supporting these theories, they had to stress the virtues of society, shielded by cultural elements found in mythology, folk songs, customs, and natural laws.

The intervention of the state in the nationalist discourse at the heart of the modern identity construction is first encountered in the establishment and creation of cultural institutions during the reign of Ahmet Zogu I (1928-1939). An example is the history of the Institute of Cultural Anthropological and Art Studies in Tirana, including its archives. The audio and video archive has an important role in the founding history of the Institute. In different periods, the archive records remain proof of national presence, making up the core of the Institute's nationalist work.

The music archive was created in 1939, serving as an archive of Radio Tirana (1939) and located in a three-floor villa with an Italian fascist architectural style. Under the special care of King "Ahmet Zogu I," Radio Tirana's mission was to establish the first Albanian-speaking radio and broadcasting programs with the intention of disseminating Albanian culture in the newly formed state. Apart from its broadcasting role, it also started to publish twice a month a journal named *Radioprogram*, which later changed its name to *Radiorevista Tirana*, *Vatra shqiptare* (Albanian Hearth) and *Jeta shqiptare* (Albanian Life) (Këlliçi 2018). In its early years the journal dealt with local cultural and art topics, with ethnographic reports from the field, and short research works on folklore matters (until 1944).

The archiving of culture became a third role for Radio Tirana, one strongly connected with traditional music. Urban songs were recorded in the Radio's studio by professional technicians or in Italy by Italian state radios, while the rest of the songs and

3) Herder himself was not a Romantic, but his ideas about "ethnicity," *Volk* and *Geist*, had a strong influence on the political Romanticization of "the new nations" and their founders (Sirbu-Iosif and Shkreli 2015: 11).

4) The rhetoric was continued during communism and even strengthened. Historical references and the ethnogenesis thesis were the pillars of the nationalist communist ideology (see also Hoxha's Plenary speeches at Party Congresses, *Kultura Popullore* 1985: 19-74; about ethnogenesis in folk songs, see Filja 1989: 141-143).

dances were collected by a number of patriotic professional musicians, who had studied abroad through scholarships funded by the kingdom. They traveled to different regions of the country, to urban and rural areas very rich in traditional elements, and they recorded and transcribed songs and dances. For example, Tish Daija, a prewar composer made a great contribution recording songs from the north to the south Albania,<sup>5</sup> as well as publishing field reports with brief descriptions about the performance of the song (Hajati 2006). In general, there were no analyzes, only reports that indicated the existence of songs within the geographical area.

During all this time, the building served as a political institution; first, in the prewar period, it had the function to support the kingdom's nation-building agenda, nourishing the public with nationalist propaganda; second, it acted as a paramilitary unit, when in November 17, 1944 the Radio aired the first news claiming the liberation of Tirana by the Nazi occupation.<sup>6</sup>

In all aspects, in its fascist architecture, cultural and political functions, the building has something important to contribute to the formation of local and national history, concerning material and immaterial culture (Anglin 2008: 241). Currently, the building contributes to Albanian national and cultural policies, as it is recognized by the Ministry of Culture as a cultural monument.

In the early years after the World War II, Radio Tirana remained in the same building along with the folklore audio collection (traditional music, fables, etc.).<sup>7</sup> When the Ethnographic Research Sector was founded (1947) under the direction of the Institute of Sciences (see also Minga 2017: 35), it was located in the same building as Radio Tirana, making good use of the archival materials. The materials collected during fieldworks continued to be stored in the music archive.

During this time the scholars' task was completely focused on collecting, transcribing and disseminating national folklore ma-

terials (music and texts). Folklore had to respond to the necessities of the new communist nation and the nation building process; it had to emancipate the society in the domain of education and culture (Sokoli 1965). In this context, in 1959, folklore was integrated in all the academic curricula as a course and in History, Music and Literature text books (Sirbu-Iosif and Shkreli 2015: 10).

### **The Marxist-Leninist methodology for the process of collecting folklore songs and dances**

Recording, archiving and classification methods of folk music fully reflected the ideological orientations of Enver Hoxha and the Party. Hoxha's political messages communicated in the plenary sessions of the Party's Congresses were transmitted through a variety of media. Political communications at the Institute came through the Ministry of Education and the attached bureaus for different domains. In 1950 the Committee for Arts and Culture was established under the Laboratory of Music with the task of orienting science, art and literature towards specific thematic and methodology classification, everything based on Marxist-Leninist ideology, of course. Hence, we see how the archiving process of musical folklore started to reflect every single speech of the Party's leader, seeking to emphasize the national evolution, as well the national revolution (Sako *et al.* 1972: 2-4).

In its early years, the Ethnographic Research Sector did not conduct any planned and collective expeditions as it lacked logistics, methodology, and practice to conduct them. Song collection depended entirely on individual contributions, mainly from musicians or passionate music or literature school teachers who lived in urban and rural areas. These passionate folklore collectors also transcribed the materials, which can still be found in the music archive.

5) Interview in 2004 with Robert Çollaku, Head of Ethnomusicology Archive at the Institute of Folk Culture.

6) Conversations with researchers at the Ethnomusicology Department between 2003 and 2008 (See also Këlliçi 2018).

7) Conversation with Robert Çollaku at the Institute of Folk Culture.

However, they started organizing collective expeditions after the 1950s when the Marxist-Leninist ideology along with Soviet methodology were introduced and delivered to the Institute's scholars through various actions: workshops and seminars, joint experiences of fieldwork, experiences of visiting communist places, practices illustrated from international ethnographic exhibitions<sup>8</sup> (Gjergji 2006), as well support with equipment supplies.

The year 1957 marked the first organized official ethnomusicology expedition, which in fact was an endeavor of the Eastern German Academy of Science in collaboration with the Institute of Folklore in Albania. "A venture of two socialist sister states" as Pistrick (2017: 42) calls it, the expedition was financed and methodologically supported by the German partner, while logistics on location were covered by the Albanian state. The Germans were led by the successful ethnomusicologist couple Doris and Eric Stockmann, and the scholar Wilfried Fiedler, as for the Albanian team it was led by the ethnomusicologists Ramadan Sokoli (Stockman *et al.* 1965). As a matter of fact, Sokoli, a composer, flautist, musicologist, founder of Albania's ethnomusicology discipline, was actually a contested figure in the eyes of the regime who belonged to the former Albanian bourgeoisie. And here in this expedition he was the leading scholar, representing the Albanian partner.

The collaboration resulted in the collection of an estimated 620 recordings of around thirty-five hours, and 900 photo negatives, as well as an exemplary publication, which set new standards in comparative musicology (Pistrick 2017: 245). With its methodology and collection, the expedition opened a new era for the Ethnomusicology Department's archive. The Stockmann's archive is even now considered quite important among the Institute's collections: the archive section was named the "Stockmann collection."

In 1959, a second experience, but not central like the German experience, brought

Albanians and Romanians together for an international collaborative expedition with scholars from the Romanian Academy of Science.

In the meantime, the discipline of folklore got more attention from the state, and the sector was redefined under a new name and a new structure. It became the Institute for Folklore Studies<sup>9</sup> (1960) with two departments, the Department of Folklore and the Department of Ethnology. In 1979, the Institute of Folklore was again reorganized under a new name *Instituti i Kulturës Popullore* (IKP) (Institute of Popular Culture). In this period, IKP started to work under the direction of the Albanian Academy of Sciences (*Akademia e Shkencave të Shqipërisë*), a typical organizational structure, analogous to others of the communist Eastern Block which until 1990 followed the Soviet model.

Due to institutional changes, in 1960, Radio Tirana and the music archive were restructured and moved to another place. The original materials were stored on the same 6,3 mm magnetic tape in the Radio Tirana Archive, a copy being kept in the Institute's Archive with registering numbers from 1 through 142 (Qafoku 2009: 105).

Along with institutional reorganization, funding also increased, which in turn led to an increase in the number of expeditions and the quantity of recordings that would furnish the audio archive. The audio and video archive would acquire upgraded recording equipment, particularly those used in the field, Nagra-audio portable 4.2L recorders and Uher Report 4000, which in the early 1960s were available all around the globe. Uher recorded on 5 inch reels at speeds of 7½, 17/8 ips. The quality was excellent, they were considerably lighter compared to the Nagra-audio portable 4.2L recorders, but still quite heavy given that the researchers had to carry the equipment around remote villages, sometimes for hours.

Once the discipline and the archive were institutionalized, expeditions became very organized and followed a system of regulations oriented by the Soviet methodology

8) In 1976 a Romanian collection from the National Museum was opened to the Albanian public, continuing with an ethnographic exhibition from Swedish tradition (Gjergji 2006: 143-145, 168-170).

9) The Institute remains attached to the University of Tirana.

of research. Collective expeditions were organized in two ways: (1) *stationary expeditions* which involved ethnographers using a set of observations/questions to explore the thematics; and (2) *moving expeditions* which involved ethnomusicologists in recording songs and dances. Fieldwork, both collective and individual, was led by scholars at the Department, with the participation of technicians of the musical archive,<sup>10</sup> as well as external scientific collaborators (school teachers in urban or rural areas).

The Party's institutional directives were very precise in propagating the Marxist-Leninist ideology concerning collecting methods, classification of tradition, as well as the thematics. As a first step the ideology was applied through the compilation of a standardized questionnaire (Dojaka 1972: 137) consisting of a large number of questions which were carefully formulated and discussed in departmental meetings by scholars of the Institute, leaders of the Academy of Science, as well specialists at the Ministry of Education (*Kultura Popullore* 1980: 123). Each question targeted those specific ideologically oriented thematics connected with both historical evolution and social transformations. Epics and legendary songs, lyrical and ritual songs, dances, they were all part of these thematics. Following the national homogenization orientations, the songs had to be contextualized within the regional classification; in preparing the survey questions, the scholars who were ethnographers, ethnomusicologists and oral folklorists had to exclude the presence of linguistic and ethnic minority group songs, or at least the text (Slavic, Greek, Vlach) had to be sung in Albanian. A systematic survey had to be undergone during the time in which the archive had to be updated with songs from new folklore focusing on thematics, such as the family, collectivization, emancipation, agriculture, farming etc. (Panajoti and Kruata 1985: 89-108). Through the new folklore, archival materials along with the studies had to narrate the progress of the socialist society and the formation of the cult of the indi-

vidual, the New Man. Another aspect which accompanied the collective and individual expeditions was the verification of the informant's political background which, in coordination with vigilant representatives from local (urban or rural) authorities and other institutions (school teachers, cultural center directors or specialists), mapped the political situation of each informant, making sure that the informant's political biography was "spotless." In this way the recorded data on analogue tapes reflected the orientations given to the archive, which had strictly followed the ideological and political content of the orientations.

Here is a representative example of a questionnaire:

- The title of the song;
- The singer's gender (man, woman or group);
- The performance (a Capella or with accompaniment);
- The instrument;
- The singer's age and name;
- Place where they are recorded (village, town, festival, or recording studio);
- The date of the recording;
- The person who made the recording;
- The transcriber and the date of notification;
- The name of the publication and the year and name of researcher who published the lyrics.<sup>11</sup>

Mikaela Minga, an ethnomusicologist at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies (IAKSA), argues that since their establishment "the functions of the audio-visual archive were oriented . . . on an ongoing principle of collecting, cataloguing, and preservation . . . The indicators for this are two guidelines for folkloric research in 1968 and 1975" (2017: 39). The same claims come from Eftim Dheri, one of the founders of the Institute's Ethnomusicology Department: "The guidelines and the structured questionnaire conceived by the Institute's researchers were central for the methodology" (Dheri 1965: 15), as they highlighted the association with oral folklore and the product

10) As you will note I use different labels for the audio and video archive, as during the time I spent at the Institute the archive had assigned various names. These names, audio-video archive, music archive, ethnomusicology archive were given by the scholars and which I also found them in the Institute's documents.

11) The data were collected in the audio-visual archive of the Institute of Folk Culture, from 2006 to 2008.

itself, while performance and participation of the audience had to be secondary (Minga 2017: 39).

The formative influence of Bela Bartok's nationalism emphasizing the methodology of melody recording had an effect on the folklore scientific community as a whole. Bartok's advice "to catch the last intangible treasure of our people" was published under the Party's directives in *Popular Culture*, the journal of the Institute of Folk Culture (*Kultura Popullore* 1982: 4-12). Under these directions, ethnologists, folklorists and ethnomusicologists scrupulously collected materials from all over the country, from the most remote villages in Albania and other Albanian-speaking territories (Kosovo, south Italy, Macedonia, etc.).

Whether Bartok himself at a certain moment shifted his point of view, when in the 1970s a revolution occurred in sociocultural anthropology,<sup>12</sup> it began to be felt in ethnomusicology and became a great challenge (Titon 2015: 176). Bartok became skeptical of the methodology according to which music was to be construed like an object to be analyzed. He asserted that: "Up to this point we have discussed the collection of melodies as if they were isolated items" (Titon 2015: 179). Instead, for Bartok and others (Merriam, Lomax), since they were considering a shift of paradigm, music was to be understood as a text to be interpreted, as they did in the humanities (Merriam 1964; Lomax 1968, 1972, 1976).

But as ideology would dictate in the communist camp, Albanian ethnomusicologists had to avoid the new western theoretical flow. The Albanian scholars never considered the comparative approach and music understood as praxis; instead their primary duty was collecting. Secondly, the interest was in text production of song transcriptions,<sup>13</sup> technical analyses of the pitch, rhythm tempo, and harmony. The social and cultural aspects assumed a third role, while music as a productive activity in the social world with an economic basis and political implication had to be left aside (Titon 2015: 176).



### **A wind of change for the discipline: the restructuring of the institution in order to reform the discipline**

With the change of political system, forty years after its foundation, the Institute's research production was drastically reduced. On the one hand, there was the exodus of scholars who left the country for a better life; some of them were awarded scholarships to acquire western knowledge, but never returned to Albania. On the other hand, the postcommunist transition period put the Albanian academic reality into chaos by what later came to be termed the "brain drain" or "the emigration of intellectuals."

Another aspect of the degradation of science was the cuts in research funding and the impoverishment of libraries of the Academy of Sciences. There were very few scientific collective field trips. The conditions caused by the political and financial climate gave rise to a deficit of new materials in the archive collection. And, of course, the participation in international activities was covered from the scholars' own pockets or with some support from international associations.

At this point, a political action had to be undertaken to deal with this situation. After two decades after the fall of communism a reform in science was to be implemented. With the coming to power of the Right Wing Party in 2005 under the slogan "Time for a change," (Progni, 2015) a new program was revealed to reform the whole academic system, of what had remained as a legacy of Soviet colonization. The reform project initially took different forms—from "a deconstruction of the academic system" to "the melting down" of the Academy of Sciences of Albania and its fourteen dependent institutes (Vendim 2007).

With the victory of the Right Wing, the proposed project on science and higher education was adopted between 2007 and 2008 (Vendim 2009). To tell the truth the objectives of the Reform were welcomed by

12) Itself centered in ethnography and influenced by literary and philosophical theory, particularly from France and Germany, and bristling with ominous sounding words like phenomenology and hermeneutics (Titon 2015: 176).

13) A prolific period between the 1950s and the 1980s, it saw the publication of anthological works with transcriptions and texts; loads of song transcriptions and texts were disseminated from the Department of Ethnomusicology and Folklore (Daja 1982, 1983; Dheri *et al.* 1964; Vasili and Doja 1990).

postcommunist scholars who were already interested in a “paradigm shift” (Roth 2014). Some of these scholars were part of the successful results from a brain-gain strategy, a cohort who had studied, researched and taught at the western universities and now returned to Albania. The other fraction of scholars were the young researchers of the Academy of Science who, thanks to the opening of the Albanian market to western texts, had had the possibility to gain knowledge from a new critical perspective.

The Reform was part of the national policy strategy for *Science, Technology and Innovation* with an Anglo-American approach to science, targeting the transformation of the higher education system and the reorganizing of the Academy of Sciences by separating the institutes from its jurisdiction and then placing them under the superintendence of the Ministry of Education and Science.<sup>14</sup> The institutes which dealt with the humanities, or Albanian studies, were grouped together in a new interdisciplinary center, the Center for Albanological Studies (in spring 2008).

At the time of the Reform implementation, a harsh rhetoric was used toward research institutes and the Albanian Academy of Sciences presidency. The media scorned the institutes as *vegetative* or *parasitic units* with *useless* scholars who, since 1991, had not produced science but rather had squandered state funds (*Gazeta Shqiptare* 2007: 8).

As a matter of fact, the final results of the reform for the Academy of Sciences were drastic—the funding was not increased, on the contrary, the budget was reduced, and more than a hundred academicians and technical staff lost their jobs. Besides, no effort was made to consolidate the research and create closer links between researchers and research projects (UNESCO Science Report 2010: 195).

The Center for Albanological Studies (Qendra e Studimeve Albanologjike-QSA) (March 2008), with four research institutes in the humanities (History, Linguistics and Literature, Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies, Archeology), was the new structure

given the role to produce science under a new vision. Conceived as an interdisciplinary research directorate using a westernized methodology in empirical studies and analyses, it expanded its functions also as an Inter-University Service Center. The new structure fitted the new government’s “modernization” objectives for the democratization of science and education.

On the other hand, the Academy of Sciences remained an honorific title, with very limited research functions, a few academic members, and very little influence on research policies.

Institutional change under the new vision and paradigm also influenced the change of the name of the Institute of Folklore that became the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies [*Instituti i Antropologjisë Kulturore dhe Studimit të Artit*]. The departments also were restructured as the Department of Ethnomusicology and Ethnochoreology and the Department of Oral Folklore became the Department of Folklore. The restructuring affected human resources too, many academicians and technicians were replaced, raising the question of the fate of the archives and their maintenance. The same applied to the audiovisual archive. The archivists who had dedicated a lifetime to cataloguing and preserving materials were dismissed as old and useless; the reform replaced them with new entry-level employees, inexperienced in archiving, field work, and folklore.



### Post-communist techniques of preserving folklore music

In Albania, conservation programs on cultural heritage include different organizational entities, which have the responsibility of the archives’ physical maintenance and supervision. For years, the Institute of Folk Culture has been undertaking efforts to protect the records in their original format. The

14) See also *Albania Progress Report* (2008: 34) and *UNESCO Science Report* (2010: 195).

audiovisual records database, including the content of the tapes, is found in handwritten or typed form, but since 2007 the information was digitalized.

In this section I will try to depict the conditions and the quality of the archive's collection and the efforts the Institute and the Albanian state made to preserve the intangible cultural heritage. The first step of the conservation process concerned its very core elements, archive infrastructure and technical maintenance equipment for archive maintenance:

The archive room.

The audio and video station with technical recording machines that are used to duplicate tapes, from tape to tape, and from tape to digital form.

A recording studio.

The listening room of archival units for researchers.

Transportable field recording equipment.

Due to generous state funding over the years, the archive collection built up a considerable variety of inventory: phonograph records from 1920; audio recordings on magnetic tape, amounting to 3,000 tapes with a total duration of approximately 2,000 hours, 60,000 linear m of 16 mm magnetic tape; approximately 500 video materials / videocassettes (Schüler 2008: 24; Qafoku 2009: 105; Shkreli 2010); and digital audio and video recordings from folk festivals which date from 2005 to the present. The registers inventorying the recordings date from 1957 up to 1992. The content of the registers classifies the recordings into three categories: rituals, customs, and entertaining, as well as subcategories that are shown in Tables 1 and 2.<sup>15</sup>

The analogue recording system continued until the postcommunist period but fell out of use by the end of 2005, when ethnomusicologists integrated in their individual field-work digital MP3 recorders. Only a small

15) The tables are created by Klodian Qafoku, ethnomusicologist at the Institute of Folk Culture/IAKSA, involved in the digitalization project (Qafoku 2009: 110-111). The project was implemented and finalized thanks to the ethnomusicologists at the Institute, Robert Çollaku, Klodian Qafoku, Armand Zaçeliçi and Bledar Kondi.

Table 1

<i>Këngë djepi</i> [Lullabies]	<i>Këngë dashurie</i> [Love songs]
<i>Këngë dasme</i> [Wedding songs]	<i>Këngë trimërie</i> [Heroic songs]
<i>Këngë kurbeti</i> [Migration songs]	<i>Këngë të epikës legjendare</i> [Legendary epic songs]
<i>Këngë nizami</i> [Ottoman military songs]	<i>Këngë atdhetare</i> [Patriotic songs]
<i>Vajtim / Gjamë</i> [Laments]	<i>Këngë historike</i> [Historic songs]
<i>Thirje Majekrahi</i> [Mountain signals]	<i>Këngë të realizmit socialist</i> [Songs of Socialist Realism] Or <i>Këngë të folklorit të ri</i> [Songs of the new folklore]
<i>Këngë kalendarike</i> [Calendar songs]	<i>Këngë shoqërore</i> [Social songs]
<i>Këngë fetare</i> [Religious songs]	<i>Këngë humoristike</i> [Humoristic songs]
	<i>Imitime kafshësh</i> [Imitation of animals]

Table 2

Vocal music		
Instrumental music		
Dance instrumental music		
Vocal-instrumental music		
Danco vocal-instrumental music		
	Original	
	Copy	Studio recording
		Stage recording
		Field recording

number of these recordings were delivered to the Institute archive, the rest became part of the researchers' personal archives.

Archival digital recording was also used at folk festivals when digital equipment was introduced, thanks to an Austrian digitization project.

According to the information in the registers, the numerous songs, dances and rituals were collected not only through fieldwork but many came from recordings at the Institute's recording studio, in the studios of Albanian Radio Television, at the National Festival of Gjirokastra,<sup>16</sup> and different thematic folk festivals. The period from 1962 to 1987, when state funding for folklore was on the rise, was the most intensive one for material collection.

The archive's structure, content and classification<sup>17</sup> can shed light on the political situation as it actually was, that is, the archive held a dual ontology: in form it used a Stalinist-Soviet methodology and in content, the Marxist ideology; this was what the scholars were obliged to follow. The task of scholars and volunteers, as we have already discussed, was to show facts that prove the linear evolution of the Albanian people from the archaic period to the modern one, whether they lived inside or outside the state's territory (Bardhoshi and Lelaj 2018: 33). Trying to explain the table above, the archive documents indicate the presence of social and historical myths; the myth of origin, the myth of wartime, the myth of national resistance against the enemy as found in basic prototypes of popular culture in northern homophonic songs and epic songs (see also Schwandner-Sievers 2012: 228). In form and content the archive reflects the nationalist orientation which, over the years of collecting and recording, has tried to maintain ethnic homogeneity of the nation as visible in the classification of songs and dances. Again, the table illustrates the basis of the classification system that emphasizes regional aspects, mainly the rural areas, trying to prove that the peasant songs contain the ancient characteristics of the nation. An-

other aspect that can be read from the table is the lack of songs and dances of minority populations that remain confined to the regional category. Their songs were translated into Albanian and attached to each village's folklore. In trying to affirm the evolutionist theory, for the scholars who focused on ethnic homogenization, the minorities' presence did not correlate with the nationalist communist agenda.

Despite the difficult economic conditions of postcommunist Albania, the visual audio archive was organized and maintained in good condition. The Institute was able to maintain the UHER Report 4000 transportable and NAGRA 4.2L recorders in optimal condition. But as time passed, keeping the archive up to the required standards was quite difficult, especially when, in spring 1997, the financial and political situation in Albania collapsed (Duka 2008). The lack of state conservation funding enormously affected the physical condition of the tapes, which after 2000 were considered at risk. In the meantime, the Institute of Folk Studies kept in touch with the international scientific community, especially with European folklorists, ethnomusicologists, and audiovisual archivists.

In 2005, a digitalization project was implemented by the Vienna Phonogram Archive of the Austrian Academy of Science, the world's oldest sound archive. This was part of a larger project, which involved five Eastern European audiovisual archives: the Academy of Sciences, Tirana, Albania; Skopje, Macedonia; Bucharest, Romania; Warsaw, Poland; Saint-Petersburg, the Russian Federation. The project was proposed by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Austrian Development Cooperation Agency, with the aim to preserve cultural heritage collections in Eastern Europe. The project was led by the director of the Phonogram Archive, Dr. Dietrich Schüller, and other scholars and archivists from Vienna (Schüller 2008).

The project was based on national and international cultural policies for preser-

16) This is the biggest folk festival in Albania organized in the medieval Ottoman town of Gjirokastra in south Albania, which happened to be the home town of Enver Hoxha. The festival was founded in 1968, and during the regime was an institution that celebrated the birthday of the dictator.

17) In order to understand the classification method of the archive materials, there were suggested the Registers of phonotech from the year 1964 till 1990 (AM-ASH, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

vation and promotion of cultural heritage in Albania in 2005. Not only was it a good opportunity to preserve the audiovisual archive of the Institute of Folk Culture of the Albanian Academy of Science, but it was also a good time for the Albanian Academy to show to the public that the science reform of 2005 had already started from within. The international cooperation aspect of the project supported open access and democratization in research, particularly of folklore. It was also a new vision and perspective in line with the Open Archive access movement, making the data in the Institute's audiovisual archive accessible for scholars.

The Austrian project supported the archive with funding, knowledge and methodology in digitization, technical support, a digital workstation, and a server with sufficient capacity to store the digitalized materials.

The strategies and methods of digital recording were based on a standard document set by the International Association of Audio Archives (IASA) that applied to video archiving (Schüller 2008: 23). Furthermore, the collection was transferred from analogue tape to original tape and to digital discs, and videos to DVDs. Increasing the quality of the collection was the only way to ensure a longer life of the ethno-documents. Besides, the digitalization process opened the possibility to observe in detail the quality of the tapes, to preserve them in the longer term within a platform, and avoid possible future information loss.

On the other hand, the conversion of the collection from analogue to digital enabled duplication, thus, a copy of the collection was also deposited for conservation in the Phonogram Archives in Vienna. From a nationalist point of view the process seemed extremely revolting, "selling your soul for nothing," said some nationalist scholars. But at the level of heritage preservation, opening a conservation corner in a highly maintained archive institution turned out to be a positive choice. What all archivists fear the most is time, conditions and circumstances, and, in fact, after the completion of the proj-

ect at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Art Studies in Tirana, approximately in 2011, the server that held the collection's metadata collapsed, and the digital copy of the collection was irretrievably lost.



## Conclusions

Communist politics connected with peasant culture and communist ideology was also connected with "tradition" as a model for the construction of the New Man. The soviet Marxist-Leninist ideology strongly influenced the evolution of Albanian society during and after the communist era. The interest of the communist authorities in folklore as a discipline of the masses led to the formation of folklore consumerism.

This situation characterizes communist politics that strongly oriented and controlled archival activities—collecting, classifying, cataloguing, and preserving—and text publications. The Ethnomusicology Archive at the Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana was a repository in which materials of traditional significance were/are stored and controlled (Brown and Brown 1998: 17). As a national research archive, along with the discipline of ethnomusicology, it played an important role as an ideological tool in the construction of the communist nation state. However, peasant cultures, which were converted by the communist regime into "cultural traditions," remain one of the most important domains in Albanian studies.

Today, postcommunism and the west have already contributed to the change of the nationalist communist approach in folklore studies. The transition from old concepts of Marxist-Leninism to contemporary paradigms of cultural anthropology thus became necessary and useful for the young generation of the Institute of Folk Culture as they replaced the object of research, theory and methodology with the western comparative approach.



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