The Department of Folklore in Eötvös Loránd University is one of the oldest university research centres in Hungary where academic folklore education is carried out. The Department is part of the Institute of Ethnography and is one of the most important university institutes for teaching folklore studies. This text gives a brief history of the university and focuses on major directions the Department took and the professors involved.

Tradition and heritage

In Budapest we are looking at over two hundred years of education in folklore and ethnography (Voigt 2004). In the beginning of folklore studies from the nineteenth century people who were interested in Hungarian folklore were professors of different fields and arrived from various disciplines. Pál Gyulai (1828–1909) and Lajos Katona (1862–1910) were two such professors who lectured often on contemporary Hungarian folk poetry, and on the genres of Hungarian literature closely associated with folklore. István Györffy (1884–1939), a progressive ethnographer and museologist, developed the educational system of ethnography in the Budapest university. He was appointed as professor of a newly established chair of ethnography in 1934. After World War II, in 1945, Gyula Ortuțay (1910–1978) became a professor and the chairman of folklore at the institute. The Folklore Department was founded in 1946 and was reorganized in 1951. The reorganization involved the chair being separated into two distinct areas: the folklore chair, and the chair of material ethnography. This is the system as it is today. Gyula Ortuțay was head of the Folklore Department until 1968 when Tekla Dömötör became the chair. Between 1979 and 2005 Vilmos Voigt was the chair of the Folklore Department and he was followed by Kincső Verebelyi (2005–2011). Since 2011 Dániel Bárth has been the chair.

Before 1989 the educational role of the Department was very important, as there were only two universities in Hungary (Budapest and Debrecen) which delivered special university lectures on folklore. An emphasis was placed on the folktale, folksong, ballads, folk beliefs, and folk customs. Gyula Ortuțay, Linda Dégh, Vilmos Voigt became internationally recognised as experts on folk tales. Imre Katona wrote numerous pieces on folk songs and ballads while folk beliefs and folk custom studies were primarily supported by Tekla Dömötör and Kincső Verebelyi. At the same time, other lecturers were teaching topics in ethnology, as László Vajda (until 1956), Lajos Boglár, Mihály Sárkány. The university handbook, A magyar folklór [Hungarian Folklore] was written by the professors as well as invited lecturers of the Folklore Department (Voigt ed. 1998). It gives an overall view of history and phenomena of Hungarian folklore and folkloristics for the first time. In each chapter, a definition is given of the challenges in the various folk genres. The chapters reviewed previous studies and attempted to demonstrate the international connections and historical strata of Hungarian folklore. The handbook was first published in 1979, in 1989 a revised version was prepared and the latest version appeared in 1998. In the 1940s and 1950s the Institution was the centre of new research such as the emblematic day of the Hungarian revolution (15th March 1848 in folk traditions), the folklore of industrial workers and miners, and the Big-Budapest research (the last concentrated on people's tradition and folklore in Hungary who lived the places which were coupled to Budapest in the 1950s). The collected narratives are in the archive of the Folklore Department. The Library of the Institute has about 60 000 printed books, and Gyula Ortuțay's valuable private library (14 000 printed books) is also part of its holdings.

International connections were very important to the Institution. Gyula Ortuțay, who initiated the 'Budapest school' of folklore studies from the 1930s paid close attention to the individuality of his story-tellers. Linda Dégh was his first student who followed his methods and her subsequent publications demonstrate the merits of this school and are well-known throughout the world. In the 1960s, Vilmos Voigt used the methods of structuralism, semiotic and communication theories in folklore research. In the 1970s, many conferences were organised in connection with folklore. In 1989 the members of the International Society for Folk-Narrative Research (ISFNR) held a worldwide congress in
Budapest and the Department supported it. The texts of the conference were published in two volumes (Voigt ed 1995). The two main significant periodicals of the Institute, *Artes Populares* and *Folcloristica* were published from the 1980s. The Institute also took part in the editing of the volumes of *Vallási néprajz* [Ethnology of Religion] from 1985.

The present structure of the education

The structure of the higher education system radically changed in 2006. During the three years of a Bachelor programme the university students are able to learn the main methods, the international connections, and the historical layers of Hungarian folkloristics. One section of the lectures given concentrate on folklore. There are semesters dedicated towards folk ballads, folk songs, folk tales and other narrative genres in Hungarian folklore. These lectures follow the aesthetics and ethical questions of folklore. On the other hand, there are numerous lectures in connection with folk religion and folk customs. When it is possible, guest professors may come from Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and other neighbour countries so the students are exposed to lectures on folk music, folk dance, folk art and often on the folklore of the Hungarians in minority outside the state borders as well. These lectures also demonstrate the international connections found in Hungarian folklore. The students have the chance to learn practical methods of ethnographical fieldwork more precisely and they are given the opportunity to travel to small villages and write about these experiences. The Institute takes part in the Erasmus program which is the largest exchange student program. Erasmus students can apply to study in many countries for example Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Romania, etc.

During a two-year Masters programme the students study a more specialised line of query in Hungarian folklore. The professors highlight the historical perspectives of folklore and also hold courses around their own research areas. During these semesters the students are able to learn about customs, folk religion, and history of magic in a wider perspective. There are many courses about digital folklore, present perspectives of
folk narratives, newer research methods of oral history and life stories, and the connection between culture and politics.

The current PhD program, Hungarian and Comparative Folkloristics is open to students from different institutes as well. In 2016 this programme became four years in duration. In the past two decades more than fifty students completed their PhDs.

The present directions of research

Major research areas have close connections with the professor's interests. At the moment there is a professor emeritus and three full-time professors at the Department. Vilmos Voigt (b. 1940) is an internationally recognised expert of folk tales, folk religion, comparative religion, semiotic and Finno-Ugric mythology. His publication list consists of more than 2000 titles. Many of them were translated into a number of languages. He has edited the handbook of Hungarian folklore (Voigt ed. 1998) and written the handbook of comparative religion studies and semiotics which are required readings for students.

Dániel Báth (b. 1976) is currently the chair of the Department. His research work focuses on the connections between folk and elite culture especially in relation to customs, and religious phenomenon. The benediction and the use of exorcism have been highlighted in his work. In his latest book he examines the methods and the worldview of a Franciscan priest in Zombor in the eighteenth century. His source material are archival in nature and found throughout Europe in the early modern period.

Bernadett Smid (b. 1982) is an assistant professor in the Department. She also concentrates on archival source material, more specifically on trials of the Inquisition that examine a Spanish hermit from the seventeenth century. Her PhD dissertation examined the genre of the Spanish romances but she is also interested in the genres of new folklore such as on-line folklore.

Zsófia Kata Vincze (b. 1979) is an assistant professor too, she is recognised for her work on Hungarian Jews. She wrote her PhD dissertation on this topic which was published in 2009.

More recently her main research areas include the cultural conflicts and the memorial politics around ethnicity.

Currently the research topics of PhD students are varied. There are historical topics which are based on archive sources: the connection between folk and elite culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries used by criminal suits, the use of the language in the witch trials, the socio-historical background of Hungarian folklore studies in the nineteenth century. The history of folkloristics in the 1950s also emphasized the connection between science ideology and politics and under this framework the folklore of industrial workers at the time. On the other hand, there is also postgraduate work being undertaken in the areas of modern paganism, the Jews in Budapest, the denomination's conflicts as well as the cultural heritage, the childlore, the motifs of Estonian hand knit gloves, and the creation of digital databases.

In the future the professors of the Department would be open to new international projects and it would be a pleasure to join new research groups. A main objective is to create and foster international cooperation among other European Folklore Institute.

Dániel Báth, PhD, is the Head of the Folklore Department of ELTE, Budapest

Literature

Voigt, Vilmos 2004 A Brief Account of More Than Two Hundred Years of Teaching Folklore and Ethnography (including Cultural Anthropology) at Hungarian Universities. *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 49 (3–4.) 181–210.


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