

# JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE

*Carmen Ortiz*

The Uses of Folklore by the Franco Regime



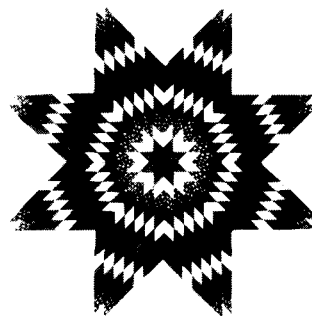
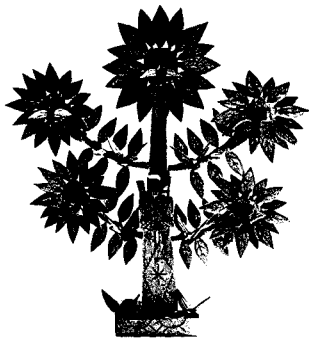
*Haya Bar-Itzhak*

Rhetoric of Place in an Israeli Kibbutz



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Public and Private Reflections of Stories in North India



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## The Uses of Folklore by the Franco Regime

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*The role that popular tradition, invented or “genuine” but presented from a privileged position, plays in nationalist political movements is well known. Similar to other totalitarian systems, the Spanish Francoist regime (1939–75) appropriated and misused folklore in various ways. In this article I survey several of these uses, such as the strengthening of political legitimacy—actually enforced through a coup and a bloody civil war—by resorting to some supposedly pristine, spiritual values of the Spanish people, as symbolized by the peasantry. Other uses of folklore were the practical exploitation of models, symbols, and characters of traditional poetry to present an epic image of Franco and his regime and the recourse to folk music presentations abroad with diplomatic and propagandistic purposes.*

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THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN politics and folklore and shows how some aspects of popular culture, previously selected by folkloric academic research, were exploited by the totalitarian regime imposed by General Franco in Spain after the civil war (1936–39). Without going into a detailed account of the Spanish research during Francoism (1939–75), the aim here is to see folklore as a field from which the regime extracted concepts and facts that were distorted and manipulated, assigning them a new and ideologically profitable meaning.

In this essay I analyze how the regime seized traditional poetic forms—lyric and especially epic—for legitimizing the political figures that won the civil war and inculcating in the popular masses a heroic cult to their leader (caudillo), General Franco. I will also show the deliberate emphasis on a specific ideal of popular piety which was actually a continuation of previous, ultraconservative Catholic thought in Spain. Consequently, some traditional religious feasts (Holy Week, Corpus Christi) were given the greatest promulgation, while other aspects such as anticlerical lyric and prose were strictly censored. Also the idealized picture of the countryman, essentialized as the unsophisticated and natural man and as the very representation of the true being of people and nation, was used by the totalitarian regime to disguise and conceal class and regional contradictions and to legitimize its antidemocratic power. Finally I will narrate with some detail how folklore was institutionalized through the Francoist party

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and exploited for propaganda and the political training of its feminine branch (Sección Femenina de Falange Española Tradicionalista [FET] y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista [JONS], the Women's Section of the FET and the JONS).

The information about all these subjects has been mainly extracted from some historical sources—and not so much from the folk research of that time. I have also resorted to the literary and poetic works of the very creators of the invented tradition that is here being analyzed (see Hobsbawm 1983).

### *The Political Possibilities of Folklore*

Folklore, understood in the classic 19th-century sense—that is, as that which is done, known, and felt by the people—is a sphere that has traditionally been assigned considerable importance in certain historical periods, countries, or ideological groups. Behind this interest in folklore lies the need to claim key symbols of identity or territorial, ethnic, or political unity. In this way, the valuing of folklore, its establishment as a form of scientific or academic knowledge, and, finally, its ideological use have been common phenomena in modern European nationalism and totalitarian regimes, including the communist systems of the East as well as fascism in the West.

The relationship between folklore and totalitarian ideologies has been a subject of debate among folklorists and historians in the anthropological sciences.<sup>1</sup> There are different ways in which this relationship has developed. First, it depends on the specific characteristics of the regime in question (German, Italian, and Spanish fascism are not all the same). Second, these forms are founded on the preexisting level and extension of scientific knowledge of the folklore of a given country.

Indeed, many of the elements taken from traditional culture for the purposes of propaganda or political indoctrination in the era of fascism had already been firmly established concepts in the study of folklore since the 19th century. Thus, the ideological apparatus of Nazi Germany absorbed and integrated many of the fundamental ideas and guiding issues that had been on the agenda of previous folklore research. Many scholars of folklore were thereby allowed to continue their work intellectually unhindered. The result was, with the exception of the more racist and geneticist tendencies, an apparently unbroken continuity with previous scholarship (Bausinger 1993:68).

It is in a certain element of folklore, specifically in its fundamental agent, “the people”—conceived in a romantic, idealizing, aestheticizing, and essentialist way—where we find the main interest of nationalism (in the 19th century and today) and of fascism in the use of folklore for practical ends of an ideological character. As Bausinger has pointed out, independently of the real achievements, contradictions, and even aberrations of *Volkskunde* research in the Third Reich, what is important to call attention to is that the basic principles that made such aberrations possible are, in large part, central components of folklore as a discipline and not limited to a certain age (1993:71). The term *folklorism* has been coined to refer to the sociopolitical possibilities of this field of inquiry.<sup>2</sup>

Given these other dimensions of folklore, we would have to study from another angle—in politics, not in folklore proper—the significance of this scholarly endeavor as a general instrument of political action. The mechanism is the appropriation and

management of a people's referents of ethnicity or identity, namely, their language, dress, architecture, music, and rituals. Folklore presents itself as the most direct, emotional, and nonrational way of appropriating the "style" of a community and, as such, a privileged form of mediation. So the possibilities can be found on both sides, which is not to say that any use of folklore is possible or legitimate or that its acceptance as an object of scientific study should include the often acritical use of stereotypical terms such as *people*, *tradition*, *ways*, and *customs*.

### *Folklore Research under the Franco Dictatorship*

The previous history of folklore research did indeed lay the foundation for the development of the discipline during the Franco dictatorship. This research had arisen toward the end of the 19th century, linked first to romanticism and later to positivism and the consolidation of nationalist and regionalist movements in certain parts of Spain (Aguilar 1990; Prat 1991; Prats 1988). Under Franco, some of the main characteristics of this previous scholarship simply continued: for example, the mere pursuit of gathering data, with minimal attention to theoretical concerns. Indeed, this lack of theoretical perspectives (which reduced the study of folklore to the ever more extensive and bulky compilation and publication of "popular" collections, thus making its development more quantitative than qualitative) together with other factors, such as the confinement of research to the rural cultural context and the rise of nonconflictive themes, partly explain why this work was tolerated and even encouraged by the regime.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the advent of the dictatorship did bring with it a rupture and change of direction (as opposed to the basic continuity noted above). There was a rupture because as part of the swift post-civil war closure of institutions and the purge of those people who had been involved in research and education during the period of the republic, the research centers devoted to work in folklore—mainly regional—were suppressed. They were subsequently replaced by others that were to convey a symbolic system opposed to the regionalist or ethnic basis that had motivated folklore research in many places (Prats 1991:84).

Because folklore lacked the status of a university discipline, its study had become mainly associated with various centers of regional or local studies, as well as a few seminars held under the auspices of university chairs in different fields.<sup>3</sup> Thus, no political reprisals of note occurred in university folklore after the war. To the contrary, folklore was soon introduced (in 1943) under the title "Popular Traditions" within the structure of an organization designed to be paradigmatic of the centralization of scientific research put forth by the dictatorship: the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC, High Council for Scientific Research) (Ortiz 1994).

The CSIC (also with the "Bernardino de Sahagún" Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology under its patronage since 1941; see Sánchez 1992) was to fulfill another task set for it, also in accordance with its centralist function. This was the "cleansing" and replacement of those provincial and regional centers that had operated before 1936 (the beginning of the war) and had ideologicocultural positions distinct from those of the new regime. The maintenance of a network of local centers of research served to keep up a useful image of the "regionalization" of the CSIC (Uría 1984:58)—after subjugating

the centers to iron-handed control, eliminating any dangerous possibility of autonomy by means of the system of electing officers, creating statutes, purging members, establishing hierarchies, and so on. One of the most telling examples of how and toward what purposes these changes occurred is the case of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Institute for Catalan Studies). Its name was changed to Instituto de Estudios Mediterráneos (Institute for Mediterranean Studies), in support for which "the Civil Governor has taken care, from a sense of understanding, realism, and gratitude, to ensure a Catalan majority in the directive body of the institute from now into the future, with no other precondition than that they be good Catalans, which is to say good Spaniards" (Uría 1984:59), that is, in favor of centralism.

Although with some difference, folklore work was carried on in these centers—adapted to the new circumstances, of course. First, the centers maintained the empiricist character of the work, with its emphasis on compiling (which brought no political problems). They started out from the notion of popular culture as a superstructural product to be respected in its diverse formal, regional, or, even better, local manifestations as long as these formal aspects, typical elements, and cultural differences did not come into contact with any other traits indicative of particularity in other, more tangible realms (i.e., social, political, or economic).<sup>4</sup> Finally, submission was a necessary part of this adaptation, for it must not be forgotten that folklore research, as much as historical, philosophical, or aesthetic work, was subject to "the fundamental principles of the Movimiento [Movement]," Franco's political party, and to censorship, to which academic disciplines, institutions, and researchers were subjected. This was the case whether researchers sought official recognition of some sort or simply sought to avoid the repression exercised by the regime (Cirici 1977:12; París 1977:55; Tuñón de Lara 1977:29).

### *The Folklore of the Franco Regime*

Despite the possible interest of a detailed account of the anthropological and folklore research carried out during the long period dominated by the dictatorship, the aim of this article is more limited. My aim is to analyze folklore as a domain from which the regime, specially in its initial Falangist and National Catholic stages, selected, twisted, and made use of elements, concepts, and events for functions such as legitimizing the regime and creating an aesthetics of its own.

That is to say, the point here is not to study the development of the scholarly, research-oriented side of the discipline by taking into account the limitations imposed by political demands. Rather, it is to see how the totalitarian regime extracted very specific benefits from this knowledge (independently of its scientific validity)—how it employed this knowledge for its ideological practice, its symbolic world, its public staging, its mythology, and so forth. How was the *material* provided by folklore utilized? In short, what folklore was chosen by Franco?

The utilization of the distinct registers of popular culture or folklore by the regime was based on a mechanism that is common to many political institutions and ideological movements. This device is to resort to what Hobsbawm (1983) has named and defined "invented traditions."

After the war, the triumphant side needed to justify its victory over the democratically constituted state against which it had rebelled. In addition to the use of coercion and repression as an expeditious method of finishing off all resistance, it also had to establish certain practices aimed at legitimating the new institutions, the new status achieved by its elite, and the new authority relations on which it was founded.

Precisely, the insistence on the “novelty,” “originality,” or “revolutionary” character with which the Movimiento identified itself carried with it an apparent paradox. This was the pretension that the system was rooted in the deepest strata of the Hispanic nation; so the “New Spain” identified itself as a break with the republican one, but, at the same time, it set itself up as the sole representative of “eternal Spain.” Thus, the regime’s propaganda constantly referred to the historical ancestry of this new Spain and by means of the invention of tradition sought an effective historical continuity for itself. The Reconquest, the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, and the Austrian Empire were the sources that would nourish the new symbolic world, which was an “invented” one because it distorted or simply falsified history. Above all, though, it was “invented” because it appropriated historical events, mythicized them, and endowed them with new, eminently ritual and symbolic functions.

Folklore was of a greater importance as a legitimizing instrument because it was able to provide the system with a fundamental, timeless, and organic continuity that was deeper than that gained from history. The “people” (the Spanish people) were the highest referent because they were the possessors of the essential spiritual qualities with which the fascist ideology of the Movimiento identified itself. Based on this principle, popular culture, or certain elements of a more emotive or aesthetic kind (like music or poetry), could also play a significant role in the pursuit of other objectives, such as symbolizing or establishing bonds of cohesion or belonging for certain social groups and the inculcation and socialization of beliefs, value systems, or norms of behavior (Hobsbawm 1983:10).

### *Anthems and Heroes*

In this general process, there were numerous cases of the utilization of elements of folklore understood in its strict sense, that is, as anonymous, traditional creations of oral transmission. The task was carried out by political institutions set up precisely for this purpose, which promoted folklore throughout the country. The Franco regime, nevertheless, produced its own folklore—for example, in the form of “refined,” authored anthems, songs, shouts—that, imposed in a relentless way, became popular to the extent that they were compulsorily learned and repeated over and over by the “popular” masses for many years (Abella 1996:20; Díaz 1985:16–20). Some of them rendered the basic concepts of Spanish fascism into truly ancient and traditional forms of the country’s popular poetry. Let the following ballad by José María Pemán, entitled “Así España, la Minera . . .” (“Thus Spain, the Miner Woman . . .”), suffice as an example:

Pero la España de siempre  
la de Isabel y Guzmán,  
está metida en la tierra . . .  
¡Si alguien quisiera escarbar!

But the same old Spain  
of Isabella and Guzmán,  
is under the ground . . .  
If only someone were to dig it up!

Francisco Franco ha escarbado  
 con sus manos de sultán.  
 Era a mediados de julio,  
 por el tiempo de segar.  
 Brotó de la tierra un siglo:  
 ¡Ay, mi Dios, qué manantial!

Francisco Franco has dug  
 with his sultan's hands.  
 It was the middle of July,  
 'round reaping time.  
 A whole century erupted from the land:  
 Oh God, what a spring he found! [1940]

In this case, as in other examples, the poet, belonging to the new elite, shows a conscious will to tie himself to the common substratum of people from which he originated. Nevertheless, neither the melody, the meter, nor the style of the author's composition shows any trace of a traditional background (Díaz 1985:24–25). Indeed, the people (that abstract entity, an eminently creative subject in the traditional concept of folklore) must not have considered Franco, or the other heroes of the “Crusade” against democratic Spain, a source of inspiration.<sup>5</sup> Rather, the lyrical image of Franco was organized and imposed from above; it was the creation of a collectivity that invented its own aesthetic, expressive, and stylistic codes—that is, its own lore (Díaz 1985:26).

In any event, it must be taken into account that in the need to sanction the new by availing oneself of supposed ancestral traditions, there is always a mediation when it comes to any traditional or folklore element. So what comes to constitute the contents of knowledge or the ideology of a nation, state, or school is not history or popular culture preserved in the collective memory but, rather, that which has been selected, written, painted, popularized, or institutionalized by those who have such construction as their job (Hobsbawm 1983:13). Thus, the question is not whether the songs and anthems of the Falange were authentically popular or whether their relationship to Spanish traditional culture was legitimate but, rather, whether those songs, written with aims that were more propagandistic than purely aesthetic, referred to concepts, poetic motifs, metaphors, and myths with a long tradition.

Above all, the victory of the nationalist side in the civil war was read as an epic poem, and the use of the epic rhetoric was extended to cover the description of the most immediate reality. Thus, next to Franco, José Antonio Primo de Rivera (the founder of the Spanish Falange) and his followers, the Spain Youth or the “glories of the Race” who defended the Alcázar of Toledo (in one of the “heroic” battles of the civil war), we can find historical celebrities such as Guzmán el Bueno (the Good) and Ferdinand and Isabella, as in the famous “Himno de las JONS”:

De Isabel y Fernando el espíritu impera  
 moriremos besando su sagrada bandera. . . .

From Isabella and Ferdinand the spirit reigns  
 we shall die kissing their sacred flag. . . .

Other outstanding figures are also to be found, as in the song “¡A tus órdenes!” (“At Your Orders!”):

Para ser España Una  
 tuvo a Isabel y Fernando  
 para ser grande a Colón  
 y para ser libre a Franco  
 Franco, tú eres nuestro Caudillo  
 Franco, eres nuestro Capitán,

For Spain to be One  
 she had Isabella and Ferdinand  
 to be Great she had Columbus  
 and to be Free, Franco  
 Franco, you are our Leader  
 Franco, you are our Captain



y las Falanges Juveniles  
a tus órdenes están.

and the Falangist Youth  
are at your orders. [Díaz 1985:160]

In these creations, as in other aspects of the fascist aesthetics in the initial period of the dictatorship, the configuration of a cultural myth upholds the prototype of a hero who belongs to the collective ideal of a rural society, in which the archetypes of saints and warriors hold sway (Tuñón de Lara 1977:26). To be in the brotherhood of arms and letters, the perfect man, the “monk-soldier,” represents, on the one hand, the imperialist dream (*por el Imperio hacia Dios*, the empire ascendant toward God) and, on the other, the fundamental values of nationalist-Falangist, Catholic ideology: order and sacrifice on the monk side, violence and destruction of the enemy on the soldier side (Cirici 1977:18).

The repertoire of heroes, always enraptured with the highest spiritual values and in constant struggle against materialism—and always machos—begins with Pelayo and the warriors of the Reconquest (in a war against the cowardly Muslim enemy), carries on with the conquerors of America (champions of the Faith and Spanishness), and ends with the comrades (often pairs of friends made up of a youth and a child), occasionally with a Nazi contamination (as in the Falangist song “Yo tenía un camarada” [“I Had a Comrade”]) or a racist one (the “Pelayos” fighting against some terrifying monsters called “Masonic vermin” or the martyrdom of the child Santo Domingo de Val, crucified by his Jewish neighbors) (Cirici 1977:162–166). War, violence, and death are constant motifs in the anthems—and not only in those of a military type. Images are repeated over and over of people (youth, soldiers, “the people”) getting up, walking, sporting an impassive look, in military formation, fighting, dying, and working for the Fatherland, the Cross, Spain, Honor, Glory, or the Empire (always capitalized). The fatherland is represented with two attributes: peace (justice) and bread (work). More concrete elements never appear, apart from the metaphorical references to the spring, the shining sun, the blue of the sea, and, above all, the morning star, which symbolized the light that overcame the darkness in the advent of the new order.

The heroes (Franco and José Antonio), the struggle, and the symbols of the Falange and of the Fatherland are all identified in an intimate unity: Spain, Franco, and the Movimiento are all the same, a single luminous entity. But, it is added, this monumental edifice is isolated and surrounded by enemies. Sometimes the references are direct, as in the “Himno de Combate de las JONS” and other works of the Spanish poet José María Pemán:

Sobre el mundo cobarde y avaro  
sin justicia, belleza, ni Dios  
impongamos nosotros la garra  
del imperio solar español.

Upon this cowardly and greedy  
world with no justice, beauty, nor God  
Let us impose the claws  
of the Spanish Empire of the Sun. [Díaz 1985:142]

La mirada del claro Occidente  
se ha colgado en nosotros pendiente  
de esta empresa de gloria y honor.  
Consumad españoles la hazaña  
y pensad que morir por España  
es morir por un mundo mejor.

The eyes of the clear West  
are on us, awaiting the outcome  
of this glorious and honorable undertaking.  
Spaniards consummate this feat  
and know that to die for Spain  
is to die for a better world.

Toda España es un grito de guerra  
 todo el viento es consigna y es voz.  
 ¡Españoles! Limpiad esta tierra  
 de las hordas sin patria y sin Dios.

All Spain is a cry of war  
 and the wind is a password and a voice.  
 Spaniards! Cleanse this land  
 of the hordes with no country or God. [Díaz  
 1985:161]

But, fundamentally, that unity of the fatherland and its leader transcends and becomes an imperial destiny. Spain is the redoubt of the “eternal” values of Western civilization, and these values are to irradiate out from her, through her example, to the rest of the world, so as to defeat communism on the one hand and liberal democracy on the other. Thus, the recurrence in practically all songs of the sun and the morning star can be explained because they constituted the metaphor that turned the country and its leader into the guardian and savior of the planet and universal order.

The lack of correspondence with reality in general and with the situation in Spain in particular—the latter being quite the opposite of luminous, from whatever angle it is seen (it included shortages of electricity)—distances these poetic creations from traditional lyric poetry, regardless of how many formal and functional archetypes might be taken from them. On the contrary, the use and abuse of similar elements of popular inspiration in the creation of a national myth, headed by the great leader, that can be seen in the case of the Franco dictatorship as well as in others of opposing ideology, such as those of Stalin in the USSR (Miller 1990) or Enver Hoxha in Albania (Gossiaux 1995:130–134), reveal the same mechanisms in the creation and functioning of folklore.

### *The Catholic Caudillo*

Apart from the favorite metaphors, and within the general orchestration of a veritable personality cult, there was an attempt to adorn the figure of Franco with a sacred halo and the image of a providential agent, in accordance with the predominant dogma of National Catholicism. The imposition of religiosity on the population, with the celebration of Catholic mass in public squares, processions, rosaries—sometimes in a spectacular way, as with the carrying of a giant cross on the backs of a huge crowd of people to the top of Mount Tibidabo (in Barcelona) in 1939—served as a means to express repentance in public shows of guilt. Not coincidentally, these events were organized during the 1940s in those areas that had been traditionally republican (Cirici 1977:104–108). But the events were also a way of creating sacralized appearances of the caudillo, in elaborate altar-tribunals or under a pallium, accompanied by the ritual cry and occasionally the inscription of the word “Franco” three times on ceremonial stages, reminiscent of the highest liturgical expression, “Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.” Many more images of this deifying symbolism can be presented, as in the following text, in which the supernatural standing of the head of state is displayed at its highest level:

I have seen, a few days ago in a Castilian village near the “red line” [near the republican zone] how in an apotheosis of crosses and flags, with schoolchildren and every body else in the Sunday best, the mayor walked under the central nave of the church carrying a picture of Jesus . . . accompanied by two town

councilors, one of them carrying a painting of the Virgin Mary and the other a portrait of the "Generalísimo" [Franco] which was then placed in the High Altar, next to the epistle. [Díaz 1985:158]

In the mythology that the Franco regime tried to create, elements of reactionary Spanish traditionalism appear mixed with other more purely fascist ones. One of the favorite symbols was the feast of Corpus Christi, the representative power of which is expressed in this tremendous passage from Giménez Caballero:

Bread. The prodigious festival of the Spanish Corpus! The Corpus is not a spring festival to resurrect Christ-like the Saturday of Glory in April. It is not the naïve winter festival of the Sun Child, of Christmas Eve. It is the central festival of the sun and sky, of seasonal fruit and the resurrection of life. Of copulation. Of communion. Of love. Of unity. Of marriage. Of that sacrament—the most sublime for me—for uniting two souls and two bodies so the Child may arise. The Soul and God. Spain and God. [1935:109]

If spiritualism and Catholicism were the fundamental elements in the ideological configuration of what had been the past and what was to be the future of Spain, it is not surprising that the regime insisted not only on imposing a guided and compulsory form of piety but also, in a parallel way, on inserting religiosity as one of the basic components of the Spanish popular mentality. In the people, that is, in the folklore, all those essentially religious sentiments, which could still be found in festive manifestations (above all in Holy Week celebrations), prayers, and songs and, in fact, in all traditional culture impregnated with an ancestral religious sense, were to be preserved. This was lost among the urban and industrial classes, whose pious religious sentiment had been subverted by materialism and "foreign" modernizing trends.

Religious folklore was, then, one of the privileged themes in the professional compilations of the oral tradition. Descriptions of festivals abound (pilgrimages in various advocations of Mary, celebrations of the patron saint, expiatory processions in Holy Week, the Corpus Christi, sacramental celebrations, etc.) where Catholic liturgy was the general norm. Obviously some fundamental aspects were censored, such as anticlericalism, which is widespread and evident in traditional lyric poetry and narrative; festivities of a communitarian or secular type; and rites of pagan origin, which did not conform with the image that was to be conveyed.

### *The People, the Nation*

Much more important than the folklore or pseudofolklore of the anthems, and the sacralization of the caudillo, was the concept of nation and its identity, which constituted the deepest nucleus of the ideology of the Franco regime and, in different but parallel terms, of Nazism. One of the defining principles of the regime was centralism. The unity of Spain was, perhaps, the most substantive political objective in its rhetorical discourse throughout the dictatorship. The centralization of functions, from strictly political ones to the most ordinary daily activities, was established through an organic system of successive relations of different levels of hierarchy, from the most local base up to the head of state.

Within the ideological conglomerate constructed by fascism, the recourse to a radically conservative and reactionary theory of society creates a superstructure in

which it is possible to absorb contradictions (center/periphery, the socioeconomic class struggle, the peasant/industry contraposition, etc.). This occurs by means of the essentialist idea of the nation as an original and eternal entity, a natural social construction of which the base is the people, the spirit, or the race, immutable qualities that are exemplified and visible in the peasant, “the founding-stone of the whole nation” according to Hitler’s definition in *Mein Kampf* (Bausinger 1993:70).

More directly, the subversion of this organic principle of the national unity in Spain itself was seen to have led directly to the chaos that the war represented. Thus, not only was any outbreak of regionalism to be avoided (at the most elementary levels, for the possibilities for political organization of these movements had been completely suppressed), but the state system found in the most extreme centralist nationalism one of the most practical elements of social cohesion.

The definition of Spain thus became “metaphysical.” In the words of José Antonio, “Spain is diverse and plural, but her diverse peoples, with their languages, customs and characteristics, are irrevocably bound in a unity of destiny on a universal plane” (Primo de Rivera 1941:105). The project, therefore, was to turn regionalism into an aesthetic and emotional element, thus making regional diversity an unproblematic aspect in the composition of the general framework of the nation. It also provided unquestionable services to the irrationalism of the fascist discourse. Regional differences were folklorized. This was summarized in the plural expression of dialects, customs, music, festivals, and regional dress in which “the Spanish people” (or its genius or soul) truly manifested itself, with no other divisions or with so many local versions that it was not easy to find the concrete cultural manifestation ascribed to either a historical or culturally defined community (Uría 1984:115).

Given all possible nuances, the insistence on the variety of the forms of traditional culture in Spain and the respect for autochthonous linguistic expression in folkloric manifestations became usual practice in specialized publications as well as in public displays.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, despite the contradiction, according to the regime’s ideology Spain was Castile, things Castilian, and the Castilians. One of the most explicit authors in this sense was, once again, Giménez Caballero:

While there has been a Spain with Oriental and Mediterranean roots in the south, with great, famous cultures (Hispalis, Gadex, Tarragona, Cartagena, Córdoba) there has been an equally outstanding Spain, with continental, European roots; mountainous Spain. That from the unification of the two Spains emerges the universal genius of the Spanish is something else; it is something that only we, the “central Celtiberians”—the soul of Madrid—can esteem and exalt. [1945:22]

The leadership ability of Castile—its supremacy for heading up the nation, its power as a symbol—was described in dreadful terms by Giménez Caballero:

Spain—that is, Castile—is a country that is poorly gifted for climbing the scales of sonorous melodies or sonorous paradises; Castile, an epic, heroic and yet anti-lyric, always had a great faculty of assimilating, through bites, neighboring lands and the favors of women, as well as the piety of God. A country of Empire, Castile felt the flesh-hungry sublimeness of the lion. Don Juan ate women as a lion does its prey, after longing for them, *after hungering after them*. . . . Spain has been, and is, a country of bites more than kisses. [1935:109–110]

Without reaching the almost anthropofagous savagery of the previous text, there was little doubt about Castilian primacy in dominating the other regions (which it had historically subjugated) and the identification of “Spanishness” (*Hispanidad*) (parallel to the Nazi term “Germanness,” *das Germanische*) with some supposed values of Castile. For example, in the choice by Pilar Primo de Rivera of the Castle of Mota as the headquarters and symbol of the Falangist women’s organization, not only did the historical weight of the female figure Isabella play a role, but also the ruralness of the place (a counterpoint for an eminently urban, bourgeois organization) was important, as well as the specific weight that the contingents of Castilian people began to take on and, above all, the idea that in that land and landscape the metaphysical reality of Spain could be better appreciated (Suárez 1993:93).<sup>7</sup>

### *The Peasant Myth*

In any case, the most common signifier is the peasant world in general, independent of regional origin. If Spain is Castile, Castile is the most ideal representation of the countryside; *Castilian* is synonymous with *peasant*, and *peasant* with *Spanish*. This would be the chain of representations leading to the extraordinary ideological appreciation (and not only on the part of ethnological researchers) of the peasantry. The national spirit, Spanishness, and Spanish racial origins were all said to have their roots in the agrarian world and in its culture—in its tools, crafts, dances, and songs—whereby the specificity of the national essence was found, free of external contamination. There was to be no doubt that the authentic popular culture was the peasant one.

The discourse on peasantry was founded not only on the essentialist concept of the nation but also on other ideological principles, such as the idealization of preindustrial life. The image that interested fascism was that of the traditional peasant, obedient and faithful to his or her master with no revolutionary or conflictive ideas, the representative of values opposed to those upheld by other classes (workers, bourgeoisie, or civil servants), creators of an urban, industrial culture that had given rise to democratic and liberal ideas (Cirici 1977:74). The peasant way of life was of value not only because within it the traditional virtues of the “race” were conveyed but also because small family units of agricultural production constituted a basis for the political and economic stability of the country—that is, they fit in with the supposed overcoming of socioeconomic conflicts that fascism intended: “In the family farm the disturbing social factor of struggle between the worker and the employer is eliminated; these two elements of production are merged into one, capital and labor” (Figar 1960, cited in Uria 1984:84).

The public appearance of the bucolic peasant, as traditional image of unity, was frequent in the celebrations of anniversaries established or revalued by the Franco regime. Perhaps the first of what were to become habitual mass rallies was the homage to the caudillo and to the Army of Victory that Pilar Primo de Rivera, at the head of the Women’s Section of the Falange, organized at Mota Castle on May 30, 1939. The program comprised three parts: the Falangists’ speeches, a folkloric and gymnastic exhibition, and the offering of the fruit of the land to Franco from the hands of 25 young peasant girls belonging to the Brotherhood of City and Country, from different provinces and dressed in their respective regional dress.<sup>8</sup>

In many other aspects—more practical than the parades or rallies of allegiance—of the regime's aesthetics, a dichotomy, also applicable to Nazi Germany, has often been pointed out. This would posit that while artistic expressions linked to the state, above all architectural ones, were to have a fatuous, monumental, and heroic character, the daily life of the masses of the people had to be, to the contrary, bucolic and tranquil. This is evident, for instance, in the urban regulations elaborated in the first years of the dictatorship (the Housing Improvement Plan, the Economical Housing Law), which reflected this conformist sensibility, and the "agricultural nostalgia of those who obscure the contrast created by industrial life between the capitalists and the workers. Both demands favored the tendency toward traditionalism, neopopularism, of artisan morphology" (Cirici 1977:120).

The mythification of the peasant way of life together with a rejection of previous, rationalist urban planning brought into being a type of planning (which, in fact, was implemented overwhelmingly in the construction of new neighborhoods and in the reconstruction of areas devastated by the war) whereby popular life, identified with rural life, was the canon for a supposedly picturesque, local flavor. The elements that constituted this new urbanism were closed public squares with porches, arches above the streets, and Arab tiles on roofs, with the construction of neighborhoods beginning from an outstanding, monumental center embodied by a church. The church constituted not only the architectural nucleus but also the only space for direct social interaction, for the construction of other venues for meeting in public was not in the plans (Cirici 1977:110–136).

These and other applications that were enacted must be considered, nevertheless, as a function of the basic elements referred to above. It must be underlined that the appreciation of and insistence on the cultural and ethnic values of the countryside coincided, in the postwar period, with a total agrarian crisis and statistics that indicate a state of misery among the agricultural population. Later, beginning in the 1950s, this led to a massive hunger-induced exodus of a large section of the rural population from the country to the cities and the industrialized countries. As Bausinger has pointed out in referring to the case of Germany, the eternal discourse about the peasantry continued, despite the fact that the country was undergoing, in every sense, a rapid industrialization or precisely *because* this was the case (1993:73).

The peasantry, in its idealized description, functioned as a myth, a referent of origin for the rest of the population; everyone, regardless of real social differences, was of the same origin. The national peasant substratum formed the basis for a fictitious, supposedly "natural" social building. In this way the political system gained an apparent legitimacy for its coercive acts and its structure, by being grounded on something immutable, eternal, just, and therefore much more difficult to reject (Bausinger 1993: 3–74).

### *Musical Embassies*

The political organization expressly entrusted with the task of researching, exalting, and folklorizing manifestations of popular culture—the Women's Section of the FET and the JONS (Falange)—focused on the most aesthetic aspects, those most capable of producing a type (such as regional dress) and those with an emotive, sensible character

(such as music and dance). This was done, in their words, “thanks to the healthy idea of not disdaining Folklore (or *natural music*), but rather taking advantage of it, studying it, purifying it, as it is so rich and diverse, full of true Spanish racial vitality” (Sección Femenina de FET y de las JONS 1946:820, emphasis added). As they saw it, “Spain did not sing, and it was intended to make Spain a musical country, because music refines our sensibility, it educates and cultivates the spirit” (Suárez 1993:209).

Indeed, tradition was to be reclaimed, but it had to be rescued from the neglect in which it had been left, as if it had been necessary to achieve that “metaphysical” consciousness of the nation and its destiny in order to *discover* and revive those characteristics of the race, already present in primitive times and now latent in the people but on the verge of falling into oblivion and extinction: “In the Spain of 1936, these folkloric manifestations had practically disappeared . . . even the little that remained was losing its flavor by leaps and bounds. . . . The greatness of the Women’s Section’s idea was that of knowing how to see and value that immense and still retrievable treasure” (Sampelayo 1969:99). That is, an instance was procured for the *re-creation* of that which was necessary and in the *manner* necessary (Bausinger 1993:72). And, finally, it was presented as an edifying spectacle (which, at the same time, counteracted the possibility of the presentation of music and dance “dangerous” for their foreign origin and their immorality). Grandiose performances were continuously organized all over the country by the Women’s Section through contests for the choirs and dance troupes of Spain. Together these spectacles were “a stupendous political work” (Sampelayo 1969:100).<sup>9</sup>

Filtered from above, the culture that had come from the people was returned to the people.<sup>10</sup> Even more, this folkloric and bucolic image of the popular Spanish cultural heritage could be displayed abroad and serve to put a kind face on the dictatorship. It started from the premise that,

in terms of music, the world knew Spain for almost nothing more than a deformed image of things Andalusian. . . . The Spanish themselves, except for a few peoples, who had always had a great concern for their traditions, had forgotten that in the heart of the land they had the greatest folkloric wealth on Earth. And it had to be the Women’s Section, with all the vigor of their youth and their Falangist determination, that was to unearth song and dance village-by-village, which in many places was only preserved in the memory of aged people. And all this by force of contests and encouragement, bringing back to life the incomparable trove of our popular art, with all its variety of dances, religious, warrior, cortesán, pastoral, of minstrels and lovers. [Suárez 1993:209]

Very soon the idea of profiting from this wealth arose. From 1942, when the first national contest of song and dance troupes was held, until 1948, the Women’s Section devoted itself to internal work, focused on the training of members and students. Evidently there were no possibilities of foreign projection. But in 1948 circumstances changed and allowed a timid international opening of the regime. After Eva Perón’s visit to Spain in 1947, a visit of the song and dance troupes to Argentina was organized through diplomatic channels. An expedition composed of several selected regional groups with their commanding officers arrived in Argentina in May 1948 to perform at the main theaters of Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Mendoza. The choirs received a friendly political welcome and great popular acclamation. Naturally, the young women

were hosted in the Spanish Club, warmly received by supporters of the regime as well as by exiled Republicans. As told by L. Suárez in his informative chronicle on the Women's Section, the success of the "quite original embassy" in achieving its fundamental objective was complete (though there had been some doubts because of a previous attempt by exiled republicans to obstruct a cultural event):

What had begun in an official tone, as a visit agreed on between Chancelleries, soon became something new in the annals of diplomacy; politics remained silent and the heart spoke; those who lived in exile did not have an image of Francoist Spain in front of them, but rather the accents and dances of their own land. . . . It was discovered that above politics, even apart from it, there were very deep emotional strings which made a bringing together of the two peoples possible. [1993:217]<sup>11</sup>

Starting with this first voyage, new opportunities presented themselves, and the trips abroad increased dramatically. In 1948 the choirs participated in the Folklore Festival of Llangollen (Wales). In 1949, even in a tense diplomatic atmosphere, the Women's Section decided to repeat its "embassy" in Peru and Chile, the latter not a place where political affinities could be a reason for the trip and where a significant colony of exiled republicans lived. This trip to Chile was clearly propagandistic to judge by the tone of a dispatch from the Spanish ambassador there, José María Doussinague. The emotional intensity achieved by the folklore performances even had victims:

You might already know the case of Manuel Pérez Gutiérrez. This Spaniard died of joy. I have written a letter of condolence to his children, almost a congratulation, saying that God gave him grace in the moment he was called to Him, that Mother Spain were to unfold before his eyes, after forty years of absence, all her joy and light. He died listening to singing voices. [Suárez 1993:221]

In the eyes of the Francoist ideologues, in Chile all Spaniards, whatever their political tendency might have been and whatever region of the country they might have been from, cried. Even the Chilean left-wingers, despite a few attempts to extend the chant, "Death to the fascist swine," began to fall before the "female attractiveness" of the young women and their Spanish strength of character. In the Republican Center, flags, banners, and other symbols were taken down to receive them. Basque separatists showed up at the Spanish Circle, "knowing what this means," and an exile from the region of Murcia could not venture to speak to a woman compatriot:

She approaches him, offers him her hand in greeting, and asks if he is from her country. He answers:

"Yes, but I didn't dare speak with any of you because we [the republicans] are the bad guys." The phrase is said without affectation or irony, but with all the bitterness of a confession which comes to one's lips after ten years of pent-up, vainly struggled-against remorse. [Suárez 1993:222-223]

The Chilean apotheosis made them extend their tour to Panama, Ecuador, and Colombia, where exiles continued to have lumps in their throats and where the proverbial charm of the young Falangist women also left its mark. Invited to the home of José Prat, republican President Negrín's secretary, and asked if they knew where they were, the women replied, "Yes, in the home of a Spaniard" (Suárez 1993:226).



It is true that it was in these experiences that the highest level of fulfillment of the objectives (not of folkloric spectacle but of propaganda) of the song and dance troupes of the Women's Section was achieved. Other North and South American countries, such as Mexico, were not visited, and European tours resulted in very different incidents and characteristics from those seen here.

Nevertheless, the dictatorship managed to take great advantage of these South American experiences not only in the press but also in the cinema. Aside from the repeated reports issued in the cinemas by the NO-DO, the regime's news and documentary arm, a film, with the title *Ronda Española (Spanish Serenaders)*, was already being planned in 1950 on the topic of the trip through South America. Indeed, the film, directed by Ladislao Vajda, premiered in Madrid in November 1951. Rafael García Serrano and José María Sánchez Silva collaborated in the writing of the script, and the Women's Section contributed the unpaid work of 500 trained young men and women:

The plot, which was romantic and very light, tried to link up the performances in South America with a double message: firstly, that at bottom there is a goodness in human beings that can be aroused with joy; secondly, that there are no longer victors and vanquished in Spain, but only brothers on the road to reconciliation. [Suárez 1993:232-233]

In the film there is a sequence that has certain parallels with the story told by Ambassador Doussinague about the "red" from Murcia which caused a strong impression. During the folklore performance, the camera shows a closeup of a bad-faced, fierce man who is attending the show with obvious vengeful and mocking intentions; upon hearing the Galician music and seeing the energetic and lively dancing, his expression starts to change, embittered with the emotion and his memories of the past, until, finally, at the end of the shot, tears begin running down his face.<sup>12</sup>

This brief account of a concrete application of the use of folklore-based spectacle for diplomatic and propagandistic ends is intended solely to exemplify, in one case, the broad possibilities and varied services that knowledge of traditional culture could provide the Franco regime. However, the more general aim of this article has been to reveal a multifaceted panorama of the relations that can be established between folklore and a totalitarian political system. Such a focus includes, in the first place, the forms specifically created by those collectives that constitute themselves around a political project and search for a code of expression to identify them. I have also attempted to explain the appropriation and revaluation of different aspects of traditional culture and ways of life to legitimize the establishment, by force, of a new form of state. Finally, it can be observed that, at bottom, and not confined exclusively to totalitarian regimes, there lies a conservative idea of society and its dynamics, based in essentialism and extreme nationalism, which resorts to tradition and ethnic difference to justify its coercive acts and imposed power relations and to which, in a coherent way, the knowledge and display of folklore are highly useful.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>The bibliography in this regard is abundant, above all in reference to the most paradigmatic cases: the Soviet Union and the Third Reich. See, for example, for the Soviet case, Kobo 1990; Miller 1990; and Oinas 1961, 1973, 1975, and 1976. For Nazi Germany, see Bausinger 1993, Dostal 1994, and the fundamental works of Lixfeld (1994) and Dow and Lixfeld (1994). See also Conte and Essner 1994, 1995.

<sup>2</sup>For an account of this aspect in relation to the present moment in Spain, see Martí 1996.

<sup>3</sup>The most important ones were the Seminario de Etnografía, Folklore y Artes Populares, directed by Luis de Hoyos from his physiology chair, in Madrid (Ortiz 1987); and Arxiu d'Etnografia i Folklore de Catalunya, formed by Tomàs Carreras from his ethics chair, in Barcelona (Calvo 1991).

<sup>4</sup>The relative permissiveness of the regime in the certain use of other languages in Spain (always conceived of as dialects in relation to Castilian, the sole language), restricted to family use or to subjects like folklore, may be based on a similar mechanism (Benet 1979; see also analysis with regard to the Asturian language called Bable in Uría 1984:146–150).

<sup>5</sup>This is true if we exclude popular manifestations of a humorous type, which in the late stages of the regime truly flourished (Brandes 1977).

<sup>6</sup>This can be seen in any of the songbooks published by the Women's Section or by some of the folklorists close to it. See, for example, the one by Rafael Benedito (1962).

<sup>7</sup>This impressive castle at Medina del Campo (Valladolid) was built in the 15th century and historically had a strong relation to Queen Isabella of Castile. In 1939, just after the civil war, it became the seat of the national school for the leaders of the feminine branch (Sección Femenina) of the Fascist Party (Falange Española), which was commanded by Pilar Primo de Rivera, the sister of the "martyr" José Antonio, the greatest hero of the regime and founder of the Falange.

<sup>8</sup>The berets and shirts of young Falangist women also contributed to their exoticism, as did the headdresses of the nurses and the attire of Franco's Moorish Guard, whose members were situated in the battlements of the castle for more ambience (Suárez 1993:99–100).

<sup>9</sup>Jazz and other popular musical forms were banned. See Giménez Caballero 1935:141–142. The zarzuela (Spanish operetta) was given a place of privilege, while other national musical pieces, like "Concierto de Aranjuez" by Joaquín Rodrigo, became the veritable soundtrack of the regime. See Uría 1984:112–114.

<sup>10</sup>It should be emphasized, however, that the fulfillment of these aims was left in the hands of a merely political institution, the Women's Section being in no way professional, however much it consulted with musicologists and scholars of the tradition (like García Matos or the maestro Benedito). As opposed to this model, specific institutions for this work were created in Germany, such as the Reichsinstitut für Deutsche Volkskunde, despite the even higher level of political control there over the work and its results (Lixfeld 1994:121–149).

<sup>11</sup>The information in this section comes from Suárez 1993: ch. 6, "Bailando hasta la Cruz del Sur" ("Dancing to the Southern Cross").

<sup>12</sup>Other famous films in the folkloric genre of the regime are *Castañuela*, by Torrado (1949); *El Centauro*, by Guzmán (1946); and the most famous of all, *Alma baturra*, by Mignoni (1947) (Cirici 1977:172–176, 187–191; Neuschäfer 1994).

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