Prince Csaba, Lead Your People Once More: Hungarian Nationalist Rock and Performance of Place in Szekler Land

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Abstract

EMI Tábor (Transylvanian Hungarian Youth Camp) took place in Szekler Land, a majority-Hungarian region in Transylvania that has been a part of Romania since 1920, and an object of nostalgic gaze from Hungary ever since. This nostalgia takes its most radical form in *nemzeti* (nationalist) rock bands, which are featured at the camp among other evening performances of rock music. This article underscores the importance of the Szekler Land and people in Hungarian nationalist projects, which often use Szeklers as an idealized representation of the nation. EMI Tábor is one place where a reification of Szekler Land takes place, based on historical and mythical connections. By applying a theoretical framework of nationalism and participatory music to performances by two nemzeti rock bands at the camp, I demonstrate how nationalist rock works as a vehicle for populist mobilization, and how Szekler Land is essential to a past that furthers the Hungarian state's articulation of an identity positioned between East and West in the post-socialist landscape.

For one week each summer from 2005 to 2019, yurts sprouted from a field outside the small Romanian city of Gyergyószentmiklós/Gheorgheni.[1] The cracking of whips and thunder of horses' hooves resonated near an outdoor stage in preparation for Erdélyi Magyar Ifják Tábor (Transylvanian Hungarian Youth Camp, hereafter EMI Tábor). The camp was located in the Szekler Land, a majority Hungarian region of Romania with strong ties to Hungarian national mythology. The event aimed to build community among young Transylvanian Hungarians as they strengthened their connection to their cultural heritage. While many participants were local, campers came from all over Transylvania, Romania, Hungary, and throughout the Hungarian diaspora. Historical, cultural, and political presentations in the daytime gave way to evening rock concerts.

At least one evening of the week was dedicated to *nemzeti rock* (nationalist rock) bands. The connection of nemzeti rock to the far right is clear in lyrics that express extreme nationalist views. A common theme is irredentism, the advocacy for reoccupying territory considered lost. Transylvania, as well as the Szekler Land that lies within it, are frequently invoked as examples. However, the power of the songs to move listeners lies in their performance as much as their message, which was enhanced through the location of the event in Szekler Land. Nemzeti rock grew in the early 2000s in partial affiliation with Jobbik, which was then a far-right party but has since shifted its focus towards the center. Much has been made of this connection in scholarly and journalistic writing. Yet primordial nationalism, which orients a nation's identity toward a particular ethnicity connected to ancient heritage, is more present in a connection to place than it is in top-down party affiliation. While media attention to rising far-right parties in Europe has focused on voting trends and the words of politicians, a scholarly trend, particularly among Hungarian researchers, has

[1] The city's official name is Gheorgheni in Romanian. I identify place names in Hungarian and Romanian throughout this article because my interlocutors use the Hungarian names, but maps and other documents use the Romanian names.

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transferred attention to local and rural nationalist projects.[2] At EMI Tábor, far-right nationalism was performed as group identity.

In this article, I demonstrate the centrality of place in the subculture that includes nemzeti rock bands and their fans and how EMI Tábor's location in Szekler Land amplified their message. My fieldwork in the summers of 2016, 2017, and 2018 spanned a transitional time for the Hungarian Jobbik Party as it moved from far right towards the center. Although nemzeti rock developed alongside Jobbik, the connection between the music and party politics is no longer strong. However, the development within a subculture of radical nationalism that draws upon primordialist thinking is still key to understanding nemzeti rock. Musical analysis elucidates nemzeti rock tropes, and the performance within the festival frame carried the music's power beyond lyrics. The accounts of festival participants, organizers, and musicians speak to how this music shapes and presents national identity. Scholars of nemzeti rock have emphasized lyrics and their similarity to the rhetoric of Hungarian far-right populist politicians, along with their use in popular culture and festivals.[3] I build on these studies by analyzing how musical sound connected to ritualized behavior reinforces the rhetoric held in common by politicians and musicians. The primordial past is reified through their performance in Szekler Land.

Szekler Land is part of Transylvania, which has lain within Romanian national borders since 1920. When post–World War I sanctions redistributed land throughout Eastern Europe, Transylvania was given to Romania. The Treaty of Trianon divided the Austro-Hungarian empire, redistributing parts of Hungary among the neighboring nations of Czechoslovakia (present-day Slovakia), Slovenia, Ukraine, Croatia, Serbia, and Austria. Harghita and Covasna Counties make up the region known as Szekler Land, where Hungarians are a majority. The Szekler people occupy a central place in Hungarian history and folklore.

Visitors stepping off the train in Gyergyószentmiklós will feel they have entered Hungary despite traveling 400 kilometers from the Hungarian border. People passing on the streets chat in Hungarian. Signs in Hungarian adorn shop windows. Streets are named in three scripts: Hungarian, Romanian, and *rovásírás*, the ancient Hungarian runic alphabet. Ornate wooden Szekler gates guard entrances to homes and businesses.

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[2] Cf., e.g., Virág Molnár, "Civil Society, Radicalism and the Rediscovery of Mythic Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 1 (2016): 165–85; and Margit Feischmidt and Kristóf Szombati, "Understanding the Rise of the Far Right from a Local Perspective: Structural and Cultural Conditions of Ethno-Traditionalist Inclusion and Racial Exclusion in Rural Hungary," *Identities* 24, no. 3 (2017): 313–31, https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2016.1142445.

[3] Áron Szele, "Nemzeti Rock: The Radical Right and Music in Contemporary Hungary," *JOMEC Journal* 9 (2016): 9–26; Margit Feischmidt and Gergő Pulay, "'Rockin' the Nation': The Popular Culture of Neo-Nationalism," *Nations and Nationalism* 23, no. 2 (2017): 309–26.

Figure 1: A sign in Hungarian and rovásírás runic script welcomes drivers to Gyergyószentmiklós/Gheorgheni.

Figure 2: "Brotherhood Avenue" street sign in Romanian, Hungarian, and rovásírás runic script.

Figure 3: A Szekler gate at a home in Gyergyószentmiklós/Gheorgheni. Photos by author.

EMI Tábor was held two kilometers outside of Gyergyószentmiklós. Camp staff and volunteers were packed into one cabin near the road. Hundreds of tents lay in neat rows across a field. Crops grew in the next field, and horses' bells woke campers each morning as farmers drove them before their hay-filled wagons. The center of the camp contained activity tents, food booths, and stages for musical performances. Young volunteers—teens and early twenty-somethings—bustled around the grounds relaying messages, performing maintenance tasks, and supervising action on the stages. Participants entered the camp between

two haystacks, and came into a field that paid tribute to steppe nomadic ancestry. Several yurts (called *jurta* in Hungarian) served to house both historical reenactments and more modern amenities, such as an information booth.

Figure 4: Haystacks at the camp entrance, adorned with the Szekler flag at EMI Tábor 2016. Photo by author.

I carried out my fieldwork in the summers of 2016, 2017, and 2018, during which time I traveled throughout Transylvania to Hungarian music festivals in various locations. My access was greater at EMI Tábor than at other sites due to the small size of the event. I was able to meet organizers in the cabins where

they were staying, and I had some backstage access to speak with bands. In the first year, I camped in a tent in the designated area next to those of other participants. I was also present at the opening and closing celebrations of the organizers in 2016. Lengthy interviews with Örs Sorban, the event's main organizer and leader of EMI at the time, bookended my 2016 summer of fieldwork and informed much of what I learned about the ideology behind the camp from a leadership perspective. Additional recruitment of informants was casual as I observed and took part in daily camp activities. Interviews often took place as people were gathering for concerts and during intermissions in the action in concert evenings—especially breaks due to frequent torrential rain in 2016. Participants also wrote about me. I made the camp news circulation one day and was interviewed for a local paper in the summer of 2016.

Primordial Nationalism and the Reification of Szekler Land

Hungarian nationalism ties national identity to an ancient ethnic past, a concept known as primordialism in nationalist discourse. Primordialism is most often associated with the far right; however, the definition is not limited to that orientation. For example, Basque leftist nationalist movements have also drawn on primordialist thought.[4] Katherine Verdery describes how state socialism in Romania and throughout the Eastern Bloc drew on primordialism,[5] and much of Hungarian nationalism as it relates to Transylvania is a reaction to that legacy in Romania. Most scholars of nationalism accept Benedict Anderson's modernist concept of the nation, in which states are created for civic and economic purposes and where ethnicity, though essential to human self-understanding, is an imagined construct.[6] The primordialist concept of an ethnic core is expressed in the rhetoric of government leaders such as Hungary's Viktor Orbán. In 2012, Orbán led Hungary's ruling party, Fidesz, to introduce the Status Law, granting Hungarian citizenship to ethnic Hungarians living as minorities in former territories. Orbán's speeches at the Tusványos Festival, also in Szekler Land, have become a favorite source of citations for journalists writing about illiberalism. In his 2019 speech, Orbán clarified his definition of an illiberal society:

> The illiberal or national viewpoint states that the nation is a historically and culturally determined community. It is a historically developed configuration, which must protect its members and prepare them to stand their ground in the world for a common cause.[7]

Orbán argues that liberalism, as a Western construct, is against the nature of Hungarians due to their shared history. He expresses a position similar to the scholar Anthony Smith, who is an outlier in nationalism theory and orients the essence of a nation in its people's cultural similarities.[8]

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[4] Donna Weston, "Basque Pagan Metal: View to a Primordial Past," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (2011): 103–22.
[5] Katherine Verdery describes how Dacianism and protochronism shaped national ideology under Nicolae Ceaușescu. Similarities to Turanism in Hungary abound. Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
[6] Cf., e.g., Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[7] An English translation of Orbán's entire speech is found on the Visegrád Post website: https://visegradpost.com/en/2019/07/29/orbans-full-speech-at-tusvanyos-political-philosophy-upcoming-crisis-and-projects-for-the-next-15-years/.
[8] Smith's definition of the nation is similar to the above quotation from Orbán's speech: "The modern definition of the nation omits important components. Even today, a nation *qua* nation must possess a common history and culture, that is to say, common myths of origin and descent, common memories and common symbols of culture. Otherwise, we should be speaking only of territorial states." Anthony D. Smith, "The Origins of Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12, no. 3 (1989): 341, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1989.9993639.

Neo-Turanism embraces primordial nationalism and is at the core of nationalist rockers' messages of unity on the concert stage. Turanism is an early twentieth-century nationalist concept that traces Hungarian ancestry to Central Altaic nomads. In Hungarian mythology, the Szekler people are the direct descendants of Attila. Neo-Turanist archeological and historical research has not been replicated by others in fields outside their circle. This genetic/historic connection supports an anti-liberal, anti-globalist stance, critical of EU and US foreign policy. Neo-Turanists tend to position Hungarians as victims of the West, yet they emphasize preservation of a Christian Europe, a seeming contradiction that Péter Balogh elucidates.[9] Nemzeti rock performs the ideology through song lyrics that honor ancient military heroes. They set nationalist poetry to music, and themes of homeland and loyalty are typical of the genre.

Szekler Land is outside the territory of the Hungarian state, yet it is the setting for many myths of the Hungarian nation. The story of Prince Csaba as the son of Attila serves both to explain the Turanist origins of the Hungarian people and to locate them in Szekler Land. Szekler Land's extraction from the Hungarian state severed the connection between the nation's mythical and heroic past and left an uncertain future. Tom Nairn's Janus-faced understanding of the nation as both forward and backward looking explains the anxiety this rift caused.[10] Hungarians living in Hungary have long looked towards Transylvania as a whole, and Szekler Land in particular, as a location of a purer culture. I use László Kürti's framework of reification of Transylvania in the Hungarian imagination to describe how a people can secure a figurative connection with the past. Kürti defines this reification as "the tendency to imagine Transylvania as a concrete territorial entity engulfing the very essence of the Hungarian national identity," drawing similarities to the Slovak Tatra Mountains and the Polish Kresy region as exemplars of those nations' imagined cultures.[11] This imaginative tendency is more intense regarding Szekler Land because it is central to national myths and has a majority Hungarian population. Radical nationalism uses mythology to mobilize, whereas population density raises more practical concerns about minority rights in Romania. Politicians and activists outside of the far right argue for autonomy based on civic issues, such as language rights, often pushing back against Romanian nationalist agendas under state socialism.

Nemzeti rock lyrics use the populist tactic of national unity, and performances at events solidify a cultural cohort based on ethnic affinity. Invoking Anderson's concept of the imagined community, Áron Szele describes nemzeti rock songs' goal to recreate this community "utilizing personal, spatial and temporal references. The songs are mini-narratives and together form a larger story that is connected to and somewhat expands on the political message of Hungarian populist radical right political actors."[12] Music and lyrics are paired with an emotional atmosphere that performers facilitate through leading chants, and audiences echo with enthusiastic participation and flag waving. In this way, nationalist rock concerts at festivals animate and embolden ethno-national realization. EMI Tábor's location in Transylvania, and Szekler Land in particular, made concrete the spirit of nemzeti rock lyrics and neo-Turanist symbols of steppe nomadic ancestry on the camp's grounds reinforced this spirit.

For some participants, EMI Tábor was a kind of nationalistic pilgrimage, where they could visit a place they perceived to be more in tune with the real Hungarian way of life. Some audience members I

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[9] For an analysis of the ways in which these seemingly contradictory views actually reinforce each other to support current Hungarian illiberalism and its peripheral geopolitical position, see Péter Balogh, "Clashing Geopolitical Self-Images? The Strange Co-Existence of Christian Bulwark and Eurasianism (Turanism) in Hungary," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, June 13, 2020, 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2020.1779772.

[10] Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London: Verso, 1997).

[11] László Kürti, *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), viii, 15.

[12] Szele, "Nemzeti Rock," 18, https://doi.org/10.18573/j.2016.10040.

interviewed traveled a long distance from Hungary for this opportunity. On the first day of the festival in 2016, I interviewed a man in his fifties sitting next to a triangular green tent of an older vintage than those surrounding it. He had come to EMI Tábor from Makó in southeastern Hungary, about 10 km from the Romanian border. The trip was approximately 531 km to Gyergyószentmiklós/Gheorgheni and took twelve hours by train. He had made the journey to the camp for the past ten years. He expressed that EMI Tábor had taken on more of a festival atmosphere in recent years and had strayed from its original purpose. On the importance of the political aspect of the camp, he remarked that he came in support of the one million Hungarians living in Romania and that "it is not a mistake for the Catalans and the Basques to fight with the Spanish at least to have autonomy [that should be] allowed for any people. It is important at least to have cultural or language autonomy."[13] Like many Hungarians living in Hungary, this participant identified support of cross-border Hungarians as part of his identity as a member of the nation, paired with a sense of duty towards the cause.

The most visible example of nationalistic tourism occurred during the years when the youth branch of the Jobbik Party held an annual convention at the festival. Their presence was visible in the form of flags and banners in their tent area and represented a group of youth present at the festival in direct association with political activities. Concerns for cross-border Hungarians were a key part of Jobbik's platform during the years the party was visible at camp.

Hungarians are proud of their heritage's folktales, yet most reject the radical nationalism of extreme right-wing groups. Not all area businesses were interested in sponsoring EMI Tábor, just as not everyone was interested in nemzeti rock, even when offered in an apolitical package. Nemzeti rock performances occupied one or two evenings at EMI Tábor. The music on other evenings leaned towards hard rock and heavy metal, lacking nationalistic lyrics. The only requirements were that songs must have Hungarian lyrics and references to folk music must be Hungarian, even if the bands had repertoire that lay outside these restrictions.

It is notable that another festival, SIC Feszt, was held in Covasna County during the same week as EMI Tábor. I learned from organizers that this was no coincidence. SIC is an abbreviation of the Latin name for Szekler Land, *Terra Siculorum*. SIC Feszt is sponsored by the Transylvanian Hungarian political party RMDSZ (*Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség*; Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania). SIC Feszt is organized on the same "free university" model as the Tusványos Festival that Fidesz sponsors, where participants can take part in daytime presentations and evening concerts. The focus is more on civic development than folklore. The opposing view offered by SIC Feszt demonstrates a more mainstream approach to Szekler autonomy, cultural preservation, and community formation in Szekler Land in particular and Transylvania more generally. It is built on a model of collaboration rather than resistance. Some musical groups overlap in the festival circuit, but nemzeti rock performances are not common outside EMI Tábor.

Ritual and Participation

Ritualized participation makes the scene of a nemzeti rock concert familiar at each event. Audience members wave flags, sing, and chant. These behaviors are examples of what Thomas Turino has called "the frame for a given type of music—the ideology, imagery, and expectations that guide interpretation." Certain

[13] Interview with the author, August 2016.

values are presented through attire and behavior that signal social class, culture, or identity.[14] Nemzeti rock is a musical genre expression of a subculture with an associated symbolism. Visual symbols on apparel identify wearers as members of the subculture of the Hungarian far right. Musicians and fans are seen with traditional leather pouches, band t-shirts with rovásírás script,[15] and tattoos or t-shirts depicting outrage and despair at the breakup of the former Hungarian state. Margit Feischmidt and Gergő Pulay have called such displays ritualistic in the context of concerts and festivals.[16] Album art and music videos depict Hungarians in battle from nomadic times to the nineteenth century, and these were connected to the scenery at EMI Tábor, including the yurts and demonstrations of ancient fighting styles. In a performance at EMI Tábor, the larger frame of a nemzeti rock concert was combined with the frame of this specific event and its location.

I argue that participants made EMI Tábor's location temporally and spatially liminal because of the area's historic ethnic character and connection with national mythology. The action of gathering reified Szekler Land as Hungarian, despite its location in Romania, actualizing Victor Turner's concept of festivals as ritual and liminal spaces "betwixt and between" routinized life.[17] Wearing symbolic clothing and shouting nationalist chants tends to "carry to the extreme behaviors that are usually regulated by measure; they invert patterns of daily social life," in the words Alessandro Falassi uses to describe festival behavior.[18] In this case, Hungarians who may live out their national identity in more subtle ways from day to day will feel ethnicity with a greater purpose during the camp, and the ritualistic behavior of a concert adds to these feelings.[19] While some aspects of participation are present at any rock concert, such as singing along to familiar songs and moshing, nemzeti rock subculture imbues them with an ideology associated with identity and emotion, reinforced by their presence in a place charged with ethnic symbolism.

Szekler Land under the gaze of Budapest implies not only a top-down approach to nationalism but also a synecdochic relationship in which the Szeklers represent the Hungarian nation by embodying its purest form. A nationalistic musical performance in Szekler Land can be understood through Philip Bohlman's concept of musical monuments: "When public performance shares a monument's space, it calibrates monumental time by drawing those experiencing the music closer to the historical moment being memorialized."[20] The historical monuments of Szekler Land are myriad, but all are concentrated in a glorified past existing before 1920, in which the Hungarian nation was more closely connected with its myths.

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[14] Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 64–5; ibid, 15. Turino applies the concept of frame in Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[15] Although any nationalistic meaning is anachronistic to the ancient script, rovásírás enthusiasts are increasingly associated with the Hungarian far-right (see Alexander Maxwell, "Contemporary Hungarian Rune-Writing: Ideological Linguistic Nationalism within a Homogenous Nation," *Anthropos* 99, no. 1 (2004): 161–75), even to the point where signs in rovásírás in a village once indicated Jobbik presence, but Jobbik has since worked to remove the association of the script with the party after the party's reorientation towards the center. See Klára Sándor, "Versions of Folk History Representing Group Identities: The Battle for the Masternarrative," in *The (Web) Sites of Memory: Cultural Heritage in the Digital Age*, ed. Gergely Tamás Fazakas et al. (Debrecen, Hungary: Debrecen University Press, 2018), 82–9.

[16] Feischmidt and Pulay, "'Rockin' the Nation," 321.

[17] Victor Turner, ed., *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982).

[18] Alessandro Falassi, ed., *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, 1st ed (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 8.

[19] For a study of the ways nationalism and ethnicity are experienced apart from intensified events, an excellent study of the Transylvanian city of Cluj is shared in Rogers Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[20] Philip V. Bohlman, *Focus: Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 95, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203844496.

Within the large scope of the events, rock music was only part of the experience of EMI Tábor and nemzeti rock was only a part of the concert offerings. The messages of nemzeti rock are nationalist in rhetoric, but the songs alone do not mobilize people. In the following sections, I show how the event space and associated rituals contribute to the message. I begin with an analysis of the "Szekler Hymn" at EMI Tábor, demonstrating how its lyrics and performance point to Szekler Land's centrality in the Turanist view of history. Drawing from interviews with camp participants and organizers, I explain how a sense of belonging and identity takes precedence over ideological continuity. Finally, I show how performance behavior connects nemzeti rock lyrics to place and enacts community that is central to the mission of the camp and to the growing Hungarian far-right movement.

Participatory Singing and an Anthem for Szekler Land

Through anthem singing, participants connect to group identity in action as well as through lyrics that narrate myths of the nation. The Szekler Hymn (*Székely Himnusz*) echoes the title of the Hungarian Hymn (*Magyar Himnusz*), the national anthem of Hungary.[21] The Szekler Hymn's place at EMI Tábor demonstrated the role of communal singing and of the mixture of participatory and presentational music at the event. Volunteer organizers sang at the opening and closing bonfires, a ritual that defined the time-space that bookended the camp each summer. Turino describes the power of the connection between emotion and communal singing: "When the emotion felt is indexically tied to the words sung and the meaning of the event itself, it can be a highly effective political tool."[22] Singing the anthem at EMI Tábor added a layer of meaning to the text and music.

Bands performing at EMI Tábor commonly included the anthem on their set list, creating a mixture of performative and participatory music. For example, Hungarica's performance of the anthem at the end of their concert highlighted the centrality of Szekler Land in the national imagination. The Szekler Hymn's lyrics, similar to nemzeti rock songs, reference the place-based mythology that Szekler Land holds for the ethnic Hungarian nation.

Hungarica's performance at EMI Tábor modeled all the conventions of a nemzeti rock concert. Flags waved, voices were raised in singing and shouting, and bodies moved to driving rock or sentimental ballads. But the crowd stood at attention for Hungarica's encore. With the final chord of the set still ringing, frontman Zoltán Fábián sang the opening phrase of the Szekler Hymn, "Who knows where . . ."(*ki tudja merre*). When the audience continued "where fate will be led" (*merre visz a végzet*), Fábián jumped down from the stage to stand among the crowd while singing with them—a symbolic gesture that transformed the scene from concert to communal singing. The scene's focus shifted from the stage to the crowd as they sang the next lines "On a rough road, in a dark night / Drive your people towards victory once more, / Prince Csaba, on your starry path." The lyrics speak of trials, looking to the past and the future:

> Who knows where, in which direction destiny will lead,
> On a rough road, in a dark night.
> Drive your people once more towards victory,
> Prince Csaba, on your starry path.

[21] For a description of the use of hymns as anthems and their affective power, see J. Martin Daughtry, "Russia's New Anthem and the Negotiation of National Identity," *Ethnomusicology* 47, no. 1 (2003): 45, https://doi.org/10.2307/852511.
[22] Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 210.

The Szekler are like stone, crushed into a fistful of dust.
The folk battle on the turbulent sea.
Our heads are engulfed by the sea, oh, one hundred times.
Do not let Transylvania be lost, our God!

For so long as we live as Hungarian-speaking folk,
Never may our souls be torn.
Let us be born anywhere, wherever in the world,
Let our fate be good or harsh.

The Szekler are like stone, crushed into a fistful of dust.
The folk battle on the turbulent sea.
Our heads are engulfed by the sea, oh, one hundred times.
Do not let Transylvania be lost, our God!

Ki tudja merre, merre visz a végzet
Göröngyös úton, sötét éjjelen.
Vezesd még egyszer győzelemre néped,
Csaba királyfi csillagösvényen.

Maroknyi Székely porlik, mint a szikla
Népek harcának zajló tengerén.
Fejünk az ár, jaj, százszor elborítja,
Ne hagyd elveszni Erdélyt, Istenünk!

Ameddig élünk Magyar ajkú népek
Megtörni lelkünk nem lehet soha.
Szülessünk bárhol, világ bármely pontján,
Legyen a sorsunk jó vagy mostoha.

Maroknyi Székely porlik, mint a szikla
Népek harcának zajló tengerén.
Fejünk az ár, jaj, százszor elborítja,
Ne hagyd elveszni Erdélyt, Istenünk!

Csaba, still a common Hungarian name, literally means "gift from the sky," and legends tell of Csaba's appearances on a pathway of stars to aid the Szekler people in their battles against invaders for hundreds of years. The hymn was written in 1921, just after the Treaty of Trianon placed Szekler Land within Romania. The opening lines of the "Szekler Hymn" invoke the legendary prince to guide the Szekler people out of yet another trying historical epoch. Continuing to sing these lines emphasizes the continued struggle of the heroes of a nation, whom nemzeti rock lyrics tend to depict as victims as much as conquerors.

Figure 5: Video of Hungarica's performance of the Szekler Hymn at EMI Tábor 2018. Video by author.
Video link: http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3111.

Drawing on Martin Daughtry's comparison of communal singing of a national anthem to an ecstatic state in ritual, I underscore the importance of action to accompany ideology.[23] A member of the audience at EMI Tábor told me he came for the nemzeti rock concerts because "they sing about the truth; Kárpátia, for example, 'Hol Vagytok Székelyek?' (Where are you Szeklers?)." He spoke about the purpose and work of music in a physical and emotional sense: "Hard rock works for me by pushing up the adrenaline. . . . The national anthem, that is the opposite because it works on people by calming them. [Both kinds of music] work by singing the truth."[24] Participation in anthem singing at a rock concert deepens the work both types of music do. While nemzeti rock songs and anthems communicate similar ideologies through rhetoric, a communicated sense of belonging is even more apparent in communal singing, especially when it is done in the context of the camp environment.

Centering the Nation in Local Performance

Celebration of nomadism dominated the visual experience of EMI Tábor and highlighted a Hungarian identity separate from Western Europe. The Hungarian Turan Foundation (Magyar-Turán Alapítvány) became a strong presence at EMI Tábor beginning in 2017. The foundation's chief historian Zsolt András Biró presented at the camp, and young members demonstrated yurt construction in historic apparel. Large signs at EMI Tábor advertised Kurultaj, the annual meeting for the Hungarian Turan Association. Young people engaged in historical reenactment through yurt construction and ancient combat with a sense of sincerity and purpose. Kürti emphasizes that movement to center nomadism in Hungarian identity is performative, and that it is more utopian than nostalgic: looking to a better future by constructing a past.[25]

[23] Daughtry, "Russia's New Anthem," 45.
[24] Interview with the author, August 14, 2016.
[25] László Kürti, "Nomadism and Nostalgia in Hungary," in *Memories on the Move*, ed. Monika Palmberger and Jelena Tošić (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 234–5, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-57549-4_9.

A celebration of nomadism centers the peripheral rural character of Szekler identity, tying it to a glorious past rather than a rural backwater.

Figure 6: Members of the Hungarian Turan Association (*Magyar Turán Szövetsége*) erect a yurt (*jurta*) at EMI Tábor, 2017. Photo by author.

Camp organizer Örs Sorbán describes nationalism in terms of the local, centered on Szekler Land. When he speaks about the meaning of *nemzeti* and its distinction from "nationalist,"[26] he acknowledges that nationalist is looked upon in a negative light. Instead, he emphasizes how nemzeti is felt and enacted rather than understood as an ideology:

> My organizers, my fellow EMI group, they believe in this thing. Most of them don't understand it, but that's not a problem. You are part of the nemzet if you maintain those standards. You believe that you are Hungarian. You want to live like a Hungarian, your mother language is important to you, your ancestry is important to you, your heritage is important to you, your history is important to you, and you want to continue the legacy which was given to you by your ancestors and their ancestors in these few thousand years, because we have roots here. There is a saying in Székelyföld that everybody lives somewhere if they can show their grandfather's grave (*Itt élsz hogyha, megtüntethatod a nagyapádnak sríkövét)*. The thing is, in the time of the migration, we came here. There was somebody else before that, before them and before that. We don't say that we rose here from the ground like mushrooms. But we created a culture, a kingdom here, and nobody else did that, and we lost this.[27]

The same theme of lost connection to place returns as Sorbán speaks about the importance of learning horseback riding for young urban campers. As he traces the history of Hungarian people with horses, he ties it back to land and to Turanist connection: "Horsemanship is part of our culture, and the horse is part of our culture, and sadly we got very unattached to it in Transylvania because we don't have great steppes like in Hungary."[28]

Performative identity connects pagan Turanism and Christianity as a matter of center and periphery rather than dogma. In tracing the Hungarian history of military horsemanship from the Mongols through the Hussars to the present, Sorbán emphasizes that these tactics changed when Hungarians were Europeanized in the medieval era.[29] Hungary entered medieval Europe in 1000 CE with the crowning of Stephen, the nation's first Christian king, and the event remains central to Hungarian national imagining. Stephen represents a combined Christian and pagan identity and thus speaks to the contradiction in glorifying a pagan past and preserving a present-day Christian nation. At EMI Tábor, historic reenactments of pre-Christian times took place just a few meters away from a tent sponsored by Narrow Way (Keskeny Út), a Christian organization. To participants, the proximity of demonstrations of ninth-century lifeways to a religion not introduced to Hungary until 1000 CE did not feel incongruous. In his study of the MOGY Festival in Hungary, István Povedák positions syncretic celebration of pagan and Christian rituals as one indication of post-socialist national reimagining.[30] Hungary's self-image as a Christian bastion for Europe and a Eurasianist state with pagan roots, as Balogh explains, are united by their common enemy: "Western-style liberal democracy, multiculturalism, and globalism."[31] The ideological disconnect is better understood by looking at Turanism/nomadism as an act or an affiliation rather than merely an ideology. Szeklers

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[26] *Nemzeti* in Hungarian translates to national, and can refer to anything associated with a nation, such as a national holiday, national bank, national anthem, etc., or in rarer usage, the people or folk of a nation. The Hungarian *nacionalista* carries connotations similar to nationalism in English.
[27] Interview with the author, August 2016.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Interview with the author, July 2016.
[30] Povedák points out that distrust of institutional Christianity can be as strong as distrust of other outside forces—political and cultural—that are placed in opposition to what festival participants consider true Hungarian character. István Povedák, "MOGY: A Vessel of Ritual in Post-Socialist Hungary," *Traditiones* 41, no. 1 (2012): 147–58, https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2012410113.
[31] Balogh, "Clashing Geopolitical Self-Images?," 21.

defended Europe against invading Turks in their historic role as border guards, which played a significant role in maintaining Christian domination in Europe. Connection to Csaba and Attila places Szeklers at the center of Eurasianist theory.

Nationalist movements tend to raise rurality from the periphery to the center in identity reconstruction. As Vanessa Knights and Ian Biddle argue, state-sponsored mythologizing often comes with an idealization of place, and popular music remains a way for people to express national identity, despite recent scholarly trends that emphasize globalization and migration.[32] Scholarship in Hungarian music followed this line of thinking by identifying rural movements as loci for Hungarian identity reconstruction,[33] and EMI was one among many of these movements that take on a grassroots approach to identity. Feischmidt and Pulay argue that the state uses only the symbols that a subculture amplifies to legitimate and ingratiate itself among voters.[34] Jobbik in the early 2000s and Fidesz more recently have done so in part by positioning themselves as anti-party parties, and by centering on interests of cross-border Hungarians for their platforms, such as minority rights for Transylvanian-Hungarians and autonomy for Szeklers. Fidesz originated as a youth movement in the 1980s. The party's image was a relaxed group of young activists, eager to bring the country into a new era. Fidesz began left of center, then turned center right, and has most recently leaned far right. Jobbik emerged as a far-right party in the early 2000s, in the wake of civil unrest over what many working-class Hungarians felt were promises unfulfilled a decade after the regime change. The slogan "movement for a better Hungary" takes the populist tactic of representing Jobbik as a movement rather than a political party. In recent years, Jobbik has carried out a campaign to shift its image and objectives towards the center, critical of Fidesz's resistance to the European Union and Orbán's increasingly authoritarian governing methods. Scholarship on the rise of nationalism in Hungary has underscored the neo-Turanist connections to Jobbik's early rhetoric.[35] Such nativism has fostered antisemitic and anti-Roma sentiments. Fidesz members have also supported the Hungarian Turan Association.

During the time of Jobbik's strong presence at EMI Tábor, then-party leader Gabor Vona was an invited speaker. The Jobbik youth group held their annual meeting at EMI Tábor and the party's website advertised the camp. The party at the time used preexisting subcultural symbols in its rhetoric, but the high visibility at the camp positioned the entire event as one such symbol. Troubled by the associations with the party, Sorbán once again became locally focused. He asserts that EMI Tábor was not about party politics or telling youth how to think, but rather was concerned with how politicians addressed issues pertaining to Szeklers and other cross-border Hungarians:

> We want to present our side of the story for our people. We don't want to convince the world that we are right; we want to learn our history from our perspective at EMI Tábor, and this is considered very controversial. We strongly believe in the freedom of speech, and we are inviting Vona Gabor to speak not about the Gypsies or Roma, or the big Hungarian political topics here. He's speaking about his opinion on the European situation . . . or how a Hungarian party should focus on his brothers and sisters abroad, us, and he's telling his perspective.[36]

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[32] Vanessa Knights and Ian Biddle, eds., *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location: Between the Global and the Local* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007).
[33] Cf. Feischmidt and Pulay, "'Rockin' the Nation," 309–26; Feischmidt and Szombati, "Understanding the Rise of the Far Right," 313–31; Molnár, "Civil Society," 165–85; and Povedák, "MOGY: A Vessel of Ritual," 147–58.
[34] Feischmidt and Pulay, "'Rockin' the Nation," 323–4.
[35] Cf., e.g., Molnár, "Civil Society," 165–85; Feischmidt and Pulay, "'Rockin' the Nation," 309–26; Szele, "Nemzeti Rock," 9; and Emel Akçalı and Umut Korkut, "Geographical Metanarratives in East-Central Europe: Neo-Turanism in Hungary," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 53, no. 5 (2012): 596–614, https://doi.org/10.2747/1539-7216.53.5.596.
[36] Interview with the author, July 2016.

The absence of left-leaning politicians speaking at the camp makes it difficult to believe in a politically neutral agenda, but the central message here is the local focus on Transylvania and Szekler Land rather than an ideology. EMI Tábor participants reported more connection to community and values than party politics, and nemzeti rock bands perform these values. Botond Bese of Romantikus Erőszak explains the purpose the music has for him:

> For me, what is important is that we come to our Hungarianness, that we are proud of it. . . . In the Carpathian Basin, there is a beautiful history, and we look to the future positively. If we look at the world's current events, then we see enough disturbing things. But there are permanent and worthwhile values . . . such as the family, such as Christianity, such as love of home.[37]

Nemzeti rock has always emphasized conservative values and an outsider identity, and is a musical expression of the political changes around the regime changes mentioned earlier in this article. The genre had its roots in a periphery in the Hungarian underground punk scene in the 1980s.[38] Some nemzeti rock bands formed as part of the Hungarian skinhead subculture and gained traction in mainstream markets by refocusing their message away from general racism and towards Hungarian patriotism.[39] Nemzeti rock truly became a genre around 2005 amid widespread outrage at corruption in the then-ruling socialist party. Growing discontent among working-class Hungarians stemmed from continued poverty despite the promises of regime change. Nemzeti rock and Jobbik moved towards the mainstream. The fight against a peripheral identity that in their eyes has been placed on them unfairly is similar to other far-right movements and music elsewhere in Europe.[40] Nemzeti rock evolved symbiotically with Jobbik, with early distribution of CDs occurring at party meetings.[41] Thus, even if band members do not claim political party affiliation, their ideology aligned with Jobbik's agenda, and that party has used their music for propagandistic purposes—reaching people through values, even if they may be uninterested in or disenchanted with party politics.[42]

Szekler identity is rural, and the Hungarian imagination has room to stereotype Szeklers as simultaneously backward and as cultural paragons.[43] Nemzeti rock fans as a group reflect this double status. A university student attending EMI Tábor while home for the summer spoke to me about her attraction to nemzeti rock in terms of a feeling of home: "It makes me feel [that] we have to stay here, in our home. . . .

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[37] Interview with the author, July 21, 2018.

[38] Because they were underground and not trying to push their music through the government censors, many of these bands did not hold back in their anti-government rhetoric and also far-right sentiments in some cases. See Anna Szemere, *Up from the Underground: The Culture of Rock Music in Postsocialist Hungary* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Margit Feischmidt and Gergő Pulay, "Élmény és ideológia a nacionalista popkultúrában," in *Nemzet a Mindennapokban. Az újnacionalizmus populáris kultúrája*, ed. Margit Feischmidt et al. (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2014), 249–89; and Margit Feischmidt and Gergő Pulay, "'Rocking the Nation," 309–26, https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12264.

[39] Feischmidt and Pulay, "Rockin' the Nation," 313.

[40] Cf. Fábián Holt, "Kreuzberg Activists: Musical Performance as Social Vehicle," *Popular Music and Society* 30, no. 4 (2007): 469–92, https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760701546349; Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, *Lions of the North: Sounds of the New Nordic Radical Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190212599.001.0001; Philipp Karl, "Creating a New Normal: The Mainstreaming of Far-Right Ideas through Online and Offline Action in Hungary," in *Post-Digital Cultures of the Far Right: Online Actions and Offline Consequences in Europe and the US*, ed. Maik Fielitz and Nick Thurston, (Bielefeld: transcript-Verlag, 2019), 67–78, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839446706-005; and Szele, "Nemzeti Rock," 9.

[41] Szele, "Nemzeti Rock," 16.

[42] Szele, "Nemzeti Rock," 16; Molnár, "Civil Society," 165–85.

[43] Nairn has argued that although nationalism is often enacted through urban glorification of peasant culture, rural citizens' agency in nationalist movements must not be overlooked because leaders are often a mere generation away from the fields. Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London: Verso, 1997), 104–12.

It makes me feel safe." But she also made a class value statement that if people criticized nemzeti rock, she encouraged them to try it, to listen to it. She said that outsiders associate nemzeti rock with "the [lower-class] people."[44] In a conversation unrelated to nemzeti rock, a young man I interviewed at another festival felt that the best way to explain this to a visiting American was that "the Szeklers are like rednecks."[45] In both of these comments, and in other interactions I have experienced in Transylvania and Hungary, there is a sense of looking up and down at the same time to Szekler Land.

EMI Tábor participants often spoke of their attraction to nemzeti rock in terms of a connection to ethnic identity separate from politics. Few of my informants expressed a strong interest in the political part of the festival, choosing not to make a connection between political party affiliation and Hungarian identity. Many participants expressed enthusiasm for nemzeti rock bands while stating that the political aspect of the camp did not appeal to them. It seemed that most people interpreted my questions about politics at the camp as official party-related activities such as campaigning.

I spoke with a man and woman in their twenties from Cluj/Kolozsvar, the unofficial capital city of Transylvania, about 200 km from EMI Tábor. We talked as we waited for a rainstorm to subside and allow a concert to continue. When asked how important the political part of the camp experience is, he replied: "For me it's not important. I'm not interested. But I respect those who are. It's completely permissible to engage in politics here. But for me it's not the place. For those who want to try, the crowd is here; the music builds it [the crowd that comes for the music]. I allow it for anyone who is interested in it, but it's not for me—just a place for music, for a pleasant atmosphere."[46] The couple listed several nemzeti rock bands they were particularly looking forward to hearing, such as Kárpátia and Ismerős Arcok, describing them as "bands with a message for the entire nation."

When speaking with a group of attendees from a nearby village, a young man told me right away that he was here for the nationalistic spirit. "I don't really have a favorite band here, but Kárpátia is one which we always support. They are the original nationalist/nemzeti band. They are not well tolerated in Romania." He conveyed that the content of the music was more important than the enjoyment: "They are not my favorite band, but I like what they do. For example, they create songs like the ones my grandfather and great-grandfather also sang. Well, to me, that is important. . . . It's not just about rock music, the lyrics of these bands and what they are doing that is important. . . . It isn't only through rock bands [that this is accomplished], but they are here, so let's listen to them."[47]

On the same day, I spoke with a young woman who listed another nemzeti rock band, Ismerős Arcok (Familiar Faces), as a favorite for her at the festival. She said she was not interested in the political part, speaking instead about the importance of heritage/ethnic identity in nemzeti rock: "For example, I like how in folk metal there are folk music arrangements. I've gotten to know many folk songs, folk ballads, and stories. It's a way to show yourself [this history], a self-help."[48]

Considering the centrality of issues related to cross-border Hungarians in right-leaning Hungarian politics, it is difficult to understand nemzeti rock as apolitical. Audience members tended to recognize that a distinction may point to the importance of the local in this event. Gathering as a community was the

[44] Interview with the author, July 2018.
[45] Interview with the author, July 2017.
[46] Interview with the author, August 13, 2016.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

priority for many, and some indicated a longing for the older EMI events that were smaller and emphasized the forging of more local-level connections.

Performing Place, Performing Loyalty

Songs performed at EMI Tábor used lyrical references about place to connect a nationalist imagining of the past with an event-based enactment of the present. These took the form of gendered loyalty, sadness over the nation's past losses, and calls to action to protect its future. Musical styles—whether ballads or energetic rock—reinforced the lyrical messages by kindling emotional response and encouraging participation from audience members.

Figure 7: "Ringató" performed by Hungarica at EMI Tábor 2018. Video by author.
Video link: http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3111.

"Székely Vér—Ringató" ("Szekler Blood—Rocking") is a testament to a visceral connection to homeland. The song demonstrates a masculine yet non-militaristic form of national loyalty. Hungarica frontman Zoltán Fábián introduces the song with a connection to locality. He tells the audience he will now sing about his beautiful birthplace, Marosvásárhely/Târgu Mureş, a Transylvanian city about 100 km away from EMI Tábor. Fábián gazes skyward as he strums an acoustic guitar in a sentimental minor key. The two guitarists stand close together in this performance to better listen to each other, but the proximity also projects an enhanced communal feeling compared with the faster songs. The band members and the audience must listen more closely. Yet, the sentimental atmosphere can only hold an audience's attention for a limited time in an outdoor concert. Fábián hurries through the end of a chorus (*életen, életünkben*—to live in, our life) before commanding the audience to shout *hey!* on the beat during the guitar solo. The resulting shouting is aggressive compared with the tender lyrics and mood, but in this live setting, the need for participation is greater than the mood of the song. I spoke with a woman and her husband in their fifties who came from Arad, a Transylvanian city close to the Hungarian border. She told me that "Ringató" was a personal favorite. She describes the connection between ethnic identity and family: "It is very beautiful; everything is in it. Our Hungarianness (*magyarságunk*) is in it, child-rearing (*gyermek nevelés*), that is the

most important—love of children."[49] Fábián wrote "Ringató" after the birth of his daughter, and the song begins with an introspective expression of how it seems he was only just a child, and now is a father and is entrusted with the duty to teach his child how to live as a Hungarian.

The Romantikus Erőszak song "Székely Kata Balladája" demonstrates the feminine side of national loyalty centered in Szekler Land. The ballad tells the story of a captured young woman who was executed when she refused to commit the treason her captors had asked of her. The story has characteristics of a legend or folktale, and the music has folk song qualities. It is a multi-verse ballad with last phrases of lines repeated as first phrases of next lines, common in folk song. The studio version uses *furulya* (shepherd's flute) and a female singer joins Balázs Sziva's growly vocals on the chorus. Almost all nemzeti rock musicians are men, so a woman's presence even in a recording is anomalous. In live performance, including the one at EMI Tábor in 2016, Botond Bese plays the tune on bagpipe in place of the furulya. At their performance at EMI Tábor that year, Sziva addressed the audience (*Most figyelj!*—now, pay attention!) before the last verse. He pointed at the audience to the beat of the song while speaking the words: "If she should one day rise from her unmarked grave / The Szeklers would accuse those who brought on her fate." This final verse is the part of the song that connects the past to the future. Sziva invokes the crowd to remember the story and the wrongs committed by those who would threaten the Szekler people and, by extension, the Hungarian nation:

> If she should one day rise from her unmarked grave,
> The Szeklers would accuse those who brought on her fate,
> Only Székely Kata among the girls,
> Is like the red rose among the flowers.
>
> Jeltelen sírjából, ha egyszer felkelne,
> Székelyek sorsáról nagy vádolást tenne,
> Olyan Székely Kata a leányok között,
> Mint a piros rózsa a virágok között.

Figure 8: Fan video of "Székely Kata Balladája," recorded at EMI Tábor 2016.[50]
Video link: http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3111.

[49] Interview with the author, August 13, 2016.
[50] Romantikus Erőszak, "Székely Kata balladája," Nexu 69, YouTube video, uploaded August 17, 2016, 00:03:35, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmkgYcXEqTQ.

Ethnomusicologists and anthropologists have analyzed the gendered aspects of nationalism, where the role of women in a culture nation is to uphold cultural principles and display a fidelity grounded in ways men are unable to carry out. Benjamin Teitelbaum uses Partha Chatterjee's theory to describe how Swedish nationalist rock musicians interpret women's roles in the nation.[51] Chatterjee points to the material/spiritual dichotomy in nationalist discourse, where the spiritual is associated with the true self, the home, and the feminine. The material/masculine world that a colonized people navigate does not represent the soul of an individual culture.[52] In the song text, we see this analogy played out through the military capture of Kata, a Szekler woman who refuses to succumb to the conquerors' forced conversion. Each verse ends with "Székely Kata is among girls / as the red rose is among the flowers." The text does not name the enemy army, but the lyrics suggest Ottoman invaders, from whom the Szekler border guards protected Hungary in the Middle Ages, highlighting the Szeklers' importance to the Christian-bastion narrative in Hungarian identity. The unnamed nationality of the would-be conquerors allows for story placement in any past, present, or future circumstance. Kata is not a soldier, yet she prevails in the nationalistic sense of dying for one's country as a soldier would, displaying physical toughness in doing so. Székely Kata represents the loyal female ethnic Hungarian with her name, and simultaneously represents all of Hungary and Szekler women by not giving in to outside influences.

The behavioral and ritualistic aspect of live performance is at the heart of fans' affinity to nemzeti rock. Live performances of nemzeti rock have been linked to racialized violence in the past.[53] For this reason, Romanian government censorship has aimed at irredentist lyrics and their potential to stir up agitation in concert gatherings. In cases of censorship, musicians have emphasized the harmlessness, in their view, of their lyrics. Sanctions are instead carried out by preventing musicians from traveling to places where they may incite nationalistic feelings and provoke violence or unrest. Kárpátia, a much beloved staple of past EMI Tábor setlists, no longer performed there once frontman János Petrás was banned from Romania after a 2014 concert in Csíkszereda/Miercurea Cuic. Petrás defended his position on the grounds that the band did not write the songs; rather, they performed "historic military songs that praised the heroism of Hungarian soldiers."[54] Petrás refers to the common nemzeti rock practice of adapting rock versions of folk songs and settings of patriotic poetry. In this way, performers connect with preexisting patriotic feelings among audience members. Basque Rock Radical has a similar story in its use of folk music, national myth, and primordial nationalist aesthetics that align with the militant radical nationalism of terrorist groups. Donna Weston has described how the use of poetry in particular has resulted in bans and censorship for Rock

[51] Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, "Saga's Sorrow: Femininities of Despair in the Music of Radical White Nationalism," *Ethnomusicology: Journal of the Society for Ethnomusicology* 2, no. 58 (2014), https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.58.3.0405.

[52] Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," in *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, ed. Sangari Kumkum and Sudesh Vaid (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 233–53.

[53] See Margit Feischmidt and Gergő Pulay, "'Rocking the Nation," 322.

[54] Márk Herczeg, "Kárpátia énekese 3 évig nem léphet fel Romániában" (Kárpátia's singer cannot perform in Romania for 3 years), *444.hu,* January 4, 2018, https://444.hu/2018/01/04/a-karpatia-enekese-3-evig-nem-lephet-fel-romaniaban; Attila Kovács, "Szélsőséges Nacionalizmus, uszítás miatt ítélték el a Kárpátia Zenekar Frontemberét" (Kárpátia frontman convicted for inciting extreme nationalism), *Székelyhon.ro,* January 4, 2018, https://szekelyhon.ro/aktualis/szelsoseges-nacionalizmus-uszitas-miatt-iteltek-el-a-karpatia-zenekar-frontemberet#; Attila Kálmán, "Három Évre Letiltották a Romániai Fellépésekről a Kárpátia Énekesét" (Kárpátia singer forbidden from appearing in Romania for three years), *24.hu*, January 4, 2018, https://24.hu/belfold/2018/01/04/harom-evre-letiltottak-a-romaniai-fellepesekrol-a-karpatia-enekeset/. For an English language report, see Tom Szigeti, "Lead-Singer of Far-Right Hungarian Rock Band Kárpátia Banned from Romania for 3 Years," *Hungary Today,* January 5, 2018, https://hungarytoday.hu/lead-singer-far-right-hungarian-rock-band-karpatia-banned-romania-3-years-88724/.

Radical musicians who also claim an apolitical stance.[55] A far-left example is instructive here in demonstrating that primordial nationalism is not limited to the far right, even though that orientation is more familiar in recent discourse. Musicians tend to refer to censorship as aggression, in line with the victim narrative seen in nemzeti rock, and the far-right trope that liberalism is discriminatory in blocking free speech in the name of multiculturalism. Those who would ban musicians from a country on these grounds are thus included in the enemies of the nation, which are symbolic and interchangeable throughout history, as in the "Székely Kata" example.

Whereas ballads use metaphor and sentimental language of homeland to evoke emotion, the energy of a live concert heightens feelings of connection to a shared identity. While some audience members quoted above responded to the text of nemzeti rock songs, others described how it felt to experience the music in a concert setting. A group of university students on summer break described their attraction to nemzeti rock in these terms: "It's the adrenaline" (adrenalin), "it makes me feel strong and powerful" (erősit, erősebb lesz), "because it stirs up rebellion" (mert lázadás). "[We like nemzeti rock] because it is ours" (Mert a miénk). The fast-paced nemzeti rock songs tend towards explicit irredentism and violent imagery. Through songs about lost territory, a band and audience members make place-based statements of ownership and identity. "Visszatér" (Return), by Romantikus Erőszak, uses militaristic symbolism in the chorus: "Our swords strike towards the four corners of the Earth. Hungary belongs to the Hungarians" (Kardunk lesúljt, a négy égtáj felé / Magyarország a magyaroké). Each short verse calls out a region of Hungary's former territories. A verse describes Szekler Land, not Transylvania as a whole, through place-based references that combine nature and ethnic mythology:

> Return Szekler Land
> The pine trees roar
> The pathway of stars shines.
>
> Visszatér, Visszatér, Székelyföld visszatér
> Ezt zúgják a fenyvesek
> Felragyog a Csillagösvény

Although Csaba is not mentioned by name, the pathway of stars (Csillagösvény) is familiar to any Hungarian listener.

In Hungarica's "Meddig Várjunk" (How long must we wait), the lyrics' rhetorical structure and message are similar to "Visszatér." The verses also list place names: "Felvidék, not Slovakia / Szekler Land not Romania / Kárpátalja not Ukraine / Délvidék not Serbia." Another chorus expresses the same rhetoric with city names. The chorus "The Berlin Wall has fallen long ago, how long must we wait? / You do not need another land, but do not take ours! (Leömlött rég a berlini fal / mi meddig várjunk még? / Nem kell a mások földje, de ne legyen másé a Miénk!), connects to the origins of nemzeti rock in frustration with promises not kept during the regime change.

Musically, "Visszatér" is simple and made for participation and to evoke the feelings described above. It is difficult to imagine it as a song for listening. Narrow vocal range, short repetitive verses, and a simple melody with emphasized descending minor thirds are reminiscent of a chant at a sporting event, demanding audience participation. The bright major key and quick tempo seem to contradict the angry lyrics, but they usually inspire a joyous mosh pit. This type of song is a call for loyalty similar to cheering on a sports team—

[55] Weston, "Basque Pagan Metal," 115, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549410368898.

a safe and acceptable form of militaristic language. Hungarians in former territories tend to support Hungarian athletic teams. Some nemzeti rock songs even borrow soccer chants for parts of their choruses, a tactic that bolsters nationalist feeling by drawing on the energy already associated with sporting events.

Celebrations of culture in common tend to exclude those on the outside when presented as a homogenized national identity. Defenders of ethnic nationalism argue that there is no harm in celebrating one's own identity. The importance of belonging for participants in Turan heritage reenactment at EMI Tábor or Kurultáj excludes others. László Kürti explains the harm in reference to Kurultáj:

> While this cross-cultural migration homogenizes and essentializes nationality and tribal identities, it also divides and separates; neighboring populations (namely Slavs, Romanians, and Germanic speakers) and internal minorities (Jews and Gypsies in particular) are kept at arms' length. They have no place, they have no role to play, in the ancestral gatherings. The Kurultáj is not something they could relate to or enjoy. On the contrary, the celebratory nature of the ancestral gathering actually may remind them of the oppression and cruelty suffered at the hands of medieval Hungarian aristocracy, or more recently, at the height of Magyar nationalism, forced assimilation and language policies."[56]

Kürti's remarks can relate to any place where nomadism and glorification of the past narrow the inclusiveness of the nation even further than Hungary or Transylvania.

Figure 9: "Lesz Meg Erdély" performed at EMI Tábor 2018, video by author.
Video link: http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.3111.

Audience behavior during Romantikus Erőszak's "Lesz meg Erdély [Magyarországé]" (Transylvania will be Hungary's) demonstrates this power of exclusion. The end is a continued chant; this time they add the phrase "Gypsy Crime," a familiar political buzzword in Hungarian media. The positioning at the end of the song seems an afterthought, but the words tend to accompany increased agitation in the crowd, along with Nazi hand signals by some audience members. When I asked band member Botond Bese about this practice, he said that Sziva tells fans not to do it because it is a German symbol.[57] Despite Sziva's request, the practice continues in performances of the song.

[56] Kürti, "Nomadism and Nostalgia in Hungary," 231.
[57] Interview with the author, July 2018.

"Lesz meg Erdély" is a darker lost territory song in which the lyrics "Transylvania will be Hungary's" are repeated in the chorus, and then Transylvania is replaced with the names of other regions outside of Hungary with Hungarian minorities, including Szekler Land, and parts of Slovakia and Croatia. The tune is borrowed from the American Civil War Era song "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." The connection seems incongruous, but it is likely due to accumulated semiotic baggage that indexes a military theme, vague religious references, and an ominous minor key. Use of the tune in nationalist rock music is precedented. The band Ultima Thule applies it in a song by the same name.[58] Crowds of Hungarians sometimes chant "Lesz meg Erdély" at football matches, and the song is suited to a stadium setting. It has a repetitive chorus of vocables and is in a narrow range that is easily shouted. The lyrics resemble a football chant and a nationalist history lesson in collage, listing notable Hungarians, most with a Transylvanian connection. Fans have sung "Lesz meg Erdély" at football matches, adding a ritual power that emphasizes the participatory importance of the music.

Conclusion

Ritual behavior inside an event frame may intensify identity, but the sentiment behind it remains in everyday life by radicalizing listeners through a skewed worldview. Performance and action, along with musical sound, are as important as lyrical content and textual ideology. Party politics may be observed more easily by outsiders, but a sense of belonging through participation is closer to the experience of those in the subculture of nemzeti rock. Yet, nemzeti rock remains a subculture, as most Szeklers do not hold the extremist views it expresses. The fact that Szeklers and Szekler Land are used symbolically in these messages is underscored by the travel of many musicians, speakers, and participants to the festival site.

EMI Tábor was one place where a far-right populist message could be communicated through reification of the past made concrete in the location in Szekler Land. Participation by audience members helped reinforce loyalty to the homeland and willingness to fight—however metaphorically—for their rights as members of the greater Hungarian nation. A primordialist understanding of the nation strengthens the view of Szeklers as central rather than peripheral to the Hungarian nation. In this way, Szekler Land, as a synecdoche for the Hungarian ethnic nation, with its ties to the nomadic past of the Magyars, separates them from Western Europeans with whom they are asked to form civic alliances. This representation reinforces a nationalist affiliation with the past and connects to a future in which the Szekler people maintain the ethnic nation for all Hungarians by remembering their origin, identity, and rootedness.

The importance of place and mythology has implications for the broader context of music and politics. EMI Tábor provided a case study regarding the centrality of primordialism for extreme national ideologies, particularly but not limited to the far right. Rural movements tend to help locals connect with personal and group ethnic identities in ways that may not be in direct response to party politics. Instead, politicians tend to use already existing ideologies in their platforms. An outsider may apply a more politicized view to ritualized participation than members of the subculture. My informants demonstrated an identity-based understanding of nemzeti rock, which is certainly paralleled in other regional case studies of music and politics. Time will tell if EMI Tábor has seen its last meeting. A 2019 festival was held the year following my fieldwork, but limits on gatherings due to COVID-19 prevented events in 2020 and 2021. It remains to

[58] Ultima Thule, "farthest north" in Latin, is a Swedish band who also plays in an Oi style and uses folk tunes. They too have discouraged crowds from using Nazi symbols and have an official position of non-Nazism, despite ideological similarity in their lyrics.

be seen where the energy will go from this camp. The fans and the music have not disappeared, and the outlets for participation will surely change. Further study will reveal what form this will take.

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