

# INTRODUCTION

## WHERE A COLLECTION CAN TAKE YOU



In August 1956, a set of about 350 artefacts collected in villages across Romania arrived at the Horniman Museum in London, to be part of a grand, carefully prepared exhibition. When the exhibition was over, one year later, the objects were packed away and placed in the stores of the Horniman. The artefacts had somehow succeeded in making their way from the Folk Art Museum in Bucharest across a Europe that had been divided into East and West, where the movement of people from one side to another had been effectively halted. That the journey took place was in part the result of one curator's determination, transformations taking place in both of the museums, and a stroke of luck, but the most important factor was the character of the collection. The objects themselves, or rather the meanings attributed to them, made them ideal ambassadors.

These were not distinctive, highly prized, sought-after pieces of art, but were what had been rather modestly entitled 'folk art'. They included pottery from different regions of Romania, items of dress, religious paintings, furniture and wall hangings to decorate house interiors.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, almost thirty years after they had last been exhibited, the renewed interest of the Horniman curators in the collection meant that the time had come for the objects to emerge once more from the museum stores to be researched, documented and eventually re-exhibited. Redefinitions were in order, too.

This is where my own journey began, following the paths that some of the objects in this collection took in the 1950s, as well as other paths which brought to light the multiple uses of such objects. In 2010 I tracked the objects in the Horniman collection to the Romanian villages where they originated, attempting, on the one hand, to reconnect them with the families of the people who had made them, and on the other, to understand how similar things – the counterparts of those in the museum collection – are used in these places today. Yet the 'place of origin' and the museum were

not the only spaces where such objects generally considered ‘folk’ were to be found, and following the trail of these objects took me to some surprising settings. Questions of value, memory and movement appeared again and again. This book is about the movement of such artefacts, not only between homes and museums, but through other spaces where they are now used, and where their significance is constantly debated. By exploring the trajectory of artefacts, I began an enquiry into the regimes of value such objects enter.

Objects periodically re-emerge from the museum stores usually because of a combination of chance, the curators’ care and appreciation for the museum’s collections (Thomas 2016, 65), and sometimes specific social, political or diplomatic circumstances. Indeed, these elements were apparent each time the Romanian objects at the Horniman re-emerged and were exhibited. Following a curatorial turn in British museology since the 1990s, the research I undertook sought to understand current practices and uses of objects *in situ*, by returning to the places where the objects emerged. Yet this site was not easy to pin down, and neither was the historical trajectory of the actual objects. When I began to open the boxes in which the Romanian objects lay, what I had before me were not only objects, but a wealth of connections to similar objects in the villages where they had originated, and also to the institutions in Romania where such objects were cared for, and to the spaces where they were used for performances of various sorts. Indeed, I was faced with not only the objects themselves, but also their connections to their counterparts that were used, stored and cared for in different places. Paying attention to these connections revealed the complex way in which the folk idiom and material culture were used in Romania, as expressed through debates around value authenticity and history.

The collection at the Horniman was only the starting point for a journey that would follow the movement of things between different regimes of value, mapping out a network of spaces of cultural production where the folk idiom is relevant in today’s Romania. It provided a springboard to other places where objects mirroring those in the museum had their own trajectory. The people I involved in my research continuously pointed out that the thing of true value that I needed to look for – the ‘authentic’ folk object – was to be found elsewhere. This promise of an ‘elsewhere’ pushed me further along: from one village to another, from village houses to the ‘houses of culture’, and from live folk performances to national television. My concern, however, was not only with movement, but also with the places and moments where the circulation of objects was halted because their value was put into question. Between movement and contestation, this book reveals how people deal with the absence of what they call ‘an authentic object’, how they explain this ‘loss’ through historical narratives and memories, how they use the ‘folk’ idiom to make sense of other kinds of ruptures, or how they claim connections to ‘the object of value’ through performances of sorts.

## Criss-crossing Biographies

This book is the product of different journeys, and of more than one researcher. My colleague, Magda Buchczyk, set out at the same time as I did to investigate the history of the Romanian collection. From the outset we were confronted with a mystery: how was it possible for a large collection of Romanian artefacts considered ‘valuable folk art’ to become part of a museum in Britain? And how was this possible in the context of the political tensions of the 1950s between the communist East and the capitalist West?

Over the course of one year, my colleague and I opened each box and revealed its objects, each time hoping that the contact would illuminate something of their past. Some of the collection’s biography seemed to be inscribed on the objects themselves, such as the numbers imprinted on some of them at the Folk Art Museum in Bucharest. At other times, the wealth of labels that some of the objects had accrued suggested previous ownership or displays.

The archival research carried out by Buchczyk revealed that the collection had been offered to the Horniman Museum by the Romanian Institute for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (IRRC) at the request of Otto Samson, director of the Horniman at the time. Born into a Jewish family in Germany, Samson fled his native country during the Second World War. He arrived in Britain, where, thanks to his museum-based experience, he joined the Horniman in 1947 and eventually became its director, setting out to extend the museum’s late-Victorian imperial collections with European ones (Buchczyk 2015, 60). Under Samson, the preoccupation with evolution and typologies that had previously characterized the Horniman changed course, as the newly acquired collections revealed the director’s interest in arts and crafts and in the ‘vernacular’ side of European cultures (Buchczyk 2015, 62).

Meanwhile, in 1952 a travelling Romanian exhibition to London, designed to act as communist propaganda in a capitalist country, presented the riches of the nation and included folk artefacts displayed next to triumphalist posters of a country on route to modernization. The folk artefacts caught Samson’s eye, and he expressed his interest in them to the Romanian authorities. Over the following years, he maintained contact with the people who had enabled the exhibition in Britain until, at one point, he was invited to Bucharest. Here, he was met with a happy surprise: ‘an interesting collection of material had already been assembled for presentation to the Horniman Museum’ (Otto Samson, in Buchczyk 2015, 70). Following this visit, a team of Romanian folk art specialists went to the countryside to collect a further representative set of objects, for a permanent loan to Samson’s museum.

The archives present us with a straightforward process, where a simple expression of interest from a London-based curator is rewarded with a valuable collection. At the same time, on the Romanian side, the process

of sending collections of valuable folk items abroad was creating frictions between the staff of the Folk Art Museum and the Foreign Affairs officials from the IRRCS (Buchczyk 2018). We cannot know whether there are other biographies and intentions which escaped the archive, and which ultimately contributed to this movement of objects across hard borders in 1955. What remains remarkable, however, is the mobility of ‘folk art’ in the given circumstances. Key to this is the instrumentalization of ‘folklore’ by the recently installed communist authorities, in an effort to legitimize power, a theme that this book explores in depth.

In Romania, as elsewhere, ‘folk’ objects are periodically pulled in the direction of state power because of their ability to embody the nation-state (Hobsbawm 1990). For this strategy to work, they have to be assembled into carefully selected collections. As in many ethnographic museums in Romania, the collection that Samson received comprised objects collected from villages across Romania at the beginning of the twentieth century, which seen together aimed to represent each area of the country.<sup>2</sup> If bounded nation-states are crafted through ideology (Hobsbawm 1990), folk collections are also implicated: the artefacts in the Horniman collection are, for the most part, registered as ethnically Romanian. But Samson had a particular interest in the German and Hungarian minorities, and so costumes and pottery from these ethnicities were also added to the collection, on his request. The objects illustrate each aspect of village life that could be called ‘traditional’: dress and textiles for decorating house interiors; carved wooden parts of the house itself; and pottery and tools that evoke traditional occupations such as hunting, weaving and shepherding. Where possible, objects were selected so that they could be assembled to create a house interior. The effect of the collection – and of the displays – is that of a re-created world and that of a totality. Seen separately, however, the objects reveal fragments of biographies, and have the capacity to bring out threads of stories untold.

Projects set out to ‘recontextualize’ artefacts are no longer unusual in museums. They represent a turn in curatorial practices, coming out of an expansive research interest in material culture, and out of a wider institutional critique of museums as retainers of colonial traces. Isolated colonial objects found in Western museums become paths that serve to reconstruct forgotten and often violent histories. The process of ‘taking things back’ or of revisiting seems to invest the object with redemptive powers – as if mending a complicated past. The growing literature on material culture has coincided with the proliferation of an academic and popular interest in the topic of memory and its potential to generate alternative historical narratives. Objects, it has emerged, can retain memory (Miller 2008, Hirsch 1997, Hoskins 1998, Boym 2001), as they form a part of people’s *habitus*, or witness turning points in people’s lives. Furthermore, if people have biographies, things, therefore, are thought to have biographies too (Kopytoff 1986).

In order to narrate a biography, one must find a starting point. I set out to find the place and the moment when the life of the objects in the Horniman collection began, but the divergent threads that connected them to different spaces meant that biography (and time) were not linear. On my visits to some of the Romanian villages, I took with me pictures of objects in the Horniman collection. I wanted to see what kind of memories people had of those objects in store, and how their counterparts had evolved in situ. Time and again people instantly recognized the objects in the photographs I showed them as generic ‘traditional things’. They were most frequently used by their children and grandchildren, at school performances. This was no surprise. I had grown up in Romania and I too had strong associations with ‘folklore’: the school performances where we had to dress up and dance or sing ‘folklore’; the TV and radio programmes that my grandmothers sometimes listened to; the National Day celebration, when we all watched news footage of traditional dances across the country. ‘Folklore’ was part of the school curricula and of everyday life, for someone born in a socialist-era block just as for those growing up in the countryside. Yet my hope was that the people in the ‘source communities’ would have different, more personal stories about the Horniman objects. Instead what I discovered was that to most of them, the items in the photographs were simply regarded as ‘folk objects’. Women who had items of folk costumes that they considered valuable offered to sell them to me, assuring me they were ‘authentic’ by museum standards. They also warned me that most of the things that people had in their bottom drawers were not valuable. If I wanted to know more about the old customs (the ‘authentic’ ones), I was told to speak not to the elders of the village (who were too young to know about the old days), but to the folklorists from town, from the Centres of Popular Creation, or to the folklore performers that appeared on TV, who possessed knowledge about ‘traditions’. For some reason or other, these people believed there was no longer ‘folklore’, ‘culture’ or ‘tradition’ in the village, and this was visible in their interaction with objects of photographs that depicted ‘folk items’.

What did these lamentations about the loss of ‘culture’, ‘traditions’ and valuable ‘folklore’ mean? To find out, I followed their suggestion and moved on, out of the villages to the county Centre of Popular Creation, an institution with its roots in 1954 (around the time that the Horniman received the Romanian collection) and instrumental in setting up folklore performances up to the present day. There, people spoke about ‘authenticity’, about the dissolution of the traditional village, about craft fairs and folklore performances they put on to keep the tradition alive. I was told that in order to find the truly valuable objects, I would need to visit the large national ethnographic museums. The truly ‘authentic’ folk object was no longer to be found in the village.

In the meantime, I couldn’t avoid the relentless beat of contemporary folklore music coming from people’s car stereos, and the growing number of TV stations that broadcast this type of music. The constant complaints

of the folklore specialists were that this was not ‘authentic folklore’. The wide distribution of this type of performance made me think that it had a different character than the sought-after items deemed ‘authentic’. It was so pervasive that it was part of the ‘taken for granted’ world (Bourdieu’s definition of ‘culture’), part of the nation’s *habitus* and impossible to escape. I followed these fast beats to the studios of the TV stations called Etno TV, Hora TV and National TV.<sup>3</sup> Many of the performers I spoke to also sought ‘authentic’ costumes, trying to raise the value of their performance in that way. What they spoke about was the value and authenticity of the Romanian village. Alas, the authentic folk object kept slipping through my fingers. But in a similar way, it also kept pushing me forward and bringing me back to where I had started, to reassess the way in which museums and anthropologists construct perfect ‘context’ or the ‘site’ where the object is meant to be ‘at home’, and full of significance. What became clear was that different objects deemed ‘folk’ (and which, to my eyes, looked fairly similar) belonged to different spheres of cultural production, which at times seemed to be linked, and at others excluded each other. The objects I was looking at, mostly items of dress, seemed to change their character all too often.

What the Romanian collection at the Horniman evoked was a notion of national heritage and value – and it was this notion that I investigated, without leaving aside differences of class, urban and rural divides and the question of history and generations. In the end, the journey to the villages where the objects originated revealed not the right ‘context’ and the right ‘counterparts’ *in situ*, but rather the different ways in which people engage with objects that, to an outsider, look pretty much the same. In this sense, the museum is a ‘context’ too – the claim that it is an apolitical place storing objects that wait in a state of limbo is challenged in the process. On the contrary, the museum emerges as a particularly powerful site, one that framed the research through its particular treatment of the collection, and one that can validate particular objects. Miles away from the Romanian villages, or from the TV studios, or the folklore institutions that I was to visit, the collection at the Horniman was affecting all these places, contributing to the production of value and redefinitions of folk objects. All these connections exist despite people’s perseverance in distinguishing between the spheres where they are to be found: the museum is different from a wardrobe, and different from a TV studio. Bruno Latour’s enquiry into modernity as a ‘mode of existence’ points to the practice of placing boundaries between certain fields, despite the reluctance of objects to fit into them. As ‘folklore’ is a category that emerges with modernity, Latour’s perspective helps us to follow what happens when objects do not fit into categories, resulting in ‘hybrids’, re-classifications and contestation. Inasmuch as objects (and ideologies!) withstand classifications and are generative of social relations, or engage people in surprising ways, they appear to hold power.

The concept of a biography allowed me to follow the changes that objects go through as they pass from one regime of value to another, according to

"FROM STOREROOM TO STAGE: Romanian Attire and the Politics of Folklore"

by Alexandra Urdea. <http://berghahnbooks.com/title/UrdeaFrom>

the events or the *habitus* they become part of. But a linear narrative linked by cause and effect this was not. Each of the places I visited revealed itself as the product of a particular reshuffling in recent history. Wherever I went, objects were at the centre of discussions, their value and history constantly debated.

## Approaches to the Collection

The Horniman collection of Romanian objects reproduced, in miniature, the national folklore museums in Romania. What set the collection apart, therefore, was not to do with visual or material aspects of the objects, but with the fact that they had been on a journey; it was the journey that had formed these separate objects into a specific collection. The research process, therefore, entailed mobility: journeys to places but also in time.

Indeed, many an anthropological enquiry begins with a journey to a 'fieldsite' – the object (bounded in time and space) of the researcher's attention. Recently, multi-sited ethnography has become widespread, as researchers have had to account for the mobility of their informants or the simultaneous global and local connections of their chosen subjects. A journey, however, is different to a multi-sited ethnographic endeavour, and to 'mobilities' studies (Knowles 2014). Unlike multi-sited research, a journey maps out the movement of objects, and how their usage and meaning changes in the process. Caroline Knowles argues that 'journeys bring configurations of people and objects in motion into analytic focus' (Knowles 2014, 8). Unlike the proponents of mobilities studies, Knowles points out that objects and people are not in a continuous flow, and that movement can be halted at certain moments. Journeys, on the other hand, are finite and specific and they trace not only the trans-national, but also routine and everyday movement, being able to detect when a person or object can go no further, or needs to change course. Such journeys are embedded in my research, for the movement through different regimes of value is often geographical, and traceable in space.

## Costume

As all objects contain relationships to the past and to different places outside the museum, the Horniman collection offered countless possibilities of paths to take and stories to tell. Only a limited number of objects could be followed to their point of origin. In many cases, the files that accompanied the collection offered much detail about the origins of an object; for some of the objects, though, the documents were silent. The choice of the objects depended on whether the documentation opened up the path to its previous owners. Costumes and other items of dress were among those that presented this opportunity, as well as being some of the most compelling objects in the collection.<sup>4</sup>

Costumes play a crucial role in this collection's ability to represent its country of origin. The collection includes some 'complete' costumes representing different regions of the country. The initial omission of costumes belonging to ethnic minorities when the collection was prepared by the Romanian authorities, in 1955, mirrors the reluctance of the Romanian officials to include members of these minorities in the tableau of the nation. Samson's request for German and Hungarian costumes is telling of his aspiration for a complete representation of the Romanian countryside.<sup>5</sup> Much like the nation-state, a costume is an assemblage, which can also be 'deconstructed'. In the Horniman collection, each costume was accessioned<sup>6</sup> as one 'object', despite the fact that the items composing the costumes came from different sources. Conforming to the Romanian museological unit of analysis, the costumes are meant to represent 'ethnofolkloric areas', which means their actual sources within a specific region are irrelevant – what matters is that they are 'representative'.

Clothes evoke an intimate, personal engagement, they were once worn against the skin, and one imagines the absent body of the owner whenever the costume is pieced together for display. Yet at the same time costumes embody the nation-state, not only in museums, but on all kinds of stages too. They embody collective identity and they evoke relationships to past generations, as the following chapters aim to show.

### *Methodology: Finding the Fieldsite*

For the duration of the research, the journey of the objects that I followed overlapped with my own journey, and my previous knowledge and expectations regarding 'folk artefacts' are integral to the present account. As a Romanian researcher in London, to me conducting fieldwork in Romanian villages meant conducting fieldwork at home, where 'home' meant a certain familiarity with the topic (including linguistic, political and economic knowledge). To defamiliarize this 'home' was to open up the topic of 'folklore' to different spaces.

When I was thirteen, our teacher considered the class old enough to go on a daytrip to Bucharest. The small town where we set off from on our journey, and where I had grown up, was populated largely by working-class people and technical intellectuals, the first generations to have moved from the countryside to apartment blocks. As we set out one morning in the summer of 1998, our spirits were high. We entered the capital via a wide boulevard flanked by socialist blocks, the scale of which seemed enormous. The grey, decaying blocks impressed a few of my classmates, fans of Bucharest rap music which only featured such images. But the outskirts of Bucharest weren't on the list of sights to visit. The minibus carried on to the centre of the capital and after stopping for ten minutes in front of the Government building, where we had a group picture taken, it took us to the Village Museum where we spent most of our day. We roamed about



through the large park, where, try as we might, there was no escape from the sharp, suspicious eye of our teacher. There was something impressive yet unspectacular about the museum; the fairy-tale houses and interiors looked almost nothing like what we knew the countryside to be. And we knew parts of the countryside all too well – without exception, all of us had spent our summer holidays in villages, where at least one pair of grandparents lived.

Bucharest in the 1990s was a place of rapid change, more visible there than in the rest of the country. The Village Museum was a safe place to visit, our teacher must have thought. That day we all learned that at the core of the traffic-clogged capital, bustling with people and surrounded by enormous blocks, lay the serenity of an unchanging, dream-like village that had never existed in the real countryside. We ended the day having lunch at McDonalds, at the express request of the pupils.

The idea of ‘home’ captures, in many ways, the quest of my research, as it captures the gist of the notion of ‘folklore’ (or, in any case, my use of it), with its nostalgic reference to a past, deep in our imagination. This metaphor of the peasant home is at the heart of the nation I grew up in – a metaphor quite literally embodied in the spatiality of Romania’s capital. In that sense, through my research I was revisiting a most familiar ‘home’, indeed so intimate that it went unnoticed: the presence of ‘folklore’ in everyday life, and the place it occupies alongside other sites, such as the socialist blocks or an international fast-food chain. When I began my project, part of my plan was to revisit this ‘home’ and to denounce the ideology of the nation-state, and the abusive usage of folklore in reproducing power. Discourse analysis was to be my method. To some extent, the reader will not fail to be aware of this vindictive endeavour here. But not everything was comfortable at ‘home’. I realized that ‘folklore’ was present not only in the sanitized Village Museum at the heart of the capital, but also at the outskirts: between the grey blocks, near disused factories where TV studios broadcast *muzică populară* on a continuous loop.

It took a fresh pair of eyes to notice the omnipresence of these TV channels. I arrived in Bucharest with my husband Tom as I was preparing for my journeys to the villages, ready to elicit the personal histories embedded in dress, in the object’s place of origin. As I was striving to explain to him the kind of work I was embarking on, he pointed to the TV screen: ‘is this what you are going to be doing?’ A long explanation ensued about how those performing folklore on TV are the product of nationalist ideology, widespread during the last years of socialism. But said out loud, this explanation alone could not account for the energy invested by all the people appearing on all those channels. I decided to dedicate a few months of fieldwork to these TV studios. It turned out to be one of the most surreal experiences. Being a spectator was indeed a form of ‘participant observation’: the performances demand to be looked at, so I did not feel like an awkward intruder in the studios.

The minibuses driving school groups and folk ensembles from outside Bucharest to these studios in order to perform folkloric dances every

evening reminded me of my own trip from the country to Bucharest when at school. Their journeys epitomized a centre and periphery relationship which could explain much more about 'folklore' than my initial de-constructive approach.

My main goal, however, was to visit some of the areas and villages where the Horniman items of dress were collected from. Journeys to all these places revealed illuminating details about the making and use of dress, and connections to other places of performance. The nitty-gritty of anthropological research (establishing relations at different levels, the availability of archives, etc.) meant that I spent considerably more time in Vrancea, a mountainous region in eastern Romania, than anywhere else. This book, therefore, presents a more detailed account of this place. Another place where I carried out some weeks of fieldwork was the village of Cerbăl, in the western Carpathians (the area called Pădureni). Chapter Four presents the story of the Vrancean and Pădureni costumes, where the clothes act both as retainers of memory and as a potential commodity in women's wardrobes. However, the complexity of each place did not permit for a parallel study. The paths of the two costumes would not cross again, except on the national stages of folklore festivals, during the communist and post-communist periods.

Meanwhile, I continued to pursue a historicized approach to the research. One of my fieldsites was the library. As I delved into publications available in the countryside after the Second World War, I was able to track the changes and continuities in the way 'culture' and 'folklore' were framed and the socialist state's attempt to turn peasants into workers. Rather than bring out one ideological position, these publications pointed to power struggles which were played out using the vocabulary of 'authenticity' and 'folklore'. I realized these words did not mean the same thing every time I encountered them. This diversity of meaning is present today, where 'authenticity' and 'folklore' are used for different claims. Archives constituted another research site, interesting not only for their content, but for their management too. The documents that I was looking for were either lost, hidden, found in unexpected places, forgotten or most of the times sitting in limbo – as a stack of files that had not yet been registered as part of official archive institutions. This defective archive management reflects an awkward relationship with the communist period, and an attempt to forget the mass engagement in support of 'communist culture' at all official levels.

## **The Chapters of the Book**

This book is about objects that change when placed in different settings. At the same time, it shows how objects are used to maintain the distinction between these settings: in other words, that one should never confuse a TV studio for a museum and the other way around. Most of the time, this

context is characterized by the physical locality where I found the object, by place as an articulation of historic trajectories and materials, ‘temporary constellations of trajectories’ (Massey 2005, 154). The sections and chapters follow the settings in which one can find these objects, and which influence how their value changes.

The first part of the book sets the scene for the search of the objects’ ‘context’ and raises the problem of defining the objects. Such definitions frame ways of viewing a museum object – both for the museum visitor and for the researcher. Chapter One offers an outline of theoretical approaches to material culture, and a historical perspective on folklore, both of which help us to approach the study of folk artefacts.

Part Two of the book discusses objects as they are being kept safe. Many of the multi-sited ethnographies that follow the paths of objects are focused on movement. Yet objects have a fascinating life while in keeping. Chapter Two focuses in the Horniman stores and archives, and looks at how the objects in the Romanian collection and their documentation make sense within the particular space of the museum stores. The way the collection is placed in the space of the Horniman reveals particular moments in Cold War history, seen from the perspective of a folk collection on the move. In Chapter Three I look at how items of dress are kept in wardrobes and dowry chests in two of the villages where the Horniman objects originated. The opening of wardrobes reveals different ways of engaging with the past and making sense of the present, as well as the semiotic fragility of the objects when kept in the wardrobe. Different regimes of value are revealed by the way in which folk dress is stored, and issues of gender and memory emerge as central in these evaluations and engagements.

Part Three moves to the space of one region, Vrancea, to track how the folk idiom has evolved in a setting which museums consider to be ‘the object’s natural context’. Chapter Four looks at renditions of Vrancea from the local point of view, as well as discussing historic, ethnologic and sociologic approaches to this place. Chapter Five looks at the modernization projects that affected the Vrancea region, and what it looked like when seen from the stage of the local ‘house of culture’ where people were engaged in folk performances. Chapter Six investigates the process of place making by actively remembering and forgetting certain pasts. All these articulations of space and time, modernization projects and negotiations of the centre-village relationship are performed through local folklore.

The final part looks specifically at objects on stage, and is closely linked with Chapter Five. Chapter Seven looks at how these performances supported national-communist ideology, but also discusses these stages as sites of contestation, before moving to the space of the present-day mass media. Chapter Eight discusses these performances today, in the context of niche TV stations, revealing the performers’ personal engagement with folk dress and negotiations of authenticity. The final chapter offers a conclusion to the book.

This journey has been a search for objects defined as ‘authentic’ (which people understood to be the counterparts of the artefacts in the Horniman collection), and which were nowhere to be found yet believed to exist somewhere, or to have existed at some point in the past. What I began to discover was how people deal with this absence.

## Notes

1. On the same occasion the Horniman also received musical instruments, which became part of a separate collection.
2. Mountainous villages are better represented in the collection, because these regions had more material to offer to the collectors. This is discussed later in the book. It is one of the reasons why I chose to carry out fieldwork in the Carpathian Mountains.
3. All the names evoke national and folkloric motifs.
4. The collection comprises fifty-six objects of dress, with eleven objects considered ‘costumes’, comprising between three and nineteen items.
5. Buchczyk (2015, 70), and conversations with Buchczyk.
6. Technical word for registering an item in the museum’s documentation.