French Uses of Folklore: The Reinvention of Folklore in the 1937 International Exposition

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Just as we might have believed that a wave of uniformity was about to submerge all of France, and that city dwellers and countryfolk would resemble each other down to the smallest detail, signs of resistance, and even of renaissance, are beginning to manifest themselves... at the most critical moment, a sudden consciousness of age-old cultural values is occurring, a salutary and unexpected liberation from the enormous inferiority complex felt by country people towards those of the city. (Rivière 1938:2)

The 1937 French International Exposition, sixth and last to be held in Paris, corresponded as did preceding fairs to a time of profound political and social crisis. Since the early 1930s, France was suffering the throes of severe economic depression, profound political instability, and social malaise characterized by some as a "psychological civil war." These crises deepened the pervading sense of a more generalized crise de civilisation as older, preindustrial social and cultural forms seemed increasingly threatened by the modernizing processes of urbanization, industrialization, and mechanization.

The 1937 Exposition provided a symbolic stage on which tensions between traditional and modern values could be acted out. Although theoretically dedicated to the theme of "modern art and techniques," it also emphasized aspects of traditional society—including regional cultures, peasants and artisans—thus affirming a rediscovery of "age-old cultural values" in interwar France. In particular, folklore figured prominently in the collective representation projected via the fair. Its unprecedented national celebration marked a turning point in the problematic history of the French folklore movement. This article discusses how representations of folklore in and around the 1937 Fair departed from those of the past, analyzes the reasons for this change, and probes some of the implications of the shift in the ideological connotations previously associated with folklore in France.
In contrast with the 1937 Exposition, previous Parisian world's fairs had treated French popular arts and traditions with condescension if at all. Provincial styles served primarily as background decor and costumes for restaurant personnel in the occasional Breton or Provençal restaurant. Where folk songs and dances were performed, these were most often represented as quaint anachronisms of the French provinces in days of yore. If earlier fairs staged some folkloric parades like the fête des vendanges (wine festival) in 1900, described in the press as a "hodge-podge of grape-pickers and winemakers from all countries and all time periods" (L'Illustration 1900:252), these carnivalesque performances typically offered no pretense of ethnographic authenticity, nor did they affirm the contemporaneity of the folk traditions represented. Such festivals rarely incorporated "authentic" folk groups from the provinces, featuring instead paid actor-participants mostly hired in the Paris region. And although French folklore was in fact first represented in a national museological institution in the 1889 Universal Exposition, the one-room "Salle de France" was housed in the Trocadero Palace's Ethnography Museum. There the French folklore display was classified alongside exhibits about the so-called "uncivilized peoples," primarily of the French colonies, and thus essentially disclaimed as a national cultural heritage. The grouping in one museum of the traditions of provincial, rural France with those of the colonies suggested that both were viewed as survivals of earlier phases in humankind's evolution and were equally targeted by the "civilizing mission" of modern, rational, urban society.

Expositions prior to 1937 had paid little heed to folklore for two principal reasons. First, since world's fairs typically sang the praises of modern, industrial society, any emphasis placed on preindustrial traditions might have been interpreted as evidence of incomplete modernization. But more importantly, folklore bore historical associations in France which rendered it unsavory to national authorities in Paris—and especially to parties on the left of the political spectrum. Whereas recent scholarship by Richard Handler (1988), Michael Herzfeld (1986), William Wilson (1976), Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1988), among others, has revealed that in many countries, the study—and even the invention or "re-invention"—of folklore served to consolidate nationalist identities, this did not occur in France. Hobsbawm and Ranger have shown that, like other modern nation-states, France successfully constructed and exploited "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983:6) to establish national cohesion, but folk customs were not used in France for this purpose.
Within the French historical context, which pitted republican, Jacobin "nation-builders" against conservative counterrevolutionaries, republicans viewed the cult of folklore as a threat to the centralized and unified nation-state. In the decades following the founding of the Third Republic in 1870, centrist and leftist political groups sought to suppress traditional, regional cultures in an attempt to encourage national allegiance to the fragile Republic. They also shunned folkloric traditions because these contradicted fundamental tenets of their ideology:

Not only would [they] not have known what to do with peasant traditions, moreover the cult of these traditions, bearing traces of regionalism and of Old Regime Catholicism, would have contradicted the Jacobin, progressive, secular and urban ideology of the republicans. (Karady 1982:27-28)

Indeed, folklore was often used by political and social conservatives to affirm regional identities and/or reactionary ideologies, and was thus posited as a counterweight to republican national consolidation. For example, the French regionalist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whose cultural agenda included the preservation of regional cultures, were inspired above all by "a profound hostility towards centralization, towards the centralized Republic, one and indivisible" (Gras 1975:107-108). As a result, Isac Chiva argues that before the 1930s:

Unlike most other European countries, for complex reasons related to French political and cultural history and to the history of its scientific institutions, folklore never really took root in France (with a few rare exceptions), in the university or in any other important public institution. (1987:20)

Given the politically charged status of folklore in France, its celebration in the 1937 Exposition merits analysis. Various activities in and around the fair confirmed a newfound national pride in rural, provincial traditions. The government sponsored a folklore conference and created a national folklore museum in conjunction with the Exposition. Numerous French pavilions also proudly exhibited popular traditions, material culture, and live folk performances.

The International Folklore Conference, held in August 1937, was organized by Paul Rivet, who was curator of the Ethnography Museum (revamped in 1934 and renamed the Museum of Man), and Georges-Henri Rivière, former assistant to Rivet and founding director of the National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions. In his keynote speech, Rivet defined folklore (as did Edward B. Tylor several decades
Folklore is the study of all of the customs, manners, traditions and beliefs, belonging to an earlier stage of civilization, that survive in an evolved society. (Travaux 1938:26)

Rivet and Rivière identified folklore with rural society, and above all with peasants and artisans, presumably least corrupted by modernization. This conceptualization largely shaped discussions of folklore at the conference and its representation throughout the 1937 Exposition.

Sponsors hoped the 1937 Conference would raise folklore—still a rather spurned discipline in France—to the level of a "social science" and also expose the social activities being developed internationally in connection with folklore. This double objective was reflected in the twofold structure of the conference. Participants in the descriptive folklore division were invited to discuss theoretical aspects of the field, while the second division focused on folklore applied to social life. Speakers in the second division discussed methods for buoying traditional customs against the modernizing tide. Some papers addressed the unifying effects of the French education system and urged teachers to expose young schoolchildren to regional songs, dances, fêtes, and legends. Still other speakers proposed methods for sustaining folk costumes, oral traditions, or musical forms in resistance to the urban fashions, radios, phonographs, and even accordions which were perceived as progressively encroaching upon rural turf (Travaux 1938). Speakers often recommended an activist stance, emphasizing that the folklorist's role was not limited to the observation and collection of dying traditions. In the words of Georges-Henri Rivière, "folklorists want above all to inspire, by their example, the will to acknowledge these traditions and to strive to give them renewed life" (Rivière 1937). This interventionist philosophy pervaded other representations of folklore in the Exposition and necessarily altered its significance.

The 1937 Exposition also provided the final impetus for the founding of the first national institution dedicated to the study, collection, and permanent public display of French folklore. The creation of the National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions signified that folklore was finally attaining recognition both as a "science" and as a legitimate expression of the collective identity by national authorities. The new museum assumed a multifaceted mission. In addition to collecting, cataloging, and exhibiting material culture in permanent displays, it intended to establish a documentation room for
outside researchers, coordinate extensive surveys and direct research efforts in the field, organize conferences and temporary exhibits, and collaborate with regional museums and musées de terroir (village museums). The museum assumed an active social role as well. Director Rivière and his associates encouraged folk groups and organizers of folkloric fêtes, addressed the role of schools in spreading appreciation for folklore, and generally sought to encourage the preservation—and regeneration—of the traditions of rural France.8

Although the museum was not ultimately able to open during the fair itself, Rivière's team organized the Folklore Conference, helped plan live folk performances, and orchestrated several other exhibits within the Exposition. These included a prototype of a musée de terroir and exhibits on "Rural Houses in France" and on "French Potters and Print-makers." But folklore was not only the object of "scientific" or museological attention in 1937. Material culture—from costumes and toys to tools and furniture—and documentation about traditional beliefs and practices were also displayed in a more lively fashion (often using human actors) in the 27 pavilions of the Exposition's "Regional Center." Folklore also featured prominently in the "Artisan Center," where artisans proudly demonstrated their craftsmanship:

[These artisans] take us back to the time of the hand-made world, a time so close and yet so distant, when the artisan's only ambition was to do as well as his father, and better if he could, to the time when difficult communications obliged each province to be self-sufficient, when each small town had its blacksmith, goldsmith, furniture maker, weaver, potter . . . . (Clouzot 1936)

The Regional Center and life-sized "Rural Village" constructed on the fairgrounds also staged live folk festivals which affirmed, perhaps too insistently, that folk culture still thrived in the rural French heartland. Clad in provincial costumes, "genuine" folklore groups—many of them in fact recently created in the "rediscovery of age-old values" sweeping the country—were invited from all the regions to Paris to perform dances and songs, often in patois, in dozens of spectacles that animated the fairgrounds.

Unlike in previous fairs, these displays and performances were planned by folklorists who vouched for their authenticity and promised, at least in theory, to avoid "anything resembling the carnival or the comic-opera." They forbade retrospective elements and pastiches, supposedly exhibiting only objects and practices which were currently being used in France. Folklore was not treated patronizingly as an anachronistic throwback, but was instead represented—through both
mise-en-scène and discourse—as a contemporary expression of French identity.9

What can explain this unexpected patronage of folklore by national authorities in 1937? Certainly the attempts of fascist and communist regimes in the 1930s to co-opt folklore in order to ground their legitimacy in popular, national roots posed a challenge to France. Both Germany and Italy politicized folklore research and exploited popular traditions to encourage nationalism and provide the "masses" with a cultural basis which could displace their collective identities away from those of class and political party (Kamenetsky 1972; de Grazia 1981:201-216). The Soviet Union, too, redirected folklore research and performance towards political ends (Oinas 1973). Some French politicians, often seeking to bolster their own political strength in defense against these totalitarian regimes, hoped to emulate their success in rousing popular national sentiment through the celebration of folklore, albeit usually for different ideological ends. In justifying his own support for the national folklore museum, Jean Zay, Radical Minister of Education during the Popular Front, pointed out that:

. . . numerous modern States, aware of certain consequences resulting from technical progress and the evolution of the economy, have made efforts to maintain and even revive popular arts and traditions through education, the protection of artisans and the development of leisure activities for workers and the rural populace. (1938:n.p.)

This quote, along with numerous other references made to the embarrassing French lag in this area, relates French interest in folklore to its exploitation by other regimes.

Renewed interest in folklore was also in part a response to the breakdown of social consensus wrought by the economic depression, which fueled criticisms of industrial capitalism and fed nostalgia for a premodern golden age. Indeed, Paul Rivet's opening speech at the 1937 Folklore Conference explicitly linked the revival of folklore to increasing concern about modernization. He rallied participants at the conference with this appeal:

We are witnessing a process of cultural homogenization, which is occurring at a prodigious speed . . . The ease and rapidity of communications, which facilitate tourism and the mixing of peoples, the spreading of education, rural exodus, industrialization, military service, [all these] tend to cause the disappearance of those differences which, not long ago, distinguished the inhabitants of one region or nation from another. We must therefore hurry to save those touching aspects of the unique lifestyles of our provinces and preserve their memory for our descendants. (Travaux 1938:26)
Preoccupation with the accelerating pace of change certainly informed Rivet and Rivière's rather static conceptualization of folklore as preindustrial "survivals." Whereas some contemporaries defined folklore in a broader, more dynamic manner, equating it simply with "popular life in civilized nations" and including the popular culture of city dwellers in their scope (Saintyves 1936:v), Rivet clearly opposed traditional rural culture to urban, industrial culture.

National authorities seemingly hoped to offer folklore, identified in this manner with a simpler, preindustrial past, as a symbolic refuge to a distressed and divided populace. The phenomenon described by Claude Karnoouh with regards to the regionalist and folklore movements in France during the late 1960s and early 1970s can thus apply to the depression era as well. He points out that "by co-opting [the movement's] most 'reasonable' ideas, the State sought to block more radical challenges concerning the origins and management of the [economic] crisis" and concludes that in "the reification of tradition . . . one discerns typical manifestations of the ideological responses of European societies to the upheavals caused by their own economic and technical innovations" (Karnoouh 1986:18, 13).

The French connection between folklore and modernization was not in itself unusual, since folkloristics developed in most countries largely in response to industrialization. However, it took on a new dimension in interwar France, provoking a subtle redefinition of folklore's ideological connotations. In depression-ridden France, heated debates had erupted about the emerging American-style industrial civilization. Many viewed it as a profound menace to the very soul of French culture. Keywords repeated by folklorists in discussing the urgency of their task—words like homogenization, uniformity, assembly-line production, standardization, mechanization—patently echo these debates. They indicate that, for its proponents, folklore provided the antidote to rampant development à l'américaine.

In this context, folklore, previously viewed as a threat to national unity, began to appear instead as the essence of "French-ness." Central national authorities—on both the Right and the Left—sought to appropriate it as a cultural bulwark against a new and more immediate threat. The diversity and local character, the irrational quirks and handcrafted appearance of traditional arts and crafts were embraced as the antipode of standardized, mass-produced American-style culture.

Folklorists in 1937 realized that France seemed to be on the brink between two antithetical modes of civilization, and they debated the likelihood—and desirability—of a peaceful synthesis of old and new. While some advocated the strict preservation of "authentic" customs
and refused to envision their adaptation to modern conditions, most did not preach an absolute rejection of modernization. They searched instead for a compromise whereby traditions of the past could be integrated with a prescribed degree of progress. Thus, for example, through speeches at the Folklore Conference and through the Exposition's temporary regional and rural structures, architects explored methods for combining vernacular building styles with modern materials and construction methods. They hoped the resulting synthesis would allow France to preserve its cultural integrity while simultaneously assimilating changes in the inevitable process of evolution.

The national tribute paid to folklore in 1937 was especially significant in an exposition inaugurated by the Popular Front government, a coalition of Radical, Socialist, and Communist parties (the Communist party supported but did not participate in the government) elected in May 1936. As discussed above, the Left had historically shunned folklore for its backwards reactionary associations. Although it came to power when plans for the fair were well under way, the leftist government actually subsidized the Folklore Conference, approved the creation of the National Museum of Popular Art and Traditions, and sponsored other folkloric representations throughout the fair. In their speeches, press releases and correspondence, Popular Front ministers explicitly situated the cultivation of folklore in and around the 1937 Fair within their policy of "cultural democratization" (popularisation culturelle). Socialist Prime Minister Léon Blum and Education Minister Jean Zay intended to associate folklore museums and similar folklore projects with other forms of "collective popular culture" (culture collective populaire), such as youth hostels and popular leisure, which the leftist government actively sought to develop as part of its cultural policy (Zay 1936).

This unprecedented patronage of folklore by a leftist government entailed a fundamental shift in the ideological use of folklore. In keeping with its centralizing instincts, the Left could only construe folklore as an authentic expression of the culture collective populaire by simultaneously redefining it as a popular, national heritage. This required, first, dissociating folklore from its original museological link with "primitive cultures." Whereas the old "Salle de France" had originally been exhibited with "uncivilized" cultures in the Trocadero's Ethnography Museum, the esplanade of the reconstructed Palais de Chaillot now separated the two newly distinct museums: the Musée Nationale des Arts et Traditions Populaires was to be housed in the left wing (aile Paris) of the Palais, opposite from the reconstructed
ethnography museum, renamed the Musée de l’Homme. Moreover, as a confirmation of its promotion to national status, the folklore museum shared its wing with the Musée National des Monuments Français.

What could be called the "nationalization" of folklore by the leftist government also required casting off the anti-republican, anti-Jacobin connotations it previously bore. It constituted in fact a re-appropriation of elements of popular rural culture which had long been the privileged domain of reactionary forces in France. Instead of serving to affirm local identities and reactionary political ideologies in opposition to the unified national identity and progressive Republic, folklore was reclaimed as an expression of the popular génie français. The leftist discourse accordingly accentuated the popular, national character of folklore research and activities. Making short shrift of past uses of folklore by reactionaries in France, Jean Zay affirmed that "in the most critical hours of their history, peoples have in a sense reimmersed themselves in their folklore and asked their scholars to make vast surveys [of their traditions. . .]." (Zay 1938).

Thus, the diversity of regional cultures was redefined by the leftist coalition as an affirmation of national French identity in which local particularities were shown as contributing to the richness of the national culture as a whole. The grandiose folk festival held on August 28 and sponsored by Blum’s government exemplified this strategy. It incorporated more than 1,000 costumed participants from all the provinces in one nocturnal gala: four processions gathered at different fair entrances and paraded simultaneously towards their symbolic convergence in the fair’s Regional Center. The official press release directed the public to interpret the parade as proof that regional characteristics "complement each other in happy harmony [to] form a whole and appear as a sign of strength."14

The "nationalization" of folklore was significant not only because it was carried through by a leftist government. Indeed, the recovery of folklore-as-symbol during the Second World War by the right-wing Vichy government proved that reactionary forces were equally eager to associate folklore with nationalism to support their ideological agenda (Faure 1986). Exploitation of folklore by the Vichy government would in fact taint folklore so strongly that the term itself was rarely used after the war, when it was generally replaced by ethnology. But beyond this battle between Right and Left to invest folklore with specific ideological meanings, uses of folklore in 1937 constituted the co-option by central national authorities—regardless of political persuasion—of the traditional cultures of rural, provincial France.
These cultures had to be detached from their previous associations with the periphery towards identification with the center. There they could be "reinvented" as essential elements of the national identity.

This co-optive tactic was symbolized most strongly by the new folklore museum, which Rivière envisioned "not as a sum of regional museums, but as a museum of synthesis" (1936:68). The goal of gathering "the elite of folkloric objects" in a Parisian museum constituted the most transparent step towards usurpation and raised the ire of regional folklorists who insisted that "it would have been normal to create not one museum, but several museums, each one relating to the folklore of a given region and placed in that region's major city" (Marchal 1939:1). A more subtle strategy involved the classification system used by Rivière, which divorced objects from their regional contexts and recombined them in natural or structural categories—such as the forest, the river, the sea, the house, the village or costumes.

A similar method of taxonomy was also applied to the exhibit on "Rural Houses in France," orchestrated for the 1937 Fair by Albert Demangeon under the auspices of the folklore museum. This exhibit grouped rural domestic structures into two principal architectural types and five subtypes, thereby de-emphasizing regional particularities and accentuating common elements found in rural structures throughout France. Such typologies were not de rigueur among French architects and folklorists. As proof of the contrary, Arnold Van Gennep ridiculed Demangeon's contention that houses in rural France could be divided into two basic types, and quipped: "In Savoie we have seventeen kinds! . . . Since you like architecture, at least try to see what characterizes a region [pays]!" (Congrès 1937:n.p.).

Thus, the strategy applied to the folklore museum and to the exhibit on "Rural Houses in France" consisted of deconstructing traditional local cultures into elements which could be recombined in natural or structural categories that did not pose a threat to the national "totality." Newly contextualized and depoliticized in this manner, cultural diversity taken as an ensemble could be used by national authorities to affirm French national identity in implicit opposition both to American-style standardization and to the interwar international style.

The strategy of appropriation by the center of peripheral cultures was firmly reinforced by authoritative, interventionist attitudes of folklorists and other fair planners towards regional individuals, groups, and institutions. Such a posture jibed with the entrenched Parisian habit of colonizing the provinces. Folk objects and performances destined for the new museum or for the Exposition's Regional and Rural
Centers all required the approbatory stamp of authenticity from specialists in Paris. Various fair committees determined what was "authentic" and appropriate for display in the regional pavilions and elsewhere in the fair, ultimately censoring the (theoretically self-made) images projected by the regions. Rivière and others repeatedly asserted the need to distinguish "genuine" folklore from the "ersatz," "kitsch," and "tacky pastiches" so often produced by misguided provincial artisans. They emphasized that folklorists should assume a guiding role and, if necessary, to borrow one speaker's phrase, act as "directors of conscience" (Cheronnet 1937:330). In numerous instances, fair committees actually hired Parisian artists to design patterns for regional objects—Le Puy lace or Limousin wicker-work for instance—which were then sent to "real" provincial artisans who executed them for display in the Exposition! Thus, the co-option of folklore by the central authorities implied that specialists in Paris would dictate the terms of authenticity to its producers in the provinces. One participant at the Folklore Conference even envisioned establishing national committees of experts to verify with official labels the origin and quality of folkloric and artisanal products (Clouzot 1938:313).

In sum, then, the positive representations of folklore in the 1937 Exposition did not constitute a disinterested tribute to rural and provincial folk. Instead, they provided a nostalgic refuge from industrial capitalism in crisis. More importantly, they translated a simultaneous attempt by the Left to "reinvent" folklore as an element of its collective popular culture and a usurpation of local cultures by national authorities. In addition to these ideological aims, some sought to exploit folklore in the late 1930s for economic purposes. Folklorists, representatives of the growing tourist industry, and other interested parties constantly alluded to gains to be made through tourism and the commercialization of regional products. Some traditionalists happily adopted this economic argument, hoping that, as a tradeoff for the commodification of tradition, many would find renewed pride, fostered by economic interest, in maintaining old ways against the onslaught of modernization.

However, they did not seem to recognize fully the inherent danger of this strategy. The preservation of folklore easily gave way to the objectification of simulated tradition; despite promises of fair organizers to represent only "authentic" traditions, they were often more concerned in practice with creating the appearance of authenticity. Edmond Labbé, General Commissioner of the fair,
instructed that, in staging folk spectacles, qualities like "sincerity, naiveté . . . and even occasional awkwardness (gaucherie)" should be preserved because these gave folklore its "picturesque charm" and served as "propaganda for tourism" (Labbé 1938:226). Indeed, the commercialization of tradition potentially extended even to lifestyles and landscapes which could also be packaged as objects for consumption. In a speech given at the 1937 Folklore Conference about encouraging rural inhabitants to revive folk traditions in order to beautify their surroundings, Louis Cheronnet pointed out:

There is nothing—including Tourism—which could not benefit from such an effort. What joy for the touring motorist to pass through villages which would each have an original style and be picturesque not only because they are old but because each would offer a spectacle of living Beauty. (1938:332)

The ultimate irony should be lost on no one: the preservation of tradition in the France of the late 1930s, originally intended as an antidote to unbridled modernization, unwittingly entered the cycle of cultural objectification and commodification. This tendency confirms Dean MacCannell's argument that the victory of modernity over "non-modern" societies is proven less by the disappearance of traditional cultures than by their artificial preservation and reconstruction within the modern world (1989:8). But this strange twist should come as no shock. As one French art historian concluded, justifying the modernist strategies adopted by folklorists in 1937:

People might object that this preservation of tradition is artificial. But so is every fashion. And how many other things which now seem natural to us were artificial to begin with? (Colombier 1938:n.p.)

Notes

1 This paper is excerpted from a doctoral thesis in progress on "Representations of Tradition in the 1937 Paris International Exposition." Do not reproduce or quote any section of this paper without prior permission from the author.

2 All translations from the French are mine.

3 The 1878 Fair opened briefly after a constitutional crisis in which the republican regime was finally established and monarchists defeated, while inauguration of the 1889 Fair followed the Boulangerist campaign, and the "Expo 1900" opened in the wake of the divisive Dreyfus Affair.

4 Indeed, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett confirms that "the history of folkloristics and applied folklore cannot be separated from the formation of nationalism as an ideology and the
relation of that ideology to the political process of state formation" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988:143).

5 "Republican" is used here to designate not adherents of a particular party but rather those who favored a republican form of government, as opposed, for example, to a restored monarchy or an empire.

6 Cf. Eugen Weber (1976) for a study of the modernization of rural France between 1870 and 1914. He analyzes the process of acculturation and virtual "colonization" of local, rural cultures by the dominant national, urban culture.

7 The first proposal for creation of a national folklore museum, in the form of a "Report on the project for a French Folklore Museum" (MNAIP Archives) was submitted in 1931 by Georges-Henri Rivière, then an assistant director to Paul Rivet at the Ethnography Museum. Negotiations continued for several years, but the creation of the museum was not decided until late 1936, upon the personal approval of Prime Minister Léon Blum.

8 The first press release issued by the museum in June 1938, entitled "Rallumons les Feux de Saint-Jean," confirmed this interventionist desire to revive dying traditions. Published in Chambres d'Agriculture. Fais et documents, June 20 1938, pp. E54-E55.

9 The roles played by folklorists in organizing similar cultural performances and other forms of "cultural conservation" in the United States have been discussed in Feintuch (1988). Cf. also Handler (1988), especially pp. 52-80, for a very perceptive study of staged folk performances and the "objectification of tradition" in Quebec.


11 For example, André Varagnac reasoned that individual innovation, meaning attempts to update traditional customs, contradict the collective nature of folklore, and, he concluded, "that is why we must be absolutely rigorous in respecting ancient costumes" (Travaux 1938:363).

12 Although plans for creating two museums preceded the Popular Front (see note 7), they were largely initiated by Socialist activist Paul Rivet. Furthermore, the principal lobbyist for the national folklore museum, Georges-Henri Rivière, pitched his appeals to the populist and centralizing instincts of the leftist government. By tailoring his project to suit their ideological agenda, he won their support.

Jean Jamin (1985) discusses the parallel treatment of the "primitive" and the "popular" during the 1930s. He contends that, although they were conceptualized in similar terms, there was a "a sort of incest taboo" against exhibiting them in the same museum. Jamin does not emphasize that this separation was in fact an important departure from their former combination in the Ethnography Museum, and therefore neglects the significance of this new dissociation.

13 This desire to celebrate the diversity of popular traditions as contributing to—rather than opposing—national identity had its contemporary American equivalent in ideas embraced by New Deal folklorists, as discussed by Jerrold Hirsch (1988).
Versions of this press release appeared in the *Excelsior* (August 30, 1937), *L'Humanité* (August 30, 1937) and numerous other papers of various political persuasions.

The two types Demangeon described were the *maison-bloc* (either *à terre* or *en hauteur*) and the *maison-cour* (either *à cour fermée* or *à cour ouverte*). The fifth category of house was the *maison élémentaire*. Cf. Demangeon (1937).

In his study of nationalism in Quebec, Handler (1988:124-129) develops the concept of "mutually exclusive totalities," arguing that a nation cannot fully recognize other "totalities," such as regional ones, within its borders, and therefore seeks to decompose local or regional cultures into distinct pieces in order to reabsorb them within the national totality.

Cf. for example the proceedings of the Exposition's Regionalism Committee in the Archives Nationales, Paris, file F12 12395.

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"Congrès international de folklore. Séance du 26 août 1937 (compte-rendu)." 1937. File of the Archives of the Musée national des arts et traditions populaires.


L'Illustration, 1900. October 20, 1900.


