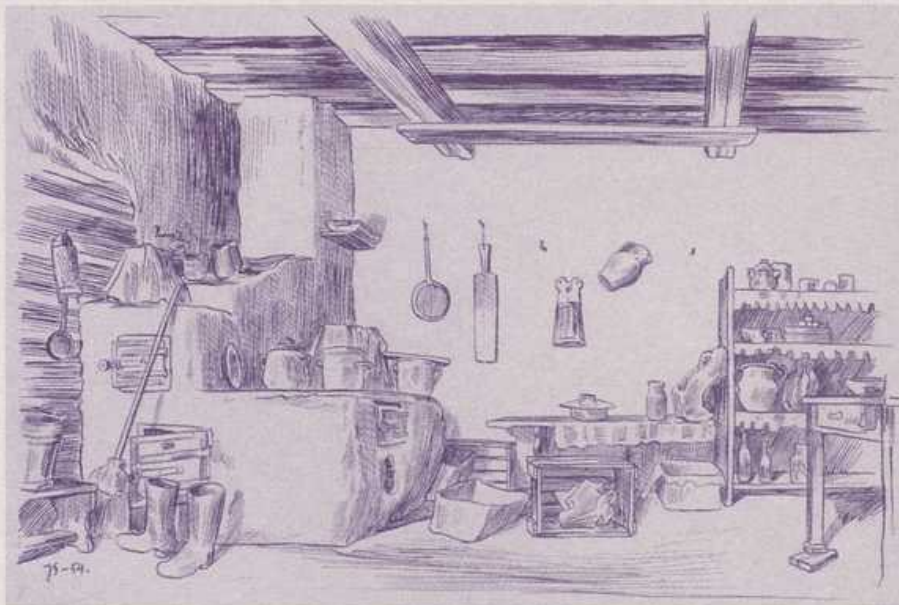


# SLOVENSKÝ NÁRODOPIŠ

SLOVAK

ETHNOLOGY



WILD OVÁ, Kateřina: When things are a burden on you:  
Material culture ethnography in the foothills  
of the Sierra Nevada

DJURIŠIČOVÁ, Danijela: Material objects  
as evidence of supernatural harm

GIBAS, Petr: Ballet amidst fences: Placelessness  
and place-attachment in one Prague suburb

PAUKNEROVÁ, Karolína: Two prehistoric cultures  
in one flatland: A phenomenological analysis of landscape

LUTHEROVÁ, Soňa G.: Investigating the visual  
dimension in material culture research on the home

MENTEL, Andrej: Human evolution, social revolution  
and silence about sex (Interview with Chris Knight)



*Slovenský národopis (Slovak Ethnology)* is a journal published five times a year by the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, Slovakia. Four issues are published in the Slovak language, the fifth issue in the English language. *Slovak Ethnology* is devoted to research in the fields of ethnology, cultural/social anthropology and related disciplines. The journal publishes analytic, theoretical or synthetic articles contributing to current debates in the social sciences. The papers focus mainly on Slovakia and Central Europe and are oriented towards social analysis based on field research. The main themes of the journal include social and cultural aspects of economic and political transformations; modernisation in both rural and urban areas; ethnicity and minority issues; the role of cultural heritage in the European context; ethnic, cultural and historical development in Central Europe; history of the disciplines. Contributions on other topics are also welcomed. The journal also publishes research reports, book reviews, interviews, critical comments, and other news items.

The journal is committed to a comprehensive view of ethnology and anthropology and provides a forum for active scholarly critique. To this end, all major articles undergo reviewing by commentators selected internationally. The journal also provides a space for discussion of important issues in the social sciences as well as critical response to the published articles.

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Interior of a house in Závadka (Slovakia), drawing by J. Scheybal (1954).

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It gives us great pleasure to introduce the second English-language issue of the journal *Slovenský národopis/Slovak Ethnology*, this time devoted to the topic of material culture. In ethnographic studies in Central and Eastern Europe material culture has been approached as a component of so-called 'traditional culture', consisting of 'material' and 'spiritual' parts. These spheres have been used as a classificatory framework for 'traditional' phenomena and have usually been studied separately. As a result, conventional ethnographic studies of material culture consisted for the most part of descriptions and typologies of material objects referring to their production as well as their function in various technologies of production.

The object of study of social sciences and humanities is social phenomena. If, therefore, social scientists study material objects, they must investigate them in connection with social and spiritual aspects of culture. We believe that the task of the social sciences and humanities is to concentrate on the social context in which material objects appear and exist rather than on the technological aspects of their production and use. There are many interrelated questions in this connection: an influence of material objects on human behaviour and the formation of social relations; the role of human behaviour and social relations in the production and use of material objects; representations and beliefs concerning material objects and people's attitudes to them; social and cognitive aspects of technological development and transmission of technologies. The ways that physical objects are incorporated into people's life determine the way that society works and communicates its features to individual members. This also leads to social scientists' concern with the media, ranging from mass consumer goods to mass media and art.

Thus the ethnological/anthropological study of material culture offers a variety of directions of research. The contributions in the present issue discuss several topics from this broad spectrum: material culture in the context of migrations, the role of material objects in supernatural beliefs, relation between space and settlement formation, and the use of visual methods in studying material objects.

Kateřina Wildová deals with the topic of habitation and people's attitudes towards objects of everyday use. Her research has been focused on a group of immigrants from Western Europe living in southern Spain. The paper therefore also contributes to migration studies, and in a rather unconventional way: it does not address migration to urban settings in western countries in order to obtain material benefits; on the contrary, it deals with migration from the world of consumption to the countryside, which people envisage as an area offering the possibility of an alternative way of life.

Danijela Djurišičová's article aims at investigating the distinction between two basic categories of supernatural harm – witchcraft and sorcery – in relation to material objects. Using current theories of cognitive anthropology and psychology, the author explains an intricate connection between social relationships and different representations of supernatural harm. The material from Central Serbia demonstrates that although the concepts of witchcraft and sorcery imply 'immaterial' influence, material objects play a crucial role in people's representations: they are perceived as evidence of supernatural harm and belong to the basic aspects of magical practices.

The present issue also brings two articles on phenomenological geography. Petr Gibas' paper contributes to the investigation of suburbanization and gentrification. The author deals with a transformation of a former industrial village near Prague into an area with

luxurious houses. He focuses on the connection between changing space and socio-economic changes in the place. The paper of Karolína Pauknerová, on the other hand, takes us back to the distant past: her research is concerned with settlement patterns in the eneolithic period and the Bronze Age. It might seem that this article belongs more to the sphere of archaeological studies than in an ethnological/anthropological journal. We believe, however, that its orientation towards perception of space and land makes it worthy of the attention of scholars outside archaeological circles.

Soňa G. Lutherová's article is dedicated to investigation of the visual dimension of material culture in relation to the study of home. She demonstrates the importance of the methods of visual anthropology in a specific case of people's perception of home through design and choice of furniture. The paper also aims to confront two different branches of social anthropology – visual anthropology and anthropology of material culture of home – in the example of the author's research on individual home construction by young people in contemporary Bratislava.

The other rubrics refer to the topic of material objects as well. The rubric Essays/Overviews is dedicated to visual anthropology, as is the preceding article: it brings an overview of the development of ethnological/ethnographic film in Serbia by Dragana Radojičić. We are pleased that we can offer the readers of *Slovak Ethnology* an interview with Professor Chris Knight, who is one of the most prominent figures in the field of palaeoanthropology and evolutionary anthropology and had until recently been teaching at the University of East London. As usual, our journal brings book reviews as well as news about the scientific community in Slovakia.

We believe that the contributions in the present volume will draw the readers' attention to important aspects of ethnological/anthropological research and will be useful in the further investigation of material objects in the social world.

*Tatiana Bužeková and Michaela Ferencová*



# Slovenský národopis

## Slovak Ethnology

5  
58/2010

Journal of the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences  
Vol. 58, 2010, No. 5

**Address of the Editorial Office:**

Klemensova 19  
813 64 Bratislava  
Slovakia  
Email: slovensky.narodopis@savba.sk

**Distributed by:**

Slovak Academic Press, Ltd.  
P.O. Box 57, Nám. Slobody 6  
810 05 Bratislava  
Slovakia  
Email: sap@sapress.sk

**Registration Number:** 7091

**Electronic version accessible on:**

<http://www.uet.sav.sk/slovenskynarodopis.htm>  
<http://www.cceol.com>

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# SLOVENSKÝ NÁRODOPIIS

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SLOVAK ETHNOLOGY

ISSN 1335-1303

MIČ 49 616

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