

THEME OF THE ISSUE:

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF FOOD IN THE POST-POSTMODERN AGE

EDITORIAL II

Hunting and gathering practices used to be one of the first chapters of any old ethnographic paper describing the life of a traditional community. After the years of neglect in post-modern ethnology the issue of food provisioning and food independence is coming back in anthropological literature in a variety of ways, e.g. by studying foraging, hunting, alternative food systems, urban agriculture etc.

Ethnology has always been seen as a science bridging various disciplines. However the traditional study of relationships between humans and other living organisms – ethnobiology (subdivided into ethnobotany, ethnozoology and ethnomycology) has an even more interdisciplinary nature touching the subjects exactly on the border line of natural sciences and humanities. That is why ethnobiologists have often had problems with being heard both by anthropologists and biologists, in spite of the fact that the field of ethnobiology has many practical implications and the information they gather on the traditional use of plants and animals may be utilized by both the traditional societies, whose knowledge they preserve, and by other societies. Interesting relationships between nature and humans can occur even in cities, where for example plants are gathered in municipal areas, traditional medicine is sold by immigrants and various forms of food production are organized, e.g. in the form of allotments or communal gardens.

In this issue of Slovak Ethnology we tried to gather articles showing a variety of issues associated with the current trends of using nature in order to get food. Ingvar Svanberg, Madeleine Bonow from Sweden and Stanisław Cios from Poland presented a paper showing the history of the culinary re-emergence of a long-underutilized small Baltic fish, smelt. In their paper called *Fishing for Smelt, Osmerus eperlanus (Linnaeus, 1758) A traditional food fish—possible cuisine in post-modern Sweden?* they suggested a new usage of this small fish as a resource and a possible development of regional cuisine.

Rastislava Stoličná in her essay *Possibilities of Using Wild Plants in the Traditional Culinary Culture of Slovakia* discussed the history of wild food plant use in Slovakia. She pointed out that wild-growing plants, that were widely used in various Slovakian regions in the past during the periods of crop failure or as supplements to common meals, now started their renaissance as so-called “superfoods”.

Eva Kotašková devoted her attention to the complicated status of horse meat and how this often disregarded or even “taboo” food got into the food system of the Czech

Republic. In her article titled *The Turn into Dangerous Meat: Case Study of Horsemeat Food Fraud in the Czech Republic* she analyzed the situation in the Czech Republic when food products containing undeclared horsemeat were classified as dangerous and thus turned to a category of non-edible food – that raised also ethical and moral questions of what is and is not edible food in general.

Marcin Kotowski studied the relationships between the list of mushrooms which can be legally sold in Poland and the actual gathering practices in the countryside in central Poland. He found out many significant *Differences between European Regulations on Wild Mushroom Commerce and Actual Trends in Wild Mushroom Picking*. Another contribution from Poland written by Agnieszka Pieńczak is concentrated on *The Collection of Questionnaires Concerning Wild Plants on the Digital Platform of the Polish Ethnographic Atlas*. It is the current activity of Polish colleagues trying to disseminate the atlas collections on the Internet.

Marija Jug-Dujaković from Croatia and Łukasz Łuczaj from Poland described a story how, through one enthusiast of foraging, a military project over many years contributed to the study of the Adriatic wild food plants and animals. In their paper called *The Contribution of Josip Bakić's Research to the Study of Wild Edible Plants of the Adriatic Coast: a Military Project with Ethnobiological and Anthropological Implications* they showed us possibilities of foraging in this area in the past which is now being compared with the current situation in this area.

Last but not least, Istvan Sántha and Tatiana Safonova tried in their contribution called *Gathering as Ontological Practice among Evenki of Eastern Siberia* to give us a rich visual report from the hunting and foraging life of Evenki people in Siberia focusing on a variety of aspects which may be normally overlooked, but can be seen in the photographs of an anthropologist. Their work is an attempt to reintroduce almost forgotten methodological approach, a photographic analysis of pictures made by researchers themselves during the field trip, which was originally proposed by Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead in the first half of the 20th century. New using of this old method “provides a possibility to reconstruct relations between visual images caught on camera, field notes and complex contexts of experiences” according to authors of this experimental paper.

We hope that this special issue of Slovak Ethnology will persuade you that ethnobiology is a very useful and inspiring branch of science, making bridges between humanities and natural studies.

ŁUKASZ ŁUCZAJ,

Institute of Applied Biotechnology and Basic Sciences, University of Rzeszów, Poland