

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

KREKOVIČOVÁ, Eva: Editorial • 158

ARTICLES

PAVLICOVÁ, Martina, UHLÍKOVÁ, Lucie: Folklore Traditions in Contemporary Everyday Life: Between Continuity and (Re)construction (based on two examples from the Czech Republic) • 163

POLJAK ISTENIČ, Saša: Classical Concepts, New Perspectives: What's Up with Agricultural Rituals? • 182

ŠRIMPF, Katarina: Creating "the Other" through the narrative tradition in the Slovenian-Croatian border area of Upper Obsotelje • 197

URBANCOVÁ, Hana: Laments and Farewell Hymns as Two Traditional Genres of Funeral Singing • 209

JANEČEK, Petr: *Bloody Mary* or *Krvavá Mářť*? Globalization and Czech children's folklore • 221

KROPEJ, Monika: Narrative Tradition of King Matthias in the Process of Transformation • 244

RESEARCH REPORTS

BELIŠOVÁ, Jana: Roma Lament Songs in the Past and Today • 259

DISCUSSION:

DOMOKOS, Mariann: Methodological Issues in Electronic Folklore • 283

NEWS

„Perspectives on Contemporary Legend. International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, 32nd International Conference“ (3rd of June – 8th of June, 2014, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic) (Petr JANEČEK) • 298

Visual Encounters with Other in Tartu (7th of May – 9th of May, 2014, Tartu, Estonia) (Zuzana PANCZOVÁ) • 300

BOOK REVIEWS/REVIEW ESSAYS

Eva Krekovičová, Vladimír Potančok (Ed.): *Personálna bibliografia PhDr. Sone Burlasovej, DrSc.* (Ľubica DROPPOVÁ) • 302

Peter Salner: *The Jewish Identity in Slovakia after the Shoah* (Zuzana PEŠŤANSKÁ) • 303

Ullrich Kockel, Máiréad Nic Craith, Jonas Frykman (Eds.): *A Companion to the Anthropology of Europe* (Zuzana PANCZOVÁ) • 305

EDITORIAL

Folkloristics went through relatively big changes in the 2nd half of the 20th century. It was and still is confronted with several theoretical, methodological and practical challenges of the time. The dominant features of the problematic issues studied by folkloristics have gradually changed, as well as the concepts and analytical tools used. The studied forms of social communication have also been affected by changes. On one hand, folkloristics brought new topics and research issues, deepened interdisciplinary approaches and the methods of research, thus expanding the research fields. On the other hand, folklorists continued summarising the picture of folklore, becoming gradually perceived as cultural heritage tied to a closed historic era in terms of style. Simply said, both research trends represent a discontinuous and a continuous line of research in a wider time horizon. Certainly, the tendency to such a “double-track” character is not a specific feature of scientific knowledge exclusively of the past decades, though the borderline between both approaches came significantly to the front and was deepened at the turn of the millennium.

To some extent, this situation is related to inter-generational shifts in the approach to the subject of study of folkloristics leading, *inter alia*, to an ever stronger anthropologisation of humanities in general (Kuligowski, 2012), and to an abandonment of big theories. Dorothy Noyes therefore establishes for folkloristics “a plea not for grand but for humble theory” (Noyes, 2008). The changes in theoretical approaches and the shift of the core of research from the “picture of the past” to the “processes going on at present” (Kiliánová, 2006) thus create new and attractive challenges for further folklore studies.

The general trend of the anthropologisation of humanities brings folklore studies closer not only to cultural and social anthropology, but also to ethnomusicology. Though both scientific disciplines have different historic roots, the borders between them were not always clear, especially since the turn of the 20th and 21st century. This mainly applies to the comprehensive research of songs, which is also characteristic for the modern “Slovak ethno-musicological school”. (It is characteristic for the parallel study of the textual, musical and functional aspects of songs.) This “permeability” of borders is also proven by, for example, the research in music sociology (Mačák ed. 1989, 1990) or some syntheses of song genres (Burlasová, 1991; Urbancová, 2005), etc.

With regard to the accentuation of continuity vs. discontinuity in the basic con-

cepts of research, the said changes are reflected (for example, in the Central European space, but not only there) somewhat differently in the different countries and regions. The difference in the approaches and concepts can be also found in the attitudes of the different researchers.

In simple terms, we speak about two lines of research in Central Europe: a) the lines based on the principles of the “German school” (Bohemia, Hungary, Moravia, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Slovenia); and b) the lines gaining ground in Polish folkloristics in which we can find several approaches (Hajduk-Nijakowska, 2009). They are formed in the background of a deflection from literary science towards anthropology: “folkloristics as the anthropology of the spoken word” (Sulima, 2005); the category of the “folk type of culture” (Stomma, 1986); ethnology and philosophical inspirations by French phenomenology: the category of the “folk type of thinking” (Robotycki, 1985, 1998); or the Slavistic oriented ethno-linguistics (Adamowski, Smyk, 2010).

Certain continuity of “national schools” plays a special role, in particular, in European ethno-musicology where similar changes take place more slowly and less dramatically within a determined period compared to verbal folkloristics. The analytical tools and concepts used by ethno-musicologists in the different regions are often incompatible to some extent. They correspond to the specific features of art history nature, such as historic and genetic music styles (Slovakia: Kresánek, 1951; Elscheková, Elschek, 1980), regional styles, etc. The respective changes are reflected, among other things, in an increased emphasis on the contextual and transcultural aspects of research.

The problem of verbal folkloristics today is the lack of a generally acceptable and understandable expert terminology and classification. This refers to the denomination of examined processes, texts and, in particular, genres. The terminological unstableness so characteristic for periods of major changes is determined by “national (area) schools” and also by language specificities. This concerns not only European, but also non-European relations. The new, “other” approaches and terminology also require new topics and contexts for the phenomena studied by folklorists, such as various verbal, visualised and other forms of mass media and internet communication.

The more intensive application of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods in research is reflected both in the use of the basic theoretical and methodological concepts common to several humanity disciplines, research methods (such as oral history) and analytical categories of inter-disciplinary nature (media theory, identity and identification, the processes and contexts of the origin of cultural constructions, cultural representations). In these research areas, the borders between disciplines disappear and become “permeable”. Historiography is one such example. Social history and ethnology/cultural/social anthropology get closer to each other with historic research focusing on “small history”, i.e. on the study of the past through “everyday culture”. This relates, *inter alia*, to the use of folklore sources as a support argumentation basis for historiography on one hand, and the opening of other research fields for ethnology and folkloristics (in the research of culture as a sign system) on the other hand.

The cognitive focus of the research on prosaic narratives based on the theory and methodology of cognitive anthropology and psychology represents one such specific area of such research in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. It has been more widely used since the turn of the millennium among the youngest generation of researchers (Bužeková, 2009; Bahna, 2011) working on the borderline between folkloristics, religion studies and social anthropology.

This issue of *Slovenský národopis/Slovak Ethnology* brings various folkloristic con-

tributions in terms of topics, theory and methodology. The common element of these texts is the procedural approach. Another unifying aspect of most of the articles is the focus of the authors, using materials from recent field researchers, on the present. Their studies are either dedicated to transformation processes (M. Pavlicová a L. Uhlíková, S. Poljak Istenič) or to the specific issue of modern legends (P. Janeček) and internet folklore vs. electronic folklore (M. Domokos).

The article of two researchers from Brno Martina Pavlicová and Lucia Uhlíková presents and analyses the current trends in ethnologic and folkloristic research in the Czech Republic, also reaching beyond the wider contexts of the former Czechoslovakia. The authors observe the continuity and discontinuity processes along the axis traditional folklore – folklorism – transition processes of the past two decades in the background of the mechanism of gradual incorporation of folklore elements into the national culture, as well as other parallel and subsequent processes. They highlight the current wide variability of folklore functions in general, and the importance of external influences in these processes. They offer an umbrella concept for this area of research – “ethno-cultural traditions”. In the framework of these traditions, they present case studies of two forms of such traditions from the Slovácko region (south-eastern Moravia) – “male folk choirs” and “slovácky verbuňk” (male folk dance from Slovácko region).

The issue of rituals was a grateful subject of research back to the origins of both ethnographic and folklorist/cultural-anthropologic research. It appeared to be an important area of scientific interest also during the recent study of transition processes at the turn of the 20th and 21st century. The Slovenian author Saša Poljak Istenič observes the continuity and discontinuity of traditional culture phenomena at present through an example of agricultural rituals. She provides a case study of rituals in agricultural work, referring to traditional agrarian culture. Rituals have survived until the present in changed forms and with new functions. Rituals, the actors of which are farmers, have acquired specific forms and functions at public events. The aim of the ritual is to attract customers to buy goods. The author examined them in a region close to Ljubljana, the Capital of Slovenia. She deals with them in the context of methodological changes in the research of rituals in European ethnology after 1989, and observes the changes in their contexts with respect to several aspects (for example, in relation to the concept of the rural idyll or tourism). The examined field is an example of a successfully developing regional agrarian culture. The elements of traditional culture embody here the perspectives of prosperity and sustainable positive economic development for wider communities.

Petr Janeček has been dealing with the research of legends in the Czech Republic for more than a decade, and published several books on this topic in the period 2006–2009. The published study contributes to the research of an internationally widespread type of this genre. Within the given environment, the research has witnessed an increased popularity of this matter since the beginning of the 1990s until the present. The author builds on previous studies of this narrative conducted from the 1970s. He examines the narrative as part of the children’s folklore and teenagers’ repertoire, and explores it in the context of the practices of “traditional culture” and child and youth psychology.

The Hungarian author Mariann Domokos offers a contribution to the discourse on a “new” research topic in the history of folkloristics concerning internet communication and its relation to folklore. This topic represents a big challenge for the folkloris-

tic research of current processes. On one hand, it attracts researchers' attention by means of many open questions: from terminology, research approaches and methods, relations to traditional culture or their absence, function(s), composition of genres to the multi-media character of the form, specific poetics, etc. On the other hand, the opinions of folklorists on this area of research often differ or are even contradictory. Along with several terminological and methodological suggestions for the discourse, the author also offers concrete examples from the Hungarian internet environment, considered to be folklore.

The other current trend in folkloristic research mentioned in the introduction includes the contributions by Katarina Šrampf, Hana Urbancová and Monika Krojej. The authors build, in particular, on the expressions of traditional culture, not avoiding the present-day context.

The article of another Slovenian author Katarina Šrampf is a contribution to the reflection on "the Other" in traditional narratives. She based her study on the archive and field research in the bordering regions of Slovenia and Croatia. The author explores the way of creating borders through oral traditions, i.e. stories, jokes and mockery in a specific border region along the upper stream of the Sotla River. She observes their contexts and functions in the processes of mutual co-existence of people on both sides of the border.

The study of the Slovak ethnomusicologist Hana Urbancová represents an original contribution to the research of two traditional, though differing song genres in terms of genetics and typology, functionally related to death and funeral, from Slovakia and from among Slovak minority communities living abroad, such as funeral laments as a historically closed folklore genre, and farewell hymns. Both genres are explored by the author through research on the borderline between ethno-musicology and folkloristics, building on the records of laments obtained and recorded through oral traditions in the second half of the 20th century and handwritten records from the 19th century.

Monika Krojej returns to the topic which was examined by several folklorists from the countries of the former Kingdom of Hungary, such as the historic personality of Matthias Corvinus (1443–1490), Hungarian King. He is depicted as a "good king" in folklore narratives from Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia, and also acts as the national hero or "King Liberator" in the Slovenian context. The author accompanies this topic with interesting materials based on the narrative traditions and presenting her transformation through an example of an entertaining event known as the "Castle of King Matthias" in today's Carinthia.

In the Research Report section, Jana Beliřová presents the results of long-term field research of musical and song expressions of the members of the Roma minority in Slovakia and their transformations in time through an example of a specific genre – lament songs.

The articles published in this issue of the *Slovenský národopis/Slovak Ethnology* magazine correspond to the current trends in folkloristic studies, as presented in the introduction, and enrich the international ethnological and folklorist studies with the recent results of research in Central Europe. They also bring new challenges for further research. We wish our readers pleasant reading.

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