

BOOK REVIEW

KILIÁNOVÁ, Gabriela, ZAJONC, Juraj (2016). 70 rokov Ústavu etnológie Slovenskej akadémie vied: kontinuity a diskontinuity bádania a jednej inštitúcie. [Seventy Years of the Institute of Ethnology at the Slovak Academy of Sciences: Continuity and Discontinuity in Research and at One Institution] Bratislava: VEDA – vydavateľstvo SAV a Ústav etnológie SAV 2016. 287 pages. ISBN 978-80-224-1512-5

As the top-level institution of ethnological research in Slovakia, the Institute of Ethnology at the Slovak Academy of Sciences (formerly the Institute of Ethnography at the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts) is celebrating seventy years since it was established. This publication, prepared by Gabriela Kiliánová and Juraj Zajonc – two of the institute’s long-serving and prominent members – presents familiar information as well as new facts, and places everything in a political, historical, and methodological context. The work is the interesting result of an attempt to methodologically grasp the history of one’s own scientific discipline.

Kiliánová and Zajonc have divided their work into four chapters and approached the matter at hand from a chronological perspective. The publication includes rich and well-arranged appendices (dealing with directors and chairmen of the institute, research and expert staff, national projects, international projects, selected publications produced by the institute and its staff, and journals published at the institute). The work is completed with a rather expansive and high-quality collection of photographs entitled “People and Events in Pictures” (pp. 237-273). The book contains indexes, allowing for easy navigation.

The formation of the institute as a scientific ethnographic centre is closely linked to the founding of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1946; it was one of the academy's very first centres. The first chapter is dedicated to the period from 1946 to 1953, which was marked by the institutionalization and professionalization of scientific research in ethnography and folkloristics. At this time, the institute made efforts to become a coordinator of research work in ethnography in Slovakia; it also started to publish the journal *Slovenský národopis* (Slovak Ethnography), which built upon the interwar publication *Národopisný sborník Matice slovenskej* (Matica slovenská's Ethnographic Yearbook). A significant macrohistorical turning point came in 1948, when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia became the leading political force in the country following events in February of that year. In the context of the sociopolitical conditions of the time, the institute was incorporated into the Institute of History at the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1951 and was placed under considerable ideological pressure. There were efforts to consistently apply Marxist frameworks of interpretation. Zajonc, who is the first chapter's author, describes this period as a search for a balance between the independence of science and the social engagement of the discipline.

The chapter dealing with the period from 1953 to 1969 is framed within the establishment of the Slovak Academy of Sciences as a new organization (which acquired the institutes of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts) and the beginning of the period of political normalization. Here Kiliánová, who is the chapter's author, describes the relationship between the Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences while focusing primarily on the history of the institute itself; in 1952 it was defined as a section, but in 1955 it officially became the Institute of Ethnography at the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The institute experienced considerable personnel, organizational, and conceptual growth in this period. The Slovak Ethnographic Society (SES) was founded in 1958 as a voluntary grouping of researchers, experts, and students and had the aim of focusing on comprehensive ethnographic research with the participation of external associates. Additionally, the Slovak Ethnographic Coordination Council (SECC) was established in 1969; it had the aim of ensuring scientific collaboration between ethnographic institutions as an important part of the effort to ensure independent academic decision-making. In 1969 the *Národopisné informácie* (Ethnographic Information) newsletter began publication as an official organ of the SECC and SES. The institute's research projects were determined by state planning and concentrated on three thematic areas: the history of folk culture in Slovakia, the influence of industrialization on the life and culture of the population, and the folk culture of the Carpathian region. Other significant activity centred on the efforts of the institute's staff

in the work *Československá vlastivěda* (Czechoslovak History and Geography) (1968) and the publication of a number of books within the *Klenotnica slovenskej ľudovej kultúry* (the Treasury of Slovak Folk Culture) series from 1967 onwards. Discussions within the discipline were a starting point for research into the “present”, which continued in subsequent decades.

The chapter dealing with the period from 1969 to 1989 is placed in the context of a difficult political reality where the state and the party quashed all attempts at political revival. With the support of the Slovak and Czech academic community, the Institute of Ethnography managed to avoid repeated attempts to close it down. Once again, a state plan for the development of science and technology and the centralized control of scientific research was implemented. Under the influence of the contemporary political climate, there was the beginning of a rebuilding of the Slovak Academy of Sciences towards the end of the 1980s with the aim of democratizing its management structure. However, the Velvet Revolution in November 1989 put an end to this initiative and opened the way for a more radical transformation. At this time there were more than fifty researchers and other expert staff working at the institute. From 1971 to 1975 and from 1976 to 1980, the Institute of Ethnography was the main centre of a nationwide initiative entitled *Vývoj ľudovej kultúry v českých zemiach a na Slovensku* (the Development of Folk Culture in the Czech Lands and Slovakia), which involved 18 centres from all over the country. Professional activity continued in research into traditional folk culture (an ethnographic atlas, regional monographs, preservation research, catalogues, and editions of material); the transformations of folk traditions (the study of cultural changes in village and urban settings as well as in industrial areas); the interethnic contexts of Czech and Slovak culture (a comparative study of folk cultures in the Carpathian area, relationships between Slavic folk cultures, Czech and Slovak enclaves and diasporas abroad, and ethnic groups in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic); and the theory, methodology, and history of ethnography and folkloristics. In 1988 the Institute of Ethnography began publishing *Slavistická folkloristika* (Slavic Studies Folkloristics), which was the newsletter of the International Commission of Slavic Folklore at the International Committee of Slavists. The publication outputs of the institute at this time also included *Die slowakische Volkskultur* (1972). In 1975 the most expansive synthetic ethnographic work of that time, *Slovensko 3 – Lud, 2. časť* (Slovakia 3: People, Part II), was published. In the 1970s and 1980s, the institute coordinated the Ethnographic Atlas of Slovak Folk Culture, which was one of the most ambitious projects in the history of the field. Collective research into the Hont region resulted in the publication of the monograph *Hont: Tradície ľudovej kultúry* (Hont: Folk Culture Traditions) (1988). In addition, a number of authored monographs on ethnological themes

were prepared for publication, such as those on folklore genres in the “Folk Art in Slovakia” series by the Tatran publishing house. The beginning of the 1980s saw preparation work begun on the Encyclopaedia of Slovak Folk Culture, which was another significant project. The organizational foundation of international cooperation was primarily provided by the International Commission of the Study of Folk Culture in the Carpathians and Balkans, which gathered scientists from socialist countries in order to prepare synthetic works dealing with traditional culture. Attention was given to theoretical and methodological issues (such as the relationship of ethnography to similar sciences, the use of philosophical categories in ethnography, the state of methodology in ethnography, determining the scope of ethnography/ethnology as a discipline, and the exploration of theoretical approaches and new methodological methods when researching cultural phenomena). Issues present in research, theories, concepts, and methods in folkloristics were addressed in a work by Milan Leščák and Oldřich Sirovátka entitled *Folklór a folkloristika* (Folklore and Folkloristics) (1982). Research into ethnic issues in Czechoslovakia was influenced by the translation of the book *Ethnos and Ethnography* (A. Pranda, 1980) by Yulian Bromley. Other important outputs included Viera Urbancova’s monographs summarizing the history of the discipline (*Počiatky slovenskej etnografie* [the Beginnings of Slovak Ethnography], 1970; *Slovenská etnografia v 19. storočí* [Slovak Ethnography in the 19th Century], 1987).

The chapter dealing with the period after 1989 documents a time when political events led to the fall of totalitarian regimes in those countries that had made up the Eastern Bloc. While the Slovak Academy of Sciences stopped being subject to ideological pressure, it had to adapt to new economic conditions. Finances for scientific research from the state budget had to be supplemented by funds gained through projects. Conditions were also set for the evaluation of the quality and the outputs of research centres. After some discussion in 1994 about the name of the discipline, the Institute of Ethnography was renamed the Institute of Ethnology. The staff of the institute successfully found their feet in the new conditions, and at the cost of losing some positions, the institute has featured among those centres at the Slovak Academy of Sciences which have been involved in prestigious domestic and international projects. Urban ethnology, ethnic studies, and folk culture research as a part of cultural heritage became the centre of scholarly attention. The line of academic inquiry oriented towards research into traditional Slovak folk culture as a part of cultural heritage was crowned with a number of synthetic works, including *Encyklopédia ľudovej kultúry Slovenska* (the Encyclopaedia of Slovak Folk Culture) (1995), *Európske kontexty ľudovej kultúry* (European Contexts of Folk Culture) (1997, 2000), and a number of other monographs dealing with this theme. At this time there was

a continual shift in the orientation of the academic discipline from the framework of historical sciences towards concepts and theories from the social sciences.

This expansive publication is of a high graphical standard. Through the history of one institution, it presents the history of the academic discipline itself and places it in its contemporary political, ideological, and economic context. The authors of this work have successfully managed to combine factual data with the perspectives of the actors behind concepts of scientific research and publication outputs in the field of ethnography/ethnology, and from this perspective the book is of great value.

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