
EDITORIAL

Tradition has been one of the most important terms in ethnographic research. In western countries, social or cultural anthropology began as an attempt to describe and understand non-western societies, considered to be traditional; the early ethnological research in Central Europe focused rather at the domestic traditions (Barnard 2004, 2). In Slovakia tradition had been the main object of inquiry in ethnology since emergence of the first theoretical works in this discipline (Melicherčík, 1945). This concept evoked theoretical and methodological discussions (e.g., Horváthová, 1982; 1988; Leščák, 1986). After the fall of the communist regime ethnologists' attention has shifted to newly emerging research topics related to contemporary society. However, "traditionnal culture" or "folk culture" remains an important field of ethnological research in Slovakia as well as other post-socialistic countries; and ethnological studies of new phenomena often include references to tradition, traditional communities, and traditional culture.

The category of tradition can be indeed synonymic to culture: as Shils (1981, 12) states, the ordinary concept of tradition "includes all that a society of a given time possesses and which already existed when its present possessors came upon it". At the same time, ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology has paid attention to the process of cultural transmission which secured such preservation of cultural knowledge. In this, traditional ways of thinking and behaving were usually associated with a certain type of society which can be roughly described as a small-scale peasant or pastoral community. Boyer notes that the notion of such "traditional society" referred to the anthropological and philosophical debates about the so-called "Great Divide" between tradition and modernity: "There is a strong tendency in anthropology to think that generalities about traditions are necessarily generalities about this type of societies, as opposed to large empires or kingdoms, modern industrial nations or ancient city-states" (Boyer 1990, 110). However, in post-socialist countries the distinction between "modern" and "traditional" can be difficult to apply, because industrialization, urbanization and secularization in this region have proceeded along different lines, comparing to western countries (Good, 2003).

In both western and non-western cultures tradition has been often described to be opposite to innovation and progress, as it was typically associated with cultural features which were handed on and preserved in relatively

unchanged form. Yet the history of humankind displays an eternal interplay between continuity and discontinuity, persistence and change (Lipták 2000, 14). Although tradition is usually seen as the opposite to modernity, “traditions are continually being created, not in some past time immemorial, but during modernity” (Grabum 2001, 8). Such “invention of tradition” in contemporary societies has been the subject of a growing body of research since the publication of Hobsbawm and Ranger’s book (1983).

The present volume of *Etnologia Slovaca et Slavica* brings several articles that illustrate the importance of traditions and their transformation in contemporary societies in Central Europe. Mateja Habinc analyses the images of two Bosnian national parks associated with Yugoslav socialism and its values. She demonstrates how past events and traditional images are selectively used as marketing labels in tourism to serve economic purposes. Tamás Mohay presents the case study of images used in a household of a woman living in a village in southern Transylvania. He shows in what way the sacred icons manifest the customs and traditions of the private home sphere and how personal stories link them to the historical changes in a broader socio-cultural milieu. Mojca Ramšak explores the image of human heart in traditional and popular culture and demonstrates how the symbolic of heart can serve various purposes and yet retain traditional cultural meanings. Michal Uhrin pays attention to the concept of tradition in Slovak ethnology and links his analysis to the notion of two modes of scholarship, associated with different approaches in social sciences and humanities. His essay on work and life of a prominent Slovak ethnologist Ján Botík continues the analysis of the ethnological research in Slovakia.

The volume includes the reviews of books on the Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Serbia, the holocaust in Slovakia, the single-parenthood, and the race classification. The reports about important events include obituary of Zuzana Profantová, an important figure in the history of *Etnologia Slovaca et Slavica*, who significantly contributed to the development of the journal. Symbolically, we also bring news about a new generation of Slovak ethnologists who met at the student conference in Banská Bystrica to present their research. Another important event in the rubric “News” is Marta Botiková’s report on the exhibitions related to the theme of years ending in the number eight which are part of commemorations of the significant events in the history of Slovakia.

The concept of tradition is still essential for the ethnological studies and now appears in relation to various issues in new contexts. We believe that the collection of texts in the present volume of our journal will contribute to the investigation of traditions in Central Europe and their perpetual changes in the globalized world.

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