

## EDITORIAL

Religion has been one of the most important topics of social sciences and humanities. Social scientists have mostly considered religion as integral part of social relationships and processes. In early studies religion was supposed to give way to the science and to vanish from the “rational” worldview of educated people. However, despite the great advance of science and increased level of education, today it is clear that religion still belongs to the vital aspects of human life and still influences societies in the globalized world. In explaining religious phenomena, researchers face many challenges following from the complex nature of the sphere that we call “religion”. Consequently, there are numerous methodological approaches to the study of religion that involve various theoretical concepts and emphasize different aspects of religious life of individuals and social groups. In Central Europe, attention to the study of religion has increased with the fall of communist regime that suppressed religious life. Ethnologists, anthropologists and folklorists base on empirical studies of the past and employ contemporary theoretical insights which help to understand the importance of religion and its role in society.

The present volume of *Etnologia Slovaca et Slavica* brings several empirical studies that illustrate the importance of religion in contemporary societies. Contributions to the rubric *Studies* address different forms of religious life which exist within and outside established religious systems, such as Christianity. They can be related to the ethnic identity or economy; they can contradict official doctrine and liturgy or merge it with various folk beliefs; but all of them are vital for understanding people’s worldview and behaviour. Ján Botik examines importance of confessionalism in the context of Slovak enclaves in Central and South-Eastern Europe and argues that it was one of the two main factors in the migratory movements of Slovak emigrants to these areas. While many previous studies consider enclaves mainly in relation to the core national community and pay attention to the economy, his research has demonstrated that the economic and religious motives for migration were equally important and raised the ethnic and social self-confidence of the population concerned. Magdalena Elchinova explores another group with Slavic identity

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living outside their maternal country – the Bulgarian diaspora in Canada and the U.S. Northeast and Midwest. She discusses the role of the church in immigrants' lives in relation to the concept of the ethnic church and focuses on its role in immigrants' life trajectories. Manca Račič addresses different topic – the place of religious minority in a legal system and its influence on believers' religious identity. She presents results of ethnographic research conducted in the environment of informally established groups and individuals who consider themselves as followers of the so-called Native Faith in Slovenia and examines the influence of the legislation and the state on their experience as members of a minority religious community, and the tensions that arise from interaction with the majority Catholic community.

The rubric *Research Reports* brings Nadia Clemente's description of a Slavic enclave living in the Resia Valley in Italy which speaks a Slavic language with archaic elements. She presents an interesting material recorded by scholars and travellers and connect it to the Resian oral tradition and religious customs. In his article in the rubric *Essays*, Michal Uhrin reflects on an important methodological problem – the question of objectivity and subjectivity of anthropological research, in particular regarding empirical study of religious beliefs and practices. Two contributions to the rubric *Personalities* are also linked to the empirical research on supernatural beliefs, albeit in different context of folk tradition. Hana Hlôšková presents the overviews of life and works of Ján Michálek, a prominent scholar who played an essential role in the development of folkloristics in Slovakia and significantly contributed to the study of folk tales. Tatiana Bužeková's interview with Mirjam Mencej, one of the most distinguished scholars researching contemporary folk beliefs, addresses her work in relation to witchcraft beliefs, vernacular religion, corresponding theoretical and methodological issues, empirical research, and her teaching practice. The reviews of several books that were recently published in Slovakia and reports on significant events in the ethnological community conclude the present volume.

We believe that this issue will give readers a sense of colourful mosaic consisting of ethnographic research on religion in different countries and different socio-political contexts. We also hope that the presented volume will contribute to the empirical study of religion in Central Europe and in the globalized world.

*Tatiana Bužeková*