

**AN UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE COMMISSION OF SLAVIC FOLKLORE
AT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
OF SLAVISTS
(2018 – 2023)**

At the fifth International Committee of Slavists in Sofia in 1963, a commission was launched to coordinate research on Slavic folklore and bring together folklorists from various Slavic and non-Slavic countries. It was established as the Commission for Research on Slavic Folklore, and its first chairperson was the Czech folklorist and philologist Karel Horálek (1908 – 1993), who served as the head of the commission until 1983. Throughout its history, it was led by several prominent folklorists, including Viktor Evgenievich Gusev (1983 – 1998) and Krzysztof Wrocławski, who alongside the Slovak folklorist Viera Gašparíková led the commission from 1998 to 2003; Ljubinko Radenković (2003 – 2013) and Andrej Borisovič Moroz (2013 – 2018) then followed in this role. Since 2018 the activities of the commission have been managed by Dejan Ajdačić as chairperson in cooperation with the presiding committee. Together they have determined the scope of the commission's activities for a five-year period between two Slavist conventions – the 16th Congress in Belgrade (2018) and the 17th Congress in Paris (2023) – where the results of international teams are presented at individual panels accredited to the International Committee of Slavists.

In August 2018, the commission recorded 115 registered members, including seven honorary ones. Chairperson Ajdačić, in cooperation with the presiding committee, decided to review registered members based on their activities in the field of folklore research. Several were elected honorary members, and inactive members were deregistered. The commission currently has sixty-nine active members and eighteen honorary ones, including eight representatives from non-Slavic countries, such as Germany (2), Israel (1), Lithuania (1), France (1), Canada (1), Romania (1), and Japan (1).

Since 1988 the commission has published a newsletter called *Slavistická folkloristika* [Slavic folklore studies] which is put together by the Jan Stanislav Institute of Slavistics and the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences under the guidance of executive editors Katarína Žeňuchová and Hana Hlôšková (the online version is available at <http://www.slavu.sav.sk/casopisy/folkloristika.php>). This newsletter provides information on the commission's activities, new publications, ongoing research, and conferences to all Slavic folklorists.

The creation of a separate commission website was a significant step in improving the quality of the exchange of information between folklorists. Its concept and content are prepared and continuously updated by Ajdačić and the website can be accessed at <http://slavika.org/folklor/>. The website is available in three languages (Russian, Serbian, and English) and contains information about the history of the commission's activities, including information about older programmes of activities drawn up by Viktor Gusev (1989 – 1993), Ljubinko Radenković (2003 – 2013), and Andrej Toporkov (2008). The website includes profiles and bibliographies of prominent folklorists as well as numerous links to the websites of institutions, research centres, and journals dedicated to folklore research. The minutes from the presiding committee's meetings are also an important part of the website, ensuring that members and anyone else interested are well informed.

For the five-year period from 2018 to 2023, the commission has committed to focusing on the current terminological issues of narrative folklore, the relationship between folklore and ethnolinguistics, folklore studies and literature/literary science, and folklore and visual storytelling. Upon the basis of the current research priorities, a schedule of international conferences has been drawn up and cooperation on the preparation of events with folklore research institutions in several Slavic countries has been established.

The first planned conference, entitled *Словенски фолклор и књижевна фантастика* [Slavic folklore and literary fiction], took place from 27 to 29 September 2019 in the Serbian village of Tršić, the birthplace of the linguist Vuk Stefanović Karadžić. Thirty-one conference contributions in Bulgarian, Serbian, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, and English were edited for publication by Božko Suvajdžić and Dejan Ajdačić and were subsequently published in the eighth issue of the academic series entitled *Савремена српска фолклористика*.

An international scholarly conference entitled *Питання термінології в сучасній славістичній фольклористиці* [Terminological issues in contemporary Slavic folklore studies] will take place on 19 and 20 October 2021. The conference is organised by several academic institutions, including the Rylsky Institute of Art Studies, Folklore, and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in cooperation with the Commission of Slavic Folklore

and the Ukrainian Committee of Slavists. The thematic pillars of the conference include contemporary approaches to terminology research, the naming of folklore genres, “folk” and “academic/professional” terminology, semantics, pragmatics, the poetics of folklore texts, folk culture, ethnocultural traditions, intangible cultural heritage, the relationship between literature and folklore, and the interdisciplinary nature of folklore research.

From the 30th of September to the 2nd of October 2022 an international conference named *Сербский фольклор и славянская фольклористика* [Serbian folklore and Slavic folkloristics] will be held in Tršić (western Serbia) as the 12th conference in the cycle *Современная сербская фольклористика* [Contemporary Serbian Folkloristics]. The conference topic covers two perspectives – the relationship between Serbs and other Slavs and the relationship between Slavs and Serbs. In cooperation with the Institute of Culture Sciences of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and the Folklore Department of the Committee of Ethnological Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the commission plans to hold a conference entitled *Paradygmaty folklorystyki słowiańskiej – Славянские фольклористические парадигмы* [Slavic folklore paradigms] from 27 to 29 October 2022. This academic event will focus on theoretical aspects and history of Slavic folklore, including academic paradigms of Slavic folklore research and the emergence of folklore paradigms; the role of folklorists in the formation of Slavic folklore; folklore schools and their relationship to research paradigms of related academic disciplines (e.g., ethnography, religious studies, linguistics, and archaeology); genre and national specifics; and inter-Slavic, Slavic, and non-Slavic aspects of the paradigms of Slavic folklore studies.

Folklorists are also preparing for the upcoming 17th International Congress of Slavists in Paris in 2023, where they will give presentations. Chairperson Ajdačić also announced a thematic block entitled *Диалог научных парадигм в славянской и неславянской фольклористике XX века* [The dialogue of academic paradigms in 20th-century Slavic and non-Slavic folklore studies] – featuring contributions from Katarína Anastasova, Violetta Wróblewska, Galina Kabakova, Alexander Pančenko, Nemanja Radulović, Andrej Toporkov, and Dejan Ajdačić; the decision of the International Committee of Slavists to include this thematic block in the congressional agenda will be announced by the end of August 2021.

During the pandemic, the commission’s activities were carried out through online platforms, and various interesting events took place. These events were divided into two cycles: the first was dedicated to academic lectures on a selected topic and the second was devoted to new works published by folklorists from individual countries. The aim of the cycle of three online lectures was to call attention to the existence of two parallel terminological systems and genre classifications of narrative folklore texts (both folk and academic ones). The

topic of the folk and academic naming of Slovak folklore genres was addressed by Svetlana Michajlovna Tolstaya (*Lexikon folkloristiki: metajazyk folklóru* [A lexicon of folklore studies: the meta-language of folklore]), Nemanja Radulović (*O klasifikaciji proze u srpskoj folkloristici* [The classification of prose in Serbian folklore studies]), and Ambrož Kvartić (*O mestských legendách v Slovinsku* [Urban legends in Slovenia]). The series of lectures presented various thought-provoking ideas about the relationship of the names of narrative genres in the two discourses, the peculiarities of genre naming in the different Slavic traditions, the differences in genre classifications, and the absence of genre definitions in certain national folklore studies. The cycle of book presentations was opened with a lecture by Violetta Wróblewska, who presented the three-volume dictionary entitled *Słownik polskiej bajki ludowej* [Polish Folk Tale Dictionary] (2018). The positive response from commission members and attendees led to the idea of organising this type of online events on a monthly basis. Six meetings took place, introducing more than twenty new publications by folklorists from Bulgaria, Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Croatia, Serbia, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, England, Canada, and the United States.

Opportunities have opened up within the commission for folklorists to collaborate in special groups focusing on a selected field of research, involving experts from at least three different countries. The focus of the groups can be linked to various issues of the theory and history of folklore studies. The groups have the opportunity to present their programmes on the commission's website. At a meeting at the end of May, the presiding committee approved the establishment of a new working group entitled *Образное (визуальное) повествование славянского фольклора* [Visual storytelling in Slavic folklore] led by Zoran Stefanović. This working group seeks to focus on various topics, including folklore research in visual literature and communication, signs and symbol systems, visual communication on frescoes and icons, folklore graphics, embroidery, comics and graphic novels, illustrated books, and caricatures. Also, the modern graphical computer interface used in animations, video games, and in the virtual world has not been neglected.

During the pandemic, the Commission of Slavic Folklore fully developed its activities, which have since moved to the online sphere. Thanks to the dedication and activities of Chairperson Ajdačić and the support of the presiding committee and members, various interesting events took place and clearly defined framework plans were developed, marking a new phase in the history of the commission.

Dejan Ajdačić and Katarína Žeňuchová