

#### LITERATUR:

1. SCHIER, B.: Úl ako zdroj národopisného výskumu. Národopis. zborník MS, 1941, s. 72–75.

## Survivals and Innovations in the System and Structure of Meals in Slovakia

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The Ethnological Atlas of Slovakia, though published in a form that addresses the great public, is a primary source work, like other comparable surveys. It is greatly to be welcomed. At the same time, it is to be hoped that it will be followed by a series of analytical studies by its authors and by colleagues, based on its collected material. I shall discuss two topics of the atlas in this spirit.

In European research the principle was worked out by 1970 that the fundamental unit in ethnological food research should be the meal, which marks the level where foodways are connected with the whole of the lifestyle. The meal constitutes also the level where foodways are comparable between regions, ages and social groups. Food items themselves have to be seen in their role within the meal.<sup>1</sup>

In harmony with the above principle the EAS presents the maps on meals at the beginning of the section on food and foodways. The maps deal with the main meal of the day in summer and with the names for meals during the day. In line with earlier publications, it is no surprise that there appears here an archaic structure which functioned into the 20th century and is the long survivor of the medieval two-meal system. According to map VII/3 in the EAS, the system of daily meals with the main meal in the morning was widespread in Central and Eastern Slovakia. The name for this main meal in the morning is in the North-East and Lipto **obed** in some cases, the oldest Slavic name for a meal. The name for the midday meal /whether it was a snack or a meal) was **poledňe** 'half day'. In several further cases in the northern zone of Central and East Slovakia the name **obed** was not used any more but the name for the midday meal was **poledňe** (and not **obed** as in the modern spoken language). The commentary to the maps says that for the main meal in the morning a substantial hot dish was usually cooked. Whether there were further meals or not between **obed** in the morning and **večera** in the evening during the day, the above-described main meal in the morning is a survivor of the medieval two-meal system.

The medieval two-meal system, with two permanent meals a day, used to be practised all over Europe from the king's table down to the peasant's family. The two meals were in the morning and in the afternoon, both with freshly cooked hot dishes. If anybody had regular complementary meals within this structure, it was the ones who performed physical work, including the peasants.

The upper classes in the Carpathian Basin, i.e. Hungary, changed over to the modern three-meal system from the end of the 17th century. Dinner and supper, in their old form with hot dishes, were moved to later hours while the new meal, breakfast, was organized around the hot drink, coffee. Dinner at midday became the main meal of the day in this structure.

In the southern zone of Central Europe the medieval two-meal system survived amongst the peasants in various places up to the 20th century. Different forms of survival can be traced in Switzerland, in south German villages, in Northern Croatia, in Hungary, in Transylvania, in the Carpathian Ukraine, in Slovakia and the south Polish highlands.

In the territory of present day Hungary the surviving form of the old meal system was that the peasants ate differently according to the divisions of the year. From the first ploughing day in the spring till the first ploughing day in the autumn, i.e. in the summer half of the year, they ate according to the modern three-meal system, but during winter the medieval two-meal system was followed. In summer they brought cold breakfast with them to the fields and ate it there. The breakfast consisted of bread and lard/sausage or cheese. During the hardest tasks of the proper summer months fresh hot dishes were brought for the midday meal for those who worked in the fields. As a matter of fact, the above structure of the breakfast was one of the barriers which prevented the early general reception of coffee in the Hungarian peasant breakfast.

In a crescentic zone, enclosing the Carpathian Basin from the southwest through the north to the southeast, remnants of the medieval two-meal system survived even in the summer half year, in different forms, up to the 20th century – except for in the West. In the East, in present Carpathian Ukraine and in Transylvania, freshly cooked hot dishes were brought for the morning meal at 8–9 o'clock for those who worked in the fields. This meal was followed at midday either by the leavings from the morning or by cold food. The evening meal at home was hot.

Earlier publications left some questions open about the situation in Slovakia. The survey of the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture in 1899 on the provisioning of the agricultural labourer included Slovakia<sup>2</sup> and, in conformity with the EAS, pointed out in several cases the substantial hot meal in the summer morning. This was followed at midday sometimes by cold, sometimes by cooked food and hot dishes in the evening. What we would like to know points to the organisation of the small farms. These were mostly farms in a mountainous zone where the work

in the fields might have been organized differently from that in the lowland areas. Where did the morning meal take place? At home or in the field? In the latter case who brought the dish to the fields and at what time? Stolična in her short commentary to the map in the Ethnological Atlas of Slovakia suggests that the morning meal took place before the beginning of the work of the day. The agricultural survey also said in some cases that the labourer would not start working before that large morning meal. A further question is, which kind of midday meal, if any, followed the substantial morning meal? If that was also cooked food, was it the leavings from the morning, or fresh? In the latter case who brought it to the fields again? What kind of food constituted the evening meal at the end of the day?

While waiting for answers to such questions, I am inclined to regard the whole area where the morning meal survived into the 20th century for the whole year as the main meal of the day, as an archaic area in the context of the Carpathian Basin.

In Slovakia the above area borders on the modern Western Slovakian region. Stolična characterized the foodways of the latter among other things by the midday dinner of two dishes, a thin soup (as opposed to thicker soups) and a main dish.

Thin soup as an introductory course appeared in the upper class kitchen in the Carpathian Basin in the late 17th century, in the same wave of innovations as the daily three-meal system. Contemporary records tell us that up to that turning point boiled meat or meat in sauerkraut or turnip used to be the introductory course on the upper class table. Only one or two spoons were laid on the table where several persons ate. If somebody decided to sup some of the gravy of the meat, he asked for that spoon, used it, wiped it and returned it. Craftsmen's festival menus up to the middle of the 18th century did not follow the new pattern of eating with an introductory thin soup as yet. By the end of the 18th century thin soup was the introductory course on the menus of Hungarian peasant weddings and a standard course at peasant's everyday dinners in the 19th century.

It is a great merit of the EAS that it touches on such structural questions within the food culture.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Wiegelmann, Günter: Was ist der spezielle Aspekt ethnologischer Nahrungsforschung? *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 1, 1971, 6–16.

<sup>2</sup> *Mezőgazdasági munkabérek Magyarországon 1899-ben.* Budapest 1901. / = A m. kir. földművelésügyi minister kiadványai 22./