

The Golden Fifty of *Narodna umjetnost*

Note from the Editor-in-Chief

There can be no doubt that fifty years of publication of a journal demonstrates the soundness of reasoning behind its establishment and gives powerful impetus for its continuation. A scholarly journal is the identity card of its home institution, reflecting its function, development, as well as the ideas and issues considered crucial for the development of the areas studied by its researchers; or, in the words of the editors of the first issue of *Narodna umjetnost*: “this annual journal has been conceived of largely to serve as a point of reference for the Institute’s future development in terms of style and its scope of activities; and conversely, the Institute’s activities are expected to have an impact on the journal” (1962: 158).

Thus, after the establishment of the Institute of Folk Art in 1948, the idea about the need for a journal based at the Institute took fifteen years to evolve and come to fruition. The systematic development of scholarly interests of the researchers at the Institute, which led to the publication of monographs featuring systematized and interpreted folklore material collected in Istria, was also the reason behind the publication of the journal. From its very inception the journal was not limited to the researchers working at the Institute, but was open to collaborators; and did not focus exclusively on publishing material from the Institute’s archives, but reported on “current events related to folklore” and published “reviews of domestic and international research in folklore studies and ethnology” (Palčok 1962: 7). Reviews of books, conferences, symposia, festivals and lectures held in the country and abroad as well as chronicles of the Institute have been a very important part of the journal and took up many of its pages, as a way of keeping pace with the current national and international

developments of the discipline, which has always been an important part of the Institute's profile and recognizability. The importance of and the need for ensuring the widest possible reach is reflected in the publication of contributions in foreign languages. Starting with issue no. 5 (1967) all articles in Croatian were accompanied by an abstract in a foreign language, and as will become apparent later, the entire activity of the Institute was oriented towards international communication.

Changes in research paradigms and research topics are evident from the very first issue. For instance, the section entitled *Folklore in contemporary life* was announced in the first issue, but appeared only in the following two issues featuring a total of three papers. In other words, it was as early as the mid 1960s, following the publication of articles on the potential of contemporary use of the folklore costume (Gušić 1963; Benc-Bošković 1964–1965) and on the position of folk art in the media (Ivančan 1964–1965), that the notions of the field, research topics and research approaches start to be taken more broadly. Accordingly, from then on all research published in the journal has been seen as looking into “folklore as contemporary art, as a living process, a creative expression of the culture in which we live, which provides context for both the folklore creations that we are investigating and for scholarly perspectives” (1973: viii), making up the bulk of the content of the journal. This became particularly evident in the mid 1970s with the announcement that the following issues of the journal would be dedicated to a discussion on the postulates of the folklore research current at the time. These discussions were a result of a several-year long project “Transformations of folklore traditions in contemporary culture” (no. 13, 1976: vii). The published research showed that “tradition in general, and folklore tradition in particular, exists as part of each contemporary cultural phenomenon, influencing it on an explicit and on a multitude of implicit levels, corresponding to the converse effect that the ideas of elite or written cultural creations have had on folk creativity” (no. 15, 1978: 9). Notable in this respect is the complex position of the researcher dealing with the phenomena from his/her own everyday life, which s/he therefore must first become aware of (ibid.). Research dealing with regional issues and monographic research continues to play a major part in the activities of the Institute. On the initiative of the people of Sinj, on its 20th anniversary, the Institute dedicated a double issue of *Narodna umjetnost* 5-6 (1967–1968) to the folklore of the region of Sinj on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the Alka of Sinj, which was meant to serve “as a reflection of the collective endeavors of scholars and professionals at the Institute

in dealing with such a complex topic” (Bošković-Stulli 1967–1968: 667). Thematic issues about the region of Zagorje (no. 10, 1973), the Island of Brač (no. 11–12, 1974–1975) and the Island of Zlarin (no. 17, 1980; no. 18, 1981) followed, with contributions by the Institute’s scholars and external collaborators. Empirical and theoretical interests come together in the issues devoted to the research of the carnival (1986, 1988) as well as the notion of custom (1987), and the interest in them was maintained in individual contributions in several issues that followed. With the increase in the number of ethnologists employed at the Institute, research interests gradually expanded into ethnology and many other contemporary topics. This is in harmony with the epistemological development of these disciplines and subdisciplines: with time they influence and permeate each other, their borders becoming fuzzy as a result of their shared methodologies, leading to interdisciplinary research in the humanities. “The history of changes, a perpetuation of paradigmatic shifts” (Lozica 2009: 14) is reflected in the journal, especially in the texts published to mark the anniversary of the Institute (e.g. no. 35/1 and 35/2, 1998).

Several issues of the journal were dedicated to the work and research interests of the Institute’s distinguished researchers, including Vinko Žganec, Fellow of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the founder of the Institute (1991), Maja Bošković-Stulli, Fellow of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (no. 30, 1993) and Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin (no. 33/2, 1996). These issues also included contributions in Italian, German and English by scholars from abroad.

The first special issue of the journal in English was published in 1981, and, according to its editors, it was two years in coming because of the wide range of international researchers interested in the issue of folklore as oral communication. The efforts to publish in foreign languages were greatly assisted by international conferences organized by the Institute’s researchers. In 1987 in Rovinj the 17th Conference of the Commission for Folk Poetry of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF) was organized, and in 1988 the editors of *Narodna umjetnost* prepared a special edition published by the Institute entitled *Ballads and other Genres/Balladen und andere Gattungen*. This was also the 40th anniversary of the Institute, and in addition to the Croatian issue dedicated to the carnival, there was another special issue of *Narodna umjetnost* in English, featuring twelve articles on a variety of topics, which shows the wide range of topics studied at the Institute at the time. Special issue 9 entitled *Contributions to the Study of Contemporary Folklore in Croatia* was

published as a separate volume accompanying the 12th Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES, Zagreb 1988), with the aim of presenting the results of the past decade's research to the international community. In the following year (1989), in addition to the book of proceedings from the Congress published in English (entitled *Folklore and Historical Process*), *Narodna umjetnost* also featured contributions from the congress in English, French and German.

Cultural processes caused by the war in Croatia found their way into the journal as early as 1992 while the war was still in full swing. They were investigated from the perspectives of ethnology and folklore studies on the synchronic and diachronic level, leading to the development of early war ethnography as a reaction to the traumatic events. The academic support from abroad was reflected in the 1993 issue, which largely featured contributions in Italian, German and English. Judging by the reactions from our colleagues from abroad, books of proceedings dealing with war ethnography published in English (*Fear, Death and Resistance* 1993; *War, Exile, Everyday Life* 1995) generated great interest. This added fresh impetus to the attempts of establishing active communication with the international community through the journal. In 1995 a new series of *Narodna umjetnost* was started, with an extended title: *Croatian Journal of Ethnology and Folklore Research*. From then on the journal has been published twice a year – the first issue in English, and the second in Croatian and other languages. Moreover, an International Advisory Board was established. Issue no. 36/1 (1999) features articles from the international conference entitled “Where does the Mediterranean begin? Mediterranean anthropology from local perspectives”, organized on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Institute, containing discussions on emic and etic perspectives regarding the imaginary borders of the Mediterranean. The topic of the Adriatic region as a space of identity was tackled again several years later (no. 43/1, 2006). Gender and feminist theories which were discussed at the international postgraduate seminar held at the Inter-University Center in Dubrovnik appeared in issue no. 40/1 (2003), and contributed to the research of gender, nation, tradition and transition. Tensions between nation-state ideology and the new realities of migration, multiculturalism and transnationalism in Europe and in the Western World were the topic of issue no. 42/1 (2005) of *Narodna umjetnost*, which featured a selection of papers presented at a panel held at the 8th Congress of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF) that took place in 2004 in Marseille.

The wide range of topics demonstrates the continuing openness of the journal and the openness of ideas of the Institute's researchers, with the journal offering "something for everyone", as stated by our fellow researchers – the journal's loyal readers – in a short survey. It is evident that research interests and theoretical and methodological interests of each new generation of researchers have had a great influence on the journal's editorial policy, resulting in a significant contribution to the development of our disciplines and the humanities in general. Those issues of the journal which contain syntheses of the disciplines, sometimes reviewing decades of the Institute's work, indicate a continuing reflectivity and critical reflection. Other issues reveal the receptiveness to new topics and research interests, and a willingness to be at the forefront of research into current cultural and social processes. Thus, some of the volumes are more frequently referred to by our readers. Although the journal has kept its original name, *Narodna umjetnost*, as a tip of a hat to tradition, its openness evident in the range of topics covered and methodologies used from its very inception is witness to the diversity of interests and interdisciplinarity.

All issues of *Narodna umjetnost* have been digitized and are available as "open access" on the webpage of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research and via the Croatian scholarly journal database HRČAK (<http://hrcak.srce.hr/narodna-umjetnost>). According to the number of visits and downloads, *Narodna umjetnost* is among the top journals on HRČAK. We are also trying to achieve greater visibility and recognizability worldwide through indexing in secondary databases, as a way to improve scholarly publishing and promote excellence on the national and international level.

Alongside the ideas and topics that the journal deals with, its design has also changed and is left to the discretion of the editors, which have full autonomy in editing every issue of the journal in accordance with the highest international peer review standards.

Although the editors have changed, the editorial policy has remained constant from the very beginning, following the principles of complete autonomy of decision, criticality and adherence to high standards. We believe that this is a meaningful contribution to the humanistic orientation, according to which the public good produced as a result of our efforts should not be assessed based on its market value but should be based on its applicability in education, in shaping the public opinion and in building the identity of communities and of our disciplines in contemporary society. At this unfavorable moment for the humanities, when departments across

the globe (where our fellow researchers are working hard) are facing cuts or elimination, and when there are uncertainties as to the funding of our disciplines and science in general, we are trying to contribute to creating a more positive atmosphere, and to show that humanities research is vital for the successful development of the society.

Over the years, our endeavors have been greatly assisted by many collaborators past and present – editors, scholars on the Editorial Board and the International Advisory Board, authors and reviewers – and we sincerely thank them for all their work.

Tvrtko Zebec

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