

IVAN LOZICA

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb

FINITIS DUODECIM LUSTRIS: INTEGRATING CHALLENGES

Sixty years of the Institute's existence cannot be described as a mere institutional persistence – it is the history of changes, a perpetuation of paradigmatic shifts. My intention is to rethink those changes. Hence there is a perturbation, a turn-about in the title of the paper. Challenging integration refers mainly to our present situation while my survey comprises diachronic approach. I would rather describe the past six decades as a continuous and complex process of integrating diverse theoretical, political, ethical and other challenges within our small scholarly community, in order to trace that subtle and hidden link which forms the actual identity of our Institute and makes us recognizable both in domestic and in European context.

Key words: Institute of ethnology and folklore research; anniversary

To break the habit and to avoid the sterility of the ceremonial anniversary let me follow the odd *staccato* manner of European bureaucratic *curricula* and retell the history backwards. That might help us to recollect the past challenges and to gain a better review of our responses to those challenges.

The sixth decade

To start with, let me describe the current situation. Research activities in Croatia are mainly carried out by the public research sector, which consists of seven universities and 26 public institutes, and the Institute of ethnology and folklore research is one of them. We are dominantly financed by budget resources allocated by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (MSES).¹

Public institutes are established for the purpose of implementation of public service programs in scientific research. They conduct all types of

¹ Švarc 2008 (<http://cordis.europa.eu/erawatch/index.cfm?fuseaction=ri.content&topicID=51&countryCode=HR&parentID=50>)

activities, from continuous research activities to contractual scientific research (projects).² Nowadays there are 9 projects financed by the Government at the Institute, while our continuous research remains mostly unpaid – if we do not include our salaries and lodging expenses, which we probably should.

The challenges of our time have already been stated in the call for papers. Those challenges can be articulated and localized in a sweeping mode. Here we are, celebrating the Institute's 60th birthday mostly in English, though there might be only a few native English speakers in this room, maybe none. To make it worse, my title is partially in Latin and there are positively no Romans here. In defending myself I have to say that the expression *finitis duodecim lustris* in English means "to the past twelve five-year periods" – the inscription actually serves as a post-socialist joke and evokes the notorious five-year plans of the socialist period.

How do our projects cope with the challenges? The nine projects cover broad and multidisciplinary topics – keeping with our proclaimed long-term interdisciplinary orientation and reputation.

The project **Genological aspects of oral and folk tradition** continues the genre studies in folklore research and aims to extend the existing knowledge of Croatian tradition in the field of literary and folklore studies in European context, including the influences of the Mediterranean and Central European cultural milieu. Folklorists, ethnologists, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists are working together to publish critical editions of older manuscript sources and to set up databases.

The **Interpretative levels of tradition** is a project based on the notion of tradition as the process of multi-level interpretation of repetitive procedures and symbols. It examines the interaction of tradition and retraditionalization in the formation of cultural identity, includes case studies and covers diverse topics and media. The interpretative levels of tradition are studied from the perspective of cultural theory, folkloristics, mythology, ethnomusicology, performance studies and cultural anthropology.

The objective of the project **Food culture within social changes of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century** is to promote nutrition anthropology as active and applicable type of knowledge. It continues historical culinary heritage research in the wider context of cultural policies on Croatian culinary standards and their symbolic position in the tourist "pleasure culture" as the principal kind of global production and cultural identity exchange.

The **Cultural animalistic studies: contributions from literary studies, folklore research, ethnology and cultural anthropology** is the first systematic project of this kind in Croatia. The already published book

² <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2483>

[*Cultural Bestiary*, 2007] is the first step in this project. Research activities include translations, publishing of older sources, organizing an international animalistic studies conference accompanied by a small exhibition and forming a database as a starting point for further research.

The project **Dance ethnography and multiple identities** combines the methods of the European ethnochoreology research tradition with the American dance ethnology as well as the structured movement anthropology. It deals with dance and music in various communities and in the social, cultural and historical context, having in mind the interweaving of rural and urban traditions, global influences and local adaptations, the role of gender and changes in aesthetics.

The aim of the project **Post-socialism and the cultural subject: hybrid practices of cultural mediation** is to establish the humanistic discourse and ethno-anthropological research framework for the "transitional character" of Croatian modernity. Cultural phenomena are submitted to a systematic ethnographic description, interpretation and commentary in order to reveal the inherited patterns and new strategies of everyday resistance to the experience of deprivation, exclusive worldviews, cognitive innovations and inversions of social values.

Gender and nation: feminist ethnography and postcolonial historiography is an inter-institutional project which examines the usefulness of studying Croatian culture from the point of view of feminist epistemology, postcolonial and cultural studies and cultural anthropology. It points to the gender-marked places of symbolic representation with regard to the opposed values of nationalism and liberalism, emancipation and tradition, ethno-national loyalties and European integrative processes.

The project **Contemporary culture flows and the construction of communities and identities** studies the way in which individual and group identities and the feelings of belonging are constructed in the contemporary Croatian society and in the Croatian diaspora. It deals with identity discourses and narrations as well as with the specific practices in everyday life, in the context of national and transnational migratory spaces, minority communities, multicultural cityspaces, global music trends, virtual internet and transnational religious communities.

Traditional culture, globalization and local practices is the threefold ethnological project dealing with: 1) the position of the traditional culture between global ideas and local practices on the example of UNESCO's actions for the safeguarding of cultural heritage; 2) with its role on the stage, in media and in cultural amateurism; and 3) with its use in cultural tourism on the island of Šolta. The aim is to identify the potential of traditional culture and to reinforce its position in the context of transition and globalization.

In order to complete the review of the last decade I will now quote the titles of our former projects (2002-2005): **Homeland War and war victims in the 20th century: ethnological aspects; Ethnography of mundane transition: matrices and distortions; Ethnography of contemporary everyday life and processes of identification; Ethnographic heritage and modernity between tradition and globalisation; Folklore, literature and culture: legend, folktale, mask and myth; Music, dance and community: central and marginal practices; Issues of oral and folk poetics; Kinship and social security.**

There is no doubt: during the sixth decade we have at least been trying to answer the current challenges.

The fifth decade

The issue of interdisciplinarity actually belongs to the fifth decade of the Institute's history. As early as in the 1970s and the 1980s our folklorists were turning away from the exclusive research into *oral literature* towards the entirety of *oral tradition* – that is, oral non-literary forms also – and it was announced explicitly in the 1990s. At the same time our ethnomusicologists came close to the anthropologically oriented investigation of music, adopted the principle of researching the plurality of music and music-making, enforced the examination of insufficiently investigated topics and continued folkloristic research of music as performance and communication. Our ethnologists outgrew their initial role in researching the context of folklore, i.e. folk art. The openness towards the flow of cultural anthropology and the radical criticism of the frameworks of the customs concept has redefined the folk culture as the culture of the contemporary everyday life. The newly risen ethnological approach was sensitive to political changes, such as the fall of socialism and the establishment of the Croatian state. The younger generation of experts in diverse disciplines became involved on an equal footing in the development of post-modern Croatian theoretical thought, creatively expanding and critically judging the attainments of their predecessors. We were participants during the 1990s in the open post-modern confrontation between theoretical concepts and the emergence of new (interdisciplinary, humanistic) scientific paradigms that sought to transcend the dichotomy (and dualism) of folklore studies and ethnology by post-modern writing of ethnography in combination with the recent trends in narratology and performance studies. The ideas of intertextuality and of the autobiographic discourse were successfully applied to the narrative mediation of personal experience in the war. With their content, the notations of those oral statements, narrations and testimony penetrated through the patterns of literary scholarship, but also historiographic and ethnological analysis, demanding the new pragmatic and semantic approach. The poetics of the

resistance and political rituals; warrior symbolics; everyday life in war-time; death in war and posthumous rituals; the use of arts, music and drama in overcoming the desperation and identity crises – became the topics of the interdisciplinary research and interpretation.

However, interdisciplinary approach is neither caused by war nor is it used exclusively in the ethnography of war. At the turn of the millenium, several important interdisciplinary monographs about customs and traditional culture were prepared and published at the Institute.

The fourth decade

In folkloristic, but also in ethnological research during the late 1970s, the highlight was put on the justification for opposing the village and the town, on the first and second existence of folklore, emphasising that the research into the changes in form and content of cultural phenomena is the right path towards understanding of their past and their present meanings as well.

It was shown that the hypothesis about the strict delineation between rural and urban culture was not decisive for the cultural process. Unlike their predecessors, the folklorists turned from representative cultural phenomena towards the everyday, even to what seemed to be banal, trivial phenomena. Research commenced into urban folklore, personal narratives, and children's narratives. Ethnologists researched death notices and obituaries, memorials to the victims of traffic accidents, the modern habitat culture, youth culture (high-school graduation processions, public open-air gatherings in the towns, badges, T-shirt inscriptions), children's games and songs. It was a turn away from the diachronic to the synchronic, from the historical to the contemporary – undoubtedly resulting from the influence of structuralism and the contemporary German *Volkskunde* – mostly from Lévi-Strauss and Hermann Bausinger. It should be said, however, that the strongest influence on Croatian folkloristics came from Russian formalism and Prague functionalism, combined with American contextual folkloristics. For that reason – and also because of the prior field-work experience – the exclusivity of the synchronic approach was avoided, while an ear for the changes during history was not lost.

The first three decades

In illo tempore the small staff of scholars worked together "at the Institute, on nobody's route..." It was during the 1950s and 1960s, prior to the profound demographic and social changes in the villages in Croatia, that the first major field research - both group and individual – began (in the regions of Istria, Slavonia, Banija, Lika, Konavle, Župa dubrovačka, the Dubrovnik Littoral, Sinj, the islands, particularly Brač and Hvar, and Croatian Zagorje). This

research produced numerous notations which were later published in various books and anthologies. The majority of our manuscript collections dates from that period.

The Institute was founded February 6, 1948, as an independent institution under the direct management of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of Croatia. The main intention was to collect and research material from the field of Croatian folk art (folklore heritage), to establish, handle and publish that material in a scholarly way, to cooperate with institutions which promoted folk art, to give advice and professional opinions related to the application of Croatian folk art and to take care of the preservation and conservation of the legacy of our folk art (see Vitez 1998:7). Former Musicological Department of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, headed up by the ethnomusicologist Vinko Žganec, served as a nucleus for the new institute. However, philological studies, which were introduced as a supplement to musicological and ethnochoreological research, were soon on an equal footing as an independent activity owing to Maja Bošković-Stulli – and here we are, finally at the beginning.

The conclusive remarks

Both Croatian and European ethnology and folklore studies have always been nationally oriented, although not exclusively. One must have in mind the long history of comparative tendencies in the cultural research throughout Europe and the global aspirations of the so-called "proletarian internationalism" in the East. The latter resulted in the suppression of nationally integrative research into contemporary culture and favoured both historical and genre-oriented studies. Apart from all the political differences and orientations – national or international – the 20th century research into culture has strongly depended on the concepts of nation and religion as the basic units. Current European and global integrations and migrations challenge us to broaden the scope of our research, moreover to redefine the crucial concepts of culture, tradition and community. Various meanings of the community all refer to the strength of the ties within the group, of whatever nature – cultural, ethnic, religious or moral – they may be. Undoubtedly, community depends on identity, i.e. on the processes of identification. Should we finally abandon dangerous constructs of nation and faith as the basic units in cultural research and replace them with the broader concept of community? It has already been done and we must face the consequences, both in theory and in practice.

Let me first point out the consequences in the theory. All those positions of cultural pluralism, multiculturalism, cross-culturalism, transculturalism, interculturalism, and also cultural racism from our call for papers seem to be a bit outdated, at least in theory. If we accept a flexible approach and define culture as the complex set of processes – similar, parallel or even inhe-

rent in the dynamics of identity – it becomes clear that those crude stages and mechanical gradations of diverse culturalisms actually belong to the rejected, static concept of culture defined strictly by nation and religion or – rather – to political rhetoric of the past century. The only way to deal with the new dynamic concept of culture would be to continue with disciplinary integrations in humanities – and to sacrifice some of the accumulated disciplinary knowledge in order to gain the needed interdisciplinary competence in exchange, which brings us to the level of practical consequences.

In fact, the practical consequences are rather severe and they have repercussions in theory, too. If we forsake all the political prejudices, there is a strong resemblance between current global integrations and the former proletarian internationalism in avoiding the concept of national culture. Of course, officially everything looks fine: national cultures are important and have to be globally protected. But in practice it is often difficult to distinguish the protection from control and the care from tutorage. If somebody or something needs protection then somebody or something is in danger. Who is tangling the intangible cultural heritage? Let me remind you: Cosa Nostra offers protection for the poor and weak. There is an obvious discrepancy between official rhetoric and the existing order in human society. Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin would express it in Lévi-Strauss's terms as the difference between *ordre conçu* and *ordre vécu*. It is close enough to the opposition between the official and popular/folk culture in Gramsci and Bakhtin, and it corresponds to the duality of *bios* and *zoe* in Agamben's theory, enabling the horrid "inclusive exclusion" of bare life (*zoe*) into the juridical order. In Bakhtin's formulation, the locus of critical forces of culture is the people, while the mythological forces of culture emerge from the official stratum. If we intend to continue the critical trend of Croatian ethnology and folklore studies we have to be aware of those divisions. It is all about ethics and social relevance of our profession. Research into everyday life of people is a difficult task and it is less attractive when compared to mythmaking and less lucrative than mere obedience in civil service. The purpose of our public institute is to implement public service programs into scientific research, but we are scholars in humanities and our vocation surpasses the obligations of office. Interdisciplinarity is often misunderstood for the lack of expert competence, and one cannot always abandon disciplinary positions without giving up disciplinary privileges.

Let me rewind the tape of spotted challenges: folk art, communication, performance, rural and urban, past and present, everyday life, war, fear, death, resistance, identity, values, tradition, invention, heritage, culture, religion, mythology, community, global, national, regional, local, minorities, gender, individual, transition, integration. And there are many, many more. Challenges and trends are moving, swinging like pendulum to and fro, in opposite directions: they cannot be stopped or ignored, but they can be

integrated – we can use them to produce the needed energy. The good scholarly policy would be to avoid exclusivism or one-sidedness. It is wiser to build the bridges than to burn them.

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SAŽETAK

Šezdeset godina postojanja Instituta ne može se opisati kao puka ustrajnost ustanove – to je povijest promjena, kontinuitet smjena paradigmi. Rad iznova razmatra te mijene pa u naslov priopćenja namjerno unosi zbrku, zamjenjuje pojmove. Izazovi integracije uglavnom prizivaju naše sadašnje stanje, a pregled podrazumijeva dijakronijski pristup. Čini se primjerenijim opisati prošlih šest desetljeća kao neprekidan i složen proces integracije, uključivanja različitih teorijskih, političkih, etičkih i drugih izazova u našoj maloj znanstvenoj zajednici. Pokušava pratiti tu krhku, skrivenu poveznicu koja desetljećima gradi današnji identitet Instituta i čini ga prepoznatljivim u domaćem i europskom kontekstu.

Ključne riječi: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku; obljetnica