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THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE INSTITUTE OF FOLKLORE RESEARCH

Summary

After the Institute was established in 1948, it soon became clear that ethnomusicological research, then led by Academician Vinko Zganec, must be complemented by the study of texts, both poetry and prose. Also, the research of folk music soon called for the study of folk dance. Further and more complex examination of folklore indicated also the need to treat folk customs in general, since they commonly constitute the context of folk creativity. Thus, from the early years of the Institute to the present day, musicologists, theorists of literature and ethnologists have studied folklore together.

The Institute consists of departments for oral and popular literature, folk theater, folk music, folk dance and folk customs, as well as a specialized library and an archive of documents. The researchers, who are trained in different disciplines, share a common methodological constant: the obligatory phases of fieldwork — systematization of data — writing scholarly and theoretical pieces for publication.

Since the foundation of the Institute, some important changes have occurred in the field, i.e. in folklore as a phenomenon, as well as in the conceptualization of folklore as background of researchers.

In the 1950's, the Croatian village was still free of the effects of mass communication, and rural exodus had just begun. Various forms of creativity in traditional style, based on oral communication, still flourished. At that time, the research team of the Institute completed a patriotic field project in Istria by gathering an abundance of data and publishing three books, on Istrian folk stories, folk songs and dances. The books also included ethnographic notes and comments. Further regional studies were undertaken in Banija, Kordun, Lika, Dalmacija etc., regions of study geographically defined in a wider sense than today. It has since become clear that folklore phenomena, their past and present, could be studied coherently and in-depth only within narrower regions which are precisely defined in terms of space and history.

The first generation of the Institute's staff consisted of amateurs, enthusiasts and experts in other disciplines, often truly devoted people who learned about folklore as they researched it. Soon, however, arrived new members who were adequately trained and who completed their doctoral dissertations in the Institute, dealing with the basic problems of folkloristics and ethnology.

In the 1960's, selections from the Institute's rich and growing archives started being published regularly in the yearbook *Narodna umjetnost* (no. 1 appeared in 1962). Zoran Palčok, then director of the Institute, stated in the introduction to the first issue that the collections of field data kept in the Institute make »an extraordinary basis for the development of a modern folkloristics«.

Assumptions and goals which underlaid folklore studies at the time were: to gather and preserve folklore of the Croatian people and Croats outside Yugoslavia, as well as folklore of other nationalities living in SR Croatia; to analyse folklore data historically and comparatively; to critically examine earlier collections of folklore and to publish new, systematized collections; to investigate the relationship between folk creativity and contemporary culture, and to be present in contemporary cultural production. Traditional folklore was reevaluated aesthetically from the standpoint of modern literary critique (especially by Olinko Delorko and Maja Bošković-Stulli in the series *Five Centuries of Croatian Literature*); at the same time, folklore was also analyzed by methods of contemporary folkloristics and placed in the context of dynamic and redefined folk culture. Changes in life style in the period of rapid industrialization and urbanization brought forth alterations in the forms of folk creativity. A dilemma arose: is there any folklore in urban or urban-derived culture, and if so, is it comparable to traditional folklore and worthy scientific treatment? It should be pointed out that this dilemma never really dominated the research practice of the Institute's team, since it had already rejected romantic reifications of folklore and, notwithstanding individual preferences and emphases, always researched both traditional and contemporary folklore phenomena. The new social/cultural situation, however, demanded rethinking of theoretical concepts.

Consequently, the 1970's were marked by an endeavor to study, theoretically as well as empirically, the process of transformation of folklore traditions. A new team project was started, named »Interaction of folklore traditions and contemporary culture«, and its results were published in *Narodna umjetnost* nos. 13, 14, 15 and 16 (from 1976 to 1979). These studies demonstrated something which had already been known implicitly: that a piece of folklore, or a cultural phenomenon in general, lasts only if people keep modifying it according to the spirit of an epoch and their own sensibility. Certain folklore traditions live on in the present, but they may acquire new, »second existence« in modern media and entertainment industry. The study of folklore transformations identified, on one hand, some environments and customs which sustain traditions, and on the other hand, those which create new forms of folklore. Cultural creativity was discovered among us, in all human groups that are socially interconnected in various ways, including direct, oral communication. Thus, folklore is not the specialty of some »folk« outside of the researcher's world. The common assumption that contemporary civilization, with its media of mass communication, causes uniformity of everyday life, has proven incorrect.

The current research orientation of the Institute has partly evolved from this research experience of the seventies and, despite individual differences, focuses on two methodological principles:

First, the close cooperation between folkloristics and ethnology, both of which study human creativity in its wider cultural and social contexts; but folkloristics also examines

aesthetic aspect of folklore, while ethnology concentrates more on way of life and thought in relation to global social system.

Second, no sharp line is drawn between the past and the present of studied phenomena; rather than looking for their origins, as is done by traditional cultural-historical school, cultural phenomena are interpreted both in their synchronic and diachronic contexts.

Reports on the Institute's activity, including bibliographies of its members, have been published regularly (*Narodna umjetnost* nos. 1, 5/6, 7, 10 and 16). The report in this issue gives a detailed account of activities during last six years (1979—1984), along with researcher's cumulative bibliographies. We shall summarize major points of those activities which cannot be retraced by surveying the bibliographies: In the field of oral literature, three books by Maja Bošković-Stulli have been published (*Singala-mingala*, Zagreb: Znanje 1983; *Usmena književnost nekad i danas*, Beograd: Prosveta 1983; *Usmeno pjesništvo u obzoru književnosti*, Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska 1984). Divna Zečević-Zdunić published a book on popular literature (*Pučko književno štivo u hrvatskim kalendarima prve polovice 19. stoljeća*, Osijek: Radničko sveučilište, 1982). Dunja Rihtman-Augustin published a book on the structure of traditional thought (*Struktura tradicijskog mišljenja*, Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1984). A monograph on the island of Zlarin and a collection *Folklore and Oral Communication* appeared as special issues of the yearly *Narodna umjetnost*. Next two issues of the yearbook will be dedicated to various aspects of the Mardi Gras carnival, a ritual event on which an abundance of data has been collected in recent years. A group of researchers is preparing for publication a collection of contemporary narratives from Medimurje. A doctoral thesis on the classification of oral poetry and the cataloguing of ballads is in progress. A monograph on the problems of folk theater is almost completed. An outline of the classification of folk music in Croatia and a catalogue of folk instruments are completed. Two monographs, on musical repertoire of a community and on aerophonic and idiophonic folk instruments in Croatia, are in progress. Field research on folk dances in the Croatian Littoral is almost finished. An ethnological study is ready for press: *A Hundred Years of Bread and Wine: Culture, History and Economy of a Croatian Village*. Another ethnological study, treating the contemporary and historical significance of road-side monuments to victims of traffic, is completed. Work on two other monographs is in progress, treating the subjects of residence patterns in the area of Žumberak, and the cultural history of Croats in Burgenland (Austria). The numerous field-trips and the data recorded in various media (notes, tapes, video-tapes, photos, films) cannot be specified here. (A computer listing of field data in the Institute's archive will come out separately. The Institute also links its activities to a wider public, for instance by cooperating with Cultural-Educational Assembly of Croatia and participating in their folklore

summer school; by cooperating with the International Folklore Festival in Zagreb, with numerous regional festivals and exhibitions and with mass media, especially TV; and by organizing its own exhibitions for the general public.

Recently, the Institute of Folklore Research and the Croatian Ethnological Society embarked on a new project: the development of a computerized data bank on folklore and traditional culture on Croatia and Yugoslavia. The work is in progress, and in this issue we partially demonstrate the current phase of the project by presenting bibliographies and archival records of the Institute. It is hoped that in the future our data bank will be incorporated into the UNESCO international project of preserving cultural data and connected with similar data banks of other nations.

(Summarized and translated by Olga Supek-Zupan)