

## FORTY YEARS OF THE INSTITUTE OF FOLKLORE RESEARCH

After the Institute was established in 1948, it soon became clear that ethnomusicological research, then led by Academy member Vinko Žganec, 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 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 side by side.

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 and in the profile of researchers.

In the 1950s the Croatian village was still free of the effects of mass communication, and the 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 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 fundamental problems of folkloristics and ethnology.

In the 1960s, selections from the Institute's rich and growing archives started being published regularly in the year-book *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 the folklore of the Croatian people and Croats

outside Yugoslavia, as well as the folklore of other nationalities living in the Socialist Republic of 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 a part of 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 analysed 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 shifts in the forms of folk creativity. A dilemma arose: is there any folklore in urban and 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 1970s 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 a new, "second existence" in modern media and the 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 speciality 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 been proven erroneous.

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

First, it focuses on a 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 the broader 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, 16 and 21).

While in the 1950s, research recorded all observations using only pen and paper, even making hand-drawings, the development of electronic media facilitated the application of more sophisticated recording methods. Tape recording was introduced, taking photographs became more frequent and, finally, movies and the video recording of folklore performances and individual phenomena were applied.

With the modernization of recording techniques and the archiving of field data, the organization of the Archives themselves has changed. The application of electronics was introduced here also, not as an aim in itself but as a means which will allow better and quicker retrieval of single items within the archived material and will gradually create an information system which would integrate information of the field data gathered in Yugoslavia, and connect with similar international data banks. The electronic processing of data certainly makes possible better preservation of folklore materials.

The Institute has a large collection of folklore material in manuscript (1234 volumes containing texts of poetry, prose, music and dance recordings, descriptions of customs), and a collection of tape recordings (2140 tape recordings and cassettes), a photograph collection (26,719 photographs and slides), a film collection (50 documentary films), a video collection (96 video cassettes) and a data collection (a computerized survey of the Institute's documentation with a bibliography of associates). The Institute library includes 20,000 volumes and has specialized card catalogues.

A survey of the folklore data kept in the documents archive at the Institute of Folklore Research was published in *Narodna umjetnost* no. 22, including bibliographies of its members and *Narodna umjetnost* associates.

*Editorial Board*