

Editorial: Český lid welcomes those attending the SIEF2023 Congress

The initiative to create *la Commission des Arts et Traditions Populaires* (CIAP), the forerunner of *la Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore* (SIEF), was undertaken in Prague in October 1928 at the *Congrès des arts populaires*, organised under the auspices of the League of Nations. It took place, therefore, in Czechoslovakia, a country with a rich intellectual, cultural and scholarly tradition, where ethnography had been developing as a discipline since the second half of the 19th century, when it was aimed predominantly at the study of what were called peasant folk culture and folklore. One of the most prominent platforms for the field was – and to this day remains – the journal *Český lid* [literally, *The Czech People*].

The journal was established in 1891 as an initiative of the Slavacist, anthropologist and archaeologist Lubor Niederle and the cultural historian and ethnographer Čeněk Zíbrt. During the 1890s it became the central periodical of Czech-language ethnography in the then-Habsburg monarchy and has sustained an important position to this day despite numerous ups and downs. Its history has reflected and still reflects the methodological, theoretical and paradigmatic transformations of the field, and unfortunately has not avoided ideological and political influences; crucial figures in ethnology, folklore studies and sociocultural anthropology from the Czech Republic (until 1993, from Czechoslovakia) and from abroad have published in its pages. The history of the journal is *de facto* the history of the entire field, and by paging through its more than 100 volumes it is possible to form a good picture of how ethnology and folklore studies in Central Europe have been developing. During some periods (mainly between 1945 and 1989), *Český lid* was the only Czech periodical on ethnology, as the publishing of others was impossible for political or economic reasons. Since there is not room in this brief editorial for a full outline of the history of the journal, allow us to just draw attention to the twists and turns of greatest significance during its development.

Shortly after it was established, the journal became the platform for a more conservatively-conceived ethnography (in the spirit of the German *Volkskunde* of the day), especially thanks to Zíbrt, who had quite close professional ties to Wilhelm Riehl. It remained such a platform for several decades, and it is necessary to state that other Czech journals (e.g., *Národopisný věstník* [Ethnographic Journal], est. 1906) were in more vital contact with events elsewhere in the world. However, an enormous number of empirical studies which are still useful to this day was published in *Český lid*. The journal was dependent on the person of its editor-in-chief

and publisher, and after his death in 1932 it went out of business for some time. For that reason, the journal avoided Nazi persecution (among other matters, the closure of all universities) during World War II, and was revived more as an agrarian-historical focused journal once Czechoslovakia became a free state again, specifically in 1946. However, that brief period of freedom was soon replaced with a new totalitarianism (the communist coup d'état in 1948).

In 1951, the journal was “nationalized”, and as of 1953 it was published by the newly-established Institute for Ethnography and Folkloristics of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Apart from the partial political liberation at the beginning of the 1960s, the journal was strongly affected by ideological and political influences (Marxism-Leninism and until the mid-1950s, the adoration of Stalin and Soviet science), but nevertheless it expanded its subject matter in an interesting way, as did the entire field, e.g., to include the study of the industrial workers, miners, and the urban space. The years 1962–1972 can be considered – of course within the framework of the totalitarian state – to have been a liberal period for the journal and the entire field. British social anthropology was openly discussed in the pages of *Český lid* at that time, developments in the field coming from Scandinavia were reflected upon, essential texts on the concept of ethno-cartography were published and, thanks to figures such Jaroslav Kramařík, Václav Frolec, and Josef Vařeka, information about the events in the SIEF and its working groups also made it into the journal.

The rise of the journal was interrupted by the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968. During the 1970s and 1980s, therefore, its content, like that of the entire field, was again subjected to the widest possible range of ideological pressures and political supervision. In accordance with pan-European developments, however, even *Český lid* began to aim more and more at publishing texts that were focused on minorities, migration issues, interethnic relations and what was termed “contemporaneity”, while the historically-anchored issues of rural culture and folklore were weakened.

After the “Velvet Revolution” of 1989, the situation changed dramatically. Ethnology in Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic began to be freely cultivated anew, in contact with European and global scholarship. *Český lid* gradually became “one of many” anthropological and ethnological journals published in the Czech Republic, while certainly remaining the most significant. Its relatively stable backup contributed to this fact – the journal’s publisher is the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the only non-university research workplace on ethnology and related fields in the Czech Republic. The journal successfully overcame

the widest range of cuts to the financing of scholarly research during the 1990s, has a stable base of subscribers, and there is still appreciable interest among researchers – in Central European terms – in publishing in it. After the year 2000, it gradually adopted globally-recognized publication standards: double-blind peer review, international editorial board (the members are also representatives of almost all the anthropological and ethnological workplaces in the Czech Republic), and in recent years it has added DOI identifiers, gold open access policies, and a reliable presentation on the web (<https://ceskylid.avcr.cz/en/home>). The journal also proudly espouses its important tradition, which is why it is retaining its “old school” title in Czech, *Český lid*, even as it naturally no longer occupies itself with the romantic construct of “people” or “folk”. The journal also fulfils the important mission of creating and cultivating domestic scientific language, educating undergraduate students, and informing experts in museums, the nonprofit sector, etc. That is also why the journal continues to be published mostly in Czech (approximately 60 % of the articles, with the remainder mostly in English).

Members of the journal’s editorial board welcomed the news that SIEF’s 16th Congress would take place in the Czech Republic with joy. They look forward to the results of the excellent research that will be presented there being published in the pages of the journal, but they are also of the opinion that it is necessary to show those attending what the articles published as standard in the pages of this journal look like, especially at a time when the relevance of ethnology, folklore studies and related disciplines in Central and Eastern Europe is being doubted, whether from the positions of new, quasi-totalitarian ideologies or from the considerations of economic neoliberalism. The English-language articles can naturally already be accessed by the international audience, but do the Czech-language articles have enough value to be accessed internationally as well? We have decided to select from the more than 100 studies written in Czech that were published during the last 10 years (2012–2022) in *Český lid* a total of five papers and to make them available to those attending SIEF2023 and others who are interested in their English versions. We believe that by doing so we can demonstrate what the “usual” ethnology and folklore studies undertaken in the Czech Republic are like. The studies represent these fields and the journal, and we hope will be beneficial to the international audience as well. They were selected by members of the journal’s editorial board by a vote, and at least three voting members of the board agreed to choose these papers in particular. Although this is a subjective, certainly unrepresentative selection, we believe these articles show the diversity of methodologies and subject matter in ethnology and folklore studies

in the Czech Republic. They have not been adapted or updated in any fundamental way, and therefore also reflect some of the transformations in Central European ethnology during the last decade and can even serve as a kind of invitation to those attending the congress to follow *Český lid* and other journals published in our region.

These papers have not escaped some minor adjustments, of course, chiefly to render them comprehensible to non-Czech readers. This involved, for example, adding information about Czech culture and history, figures, events or institutions that are known to Czech readers but not necessarily generally known to readers abroad. This supplementary information is published in footnotes. For the same reason, we also added translations of the captions to the photographs in some papers, where they contained data useful to the interpretation of the images. In the references we have replaced the Czech translations of the titles of books by globally-recognized authors with their English originals. As regards the formal editing of the texts, we have not included their original acknowledgements, but we have added biographies of the authors, which are not commonly published in *Český lid*, and, where necessary, updated the information about the authors' workplaces and e-mail addresses. We would like to thank all the authors for collaborating on preparing their studies for this special volume, for these minor adjustments, and for double-checking the English translations.

In this special volume of *Český lid* we have arranged the articles chronologically, i.e., according to the dates of their original publication in Czech, from the oldest to the most recent. The geographic scope of the studies remains Central Europe. We are glad to be able to present the results of research by both senior and early-career researchers, men and women, with training both in ethnology and folklore studies and in sociocultural anthropology.

The members of the editorial board hereby welcome, in the name of this journal, those attending the SIEF2023 Congress in Brno and believe this work constitutes at least a small contribution to the success of what undoubtedly is the most important event ever to be held on Czech territory in the framework of ethnology and folklore studies.

*Jiří Woitsch (Český lid Editor-in-Chief 2005–2015) and
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