

CONFERENCES

7th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE SOCIÉTÉ INTERNATIONALE D'ETHNOLOGIE ET DE FOLKLORE (SIEF)

Budapest, April 23–28, 2001

The International Society of European Ethnologists and Folklorists was established in Athens in 1964 as the successor organisation of CIAP (*Commission Internationale des Arts et Tradition Populaires*), founded in Prague in 1928. Its aim is to serve European ethnology, the European cultural heritage, to seek and protect common values, a continental perspective extending beyond national and language frames. The comparative study of folklore, folk art and folk traditions reveals the common cultural heritage of the European peoples and its regional or national features, and rejects isolation and the phenomena of ethnocentrism.

SIEF held its 1st international congress in Paris in 1971, followed after a long pause by the 2nd held in the ancient Russian town of Suzdal, in 1982. Since then the international congresses of SIEF have followed in regular succession: Zurich (1987), Bergen (1990), Vienna (1994), Amsterdam (1998) and Budapest (2001).

The choice of themes for the congress in Budapest was linked to the millennium. The theme was expressed in the title: *Times – Places – Passages. Ethnological Approaches in the New Millennium*. The central theme was thus “time”, more specifically the change of era, the experience of time in the life of societies and individuals. The programme was grouped into blocks around six major themes selected in advance; the morning plenary sessions and the afternoon panels were also linked to these. The selected themes were already set out in the first circular letter sent out in 1999 and again in the second sent in 2000 (see also *Néprajzi Hírek* 1998. XXVII. 40). According to the programme the titles of the six major themes and the keynote papers introducing the themes at the plenary sessions were:

1. Final times, past, history and memory.
KLANICZAY, Gábor (Budapest): Memory and the Supernatural in a Juridical Context: The Making of the Saint and the Witch.
2. The ethnography of states: nation, transnationalism and globalization.
SHORE, Cris (London): Nation and State in the European Union: Anthropological Perspectives.
3. Theories and politics of cultural identity, ethnicity, gender and milieu.
TISHKOV, Valery (Moscow): Anthropology of Post-Soviet Transformation.

4. Urban transformation and urban ethnography.
FEJŐS, Zoltán (Budapest): Old and New in Urban Culture: Dilemmas in Interpreting Recent Urban Transformations in Budapest.
5. Production of locality: power and strategies of culture.
FRYKMAN, Jonas (Lund). Articulating Europe in the Local: Between Memory and Material Culture.
6. Forming ethnological knowledge: fieldwork, text, public folklore and museum.
KORFF, Gottfried (Tübingen): Das ethnographische Museum: Schule des Befremdens?

Mention must also be made here of the opening paper by Swedish professor Orvar LÖFGREN (Lund) (*European Ethnology and Life in the Experience Economy*), which looked at the future facing the life of European peoples and European ethnology in the “new economy”. (For a Hungarian translation, see: Tabula 2001. 4:1. 3–13.) He asked whether ethnology will be capable of interpreting the culture and way of life appearing together with the new economy, but concluded that only future research can answer this question. Most of the papers presented in the plenary session also analysed from the viewpoint of ethnology/anthropology the transformations in Europe in recent years and the changed conditions of the peoples of the continent. Professor Cris SHORE in his paper on “nation and state in the European Union” came close to the field of futurology. He pointed out that, like the nation states, the EU is also creating its own symbols (arms, flag, anthem), the common currency, the Euro will also be a further influence shaping the awareness of unity, and further steps could be the European passport and citizenship. Moscow professor Valery TISHKOV, Director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, examined the influence of systemic change on the life of Russians. He examined the nature of “homo sovieticus”, the ethnic and demographic processes, and raised many considerations (such as the extent of alcoholism) which throw light on the undercurrents of Russian society today.

Swedish professor Jonas FRYKMAN examined the manifestation of Europeanness at the level of local societies, mainly through Scandinavian and Mediterranean (Dalmatian, Italian) examples. He drew his examples mainly from material culture, the world of objects and memory. Professor Gottfried KORFF gave a detailed analysis of the place of ethnological museology among the different museum branches, particularly stressing the work of Rivière and colleagues in this area. His aim was to formulate at theoretical level the tasks and future possibilities of museums of ethnology and in particular, of regional and local collections.

Among the Hungarian speakers in the plenary session, Gábor KLANICZAY analysed the relationship between the “saint” and the “witch”, memory and the supernatural, drawing mainly on Hungarian examples. We heard about the legends and memory of “Hungarian saints”, and also about the confessions and types of documents which arose in criminal proceedings against persons accused of “making a compact with the devil”. Zoltán FEJŐS presented the new and old features of urban

culture, the dilemmas of interpreting current urban changes through the example of Budapest. He spoke about the ethnic, linguistic, religious and social articulation of the urban population, the migration processes, the groups moving out and in, the changes in urban spaces, the spread of shopping centres, office buildings and markets, as well as the replacement of many public statues.

The further papers were presented in 12 panels and 17 sections. It is not possible here to cover the themes of the panels and sections, or to list the organisers, panel and section leaders and speakers. All we can do is list the titles of the panels and sections as published twice in the programme booklets:

Panels:

1. The Power of Memory: Remembering and Forgetting (G. KILIÁNOVÁ).
2. History, Traditionalization and Local Community. (A. B. AMUNDSEN).
3. Ritualisiertes Schreiben. Inschriften, Eintragungen als Wunschvermittlung und Erinnerung (G. BARNA–H. EBERHART).
4. Cultures of Risk: Ethnography Inquires into Managing the Future (S. BECK–G. WELZ).
5. Cultures of Borderlands: Social Practices of Separation and Hybridization (M. FEISCHMIDT).
6. Dreadful and Dreamful Worlds: Consumption in Post-Industrial and Post-Socialist Transformations. (M. VÖRÖS–V. ZENTAI).
7. Performances, Interpreters and Cultural Conflict: Reading Strategies (G. NOYES).
8. The Place of the “Small Ethnologies” in the Concept of the New Europe (R. JOHLER).
9. Worlds in Motion: Folkloristics Approaches to Ethnicity and Migration (C. SÁNCHEZ-CARRETERO).
10. Producing Locality: Strategies of Culture and Power (F. J. KOROM).
11. Economics as Folklore (U. KOCKEL).
12. Museum, Heritage and Identity (A. GUSTAVSSON).

Sections:

1. The Ethnography of States, Nation, Transnationalism and Globalization.
2. Ethnology of Mobility and Migration.
3. Ethnic Groups and Communities.
4. Religions, Rituals.
5. Past and Memory.
6. Folklore and Ethnology: European Perspectives.
7. La construction de la patrimoine ethnologique.
8. Rites, Celebrations.
9. Ethnology of the Future: Practices and Imaginations.
10. Topics, Theories and Methods of European Ethnology.
11. Narratives, Autobiographies and Memory.
12. Regional Identities, European Regions.

13. Cultural Identity.
14. Urban Transformations.
15. Community Studies.
16. Gender and Ethnology.
17. Locality and Belonging in a Global World.

Besides English, German and French were also working languages of the congress and their presence somewhat exceeded the proportions reflected in the titles given to the panels and sections. By a rough estimate, 80–82% of the papers were in English, 8–10% in German and 6–8% in French. There were some panels and sections where only one language was used, but most used two, which had to be taken into account when inviting people to chair the section sessions.

A volume containing abstracts of the papers and a description of the panels was published for the congress. It contains 225 abstracts and the introductory texts for 11 panels. In a separate volume we published 8 papers presenting the institutional background of Hungarian ethnology, and papers of the 6 plenary sessions were published in another volume in the autumn of 2001. Including also the presentation by Professor R. FOX on the activity of the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the opening speech of O. LÖFGREN, a total of 252 papers were presented during the congress.

The list of participants was published in printed form, containing a total of 343 names and postal addresses. There were 384 guests at the opening session and the reception that followed. It is worth mentioning that besides ethnologists and folklorists, there were also anthropologists, historians and sociologists among the speakers and participants. With the exception of a few peripheral countries (Iceland, Cyprus, Malta), all countries of Europe were represented. An especially large number came from the German-speaking territories and the Scandinavian countries. Close to one third of the roughly 300 foreign participants were from Eastern Europe, from the former socialist countries. We covered the costs of their participation from grants received from foreign foundations. The European Cultural Foundation covered the participation fee and costs of accommodation of 14 researchers from Eastern Europe and the Wenner-Gren Foundation (New York) paid these costs for 36 persons. Around two dozen came with the support of bilateral international agreements of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and there were others (mainly from Poland and Slovenia) who managed to obtain grants and cover the costs themselves. Around 25–30 persons came from countries outside Europe (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Israel, Japan, Turkey).

The week-long event was held in the headquarters of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and in the Museum of Ethnography. Nine sections and panels met simultaneously from Tuesday to Friday in seven rooms in the Academy and two in the museum. Eight papers could be presented a day in each section, representing four hours of session.

We consider the greatest achievement to be that the whole programme announced was actually carried out, in all nine parallel venues without any hitches, and

the papers and discussions were held with an adequate number of listeners. The programme, to which details were added right up to the last minute, was up-to-date in all cases, and the chairpersons conducting the sessions and the section assistants kept things under control. There was no lost time at this congress, there were no problems with the technology, projections went smoothly, etc. The two venues of the sessions, the Academy and the fine building of the Museum of Ethnography, together with the environment of the Danube Embankment, were worthy settings for the congress and earned much praise from the foreign guests. The staff of MTA – NEI (International Co-operation Office of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) who handled the hospitality played a vital role in all this. They collected the participation fees, reserved accommodation, made travel arrangements, organised the opening reception, the excursion buses, etc.

The excursion on Saturday to Szentendre was a more informal part of the programme. After short sightseeing the 140 excursionists gathered in the Town Hall assembly hall to hear succinct and largely extempore information in English on the institutional background of ethnology in Hungary, then continued the programme in the Open-air Ethnographic Museum. After lunch the museum colleagues held guided tours organised by Miklós CSERI introducing them to the peasant architecture and housing culture of different regions. Supper was held in the “Jászárókszállás inn” and was accompanied by a well chosen programme of folk dance and folk music.

There were numerous other programmes linked loosely to the congress. Those who did not have the time or the money to take part in the excursion to Szentendre could choose an anthropological sightseeing programme in Budapest. The congress badge gave free entrance to the exhibition on “Images of Time” in the Museum of Ethnography and one in the Budapest History Museum titled “Symphonia Hungarorum” which had inscriptions also in English. Optional programmes included a visit to the ELTE Institute of Ethnology (where Professor Vilmos VOIGT received the 20–30 visitors) and to a screening of ethnological films held in the Museum of Ethnography (János TARI and Judit CSORBA). Right from the first day there was an exhibition of books on ethnography available for sale in the foyer of the Academy headquarters. Several leading publishers (such as Walter de Gruyter) sent books for this exhibition and foreign participants also brought copies of books with them. These were given as gifts to the library of the HAS Institute of Ethnology.

A ten-member scholarly committee undertook to elaborate the scientific programme for the congress, select the keynote speakers and judge the proposals for panels. Its members were Konrad KÖSTLIN (Vienna), as president of SIEF, Péter NIEDERMÜLLER (Berlin), general secretary, Regina BENDIX (Philadelphia), Reginald BYRON (Swansea), Thomas SCHIPPERS (Nice), Gábor BARNA, Zoltán FEJŐS, Tamás HOFER, Attila PALÁDI-KOVÁCS and Vilmos VOIGT. The local organising committee also had ten members: Balázs BALOGH (secretary), Miklós CSERI, Zoltán FEJŐS, Mihály HOPPÁL, Réka KISS, Klára KUTI, Ilona NAGY, Attila PALÁDI-KOVÁCS, Kincső VEREBÉLYI, and the Director of MTA NEI, János PUSZTAI. Both committees met regularly since the end of 1998 and operated efficiently, in good

harmony. Relations with the international board of SIEF were also very constructive. Konrad KÖSTLIN and Péter NIEDERMÜLLER acted well as intermediaries between anxious board members and the local organising committee, and also gave effective help in defining the focal points of the programme. All members of the committee took part in the local organising work, but special mention must be made of Klára KUTI and Réka KISS. They both did excellent work in dealing with the daily correspondence, keeping in touch with the foreign participants, handling the computer database, keeping track of changes in the programme, etc. Right from the start Klára KUTI was the key person in the SIEF office set up in the HAS Institute of Ethnology. Others who deserve special mention are Eszter CSONKA-TAKÁCS, Zsuzsa SZARVAS, Ildikó KRISTÓF and the 26 young PhD students who took part in the section sessions as assistants. The Ministry of Education paid the participation fee for the team of young people, most of them PhD students and undergraduates. Our thanks are also due to the Hungarian colleagues both from Hungary and abroad who undertook to head sections and acted as hosts in providing guidance, information and hospitality for the foreign participants. Although the HAS Institute of Ethnology undertook the main burden of organisation and administration, it found good partners in the Museum of Ethnography and the Szentendre Open-air Museum as co-organisers. The booklet presenting the Hungarian workshops of ethnology was produced with the participation and co-operation of representatives of the European Folklore Institute, the university departments, the Hungarian Ethnographical Society, the HAS Institute of Musicology and the discipline in general (Ethnology in Hungary. Institutional Background. Budapest, 2001. European Folklore Institute).

The feedback received orally and in letters attests to the success of the congress. The first reports have already appeared in the more recent and more regularly published information bulletins (e.g. NNF News 2/2001, pp. 2–5; *Parcours anthropologiques* No. 8, Lyon, 2001. 1–68). The positive opinions allow us to conclude that the organisation of the 7th SIEF congress contributed to the enrichment of European ethnology. The volume of *Plenary Papers* appeared in December 2001 and has been mailed to all participants.

Attila PALÁDI-KOVÁCS