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*ETHNOLOGY AND STUDY OF SLAVONIC LANGUAGES*

*Although every science creates its theoretical basis independently, it has become completely clear that it is not possible to solve various scientific problems successfully without cooperation of other sciences. Yet because of this very independency of our profession it is necessary to become even more lucid towards problems of other sciences; otherwise we may easily stray into idiocy (Boris Paternu). Since contemporary ethnology is strongly aware of both axioms, it has chosen its course, but it constantly follows the development of other — especially historical — sciences at the same time. Many misunderstandings often arise from ignorance. Slovene ethnologists have therefore already formed connections with folklorists, psychologists and architects in order to find out if future cooperation is possible. At the beginning of this year (February 2, 1980), a conference dealing with common characteristics as well as differences between ethnology and the study of Slovene Language and Literature took place. Bulletin of Slovene Ethnological Society (Nr. 2) is dedicated to this topic and brings reports, contributions and discussion from this conference.*





*Ethnologists had two reasons for the choice of their discussant. One of them was the subject of folk literature which is the object of research of both sciences and thus connects them. The other reason is the fact that our leading representatives of literary theory in the past (such as Krek, Murko and Štrekelj) also researched folk literature and were at the same time leaders and representatives of Slovene ethnology as well. In the 19th century all problems which concerned ethnology were dealt with within the frame of literary theory. In the 20th century this uniform science started to divide into individual disciplines (study of Slovene language and literature, folklore, ethnology). Was this division only a result of a need for further specialization or is it possible that the two sciences do not share as much in common as it had seemed before? On the other hand, many controversial problems and questions arise: is the harmony between both sciences possible today as well if it was possible in the past? Which are their common interests? Do these still exist at all? And if folk literature represents one of such common interests, there may be others as well. The third science —folklore— partly accepts the results of the other two sciences, but as to whether these three sciences represent three completely different orientations or are they just a result of lack of communication among them.*

*The conference revealed that the connection between the sciences has been too weak up to now and emphasized different views, different theoretical foundations and methodological orientation of the sciences. It became clear that ethnology and Slovene language and literature are not as related as it may sometimes seem regarding their common orientation in the past because ethnology was also related to sciences which did not play an important role in the development of Slovene language and literature — such as geography or statistics (Slavko Kremenšek). Original ethnological accents and starting-points were pushed into the background during the romantic period, but have never been invalidated. Ethnologists (Slavko Kremenšek) are therefore certain that the romantic period simply overlooked ethnological starting-points. This resulted in a somewhat false conception of ethnology which reaches over the 19th century ambitions. This romantic period thus preferred the folkloristic orientation within ethnology. Later on the specialists for Slavonic languages such as Miklošič, Štrekelj, Krek and Murko, occupied themselves with ethnological problems only within the frame of their own profession. Of course such incorporation of a certain part of ethnology into the study of*



Slovene language and literature was not accidental (Slavko Kremenšek). The part which was included suited the concepts of Slovene language and literature of that time — that was the so-called spiritual culture which was named folklore around 1840. Between 1870 and 1919 the Slovene language and literature which had been uniform until then started to divide. When the University of Ljubljana was founded in 1919, Slovene language and literature received its chair, but folklore was not included. Ethnology as an independent science did not become a part of the University then. According to Slavko Kremenšek ethnology became a certain half-colony within which other professions asserted their own interests. This was the main reason for ethnology to remain rather vague regarding the objects of its research, its methodology and its tasks and goals up to the present day. Like other sciences, Slovene language and literature took advantage of the past uniformity as much as ethnology permitted. After the second World War the Slovene Ethnographic Institute at the Slovene Academy of Arts and Sciences submitted a programme which should comprise the entire ethnological science, but after twenty-five years the result of this institution had an entirely folkloristic character. It is Slavko Kremenšek's opinion that the Institute clung to the problems of old literary theory. But Slovene ethnology at the University of Ljubljana became independent in spite of strong criticism and does not see its perspective within than ever it tries to incorporate it into its curriculum as a part of ethnology.

This short historical survey, taken from the article entitled "Development of Relation Between Ethnology and the Study of Slovene language and literature" and written by Slavko Kremenšek, was necessary in order to represent several other doubts — and especially objections — of folklorists. A discussion about folklore as an independent science in opposition to its being only an auxiliary science has been going on in Slovenia for some time. Ethnologists are prepared to recognize its autonomy only under the condition that the folklorists present their methodological orientation and theoretical basis which will not comprise only collection and prove its existence only with preservation of antiquities and which will not defend its specific position and prove its existence only with preservation of antiquities and which will not defend its specific position only with outdated motifs and needs dating from the 19th century. The contribution of Marko Terseglav clearly indicated that up to now Slovene folklore has not done this. He was in favour of its autonomy as well as Zmaga Kumer and Marija Stanonik, each from their own point of views. This request for folklore as an independent science was even more obvious in the contributions of Croatian folklorists (Hranjec, Rodić, Kukurin, Rudan, Zvonar, Grbelja, Čubelič). Some of their reports were even somewhat intolerant towards ethnology. All of them respected the results of both ethnology and Slovene language and literature, but firmly rejected the belief that folklore is a part of ethnology which was defended by ethnologists. They also opposed to methods of Slovene language and literature which would like to incorporate folk literature into its own concept in the same manner as it incorporates artistic literature. All of these different viewpoints were emphasized once more during the discussion. But ethnologists (Slavko Kremenšek) believed that they could accept independent folklore as long as it is connected to the researches of the 19th century only through etymology; they suggested that folklorists omit the doubtful terms which set folklore apart from ethnology (folk, folk art). If folklorists, however, use these terms to denote specific characteristics of their researches or in order to purposely identify themselves with the science of the 19th century, then ethnologists do reject such folklore. The special position of folklore has to be justified and theoretically proved.

Representatives of Slovene language and literature (Boris Paternu) expressed an opinion that existential questions of either profession should not arise on such a conference and should therefore be rejected in future since all of these sciences should be cultivated by our nation. It would be necessary, however, to devote every attention to the real problems of these sciences, to their methodology, their theory and work. Every phase of work from the collection of material to the final synthesis should be properly evaluated. Only in such a way the possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration as well as imperfections of such cooperation become evident. Every science will remain on a level of assistancy if it limits itself only to collection of necessary material (Boris Paternu).

Thus a new problem appeared: how strong is the theoretical basis of these three sciences? It turned out that Slovene folklore has by far the most evident theoretical deficiency. Folklorists (Milko Matičetov) substantiated this by various objective reasons such as the lack of personnel and the fact that Slovenia is the only Yugoslav republic which does not have its own chair for folklore or folk literature. Under such circumstances it was not possible for the science or its theory to make any progress. All persons present expressed the wish to get this chair since obstacles against this do not exist any more.

The conference showed that although both sciences (ethnology and the study of Slovene language and literature) do have many common characteristics, they also speak two different languages. It turned out that the differences are not the result of deficiencies of both sciences, but they also have a different relation towards the object of their research. Folk literature which should represent a common ground to both sciences, can not be investigated with methods particular to either of them since folk literature is and is not a form of art at the same time. Ethnology is not interested in artistic value of folk literature and Slovene language and literature is not interested in the life context of an artistic product which is important for ethnologists. Yet these very differences should form a foundation for common work and cooperation.