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THE TROUBLED PAST OF EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGY

SIEF and International Cooperation from Prague to Derry

By

Bjarne Rogan

E-article

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THE TROUBLED PAST OF EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGY

SIEF and International Cooperation from Prague to Derry

Bjarne Rogan

When the ninth congress of SIEF takes place in Derry in 2008, the society celebrates its 80th anniversary. As an international scholarly society it has served as a catalyst for cooperation, exchange and debates. However, its long history has been strongly marked not only by national differences, but also by uncertainties and existential doubts – as to whether it comprises one or more disciplines, the relationship to general ethnology or anthropology, and whether it should cover thematically only Europe or the whole world. Even the name of the discipline has been a bone of contention. The article traces the motivation for international cooperation within the field(s) and discusses the problems of the unity of the discipline(s), its definition and delimitation, with a focus on the postwar period.

Keywords: European ethnology, folklore, international scholarly cooperation, SIEF, CIAP

SIEF – *la Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore* – is the longest-established general organization for European ethnology. It was founded in Prague in 1928, as *la Commission Internationale d'Art et Traditions Populaires* (CIAP). It has changed name once – from CIAP to SIEF, it has outlasted more vigorous rivals, it hibernated during World War II when other organizations succumbed, it has had its somnolent periods, it has been an arena for bitter internal in-fighting and it has been remoulded several times. Still it continues to exist after eighty years as the only general society for European ethnology – although without *European* in its name. The battle of the name alone tells its own tale about the difficulties of rallying the subjects and gathering the kingdom.

Other international cooperation projects can muster a longer history, like the *Folklore Fellows* (*Communications*), started in 1908, or the (*Internationale*) *Volkskundliche Bibliographie* 1917–), but they are all much more limited in scope. Other long-lived societies like the *International Folk Music Council* (1947–) and the *International Society for Folk Narrative Research* (1959–) cover only limited sectors of European ethnology.

For an assessment of methods, theories and paradigms shifts, these networks (and some of SIEF's constituent 'commissions') would be more rewarding than a diffuse, general association like SIEF itself.[1] Current research takes place at a lower level. An international association such as SIEF serves mainly as an arena for information and exchange,

project initiation and organization, policymaking and (sometimes) funding.

However, an association like CIAP/SIEF will also be a catalyst where inherent problems of European ethnology – which, like any scholarly discipline, is a social construct – come to the fore. To follow SIEF over time gives us an insight into national differences and the relationship between subdisciplines, interdisciplinary challenges and the role of individual scholars.[2] The deep-felt sigh from the Portuguese ethnologist Jorge Dias, when he threw in the sponge and resigned as general secretary of CIAP in 1957, reveals some of the challenges and problems for European ethnology that will be discussed in the following pages. Dias was one of the foremost defenders of a unitary discipline:[3]

> Le caractère lui-même des études des cultures traditionnelles implique un amour excessif de la chose régionale et particulière […] qui est sans doute un des grands obstacles à l'entente de tous les investigateurs à l'intérieur même de chaque pays […], ce qui d'entrée fut une force – l'amour pour les faits de la culture locale, qui a marqué l'essor des études folkloriques –, est devenu un obstacle à leur plein développement comme science […].
>
> Cette situation s'aggrave encore du fait qu'en beaucoup de pays il n'y a pas de tradition universitaire en ce qui concerne l'ethnologie régionale, toute la recherche demeurant dans les mains des moindres groupes d'amateurs curieux, très souvent avec beaucoup de mérite, mais généralement contraires à une organisation supérieure, où ils craignent de perdre la situation de prestige personel qu'ils ont conquise dans le milieu où ils vivent. (Translation: see footnote.)

From a Concern with Comparison to a Vision of a Unitary Discipline

The motivation for international cooperation was anchored on three levels. First, there was a concern for access to research material across borders. The comparative method had become the ethnological method par excellence under the diffusionist paradigm in vogue in the first part of the twentieth century. When Åke Campbell (Uppsala) explained in 1937 the background for founding a rival organization to CIAP, he argued as a whole generation of folklorists had done before him, and especially the adherents of the historic-geographic school (1937: 7–8):

> It must not be forgotten that it is the ethnological and folklore material in itself and the problems arising from the distribution of the cultural elements, which has made it necessary to aspire to contact from one country to another. […] The distribution of certain folktales, folk legends, house types etc. could not be interpreted without comparing Gothonic, Celtic, Romanic, Slavic, Finnish and other traditions.

After the war there was a growing need for an infrastructure for transnational research projects. Cartography and atlases had been on the agenda before the war, and in 1953 a commission was established during the CIAP congress in Namur. Its main task was to discuss techniques and standardisation of the national atlases. From the late 1950s discussions of an atlas of European folk culture were resumed, and in 1964 the idea of a pan-European atlas, from the Atlantic to the Urals, was taken up by scholars on both sides of the Iron Curtain. A project of such proportions required some sort of supranational structure, and it was a hard blow to the newly established SIEF when *die Ständige Internationale Atlaskommission* (SIA) declared its independence from SIEF in 1965–66. SIA continued its work through the 1960s and 1970s, but disagreement on methodological and organizational issues seem to have taken steadily more of its energy before the ambitious idea of a European atlas was abandoned in the late 1980s.

If access to research material and comparison were early motives for international cooperation, and later joint projects on cartography, bibliography and terminology, some ethnologists had higher ambitions: to bridge the gap between the many local ethnologies in Europe, to define what they had in common and how they related to general ethnology (or anthropology). General ethnology was supposed to be

the glue that would keep together the European tribe of regional ethnographies. In other words, it was the tension between the particular and the general, the wish to combine the descriptive basis of European ethnographies with an analytical and theoretical approach that was on the agenda.

Several scholars had wrestled with these issues, but none with so much persistence as Sigurd Erixon. For three decades he energetically pursued his aim, on a practical level through the founding of international journals (*Folk*, *Folk-Liv, Laos, Ethnologia Europaea*) and through associations and congresses (Erixon 1955–56); and on a theoretical level – in article after article. Erixon looked to the United States for inspiration: first to American sociology of the behaviourist school, with their functionalist time-and-motion studies (Erixon 1937, 1938), later to American cultural anthropology or 'culturology' of a diffusionistic character (1951), and in the 1960s to American anthropology of a holistic brand, with a focus on social structures and the study of the individual as a methodological approach (1967). In his eyes, European ethnology, with its tripartite thematic structure of social life, material culture and oral traditions, and its double historical and contemporary perspective, was a branch of general ethnology. Erixon was a great inspiration to younger supporters like Dias, Bratanić (Zagreb), Meertens (Amsterdam), Steinitz (East Berlin), and de Rohan-Csermak (Paris).

The Main Challenges

The most important disciplinary issues that were debated in CIAP/SIEF, especially in the 1950s and

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Ill. 1: The Board of CIAP at the Arnhem congress, September 1955, posing on a village street in Zaanse Schans. From the left: Sigurd Erixon (Sweden), Albert Marinus (Belgium), Reidar Th. Christiansen (Norway), Helmut Dölker (West Germany), unknown woman, Jorge Dias (Portugal), Georges Henri Rivière (France), Pierre-Louis Duchartre (France), Stith Thompson (USA), and Milovan Gavazzi (Yugoslavia). (Photo: Nederlands Openluchtmuseum, Arnhem. AA 41324.)

1960s, may be reduced to the following four: 1) The unity (or not) of the discipline, 2) its delimitation, especially its relationship to general ethnology (or social/cultural anthropology), 3) the name of the discipline (and of the association), and 4) the scope of the field (Europe or the world) and how to understand the notion of 'European'. These issues were inextricably entangled. In addition, there was one organizational topic that crossed these issues: the question of the membership structure and the UNESCO/IUAES[4] relationship.

In the battle for the reorganisation of CIAP in the early 1960s, Géza de Rohan-Csermak formulated the goal in this way: "Nous estimons indispensable une synthèse de l'ethnologie européenne et de l'ethnologie extra-européenne d'une part, et de l'autre, un rapprochement des trois principaux champs d'études de l'ethnologie, la culture spirituelle, la culture matérielle et la culture sociale."[5] These issues had been sporadically discussed earlier, but in 1955 they were the focus of the CIAP congress in Arnhem and the immediate follow-up conference in Amsterdam. Whereas earlier CIAP conferences had been open events where participants gave papers on what they had on their minds and in their hearts, the hosts of this congress had invited papers on the relationship between folklore/ethnology and the other humanistic disciplines (*die Geisteswissenchaften*) and the social sciences, as well as on the name of the discipline.

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Ill. 2: The Board of CIAP at the Arnhem congress, September 1955, in front of St. Hubertusslot. From the left: Jorge Dias (Portugal), Helmut Dölker (West Germany), Milovan Gavazzi (Yugoslavia), CIAP President Reidar Th. Christiansen (Norway) who is shaking hands with Winand Roukens (the Netherlands, with his back to the photographer), Stith Thompson (USA, partly hidden), Pierre-Louis Duchartre (France), Sigurd Erixon (Sweden), Albert Marinus (Belgium), and Georges Henri Rivière (France). (Photo: Nederlands Openluchtmuseum, Arnhem. AA 41408.)

Why a more open attitude to these difficult questions? The profile of the congress certainly owed much to the new general secretary, Jorge Dias, as well as to one of the organizers, P. J. Meertens. But it seems as if the time was ripe for self-reflection. Oskar Loorits (Uppsala/Estonia) drew up the background:[6]

> […] warum wird unser Fach im Rahmen der Geisteswissenschaften nicht ebenso gleichwertig wie etwa die Lingvistik, Archäologie usw. anerkannt? […] Warum wirken unsere Arbeitsresultate nicht so überzeugend und zuverlässig, dass man unsere Wissenschaft ohne bedenken als exakt bezeichnen will? Und warum schliesslich bedeuten die Nachkriegsjahre für uns eher einen Rückschlag als eine Blüte im Vergleich zu der Hochkonjunktur nach dem I Weltkrieg? […] (Loorits 1955: 32). (Translation: see footnote.)

The answer, as argued in the various contributions (*Actes du Congrès* …, 1956), was threefold: a stronger focus on the social dimension (Karl Meisen [München], Erixon), to pay more attention to contemporary issues (Leopold Schmidt [Vienna], Erixon), and to acknowledge the unity of the discipline and give it an internationally acceptable name (Dias, Bratanić, Erixon). Erixon made important contributions, according to the reports. In the words of Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann (Berlin):[7]

> Die Ausführungen Erixons gaben einen deutlichen Einblick in den Umfang unseres Faches in Forschung und Lehre, wie es in Skandinavien gehandhabt und in seiner ganzen sociologischen Breite äussert treffend mit der Bezeichnung 'Folklivsforskning' umschrieben wird (1956: 84). (Translation: see footnote.)

The most noteworthy contribution came from Dias, one of the few Europeanists at the time with an experience also of other parts of the world: "The Quintessence of the Problem; Nomenclature and Subject-matter of Folklore" was a well-argued analysis of the dimensions of European ethnology and its relationship to general ethnology. Against the widespread counterargument, which could be traced at least back to von Sydow, saying that the researcher could not embrace the whole field of European ethnology (with its three branches) without being superficial, Dias retorted with the metaphor of medicine (Dias 1956: 9):

> I believe that the problem has a solution provided that we eschew extreme positions and take up an intermediate one. In our science we need specialists as well as general scientists. The contribution of some workers need to be complemented by that of others because without their combined efforts there will be no possibility of covering the enormous field which we have to deal with: that is to say, man as a cultural being, who must be considered and studied as a whole.
>
> Exactly as a doctor has to study general medicine for some years before he specializes in any branch of medical science, so we must begin to specialize only after years of study of all the subjects that in a general way is necessary for our knowledge of mankind. […]
>
> It is certain that in many countries this is the programme for the future, but we must consider ourselves all ethnologists, each having his speciality. Just as urologists and cardiologists are doctors, so we should all be ethnologists (cultural anthropologists). This would not prevent each one of us retaining his title according to his speciality in everyday life, *viz.* folklorist, Volkskundler, musicologist, dialectologist, ethnographer, ethnologist or anthropologist.

This debate was continued in Amsterdam among the core group, which ended up by recommending that on an international level the name of the discipline (comprising folklore, material and social culture) should be *ethnology*, with the qualification *regional* or *national* when it was necessary to distinguish between "so-called historical peoples and peoples without a written history". The recommendation was unanimous, but the German and Austrian participants (H. Dölker and L. Schmidt) made their

reservations. This is the closest CIAP ever came to a commonly accepted nomenclature for the discipline. However, with the exception of Wolfgang Steinitz (East Berlin), the German-speaking scholars were not willing to abandon the dichotomy *Volkskunde–Völkerkunde* or to accept a subordination to *Völkerkunde* (Weber-Kellermann 1956; Lühti 1955).

The one hundred or so scholars in Arnhem and the thirteen hand-picked participants at the session in Amsterdam were hardly representative of the scholarly community at large. Both the unity of the discipline and the name would soon be challenged again. There was strong resistance to defining the three branches as specialities of one and the same discipline, as well as to acknowledge them as a regional variant of anthropology. The main opposition came from the folklorists.

Many documents give glimpses of a dormant but latent opposition, like this letter from general secretary Jorge Dias to Rivière in 1955, concerning internal problems in the organization:[8]

> Il semble que les folkloristes sont des gens bysantins, avec une difficulté spéciale pour résoudre les problèmes de façon claire et définitive. […] je crains qu'il [… le président adjoint de la CIAP] n'exerce quelque influence sur des collègues âgés qui ne nous connaissent pas et qui pourront croire que nous sommes des indésirables qui menaçons la pureté du vieux folklore. (Translation: see footnote.)

"The purity of folklore" or "true folklore" was often invoked in the 1960s, when the hard debate on the reorganization of CIAP brought the opposing views to the surface. An utterance like the following might

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Ill. 3: The CIAP congress, Arnhem, September 1955. Excursion Amsterdam-Volendam 24.9.1955: O. Loorits (Uppsala), Win. Roukens (Arnhem), J. M. Ritz (München), B. Bratanić (Zagreb), and J. Hanika (München). (Photo: Nederlands Openluchtmuseum, Arnhem. AA 41434.)

perhaps have been dismissed as not representative, had it not been for the fact that it is taken from the internal correspondence of the reorganizing committee (1962–64):[9]

> Il [Rivière] ne veut absolument plus employer le mot *folklore*, et veut imposer *ethnologie*, comme cela fut décidé au Congrès nordique dit-il. […] Il admet à peine les contes populaires et les croyances, mais se refugie presque uniquement dans la technologie, comme Erixon. Nous sommes loin du folklore vrai. […] Il faudra donc rallier une majorité pour combattre ces technologues (technocrates) à tous crins. Marinus [le président adjoint de la CIAP] a raison complètement. (Translation: see footnote.)

The term *technologist* or *technocrat* was used by some folklorists for those scholars who worked with material culture topics.

In his evaluation report after his period as general secretary (1954–57), Jorge Dias concluded with a serious warning, with reference to the lack of will to follow up the Arnhem/Amsterdam agreement on the unity of the European ethnology:[10] "Aujourd'hui il nous semble que ou bien la CIAP parviendra à donner à la discipline qui constitue son objet cette orientation, ou bien nous verrons la défaite totale de ses objectifs."

The debate was complicated by varying terminology in different parts of Europe. In some milieux *folklore* included material culture studies, or at least a broader field of traditions than spiritual culture only.[11] *Folklore* was the common translation of *Volkskunde*, which covered also material objects and social life – more perhaps in theory than in practice. And contrary to the situation in the Nordic countries, folklore (in a restricted sense) was struggling to gain acceptance as an academic discipline in some countries, for instance in southern Europe.

When in spring 1963 the reorganizing committee proposed that the term *folklore* should replace *arts et traditions* in the new CIAP bylaw, it raised a storm, especially in Eastern and Northern Europe, where the term did not cover material culture and social life. Two of the four committee members wanted a CIAP only for folklore in the restricted sense:[12] "[…] à notre avis la nouvelle CIAP gagnerait à se consacrer au seul Folklore sans se mettre à la remorque d'autres disciplines que leur définition même situait en dehors de l'objectif fixé par les précurseurs du Folklore." This line of argument was rejected by the rest of the committee, but the tension between European ethnology (in a broad sense) and folklore (in a restricted sense) and the different attitudes to anthropology were the two main issues that led to the dissolution of CIAP and the establishment of SIEF in 1964. The winners were the folklorists, who took all the six seats on the Executive Board of SIEF. Half of them were folklorists who professed a restricted conception of folklore.

During these years – the 1950s and the 1960s – American folklore was marked by the bitter debate and a cleavage between what has been called the 'literary folklorists' – with a European orientation as to methodological questions and research topics – and the 'anthropological folklorists', with a stronger focus on *culture* and the social context of the folklore (Zumwalt 1988). It is interesting to observe that the literary folklorists took a keen interest in the debate on CIAP/SIEF; scholars like Stith Thompson, Richard Dorson, Wayland Hand, Archer Taylor and Francis Lee Utley all supported the folklorist camp in the battle for CIAP.[13] The American interest in European folklore is confirmed by the fact that 45 out of 52 new members who joined SIEF during 1965 were Americans. One year after its establishment almost 40 percent of the SIEF members were American folklorists.[14]

This does not mean that SIEF became a purely folkloristic organization. But we can observe a clear division in the last half of the 1960s, between a folklore-oriented SIEF that staggered on, as paralysed as the old CIAP had been, and a quite forceful movement for a European ethnology that covered all the three branches. The latter lost much of its impetus, however, with the death of Sigurd Erixon in 1968. Still it remained long an important force through its organ *Ethnologia Europaea*. This journal, planned by Erixon, was launched in 1967, in overt opposition to

SIEF and with the following manifesto: "*Ethnologia Europaea* has set itself the task of breaking down not only the barriers which divide research on Europe from general ethnology, but also the barriers between the different national schools within the continent."[15]

The issue of a subordination to anthropology had a scholarly as well a formal aspect. The latter – the UNESCO question – is treated below. The ethnologists seem to have had few problems accepting European ethnology as a branch of general ethnology. Not so with most of the folklorists, who generally opposed a closer cooperation with (social) anthropology. Much of the explanation to this difference in attitudes may probably be found in the different degrees of theorizing and of coining concepts. Folklore had early created its own scholarly apparatus, whereas ethnology tended to look to other disciplines, like sociology and anthropology, for its tools (cf. Erixon and his sources of inspiration). Let us lend an ear to Åke Hultkranz (Stockholm), who during the 1950s struggled with the editing of CIAP's dictionary of ethnological terms (1967: 39):

> Both concerning its methods and its subject-matter, which is universal and still specialized, folklore deviates considerably from regional European ethnology. […] The regrettable fact is that the latter subject has only partly achieved the scientific status which general ethnology and folklore have arrived at, due chiefly, I presume, to its less international, and less developed, body of theories and concepts. During the editing of Volume I of the International Dictionary of Regional European Ethnology and Folklore, I had good opportunity to observe the differences in theorizing between American Anthropology and general European Ethnology on the one hand, and European regional ethnology on the other.

Hultkrantz attributed this situation mainly to "the historical direction" and the "exclusive stress on historical research" of European regional ethnology, not least in Scandinavia, a fact that the defenders of a general European ethnology were clearly aware of. Their answer in Arnhem in 1955 had been to pay more attention to contemporary issues and a more sociological approach, and during the 1960s Erixon argued strongly for an ethnology of the present, in addition to borrowing concepts from anthropology – concepts that according to Hultkrantz could be further elucidated by European regional ethnologists when tested out against the special European cultural circumstances (1967: 41).

To sum up, we may say that European folklorists felt – probably rightly – that they had the most solid scholarly platform, with a set of concepts and theories that to a large extent differed from that of anthropology. But they lacked the necessary academic basis in many countries, especially in Latin Europe, where they struggled with a reputation as amateur collectors. And they feared the appetite of an expansive European ethnology and a possible subordination to a rather distant discipline like anthropology. The European ethnologists, on the other hand, had not developed a sufficiently strong conceptual and theoretical platform of their own. This made it all the more natural to regard the discipline as a branch of a much more developed discipline – where the three thematic spheres formed a whole. In the difficult climate in the 1960s, when the reorganization of CIAP was on the agenda, these latent oppositions rose to the surface. Combined with the personal ambitions of some actors, it was enough to split an international organization like CIAP as well as the scholarly community. The SIEF of 1964 was from the outset a forum for *two* disciplines – folklore and ethnology – and it kept its distance from IUAES and anthropology. The answer was a counter-movement which continued to work for a European ethnology with closer contacts to IUAES and the anthropologists.

The debates on the 'purity' versus the unity and the hierarchy of the disciplines were crossed by another line of debates that was no less intense at times, even if the issues were seemingly practical and administrative only: that is the question of membership structure and the UNESCO regime.[16] As the economic well-being of CIAP/SIEF – and consequently the existence of the association – depended on these

issues, this debate periodically blurred the disciplinary issues discussed above, especially in 1960s. Some wanted to keep CIAP as a *commission* under the auspices of UNESCO, which presupposed a basis of national committees. Others wanted a *society* free from such bonds, with individual membership – which would mean an end to the UNESCO funding. There was a strong disagreement as to which solution was the most democratic: broad, free participation versus officially appointed representation. Even the defenders of a unitary European ethnology disagreed internally. Rivière claimed that national committees would prevent "congregations and sects" taking over, whereas his ally Bratanić stated that a system of national delegates would mean that he himself would be excluded from participating at any congress or association outside Yugoslavia.[17]

In Athens (1964) the great majority (mostly folklorists) voted for individual membership and the establishment of a society (SIEF) instead of a commission (CIAP), a choice which cut the contacts with UNESCO and the anthropologists. But SIEF could not survive without UNESCO funding. After some penitential exercises SIEF was accepted again in the UNESCO system from 1970, but only as a sub-commission of the anthropological association IUAES. As the latter could not accept a sub-commission with a worldwide scope, similar to itself, the consequence was a clear division of labour; SIEF had to renounce its worldwide ambitions and define itself as an organization for *European* ethnology and folklore.

Europe: a Geographical and Scholarly Dilemma

The latter question had been a recurrent theme in the debates, which included both an organizational and a scholarly side. In spite of its worldwide ambitions, CIAP had been a predominantly European organization. Postwar CIAP (1947–64) may even be called a Western European organization, as contacts across the Iron Curtain were indeed few. The new SIEF of 1964 established some contacts eastwards, but ethnology in Eastern Europe felt a closer kinship with IUAES (and with anthropology) than with SIEF. After the anthropology congress in Moscow in 1964, contacts between East and West seem to have been better with those who felt squeezed out of SIEF after Athens, and especially with the now-independent cartography group.

To judge from the debate on CIAP in the 1960s, the issue of a European versus a global perspective seems to have been mainly a question of organization for those who professed the view of two separate disciplines – folklore and ethnology – and who wanted to delimit the disciplines *against* anthropology. Their idea of continental commissions (for Asia, Africa, etc.) appears to have been as much a strategic position as a deeply founded scholarly principle. Their aim was an umbrella structure that would make CIAP (at a later stage) a worldwide organization, and thus satisfy UNESCO's requirement of being global.

To Erixon, Rivière, Dias, Bratanić and other defenders of a unitary European ethnology, the universal aspect would derive from scholarly considerations and grow out of its object of study, and not be linked primarily to an administrative and geographical structure. For them it was of paramount importance to define the discipline as a branch of general ethnology – with the latter's claim to universality – but with a specific European subject-matter, which embraced spiritual, material and social culture.

As for the subject-matter of European ethnology, it was Géza de Rohan-Csermak, Erixon's young ally, who came up with the most coherent argument for its global character. After a discussion of the spread of European culture since the early modern period through colonisation and diasporas, interethnic influences, acculturation, and the 'freezing' of European culture in other corners of the world, he concludes:[18]

> Par consequent, il existe une ethnologie européenne d'Europe, une ethnologie européenne d'Asie, une d'Amérique, une d'Afrique et une d'Océanie. Ces branches, et seulement l'ensemble de ces branches, composent l'ethnologie européenne tout court. Faire des études ethnologiques sur la population 'blanche' d'outre-mer sans observer les phénomènes d'Europe, c'est négliger le principe historique même de notre

> méthodologie. Inversement, dans nos recherches continentales, laisser de côté la culture ethnique actuelle des anciens conquistadors, c'est, d'une part renoncer aux informations historiques […], d'autre part, refuser une vue synchronique sur toute une étendue de l'ethnie européenne. (Translation: see footnote.)

What's in a Name?

The troubled past of European ethnology may be summed up through a look at the name of its foremost general organization. When CIAP was created in 1928, the League of Nations forbade the use of 'ethnology' or 'ethnography' in its name, which after the Prague congress was simply *la Commission Internationale d'Art Populaire*, or the International Folk Art Commission. The League wanted CIAP to stick to folk art and keep away from potentially dangerous subjects associated with issues of ethnicity. In 1936 *Traditions* was added, in order to broaden the spectrum somewhat.

The term *European (regional) ethnology* was coined by Sigurd Erixon in 1937. It was applied officially the same year, in the name of a *new* organization, a rival to CIAP, the *International Association of European Ethnology and Folklore* (IAEEF), which however succumbed during the war. In the 1950s, *European ethnology* was reintroduced as the international term for a unitary discipline covering the study of material, spiritual and social culture (Amsterdam and Arnhem 1955). But opposition in the following years, in spite of Dias's efforts, was so strong that the term was not introduced into the name of the organization.

In the early 1960s the name of the organization as well as the description of the field in the bylaw became an explicit issue. The bylaw of 1954 had avoided the problem by stating that *the thematic field* of CIAP should be "l'ethnologie, les arts et traditions populaires, le folklore, l'ethnographie, etc., des civilisations parvenus à l'ère du machinisme, et des civilisations en contact avec celles-ci." The reorganization committee proposed to replace this by *folklore* only (1963), and later by "folklore – as defined in *die Internationale Volkskundliche Bibliographie*" – which included material culture, in the sense of *Volkskunde*. After an intense debate the compromise (1964) was "la vie et les traditions populaires" ('folk life and folk traditions').[19]

The debate on *the name of the association* was no less fiery. The reorganization committee wanted only 'folklore' in the name, Erixon wanted only 'European ethnology', and there were others who wanted other names. The compromise (Bonn, April 1964) was to keep the name of CIAP for the new organization. But the new assembly (Athens, 1964) decided to break the compromise and voted a new name: *la Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore*. It was a name that cemented the opinion that ethnology and folklore were two distinct disciplines and underlined the distinction between these disciplines and anthropology.

The term *European ethnology* was claimed by the losing faction in Athens, Sigurd Erixon and his camp, and used both for the yearly conferences that he arranged until his death (1968), and for the new scholarly journal that was launched in protest against SIEF: *Ethnologia Europaea*, with the subtitle *Revue internationale d'ethnologie européenne/A World Review of European Ethnology*.

And Tomorrow?

SIEF has overcome some of its old problems, like the membership question. The issue of national committees is buried in the case of SIEF, even if the system has survived among the anthropologists (IUAES), and even seems to function well in the museum sector (ICOM). The reverse of the coin is that SIEF no longer obtains economic support for scholarly projects. The last vestige of its fundraising function is *die Internationale Volkskündliche Bibliographie*, a project still supervised by SIEF through a working group – in the name, but in practice?

However, the intertwined issues of the unity of the discipline(s), the geographical scope – what does 'European' mean? – and the name of the organization have by no means been resolved by SIEF. Although its first congress (Paris, 1971) bore the title "Ethnologie européenne", there was indeed very little of its content that pointed in that direction.[20] At the congresses from the mid-1990s onwards these

issues have sometimes been commented upon, but never treated in any depth. However, the topic was addressed by SIEF president Regina Bendix in her opening speech at the Budapest congress (2001). After having insisted that a European ethnology is only feasible as an addition to and not as a replacement of extant national ethnologies, and reminding the audience of the "major constituencies" of European ethnology – i.e. all the national European schools of ethnology and folklore, the Europeanists among the European social anthropologists, and the American cultural anthropologists studying Europe – she went on:

> Within this bewildering, albeit rich diversity of ethnologies, evidence for a European Ethnology – that is, a field with shared theoretical and methodological assumptions – is rare indeed. This is exacerbated by the fact that adherents of one of the ethnological disciplines often have institutional reasons to proclaim their work to be dissimilar from that of anthropologists, folklorists or ethnologists (depending on their own disciplinary affiliation).

Jorge Dias, Sigurd Erixon, G. H. Rivière, Branimir Bratanić, P. J. Meertens and others would have nodded sadly in recognition. Does this mean "the total defeat of its aims", as Dias predicted as early as in 1957? Not total, perhaps, but one can certainly not claim mission accomplished!

SIEF's present bylaw states that the society covers the field of "European ethnology and folklore" – a formula inherited from its first congress. To the adherents of a European ethnology, however, the first term includes the second. Consequently, at the abovementioned 2001 congress, SIEF's Board proposed to replace the name of the organization with *la Société d'Ethnologie Européenne* or the *Society of European Ethnology* (SEE), on the grounds that this name would represent more accurately and comprehensively the plurality of intellectual histories and current paradigms represented within the membership and to signal the society's desire to serve as an umbrella within which fruitful exchanges about European cultural research, past, present, and future, can take place.

The proposal was quickly shot down by the General Assembly in 2001. Is the time ripe for a new debate?

Notes

MNATP = Archives of le Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires (now MuCEM), Paris. Peeters refers to the collection in MNATP consisting of 13 envelopes of correspondence after K. C. Peeters, Antwerp, President of SIEF 1964–1971.

1 This problem appears clearly also in Erdmann's (2005) otherwise impressive discussion of the International Committee of Historical Sciences (ICHS) and its congresses.

2 More detailed discussions of the history of CIAP can be found in Rogan 2007, 2008a, b, and c. Rogan 2007 presents the genesis of CIAP (Prague 1928) and its history up to the mid-1930s, a period when CIAP was under political control of the League of Nations, which tried to enforce a policy of applied folklore, to fill the leisure time of the working classes. Rogan 2008a treats two parallel organizations during the last half of the 1930s, Erixon's IAEEF and Rivière's CIFL, their internal rivalry and later cooperation, and the problem of the Nazification of *Volkskunde*. Rogan 2008c is a shorter version of the same issues. Finally, Rogan 2008b is a detailed reconstruction of the reorganization phase in the early 1960, with a focus on the roles of Sigurd Erixon and Kurt Ranke. The reorganization ended with the dissolution of CIAP and the establishment of SIEF in 1964, and the launching of *Ethnologia Europaea*.

3 "The very nature of the investigations of traditional cultures implies an excessive love of what is regional and particular; a love that in certain cases has taken on even the appearance of political separatism. It is without any doubt one of the great obstacles to an agreement among all the researchers, even within each country, an agreement which is essential to the establishment of a national committee in the spirit of CIAP. Considering that very often, in some countries, the books on folklore are themselves written in the vernacular, one can assess how far goes the reluctance to accept a supraregional, unitary conception [of the discipline]. What was from the start a strength – the love of the features of the local culture, which once marked the boom of folklore studies – has become an obstacle to their full scholarly development. This love surrounds these investigations with emotional elements, which harm the objectivity that is essential to true scholarship, when they do not even distort the stringency of the observations. […]

This state of affairs is even worsened by the fact that in many countries there is no university tradition in the field of regional ethnology. All the research is in the hands of small groups of interested amateurs, who – although very often meritorious persons – are normally opposed to a superior organization, where they fear they may lose the state of personal prestige which they have achieved in their home setting" (Rapport moral sur les activités du secrétariat de la CIAP. Jorge Dias, 30.5.1957. Nordiska Museet, Collection Sigurd Erixon 8:28). This and all other translations by B.R.

4 IUAES = the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, a worldwide organization under the UNESCO umbrella.

5 "We consider essential on the one hand a synthesis of European ethnology and non- European ethnology [anthropology], and on the other hand to bring together the three main fields of study – ethnology, spiritual culture and social culture" (Géza de Rohan-Csermak. Pour une association d'ethnologie européenne, p. 4. MNATP, Org. Div. CIAP-Réunion de travail, Bonn 26–27 avril 1964; Nordiska museet, Collection Sigurd Erixon).

6 "Why is it that within the humanities our discipline is not accepted on equal footing with for instance linguistics, archaeology, etc.? And why are there not even chairs in our discipline in most countries, which otherwise are valued highly the humanities? Why do not the results of our work appear so convincing and so reliable that our discipline that it could – without hesitation – be qualified as exact? And finally, why do the postwar years represent for us a decline rather than a prosperous growth – in comparison with the boom we experienced after World War I? Positive exceptions in a few countries only confirm the general stagnation."

7 "Erixon's presentations gave a clear insight into the broad scope of our discipline in research and teaching, as it is conceived in Scandinavia; here the discipline in all its sociological breath is referred to with the highly appropriate term 'Folklivsforskning'."

8 "It looks as if folklorists are quarrelsome pedants, with a special difficulty for solving problems in a clear and definitive way. […] I am afraid that he [the deputy president of CIAP] exerts some influence on some elderly colleagues who do not know us and who might think that we are unwanted persons who menace the purity of the old folklore"(Letter of 4.5.1955 from Dias to Rivière. MNATP; CIAP).

9 "He [Rivière] will absolutely not use the word *folklore* any longer; he will impose *ethnology*, as this was decided at the Nordic congress, as he says. […] He hardly acknowledges the popular tales and beliefs, but seeks refuge in the technology, like Erixon. We are far away from the true folklore. […] We must rally a majority to combat these technologists (technocrats) as effectively as we can. Marinus [the deputy president of CIAP] is absolutely right" (Letter of 24.6.1963 from Lecotté to Peeters. MNATP/Peeters 4).

10 "Today it looks to me as if it is an either-or: either CIAP must give the discipline this profile, or we will see the total defeat of its aim" (Rapport moral sur les activités du secrétariat de la CIAP. J. Dias, 30.5.1957. Nordiska Museet, Collection Sigurd Erixon 8:28).

11 See Hultkrantz (1960: 135–141) for a detailed discussion of the different concepts of folklore.

12 "[…] in our opinion the new CIAP would profit from devoting itself only to Folklore, without trailing behind other disciplines, which already by their definition place themselves outside the objectives defined by the forerunners of Folklore" (Letter of 19.11.1963 from Lecotté à Peeters. MNATP; Peeters 4).

13 Diverse correspondence in MNATP archives, the Peeters collection.

14 SIEF Information no. 2 (1966).

15 Cited after Stoklund (1984: 3).

16 Prewar CIAP had been based on national committees, as required by the League of Nations. The new CIAP of 1947 started out with individual membership. In 1954 UNESCO forced upon it a system of national committees, to have the projects funded. As explained by Dias, many scholars were opposed to organizing on a national level, whether the reason was personal rivalry, local prestige or disagreement on disciplinary issues. A functional system of such committees turned out almost unfeasible.

17 Others, like Erixon, held a pragmatic view: a reliable national basis for transnational research projects, like the European atlas, was an additional argument for national committees.

18 "Consequently, there is one European ethnology of Europe, one European ethnology of Asia, one of America, one of the Pacific. These branches, and only the sum of these branches, make up European ethnology in short. To do ethnological studies of the 'white' population in the overseas territories without observing the European phenomena is to neglect the historical principle of our methodology. And vice versa, to leave out the present ethnic culture of the ancient conquistadors would mean on the one hand to renounce on historical information […], on the other hand to refuse a synchronic approach to the whole of the European ethnic group" (de Rohan-Csermak [1962]: Pour une association d'ethnologie européenne. Mémorandum concernant la réorganisation de la Commission Internationale des Arts et Traditions Populaires (CIAP). Pp. 22–23. Archives MNATP; Nordiska Museet).

19 This was later changed to 'European ethnology and folklore' (1971), which is the present (2008) description of the field.

20 *Actes du premier congrès …*

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