

Encyclopedia of folk culture of Slovakia

The project of the encyclopedia of ethnography of Slovakia was drafted in the Publishing House Osveta as early as in the first half of the 1950s. At the request of the editor-in-chief of the dictionary section, A. Hirner, the author of its methodical reference book to work out the first list of entries of the folk culture in Slovakia. In accordance with the common practice of that time, A. Hirner was imprisoned and the project has never been realized. It was not until the seventies that the Encyclopedic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences launched the work on the Encyclopedia of Slovakia (the first volume appeared in 1977) with ethnography as a separate lexical group. The head of the team, A. Pranda, worked out a list of entries together with a group of scientific workers of the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences which covered the basic issues concerning folk culture and the history of ethnography.

The materials assembled during the decades in the Institute of Ethnology, at the Department of Ethnography and Folklore studies of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University, the Slovak National Museum, and in ethnographic museums, together with the data of the Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia (published in 1990) encouraged their use not only in syntheses, thematic or regional monographs but also in an ethnographic encyclopedia.

A. Pranda was involved in preparing the first idea, draft and project of the Ethnographic lexicon of Slovakia (1983). After his death, the preparation of the work was taken on by J. Botík. He elaborated the Project of the Encyclopedia of Ethnography of Slovakia together with a group co-workers. They produced a list of entries and a methodical reference book (1987); and the work on the first entries was launched. After he left the Institute of Ethnology towards the end of 1988, P. Slavkovský became responsible for the task.

The authors finished their work on entries in January 1992. In this period the final number of entries was set at 2,777, the number of their authors at 142, the form of entries and cross-references, and expert reviewers.

The encyclopedia reflects the present state of knowledge about folk culture and about the individual thematic regions, which are not even, definite or infallible. The thematically arranged entries are in alphabetical order; in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the folk culture of Slovakia, the thematic regions cover: Theory and history of ethnology (theory and methodology,

ethnic structure and history, applied disciplines and related scientific fields); Material culture (agrarian ethnography, domestic, craftsman and manufacture production, transport, trade, food, clothes, settlements, building, housing); Social culture (family and relatives, common law, morals, ethics, life in villages); Ceremonial culture (faith, religion, anniversaries, labour, family habits, ethnomedicine, metrology); Artistic culture (universal theory, oral, musical, dance folklore, fine arts).

The development of phenomena in individual entries of Encyclopedia has been investigated from the second half of the 19th century to the present. Special emphasis should be placed on the aim of the work to point out the variety of ethnic structure of Slovakia, to provide a picture of the culture of all the people living in our territory, particularly in greater entries, everywhere where contemporary knowledge allowed it.

An equally important part of the work is the pictorial part: black and white photographs (from the oldest 19th-century up to the present), drawings, sheets of notes, maps. 1,104 entries are illustrated. An appendix contains 19 plates with colour photographs, with a high standard of artistic and professional graphical arrangement.

The Encyclopedia of the folk culture of Slovakia is a scientific synthesis presenting data on the development of the way of life and culture of the greatest part of population in a popular-scientific way. As P. Slavkovský writes in the introduction, it is also "an attempt to contribute to the elucidation of the place of our ancestors in the process called the development of European civilization".

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