

“THE YOUNG SING ONLY MODERN SONGS,” OR THE LARGE-SCALE PROGRAM FOR COLLECTING FOLK SONGS BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND RECOGNITION

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The collection of folk songs, which was directed by a committee as part of the program The Folk Song in Austria, provides a special perspective on folk song heritage. The committee's assumption was that folk song survived only in remote villages, and not among the young, in towns, or in industrialized areas. A comparison of the components of this program, the questionnaire used, and the collected results shows where the expectations and findings of this project agreed and where they differed.

Keywords: transcribers, methods, methodology, questionnaire.

Zbiranje ljudskih pesmi, za katero je znotraj akcije Narodna pesem v Avstriji na Slovenskem skrbel ustrezeni odbor, je odsevalo poseben pogled na pesemsko dediščino. Sodeč po pričakovanjih odbora, naj bi ljudska pesem živela le še v odročnih vaseh, ne pa tudi med mladino, v mestih ali v industrijskih krajih. S primerjavo programov akcije, »povpraševalnih pol« in rezultatov zbiranja želim ugotoviti, v čem so se pričakovanja in spoznanja tega projekta skladala in kje so se razhajala.

Ključne besede: zapisovalci, metode, metodologija, vprašalnik.

The program “Das Volkslied in Österreich” (The Folk Song in Austria) was special not only because of its attention to all of the hereditary lands of Austria but also because of the basic orientation of the project, which aimed to transcribe melodies. It is also interesting because of the social context that marked the collecting itself.

A year after the founding of the Austrian Folk Songs program, on 23 October 1905 the Ministry of Public Worship and Education appointed the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs.¹ The operations of the Slovenian committee were stretched between Vienna, from which the guidelines for the work² and funds were issued; Graz, where the chairman of the committee, Karel Štrekelj (and later Matija Murko), worked; and Ljubljana. The organization of the Slovenian committee was centralized, and the only opposition to this was encountered among the Slovenians of Carinthia.³

The orientation of the collection work in Slovenia followed the Vienna pattern. The “Osnovna načela” (Basic Principles) – which defined the methodology and methods of the

¹ This was decree no. 36,157; GNI ZRC SAZU, Archive of the chairman of the OSNP, letter of 14 Nov. 1905.

² In Slovenia the orientation of the collection work was also defined by the “Grundzügen für die Sammlung” [Basic Principles] as well as the didactic “Anleitung zum Sammeln” [Instructions for Collection] and “Fragebogen” [Questionnaire], which were drawn up for the program [*Das Volkslied in Österreich*: 41].

³ “Naša narodna pesem in – c. k. vlada!” [Our Folk Song and – Austro-Hungarian Rule!], *Mir* XXIV, 14 Sept. 1905, Klagenfurt: 219–220.

work, as well as highlighting differences from previous collection efforts – were accompanied by a “Povpraševalna pola” (Questionnaire) (about questionnaires see Fikfak 1999). This questionnaire was intended to provide basic information about the vitality of folk songs in a given area, and at the same time was to provide the committee with the names of persons of interest as singers (i.e. informers) or transcribers. The results of these questionnaires were not intended to be published, but they were to be used to orient the transcribing effort. They were thus meant to establish an information network and be a test study, which to a certain extent required ethnological insight and was to be made possible by direct observation with participation.

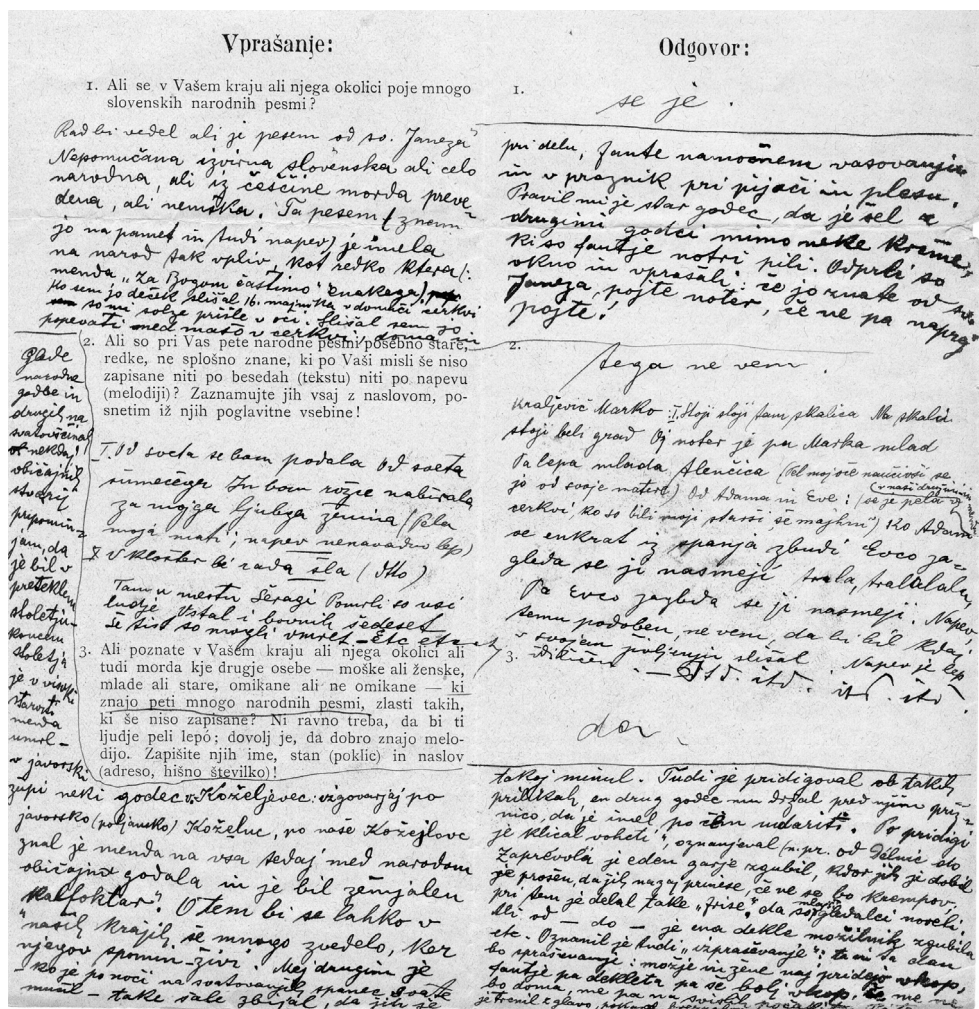


Figure 1: Some questionnaires not only offer insight into the preservation of folk song in a particular area but also reveal aspects of life itself. (Questionnaire completed by Janko Kržišnik on 16 May 1908 in Tnovo but applying to Selca near Škofja Loka; GNI ZRC SAZU, Archive of the OSNP, Questionnaire)

During the program the only problem connected with the questionnaire was that the responses to it were very brief. As it turned out, not only difficulties in the field were responsible for the poor response, but also practical circumstances. For example, one of the correspondents from Upper Carniola commented that "...nobody wants to get involved with such exacting work that nobody will pay them for."⁴ Nonetheless, these responses in judging the large-scale program are worth special attention.

The greatest innovation in this program, the requirement to transcribe melodies, caused concern for most persons even in advance, because for the most part they did not know how to do this. In their responses some even requested that the committee send them someone that knew how to transcribe melodies. On the other hand, individuals were aware that only the melody could ensure the authenticity of the song. A song transcribed with its melody would preserve the "natural beauty" or "natural genius," whereas its performance created "a cosmetic effect in its place."⁵

The individuals filling out the questionnaires encountered methodological issues as soon as they began their fieldwork. A frequent complaint was that people had to be given drinks before they would start singing. The transcribers largely understood this as a demand for a reward, although the reason also lay in the fact that the people wished to shed their inhibitions and discomfort from being in the presence of the transcriber. In one of the questionnaires a very simple methodological directive was written for overcoming these difficulties: "First it is necessary to get the person in the necessary frame of mind, otherwise your urging is in vain."⁶

People that had already had experience in "taking stock of the national tradition" were aware of the demanding nature of this large-scale program, and one put the matter quite picturesquely: "Collecting folk songs is not such an easy thing. It is easiest if a person lives among the people and collects them along the way. If a person starts asking for them, this creates some kind of suspicion among the people – as though he wants to profit off of them, and he's collecting them and, well – it's a sin to tell him love songs, for those to get spread around."⁷

The causes were not only of a moral nature, but also had a social background. This was a time when "civilization" and progress were being stressed everywhere, and persisting in the old way signified ignorance and illiteracy, which people were ashamed of. Individuals saw the causes in education and the spread of printing. "There is singing, but singing is becoming less common; among the people there were those that sang old things, but now printed material dominates here, and the old material will be lost."⁸ At the same time, modern social processes, especially society activities, were shaping a new value system and

⁴ Quest. from Naklo near Kranj, incomplete, dated 8 Mar. 1907.

⁵ GNI ZRC SAZU, Archive of the OSNP, Questionnaire. The questionnaire, which was filled out on 16 May 1908 by Janko Kržišnik in Trnovo, applies to Selca in the vicinity of Škofja Loka (hereinafter abbreviated "Quest." in the notes).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Quest. from Solčava, completed 22 Mar. 1907.

introducing terminological confusion into the understanding of what was “folk.” Thus, in many places the difference between folk and choral singing, or between spontaneous gatherings and organized public parties, was not understood.

Sometimes the reason for a negative response was national opposition. A questionnaire from the town of Kočevje was simply marked that there were no Slovenian songs.⁹ National issues also prevented the establishment of an information network and transcribing in Carinthia and altered the role of folk songs along the western border, while Prekmurje was not included in this transcription effort for political reasons.

For clarity, the committee wanted the questionnaires to state where and when the singing took place. The responses mentioned quite diverse situations linked to annual, lifestyle, or work habits and professions: “There is a lot of singing during group agricultural work, e.g. in the vineyards in the spring, when they are digging, in the fall during harvest, and there is especially a lot of singing at peasant weddings,”¹⁰ “at weddings, at wakes, while trimming turnips and carrots, and while hulling millet,”¹¹ “at peasant wedding feasts, which last for 2 or 3 days,”¹² “when they spin and husk corn,”¹³ and so on. The spontaneity of singing was most evident where singing was not connected with customs; thus there was singing “...in the spring and summer when people come home from the fields in the evening.”¹⁴ “There is a lot of singing in the vineyards when they are pruning or digging. The girls sing when they are returning from work in the evening; they also always sing while husking corn. It is especially possible to hear a lot of songs when the boys and girls gather for quiet work in which no drinking is involved.”¹⁵

The questionnaires very rarely recorded situations in towns, and so the description from Škofja Loka is exceptional: “Singing could be heard every Sunday, and especially on holidays in Škofja Loka at Mažovek’s inn at the end of the main square in the afternoon following the mass at the Capuchin church.”¹⁶ The vitality of folksongs among the townsfolk was later supplemented by several transcriptions of folk songs from Kamnik [Klobčar 2003].

Social information about the singers are rare, but the extant notes give the lie to the established notion that songs lived only among farming folk and in connection with agricultural work; these include singers such as a a knotter, a smallholder, a miner, a hunter, a night watchman, a seamstress, a tailor, a dayworker, and others. An interesting report from Trbovlje comments that the workers sang “very much. Because the workforce comes from all sorts of regions, their songs vary by melody and lyrics. I had never heard many of them

⁹ Quest. from Kočevje, completed 10 Feb. 1907.

¹⁰ Quest. from Črnomelj, completed 26 Jan. 1908.

¹¹ Quest. from Županje Njive, completed 3 Mar. 1908.

¹² Quest. from Gorje near Bled, completed 14 Feb. 1907.

¹³ Quest. from Ljutomer, completed 22 Oct. 1907.

¹⁴ Quest. from Mali Kamen near Brestanica (formerly Rajhenburg), completed 31 Dec. 1907.

¹⁵ Quest. from Velika Dolina near Brežice, completed 14 Jan. 1907.

¹⁶ Quest. from Stara Loka, completed 25 Oct. 1908.



Figure 2: The committee's transcribers were generally very well acquainted with the lifestyles in which folk songs were maintained, but only rarely mentioned them in their records. (Folk song transcriber Franc Zemljič with his family and servants in his field in Sveti Tomaž near Ormož in 1936; courtesy of Milivoj Zemljič, Ormož)

before.”¹⁷ This was the first period of industrialization. Diverse social strata are also evident among the musicians. In the vicinity of Ljutomer it was said that folk musicians could be heard “only at the banquets of poorer people, such as vinedressers, rural laborers, etc.”¹⁸ In places, changes in values were also already evident: “Gregor Klančnik, householder and innkeeper at Mojstrana no. 62, knows how to play wind instruments well, plays zither and guitar and some accordion.”¹⁹

In preserving individual characteristics the questionnaires are therefore quite valuable, but for a general assessment of the vitality of folk songs in a particular area they often erred or were completely wrong. For example, a report from the well-known iron-forging settlement of Kropa states “Old songs are simply not known here, or are known only by the very elderly, because the young sing only ‘modern’ songs from Prešeren, Gregorčič, etc., or folk songs known everywhere.”²⁰ The fact that the writer was poorly acquainted with the actual situation is demonstrated seventy-seven transcriptions from Kropa in the OSNP collection, largely made by Kramar some years later, and also recordings from the time after

¹⁷ Quest. from Trbovlje, completed 13 Mar. 1907.

¹⁸ Quest. from Cezanjevci, completed 16 Feb. 1907.

¹⁹ Quest. from Mojstrana, completed 21 Mar. 1907.

²⁰ Quest. from Kropa, completed 6 Apr. 1907.

the First World War. Completely different assessments came from some areas, such as from near Krško: “With few exceptions, everyone here knows how to sing. One need only go among them and listen.”²¹ The relativity of the opinions is also confirmed by the responses to questions about the preservation of dances.

The completed questionnaires provided some different perspectives on the understanding of folk song in Slovenia at that time. This included the territorial range of various instruments; for example, the dulcimer in the Idria hills that accompanied singing: “In my native region of Idrija in remote regions the older people use a folk instrument called the cimprekelj [dulcimer] ... which also accompanies their songs.... It is only used in the vicinity of Idrija, especially in Spodnja Idrija by older persons.”²² The role of the zither and fiddle in the vicinity of Ljubno ob Savinji was also surprising: “We have plenty of folk musicians; almost every shepherd or farm worker can play the zither ... and fiddle.”²³

A note in one of the questionnaires is also the only evidence that there were also mountebanks (or Bänkelsang singers) in Slovenia, referred to in some places as moritatlerji. Until recently there was no information that mountebanks also accompanied fairs in Slovenia,²⁴ but this is challenged by a remark referring to the Idria region: “Three years ago in Hotedršica, near Logatec, I met ... an elderly man that used to go to fairs with his fiddle and sing various types of Slovenian and German songs.” The reports of on-the-spot improvisation recorded in some questionnaires are also interesting and have been overlooked to date.

It appears that the Committee for the Collection of Slovenian Folk Songs did not further occupy itself with these responses for the reasons cited. Its third publication, a booklet titled “Navodila in vprašanja za zbiranje in zapisovanje” (Instructions and Questions for Collection and Transcription),²⁵ was directed only toward those persons from whom they could reliably expect a response; that is, those that had completed the questionnaire.²⁶

This document also demonstrates that the expectations of the program remained exceptionally great. Three sections cover the entire breadth of material relating not only to folklore, but also ethnology. In sections one and three, transcription is guided with methodological directions and precise technical instructions necessary for the unity of the program. Section two – “Questions about folk singing, folk music, folk dances, and the customs that accompany them” – devotes 248 questions to the life context [Instructions: 21–33]. The instructions for correctly transcribing the lyrics of the songs worried the public,

²¹ Quest. from Velika Dolina near Brežice, completed 14 Jan. 1907.

²² Quest. completed 27 Mar. 1907 by Karol Bezeg, an Austro-Hungarian tax assistant in Kamnik, but applying to the regions of Logatec and Kamnik.

²³ Quest. from Ljubno ob Savinji, completed 22 Oct. 1907.

²⁴ Without connection to the OSNP program, this was shown by a letter that talks about mountebanks in Kamnik [Suchy 1928: 92–93].

²⁵ The full title promises even broader interest: Instructions and Questions for Collecting and Transcribing Folk Songs, Folk Music, Folk Dances, and Related Customs [Instructions: 1906].

²⁶ The committee had only 2,500 copies of the *Instructions* printed [Tominšek 1937: 313].

but people did not question the instructions for representing the social situation in which a particular song was transcribed.

Despite their exceptional thematic content, the "Basic Principles," "Questionnaire," and "Instructions and Questions" were well thought out, while in practice this remained a shortcut to the transcription of the song itself. Because of the reward system (each song transcription was worth one crown), the transcribers were primarily interested in the result. The life context was only exceptionally noted alongside the songs. Despite ongoing financial difficulties, this result – the largest possible number of suitably transcribed songs – was of interest to the committee itself, because the goal of the program was a scholarly and popular edition of songs. At this time they did not ask what was needed for a scholarly edition.

The committee began to receive its first transcriptions of folk songs as early as 1906, although the results were more limited than anticipated.²⁷ The transcription effort was stimulated by Anton Štritof's article "Nabirajte narodne pesmi" (Collect Folk Songs), published in the almanac of the St. Hermagoras Society for 1908 [Štritof: 1908] and a brief article by Gabriel Majcen published in *Slovenski gospodar* [Majcen: 1907]. While Majcen's article was pithy and informative, and was particularly well known in Styria, Štritof tried at the same time to appeal to emotion. In his contribution one can sense an erroneous understanding of social processes and the clearly expressed fear that without effective intervention folk song would disappear. It was through this that many Slovenians at home and abroad were acquainted with the program.²⁸ Not only potential transcribers were thus informed about the program, but also the common people to whom the transcribers were sent.

The anticipation that knowledge of the informants would be of key importance for the transcription effort [Basic Principles 1906: 3] only partially proved true. Teachers were indeed most numerous among the transcribers, numbering fourteen; however, thanks to the work of certain individuals,²⁹ the work by organists was more far reaching. They had extremely direct access to people. There were ten organists among the transcribers, and the collection included many transcriptions by older organists that are not otherwise mentioned among the transcribers. Five transcribers were pupils, and the transcribers also included two civil servants. The professions of some less significant and less engaged transcribers are not known.³⁰ The success of transcribing did not depend on education, but rather the ability to access people and songs.

The large-scale transcribing program indirectly showed the role that individuals and the community played in folk song. It highlighted certain exceptional singers, and the role of the community can be indirectly felt. Matija Murko saw this as evidence negating romantic notions: "With a single word it has also been shown that in Slovenia folk song is

²⁷ By the end of 1906 1,045 songs had been collected [Murko 1906: 31].

²⁸ At the end of 1907, the Hermagoras almanac was distributed to 79,146 subscribers [Tominšek 1937: 314], while *Naš list* was primarily intended for Styrians.

²⁹ The most prolific of the committee's transcribers was Franc Kramar from Matena near Ig, as well as Franc Zemljčič, the organist at Sv. Tomaž near Ormož.

³⁰ GNI ZRC SAZU, Archive of the OSNP, song transcriptions.

Napad žravnških kmetov na grad „Sonneck“ l. 1848.?
 8645 9398 3656.
 Recitativo (Iz Iga pri Ljubljani.)

1. I - žanci so se tak' me - ni - li -
 De bje grof' gra - ši - no xbili.
 Traj la - la - la - la - lom,
 Tra - la - la - la - la - la.

2.
 Tam po cest' so ga srečvali,
 S povnim vuzam ogibali:
 Oh ko bi ga zdej dobiv,
 V graben bi ga prevniv.

Odbor za nabiranje slovenskih narodnih pesmi.

Žaradi tega napada je prišlo takrat veliko žravnških kmetov na kant, ker je posegla s. kr. sodnija vmes.

Opomba. Pišite samo na prvo in tretjo stran!

Figure 3: Among the songs collected in the OSNP program, some referred to actual historical events. These songs were subject to rapid change.

(Transcription of a song about an attack by the peasants of Ig against Sonneck castle, GNI ZRC SAZU, OSNP Collection, 9675; the song was transcribed by Franc Kramar on 18 October 1912 in Ig)

not a mystical blossom that somehow secretly comes into being in a nation and is primarily sung by gifted individuals rather than the ‘entire nation.’” [Murko 1929: 29] On this basis it is possible today to compile a very articulate life story.

The opinion that folk song was dying out was continually negated by the number of songs transcribed. This opinion was most strongly refuted by the transcription of songs in eastern Styria: the ongoing creation of special dirges (known as *slovesa*) led to complaints that it would never be possible to complete the collecting efforts [Tominšek 1937: 318]. Despite the warning that time was running out for transcribing folk songs, the transcriptions made in this program served to show not only the vitality of folk song, but also its ongoing creation.

The dirges that were connected to a specific misfortune often remained among the people as narrative songs when the details were lost, but many other songs connected to particular political events were lost more quickly. Such songs were lost because they were tied too closely to actual events – for example, the song about the attack by the peasants of Ig against the castle, about the hail at Trška Gora, and many others.

The division of Slovenian ethnic territory into individual collecting areas was intended to ensure the greatest possible uniformity in collecting. The lack of unity of representation of songs from individual areas was therefore a great disappointment to the committee. Some areas completely dropped from the transcription effort – for example, all of Istria because of the inactivity of its coordinator, who did not respond to the committee's meetings. The exceptionally rich region of Carinthia presented a special problem regarding folk tradition: teachers, who were the most numerous transcribers in the program, avoided making transcriptions for political reasons. The committee therefore tried to address this problem through its own transcribers [Tominšek 1937: 315]. On the other hand, the committee did not have enough transcribers to send them to remote areas where they were requested, although in the "Basic Principles" it had been emphasized that collecting should be directed "especially at those areas where folk song remains strong" [Basic Principles 1906: 8].

The opinion on where "folk song itself still lingered" [Basic Principles 1906: 8] often turned out to be erroneous in both the geographical and social aspect. The more developed area of central Slovenia produced many surprises in both regards. It is interesting that some of the most interesting songs were transcribed in the area of central Slovenia, particularly in connection with the braiding of plaits for the straw hat industry. It was here that Kramar found the most interesting singer, Živčkova Katra. There were also a surprising number of songs from this area, from Kamnik in particular, that remained alive among the townspeople of Kamnik.

When the collection finally got underway, after all of the program-related publications and promotional articles, the large number of song transcriptions turned out to be surprising, especially where this was not expected: otherwise, the collecting efforts were directed at the song itself. The program was oriented toward the applicability of its results: the wholeness of the transcription meant that it was reliable in melody and lyrics and accompanied by information such as the place and time of the transcription, the singer (often with his or her age), and the transcriber. Sometimes it seemed to the transcriber that the geographical

208. 4633. *Bela klopija. Novak, zapisal M. Hubad.*

ETNOGRAFSKI MUZEJ V LJUBLJANI

Pro je toča tako hudo pobila, da je rože tice vse po hosteh
 pobila, vinjake podrla, drevesa vse popopukala z drevesom,
 takrat se ni smu nikar kak "gospod" priharot, b' ga bli preo ljudje^{uh} kar
 so ljudje rekli da je Brečenski fajmister točo naredu. Ena žena je eno veliko
 točo pobrala in jo storkela, v sred toče pa je našla bela lase in⁺

Lunens

1.) Bre-lu-ba Ma-ri-ja dri-ca kak-šna je tri-ška go-ri-ca kje bla lejško pa-ra
 2.) Ra-ko smo lile~~ff~~ vas se-je-li kje je bli-ža la-je se-ni vak se je tle ve-se
 3.) Lej-tas pa je vse dru-ga-če ra-ta-li smo vsi be-ra-či bod sa-bej-nekol pa
 div-le-tas pa groj-odja ne ro.-diš + je tisto točo nesla, in
 liv da bo ta slad-ki mo-štek piv fajmisteru pred nože vrgla,
 kmot - mak-nu ka-že le pej-klet. da je to dokaz da je on
 točo naredu.

4.) Ovisla je ble strašna vra
 Čez pole ino čez guro
 Strašna toča, velik piš
 Da je jemalo strejhe s hiš
 5.) Nebo strašno rotelnelo
 Lovnce ni svetlobe meglo
 Strašna toča in vihar
 Da tacga ni blo še nikdar

Blisk in
 Dol od nejba je letela
 Mirnit je blo, lub kristjan
 Da radaj bogvišim moden dan
 Vželo je polje gorice
 Ni ostalo polovice
 Nobenga radja na dreves
 In tud na drevjih ne peres.

odbor za nabiranje slovenskih narodnih pesmi.

ETNOGRAFSKI MUZEJ V LJUBLJANI

Opomba. Pišite samo na prvo in tretjo stran!

Figure 4: The songs in the OSNP collection were usually accompanied by the most vital information; some songs, such as this song about a hailstorm at Trška Gora, also included a commentary. (GNI ZRC SAZU, OSNP Collection, 4633, transcribed by Matej Hubad in Trebnje)

designation was sufficient, for example: "This is how the song is sung in Vransko."³¹ The image of the transcriptions themselves also suits this.

³¹ GNI ZRC SAZU, Archive of the OSNP, no. 1049, the song "Kam bova vandrala, vanderček moj" (Where Shall We Roam, My Roaming Lad?), transcribed by Rudolf Vrabl.

The song transcriptions often record the professions of the singers as well. As the questionnaire indicated in part, these included a surprising number of persons that made a living by working at homes. In contrast to the "householders," these were self-employed men and women – for example, seamstresses and tailors. However, the majority of song transcriptions are without such notes. Likewise, transcriptions were rarely made on spontaneous occasions, and thus their function in life is indirectly included in the transcription. For example, in his transcription of the song "May that Mother Be Happy" the transcriber, the teacher Rudolf Vrabl, wrote: "This song was sung by young men on recruitment day on 14 June 1908 at the Košenina inn in Vransko."³²

After Štrekelj's death, his successor, Matija Murko, wished to introduce some changes in both organization and content. He believed that because of progress in transcription folk song was being forgotten, and therefore it was even more important for it to be shown in its real form: he wished to expand the attention of the transcribers to those areas that at least partially exposed life itself: "They should describe the dances, customs, and practices that accompany the singing of these songs. A musician and an ethnographer should go together." [Murko 1929: 31]

The last period in the program of the OSNP was marked by efforts to make sound recordings, which bore fruit, and attempts to include the ethnological background, of which only the principles remained. Up until its end, at the close of the First World War, the program thus garnered additional rare song transcriptions according to the established model. At the conclusion of the program the Slovenians, like the other nations included in the collection efforts, prepared sample material for a joint sample edition of folk songs. The selection of songs, graphic accompaniment, and commentary reflects the committee's view of the power of folk song in shaping national character.

The fate of the collection after the program ended is known: it was taken from the Philharmonic Society to the Ethnographic Museum, and ended up – or began anew – in 1957 at the Institute of Ethnomusicology. The institute thus became the holder of 12,937 song transcriptions,³³ which became an exceptionally important (although incomplete) mosaic-like document of the song, music, and (to a lesser extent) dance of the common Slovenian people at the beginning of the 20th century. At the same time, they became a document about what the transcribers deemed of value or worth transmitting to us, their descendents: a precious song, and also the lives that shaped, preserved, and were forgetting it. A century later, this document – in the form of song transcriptions, extremely diverse comments, and letters – demonstrates that neither the fears nor the expectations of the committee were fully realized, but it preserves a great memory of one hundred years ago, when they lamented that "The young sing only modern songs...."

³² GNI ZRC SAZU, Archive of the OSNP, no. 1,025.

³³ In this material was later included what is known as the Kokošar transcriptions [cf. Kumer 1959: 204].

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»MLADO POJE LE MODERNE« ALI VELIKA AKCIJA ZBIRANJA LJUDSKIH PESMI MED PRIČAKOVANJI IN SPOZNAVANJI

Z akcijo »Das Volkslied in Österreich«, »Narodna pesem v Avstriji«, je zbiranje ljudskih pesmi postalo del nacionalnega programa, hkrati pa – na državni ravni – del mednacionalnega dialoga. Program zbiranja je pri Slovencih kljub usklajenosti z izhodiščnimi smernicami dobil specifične poteze. Tem je moč slediti tako v programskih smernicah kot v njihovem izpolnjevanju, čeprav je bilo težišče dela usmerjeno v zapisovanje pesmi po ustaljenem vzorcu. Te zapise so spremljali mozaično sestavljeni drobci, ki do neke mere razkrivajo tudi življenje samo.

Današnje vrednotenje akcije Narodna pesem v Avstriji, ki je nastala na stičišču »časa ljudske kulture« in industrializacije, zato ne more prezreti njenega družbenega pomena. Ta ni bil samo nacionalni, kot so ga videli tedaj, in politični, kot so ga čutili nekateri. Bil je tudi socialni. Govori namreč o moči skupnosti in posameznikov. Skupnosti, ki je bila dovolj trdna, da je ohranjala pesemski spomin, in dovolj živa, da se je odzivala tudi na nekatere pomembne dogodke in pojave sodobnosti, čeprav so bile te pesmi najbolj podvržene spreminjanju. Govori o posameznikih z imenom in priimkom, tudi tistih z družbenega obrobja, ki so tudi s pesmijo lažje vztrajali na njem. S tem nam pušča odprta vrata za nadaljnjo soočanje z resničnostjo, v kateri so pred sto leti iskali ljudsko pesem.

Projekt Narodna pesem v Avstriji torej ni bil velik samo zaradi cilja, popisati vse ljudske pesmi, zaradi razsežnosti zbiranja, ki je v hierarhični obliki zajelo večino slovenskega ozemlja, ali zaradi številčnosti teh zapisov, ki so jih zbrali skoraj 13.000. Prav tako ni bil velik samo zato, ker so prvič sistematično hkrati z besedili zapisovali tudi melodije in ob koncu akcije s fonografom dobili prve lastne zvočne zapise. Velik je bil tudi zato, ker je z bežnimi opombami, ki tedaj odboru niso veliko pomenile, prestregel pomembne drobce iz vsakdanjika in praznika Slovencev tistega časa in omogočil vpogled v življenje, katerega živi del je bila ljudska pesem. Spregovoril je z drobci zgodb, ujetimi v povpraševalne pole, v opombe k pesmim ali dopise odbornikom, od katerih so zapisovalci pričakovali rešitev zadreg na terenu. Spregovoril je tudi z razliko med pričakovanji in spoznanji: kljub nekaterim razočaranjem je vendarle akcija razkrila številne pesmi, ki jih v določenih geografskih ali socialnih okoljih niso pričakovali.

Razloček med pričakovanji in spoznanji pa je zgovorno spremljal ves čas odborovega dela: pro-

gramskih smernice, ki so vabile k zbiranju, so izražale bojazen, do bodo ljudske pesmi brez posredovanja izumrle. Zapisane pesmi naj bi to preprečile. Po izteku akcije je njen zadnji predsednik verjel, da morajo izumreti, ker ne bo več nepismenih ljudi, da bi jih ohranjali, zato je prav, da se izdajo. Stoletnica dokazuje, da se sicer niso polno uresničile ne bojazni ne pričakovanja, pa vendarle je prav, da se nam je ohranil tako velik spomin na čas pred sto leti, ko so tožili: »Mlado poje le moderne...«.

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