

BREDA ČEBULJ SAJKO, *Razpotja izseljencev: Razdvojena identiteta avstralskih Slovencev*, Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2000, 140 pp.

With this publication Čebulj-Sajko has made another important contribution to the hitherto little researched lives and identities of post WWII Slovene immigrants in Australia. This publication comprises the second part of her PhD thesis, *Posledice »dvojne identitete« v vsakdanjem življenju avstralskih Slovencev*. The first part was published in 1999 as *Etnologija in izseljenstvo* and was, by her own description, a »survey and analysis of published ethnological texts on Slovene emigration between 1926 and 1993, and simultaneously an introduction into the autobiographic method connected with this topic« (*Razpotja izseljencev*, p. 133). *Razpotja izseljencev* is an »on-the-ground« examination of how »double-ethnic identity« has manifested among Slovenian immigrants in Australia.

The book is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter takes the title Čebulj-Sajko gave her doctoral dissertation, and consequently it is no surprise that, for all intents and purposes, this is the main section of the work. It begins with a consideration of how identity, be it individual, social or ethnic, is formed. Čebulj-Sajko essentially concludes that identity formation is a dialectical process which happens within a specific societal context. Therefore, Čebulj-Sajko argues, to adequately consider the identity of Slovene immigrants in Australia, one must consider their identity-forming immigration experiences in light of the changing nature of the Australian society to which they immigrated.

Čebulj-Sajko is to be commended for her serious attempt to historically contextualise her sociological analysis. She structurally organises this historicisation by defining Slovenes' experiences against three consecutive official government policies towards immigrants: the policies of assimilation (1947–1966), integration (1966–1972), and multiculturalism (1975 onwards). Her introduction to the early Slovene immigrants – the former Displaced Persons who arrived from 1948 to 1953 – is quite good, providing a framework which assists the reader in comprehending the accounts these immigrants give of their early experiences in Australia. This is perhaps the strongest as well as the most valuable section to those researching the lives of Slovene immigrants in Australia; there is a dearth of written source material until the publication of the first Slovene newsletter, *Misli*, in 1952, and the oral sources Čebulj-Sajko cites are quite rich.

In large, her attempt at historical contextualisation is very good, although not always accurate or detailed enough for my (historian's) liking. In contrast to her analysis of the nature of individual identity as evolving, complex and multilateral, she sometimes presents the Australian society in which these Slovenians live somewhat simplistically. This is particularly evident in her account of Australian society in 1947, which is almost entirely based on the descriptive works of two Australian authors.

Similarly, Čebulj-Sajko's account of life under multiculturalism, while generally good, brings with it the surprise of the sudden appearance of Slovenians in national

costume and visual participation in public events. Slovenians had, in actual fact, been making such public appearances in Australia since the mid 1950s; in spite of the assimilation policy, this »benign« aspect of the new immigrants was not just tolerated, but encouraged from a very early stage in post WWII immigration.

The last section of the first chapter of this book is entitled »Dvojna identiteta avstralskih Slovencev« and here Čebulj-Sajko moves from a consideration of Slovenes' early immigration experiences and associated challenges to one more of emotional identity. This is where her sociological analysis flourishes,¹ and her recognition that Slovenes in Australia constantly recognise themselves in the roles of immigrant (to the new country) and emigrant (from the homeland) is particularly pertinent. What most impresses me about Čebulj-Sajko's work on Australian Slovenes is her ability to be analytical while always respecting the subjects of her research, and this is evident here as elsewhere.

The second chapter of the book, »Zakaj dvojna identiteta«, is actually the conclusion of her analysis, where she strongly makes the case that double identity, which according to Južnič is nigh impossible, actually exists among Slovene immigrants in Australia. From the position of both a member of the second generation of Slovenes in Australia and a historical researcher on first generation Slovenes in Australia, I am not at all surprised by either the fruits of her research or her conclusion.

The third chapter of the book is a collection of four hitherto unpublished »autobiographies«, as Čebulj-Sajko terms them, collected during her research in Australia. Like the rest of these »autobiographies«, which Čebulj-Sajko published in *Med srečo in svobodo*, these are presented as fluid narratives in a manner designed to preserve for the reader the manner in which these Slovenes speak. This is done with spelling rather than the use of phonetic symbols, so that the narratives may be accessible to all readers of Slovenian, and not just linguists.

As narratives these stories are excellent, but I am concerned at the distance Čebulj-Sajko places between herself and the creation of these texts. In the book she refers to these edited interview transcriptions as »spontaneous autobiographies«. My concern with this is that this removes an awareness of Čebulj-Sajko's presence in their formation. What questions did she ask – surely they did not speak unprompted from beginning to end? How did her being a researcher from then communist Yugoslavia affect what they told her? We are left guessing, because Čebulj-Sajko has decided on the side of narrative fluidity and coherence.

In any case, the autobiographical stories are of great interest, and I am most impressed by Čebulj-Sajko's commitment to publishing them (presumably with the consent of the interviewees). Like her book, they will prove an invaluable source to academics and generalists alike. Perhaps Čebulj-Sajko might in future consider publishing more than a summary of her books in English translation – perhaps the entire

¹ Perhaps it should be noted here that Breda Čebulj Sajko's basic discipline is ethnology and not sociology. Editor's note.

publication. Such an edition of Čebulj-Sajko's analysis with these life stories would no doubt hold great meaning for second and future generations of Slovene immigrants in Australia who otherwise would not have the requisite Slovene reading skills to enjoy the benefits of Čebulj-Sajko's work.

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