

Jiří Večerník: CZECH SOCIETY IN THE 2000s: A REPORT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICIES AND STRUCTURES.

Prague, Academia, 2009. 286 pp.

In most European countries social reports are published with awesome regularity. To wit: the oldest among them, the British *Social Trends*, will celebrate its 40th anniversary this year. Germany has its *Datenreports*, France *Données Sociales*, Spain *Barómetro Social de España*, and Hungary (since 1998) – *Social Reports*. Nothing comparable to these, however, exists in the Czech Republic. What comes closest to them is the extensive research by the country's leading sociologist Jiří Večerník, whose *Markets and People: The Czech Reform Experience in a Comparative Perspective* (Avebury) appeared in 1996 and the edited volume *Ten Years of Re-building Capitalism. Czech Society after 1989* (Academia) three years later.

Czech Society in the 2000s is Večerník's third contribution to closing this embarrassing intellectual lacuna. The text is articulated into twelve chapters assembled in four sections – socio-economic policies, inequalities, structures, and values – and it offers a wealth of relevant data about contemporary Czech society. Its sequencing deliberately does not follow any accepted academic model. For, as the author emphasizes, the virtual infinity of mutual connections between dynamic social history and stratified social structure makes it futile to ascribe a privileged position to any among the welter of particular theoretical perspectives.

The book aims at providing a comprehensive portrait of Czech society substantiated by statistical and sociological surveys as well as by numerous other sources, and strives to pin down the systemic changes underlying quantitative fluctuations. It is required reading for anybody seeking information about the socio-economic development of Czech society over the last twenty years in terms of employment, social policies, economic inequalities, social structures (with special regard to the situation of the middle class, retirees, and the poor), and issues related to the value of work, consumption and welfare.

The first section of the book discusses social policies in three broad areas: the labor market, the welfare system and social inclusion, with a focus on the implementation of EU policies. Each chapter presents basic statistical and sociological data and concludes by sketching challenges in the offing – the problems of work commitment and stimuli to boost labor motivation, the feasibility of further reforms in welfare, and the importance of a functional framework – an inclusive middle-class society – for the successful social integration of marginalized groups.

Disparities in earnings, inequalities in household incomes and redistributive processes implemented by the state through taxes and social benefits are the subjects of the second section. It illustrates well how the system of work-reward has fundamentally changed since 1989 and it identifies the sources of this change. While in the *Ancien Régime* gender and seniority were decisive factors in determining one's income level, now edu-

cation is the primary determinant. This section surveys in detail tax and benefits reform, calculating how the new system contributes to income inequality. And, finally, it also examines public opinion on taxes and benefits.

The book's third section turns to social structures and examines them from three perspectives. The optics of social stratification is applied to the middle class. A socio-political standpoint serves to elucidate the condition of retirees and the intricacies of pension reform. The latter is a particularly contentious issue not only because the Czech population is aging fast but also because of the obvious implausibility of sustaining a pay-as-you-go pension system while maintaining at least some equivalence between past earnings and current pension benefits. The section concludes with a chapter cast in terms of economic disparities that deals with the poor, the different ways of measuring poverty and some causes of this condition (unemployment, single parent family, number of children, etc).

The final section broaches the sphere of socio-economic values and examines it through a multiple cognitive lens. It describes how work values and job attitudes have evolved over the past decade and portrays the rapid expansion of a consumer society together with the profound impact it is exerting on the values and the behavior of individuals and groups. But consumerism is not, the section suggests, the only force unraveling the fabric of local economic culture. Opening to the world beyond, the section culminates in canvassing "European values" and it ponders the potential consequences of their collision

with the contemporary Czech economy and society.

As is to be expected in such a rich and complex work the individual chapters vary in their compositions, each presenting different ratios of methodological reflections, empirical data, and their interpretations. Anybody familiar with Večerník's scholarly output might detect in some segments of his new book traces of previously published articles. The text is also not entirely proportional in balancing the author's critical attitude toward past developments with his forward outlook. But leaving these petty complaints aside, *Czech Society in the 2000s* is a signal contribution to our understanding of contemporary Czech society and a handy instrument for all foreign students and researchers who might face difficulties in accessing on their own the data Večerník's book presents. It is an indispensable volume for any library concerned with Czech studies.

Peter Steiner

**Michaela Ferencová –
Jana Nosková: PAMĚŤ
MĚSTA. OBRAZ MĚSTA,
VEŘEJNÉ KOMEMORACE
A HISTORICKÉ ZLOMY
V 19.–21. STOLETÍ.**

**[Memory of a City. Image of
a City. Public Commemoration
and Historic Turn of the 21st
Century.]**

Brno: Etnologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, v.v.i.,
pracoviště Brno, Statutární město
Brno, Archiv města Brna, 2009,
407 pp.

A collective work of Brno, Banská Bystrica and Bratislava ethnologists, a Prague and Opava historian and a German researcher from Oldenburg, Tobias Weger, rather disputably called a monograph, brings out thirteen studies of the problematics of the city and memory. Under the extraordinarily careful editing of Brno ethnologist Jana Nosková and the Bratislava social anthropologist Michaela Ferencová there resulted, on the basis of the conference *Memory of the city. The city and its inhabitants in the 20th century* (Brno 2008) a collection mainly of thoughtful and inspirational texts that is thematically and methodically in accord with the direction of European as well as Czech anthropology and historiography. In the introductory study, its authors Nosková and Ferencová pointed out that it is a frequently discussed topic and attempted to present the most influential theories of memory of the present. Anyone who chooses this road logically reaches for the work of Maurice Halbwachs, the French sociologist and creator of the concept of social memory, the English historian Peter Burke, the author of the thesis of historiography as a construct and of the plurality of memories, French historian Jacques Le Goff and his idea of two mutually interwoven histories (of collective memory and the history of historians) and the idea of memory as a manipulatable pillar of identity, as well as the work of Le Goff opponent Pierre Nora, who divided memory from history. It is possible to call successful the presentation of Halbwachs' and Jan Assmann's own work, whose concept of communicative and cultural memory as parts of collective memory is today also

used in Czech and Slovak anthropology. Further Nosková and Ferencová polemized about the equation of the social group experience being equal to collective (group) memories and they called them strongly problematic. I consider particularly contributive their pointing out the necessity of dialogue of the social-science fields with psychology. On the other hand I consider the outline of the development of Czech and Slovak urban anthropology as insufficient. For example, the dismissal of the influential monograph *Stará dělnická Praha* (Old Blue-Collar Prague) (Prague 1981), a characteristic "anachronism" of the 1950s, does not testify to coherent reflection of that work or monographs of mining regions of the '50s.

The editors divided the texts of the other authors into three thematic units, however aware they were of the permeability of their own borders. The first thematic unit *Memory and image of the city* is made up of four texts. The interesting study of Opava historian Martin Pelc follows the creation of the image of Opava in the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries by important Opava personalities, but also by tourists, the authors of guides and scientific works and the dominant features of this image: promenade parks with their nationalistic monuments, parks to which Opava town hall devoted extraordinary care [as the author emphasized, it is possible consciously to build an image of a city (p. 57)]. Probably today the best known feature of Opava, the former Little Vienna, Graz North, as a white city, a feature having its roots in the Bezruč poem, was deliberately supported after 1945.

A somewhat methodically more problematic text of the social historian Jakub Machek deals with the old Czech daily the *Pražský Illustrovaný Kurýr* (Prague Illustrated Courier) (1893-1918, but he actually discusses only the year 1898), a mass Czech sensational illustrated publication which, according to Machek, on a mass scale distributed the memory of the city (p. 67). Although the author drew attention to some conclusions of theorists dealing with the influence of the media, the linkage of the Courier and its impact on the *collective memory of ordinary inhabitants of the city* remained unproved. I would rather consider the proposal of the seemingly interesting subjects of contemporary society; I would analyze party interest reflecting in the news service; I would compare the depiction of one event in several periodicals, etc. The topic of interest of Banská Bistrica ethnologist Katarina Košťalová became the image of Zvolen as for 140 years a city of a railroad and railroad workers and further the railroad and its employees as a commemorative topic of the inhabitants of Zvolen. It was actually the railroad, along which the city was constructed, and it was actually the railroad workers who became a qualified personal socio-professional group with inherited (carried over) values, interests and with their own meeting places, a group with a specific memory permeating the city, a group in whose development was reflected the history of states, changes in the ethnic situation and social development in the city. Košťalová's colleague, Jolana Darulová pointed toward how the mining tradition in two Slovak cities Banská Štiavnica (until 1989 it maintained the mining tra-

dition – and Banská Bystrica, where mining ceased to exist 200 years ago. The main topic of her interest became the reflection of this tradition and its use in celebrations, graphic arts, and folklore. The famous tradition is today reproduced mainly by institutions. In the case of the former city, according to researchers it is primarily about nostalgic reflection, while the latter city is revitalizing its image of a mining city mainly for commercial reasons (the development of tourism).

The second portion, *Memory with Identity*, contains three studies. One of the best studies in the anthology from the pen of Tobias Weger is devoted to two neighboring border cities that, after 1945, went through a deep demographic change. Görlitz in Saxony and Polish Zgorzelec served the author as examples of a strained relationship between city and memory. After a historical excursion Weger presented Görlitz as a city which oscillates between Upper Lusatian and Silesian identities. The partner Polish city, on the other hand, amply exploits its Upper Lusatian orientation. Political rhetoric of the type *one city – two nations*, according to Weger, contravenes the reality of persistent mutual isolation caused mainly by dissimilar historic experience. Its expression is anti-Polish stereotypes and different items of memory. The Brno ethnologist Daniel Drápala then concentrated on changes in Rožnov pod Radhoštěm and the role (and its limits) of the open-air Valašské Museum v přírodě institution and their personalities in the formation of local memory. Another Brno researcher Helena Bočková developed, following the traditions of Brno ethnological research, the idea of the importance of folk culture in

the formation of national society in Brno. The main importance was attributed to the Vesna association and Lucie Bakešová. One can only regret that the topic was not presented as an expression of competition with the majority (before the revolution of 1918) of German identity.

The editors grouped five studies of Slovak ethnologists into the third part called *Memory and historic rupture/Transformation*. Katarína Popelková and Juraj Zajonc, both of Bratislava, studied Nitra – an important part of Slovak national mythology (p. 243) after 1918. Popelková analyzed the reflection of extensive political changes in the memory of the inhabitants of the city. The lucidly structured text captured the situation in Nitra before and after the rise of the republic (it contained a compilation of historic literature, complemented with archival sources) and reflections of this situation among contemporaries (unfortunately only seven). From the same sources Zajonc then reconstructed the memory of contemporaries of social life (state and local holidays, religious celebrations and theater) during the First Republic and during the period of the Slovak State. For him also, Nitra is a memorial place in the process of Slovak emancipation. Despite the quantity of valuable data, this study is, however, disturbing to me in that it insufficiently distances itself from the formation that was unambiguously a satellite of the Hitler state of Germany, a state that was emphatically anti-Semitic. The ethnologist Alexandra Bitušiková of Banská Bystrica deals with “her” city in the stage of transformation after 1945. Her paper answers the question of how does the memory of a city have an influence on the name of a public space and its formation

and on urban symbols. The post-socialist city is, however, studied as a city of pluralities and often also of competitive interests, as a city in which a *struggle over memory* takes place. An analogous topic (however only in the case of a monument) was also analyzed by Michaela Ferencová, methodically using the work of Katherine Verdery [reference to the work of Zdeněk Hojda and Jiří Pokorný *Pomníky a zapomínky* (Memorials and Forgetting) (2nd edition Prague – Litomyšl 1997) is surprisingly missing in the anthology], in the city of Nové Zámky, where Slovak and Hungarian memories compete, in the years 1918-1945 and after 1989. In the last text, which is the only one dealing with the problematics of socialism, Bratislava ethnologist Monica Vrzgulová analyzes contemporary memories of the city of Trenčín of the 1960s among one group: youths of that time. In all the biographical narratives the topic of spending free time in a city and the topic of August 1968 as an emphatic turning point in the life of young people arises. It is a pity that our colleagues did not take into account the influence of later careers of that generation on their memories. Monika Vrzgulová, like most of the other contributors, defended the concept of group memory.

In conclusion it is necessary to state that the reviewed anthology, despite a range of partial remarks of individual authors, is one of the best that have been published in recent years in Czech ethnology. The concentration of the text rather on the small city and on Slovak, Moravian and Silesian problematics is then something that the editors could hardly influence.

Blanka Soukupová

**Peter Salner: BUDÚCI ROK
V BRATISLAVE ALEBO
STRETNUTIE. [Next Year in
Bratislava or a Meeting.]**

Bratislava: Albert Marenčin PT,
2007, 200 pp.

The publication, whose title paraphrases the words of the Passover hagada (“Next year in Jerusalem”) (the book about the exodus of the Jews from Egypt which the father reads at the seder, the family religious service) relates the story of a meeting in May 2005 of young former inhabitants of Bratislava who are emigrants after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. The unusually elegant book, in an edition typical for the Albert Marenčin publishing house (a blue jacket, art paper) with many photographs of the meeting and with period photographs of Bratislava, describes both the idea for the origin of the four-day commemorative holiday of today’s sexagenarians (the first impulse came from Toronto), and the half-year of preparations for this meeting, including disputing over the location of the Bratislava meeting, the course of the event itself and finally also its aftermath and preparations for another event. In May 2005, finally, there met in the city of their childhood and youth 200 Jews from 18 countries along with members of the local Jewish community, mainly children of the Holocaust. The meeting, inspired by regular get-togethers after 1989 of the so-called Children of Maisel Street – Czech parallels of the Slovak youth movement group, took place in the courtyard of the Jewish Community,

in a former Jewish kitchen, in Limbach, in a synagogue, on Dėvín, in the Hotel Carlton, in the Chatam Sofer memorial and always, in the evening, in the U Rolanda café. The author of the book is Peter Salner, a successful publisher of many professional works and books for the general public, a Bratislava ethnologist and president of the Jewish Religious Community of Bratislava. In May 2005, being the host, he described the atmosphere of the meeting and the immediate memories of it as an extraordinarily emotional affair. However, if the importance of the text consisted only in relating the story as a sort of ethnography of one event, it would be hard for us to recommend it to someone other than its participants, for whom it would have documentary value. Fortunately, however, Salner, in this case, also shown himself to be a professional anthropologist: a perceptive and sensitive observer and reader who sees below the surface of phenomena. As one of the first researchers he used e-mail as the main source of his investigation (11,000 e-mails from the Fórum website, which was founded by participants of the meeting). Salner’s text thus has a second plan: he brings a great amount of material, which presents original testimony about what Bratislava means to an emigrant after 40 years, with which places he connects, which attributes have Bratislavan childhood and youth. Virtual contacts, however, also brought original memories of the year 1968 and the Soviet occupation, just like the period of totalitarianism. What seems to me most interesting are the experiences of the phenomenon of emigration, home

(which can also have the appearance of a Slovak kitchen or a place of origin of a Slovak Jewish family), homeland (including relation to Czechoslovakia and to Israel), religionism, just like views of Slovak Jews who stayed home. Salner's aim was not to subject these experiences to qualified analysis (for which, besides, he would need an abundance of works of foreign literature and many more pages). The resulting reflex thus remains to the reader who, however, can lean on the author's historic sketch of the development of the Jewish community after 1945 (with emphasis on the fact of the post-August 1968 emigration). But here Salner's overview is completed with annotations of his informants. A careful reader, among others, will also find the voice of the daughter of Žo Langerová, whose husband was sentenced in the Slánský trial. As an anthropologist, though, he follows with the greatest astonishment how one large meeting kicked off a chain of smaller meetings all around the world and the preparation of a new large undertaking in Slovakia. It attests primarily to the fact that the longing to belong somewhere and to someone is a basic anthropological constant and that the organizational principal of society can be a city of childhood and youth and/or the sum of similar experiences.

Blanka Soukupová

**Přemysl Mácha (ed.):
LIGHTING THE BONFIRE,
REBUILDING THE PYRAMID.
Case Studies in Identity,
Ethnicity and Nationalism in
Indigenous Communities in
Mexico.**

Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita 2009,
184 pp.

The reviewed collective monograph represents the result of a long-term interest of the youngest Ibero-American Studies generation in different manifestations of ethnicity of some contemporary Mexican Indian groups. Five authors territorially covered a substantial part of Mexico: from the northwest regions (the Rarámuri, Yaqui and Toboso peoples), via central and mid-western regions (the Purépecha and Aztec peoples) and down to today's apparently politically most distinctive area – the federated state of Chiapas in the south of the country (the Tzeltal, Tzotzil and eventually Chol peoples).

The monograph opens with a short study by its editor Přemysl Mácha. In his text he writes about news in political manifestations of ethnicity in the attitude of the Mexican state and ways of writing about it. In the latter he draws upon argumentations of a North American anthropologist Les Field, who compares the attitude of the state to the Indian question in the USA and Mexico. It seems that Fox's administration (since December 2000) has started or rather speeded up the reform process, which should result in a significant change in the attitude of the political center, or, in the case

of federally organized Mexico, of political centers, to at least several (more numerous) native groups. These reforms should lead to quick growth of ethnic awareness and creating of a rigid ethnic system of closed, ethnically “clean” communities. Mácha rightly points out the fact that the result of the rather chaotic though well-intentioned reforms, firmly embedded in the Constitution, can become the absolute opposite of a tolerant multicultural society. One of the main problems lies in the considerable inequality of almost sixty Indian groups. There are one million Yucatan Maya on one hand and on the other there are groups of only several hundred people. These groups live poorly, scattered in tiny villages of the Sonoran Desert (e.g., the Papago people), in the Chihuahua canyons (a large part of the Rarámuri and northern Tepehuan peoples) etc., or they politically join more powerful groups as, e.g., the Seri people whose chieftains swiftly communicate with headmen of Rarámuri or Pima subgroups. Such cases can be found elsewhere in Mexico, though the badly informed public does not know about them at all. Generally better-known conflicts between the Zapatista movement and the state and the representation of a “new” ethnicity of the demographically strong Nahuatl and Purépecha peoples are also reflected in the monograph.

Markéta Křížová deals in her paper with the forming of ethnic identity of some north Mexican groups (mainly the Rarámuri and Yaqui/Yoreme peoples) during the colonial times, particularly within Jesuit missions. On the grounds of archaeological finds from the southwest, she argues that the forming of

ethnic and cultural identity had undoubtedly started before the Spanish and the first missionaries came. The collapse of the sedentary (Neolithic) power center of Casas Grandes/Paquime, probably caused by climatic, demographic, ecological, as well as by social and political changes in this area, was one of the key moments for the ethnic space-forming in the Mexican north-west in protohistory. The Rarámuri people have belonged since protohistory (since approx. 12th century) among the most developed agricultural groups of the Mexican north-west. However, under the influence of pugnacious nomads and, even worse, after the arrival of conquerors they had to adapt to other subsistence forms in order to survive; agriculture lost its importance. The Rarámuri people adapted to various forms of transhumance as a way of life (also called the *ranchería* system), which helped them to save themselves as an ethnic group, but they also descended to a lower socio-economic level and split from a relatively homogeneous group into many local/micro-regional or later *ejido* groups. This is a persisting problem, as they do not have any political structure which could promote the interest of the whole group. So far a strong local (micro-ethnic) cultural and social identity persists and it is often so firm that any ethnic integration is out of question. Křížová notices practically only the Jesuit impact on forming the identity of Mexican Indians in the colonial times, though it is also important to realize that in about the last fifty years of the period and until the end of the 19th century mainly the Franciscans worked among the Rarámuri and other local people. It is a pity that we

have known only a little about their work so far. There is a lack of primary sources. Nevertheless the different attitudes in Jesuit and Franciscan evangelization enable us to ethnographically research their impact on the material and spiritual culture or social organization. There are so far visible differences within one single *ejido* (i.e., an economic and political unit in which a great part of the country inhabitants are concentrated). Those who were acculturated by the Jesuits often head communities or a whole *ejido*; men more often wear trousers, a sombrero and other attributes of the mestizo way of dressing, while the descendants of those who were under the Franciscan influence live more commonly, are more conservative in their clothing and usually do not have such political influence in their environment, etc.

In another text, Slovak ethnohistorian Radoslav Hlúšek deals with the cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe as a national symbol. After a rather long historical introduction to the cult, he analyses what is important for us from the point of view of ethnic and political resistance to the majority society: other *guadalupanismo* (*otro guadalupanismo*) as a demonstration of the anti-Catholic attitude of a part of the native population of Central Mexico (Hlúšek did his fieldwork in the Santa Clara Huitziltepec community in the federative state of Puebla, where this “new” cult originated). We agree with the author that the *otro guadalupanismo* can be best characterized as a national movement and not as a religious sect, because *Guadalupana* is understood by the Indians and other followers of the movement more as a symbol of Earth

and Cosmos than as a saint or a goddess. The cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe is no doubt a factor which unites various social classes and ethnic groups of Mexico. If we can very well observe significant cultural differences among the north, center and south of the country, then *Guadalupana* works as a cultural phenomenon that has its dynamics in Lower California Tijuana as well as in Chiapas towns in the south.

Přemysl Mácha follows the process of the shift from *ethnie* to national self-determination among the Purépecha (Tarascan) people in the federative state of Michoacán. Besides Yucatan Maya and Nahuatl and part of the Zapotec peoples, the Purépecha probably have the strongest influence within Mexican indigenous movements of national self-determination, even though there is geographical and ecological fragmentation (e.g., there are four basic sub-groups of the Purépecha people). Their strong ethnicity historically comes from at least two factors: their awareness of their absolute difference from other Mexican groups (from the linguistic point the Purépecha language is an isolate) and therefore specific and not fully explained ethnogenesis, and the influence of the bishop, Vasco de Quiroga, whose missions in the 16th century led to strong concentration of the dispersed Purépecha groups. Mácha refers to a still-living legacy of Tata Vasco and he also mentions Cherán as a community where the first coordination political Purépecha center was founded (let us remember a monograph on this village by R. Beals from the 1940s which started systematic anthropological research of

chosen Mexican and other Middle-American communities by North American cultural anthropologists). In the 1940s in Pátzcuaro a big conference took place during the course of which the Inter-American Indian Institute was founded (*Instituto Indigenista Interamericano*) and the Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas in his famous speech pre-determined the direction for native identity based on corporatism, i.e., on incorporating indigenous villages to the Mexican political and economic system preserving their cultural specificity. With the arrival of modernity which often brutally hit even remote Mexican villages, such politics seems to be rather unrealistic. Being aware of this, Mácha speaks about two types of Purépecha identity: *old* and *new*. The latter is typical not only for the Purépecha people, but for practically all rural inhabitants. It is grounded in a strong de-flux of inhabitants into towns where they are acculturated by Mexican educational institutions. These newcomers settle down in cities and do not come back to their previous homes. However, this “pattern” of the new identity is not valid everywhere – e.g., in Guatemala or in the southern part of Mexico the Indian population keeps double residence, i.e., people stay in a city for several months but spend a substantial part of the year in their villages by working in their *milpas*. Simplified, it can be said that the “old” Purépecha people bear older traditions, understood as what A. Smith calls *ethnie*, while the “new” Purépecha people are those who change their identity and they form a *national* identity now. While the former organize “traditional” village fairs, the latter participate in wider

supra-village activities within the Mexican state.

The forming of public space and its change in south-Mexican Chiapas is the topic of a text by Bohuslav Kuřík, a student of general anthropology. He follows in detail the roots of the Zapatista movement (it would be more correct to speak about movements), in particular mobilization of Indian inhabitants and their entering into public space from the beginning of the 1970s till today. Around the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, a deterritorialization of borders among Tzeltal and Tzotzil villages and Mexican cities peaked, or more precisely, long-time unsolved problems of ownership of Indian land and other natural sources became so relevant that it overgrew into a huge revolt, culminating with the known events from the beginning of 1994, when the Zapatista entered onto the international scene and their political aims became known to the whole world. Kuřík, who did his fieldwork in Chiapas, then analyzes the onset of the official Zapatismo and researches it mainly in so-called *comunidades rebeldes* (revolting villages), which are significantly differentiated from others. The study can be understood as a preview to broader research which would deal in greater detail with the forming of social nets not only inside the revolting area, but also outside its limits, with the relations between the Mexican state and the rebels, and also with the movement from inside, because it would be very interesting to decode the relations inside such a broad movement, etc. The author finishes his text with many questions which he wants to deal with during his

starting research project and therefore we can look forward to a detailed study which could help the broader public to be better oriented with the rather confusing information about the Zapatista movement which is now available.

The Chiapas Zapatistas are also the topic of the final text of the monograph, written by Petra Binková. However, she researches them from another point of view than Kuřík. She is interested in visual representations, mostly *murals*, which fill public space of Chiapas villages, squares, houses, walls, etc. Binková differentiates two aspects of art in public space – she distinguishes between the rather traditional aspect and the one that expresses the political opinions of its creators. After that she analyses the understanding of public space on a theoretical level and concludes that Zapatista murals correspond to Habermas' concept of *public sphere*, representing rather a virtual or imaginary community which does not have to exist in defined, delimited space. The manifestations of Zapatista muralists instead of supporting their own identity, i.e., aiming at least at regional ethnic coherence, have so far the rather opposite effect: the discussion of the conflict in Chiapas is led mainly outside the Zapatista autonomous zone and the dichotomy inside the zone deepens because many of its inhabitants for different reasons refuse the Zapatista ideology or do not much identify with it.

As was already said in the introduction of this review, this monograph is probably the first attempt to present some problems of forming the “new” ethnicity of well-known Mexican Indian groups. All the authors did a lot of fieldwork or (as

in the case of M. Křížová) do long-term research in archives and try to enrich the never-ending flux of debates on this topic which are led not only in Mexico but also in many other countries. It is good that Czech and Slovak Mexico studies, some of whose representatives published parts of their long-term research here, do not stay behind in the trend.

Marek Halbich

**Victoria Pitts: IN THE FLESH:
THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF
BODY MODIFICATION.**

New York: Palgrave Macmillan
Press 2003, 239 pp.¹

Victoria Pitts-Taylor, Professor of Sociology at Queens College of the City University of New York, is one of the most prominent scholars interested in the issue of the body and body modifications. In 1999 she was one of the authors of a monothematic issue of the journal *Body and Society* devoted to body modifications, alongside Christian Klesse, Bryan S. Turner, Paul Sweetman and Sheila Jeffreys; it was later published as the anthology *Body Modifications* edited by Mike Featherstone.

In her book *In the Flesh: The Cultural Politics of Body Modification* she addresses the issue of non-mainstream body modifications and the agency and power relations that shape them.

The term body modifications usually mean alterations of the human body for non-medical reasons. In its broad-

¹ Creation of this text was supported by grant GA UK No. 114708.

est sense it consists of such practices as dieting, body building, plastic surgery or breast implants. But more often it is used in its narrower sense for body piercing, tattooing, scarification, branding, incisions, sub-dermal implantations and similar practices.

Although body modifications are considered cultural universals, in their narrower sense they were long condemned in Western society. Since colonialism, modified bodies of the Others were perceived by Westerners as a sign of their inferiority and primitivism. The most established form of body modification in the West, tattooing, was associated with the working class and thus perceived as marginal, even deviant and pathological. A rise of interest in body modification comes with some subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s, BDSM, punks and later modern primitives. Mainstream interest comes with the so-called *Tattoo Renaissance* in the 1990s that resulted in the constitution of the body modification movement or subculture, which is the main topic of this book.

In her research Pitts focused on “people who define themselves as body modifiers” (p. 20). From 1996 to 2000 she conducted 20 interviews with a diverse sample of people constructed by the snowball method, ranging from ages 20 to 53, a “mostly white, adult, gay-friendly, middle-class, New Age, pro-sex, educated, and politically articulate group” (p. 20). In addition she studied corresponding subcultural texts (mostly magazines and websites) and representations of body modifications in cyberspace (especially *Body Modification Ezine*). She also analyzed articles on body modifi-

cation in 12 major newspapers over the years 1995–2000.

In her analysis she embraces a post-essentialist perspective according to which the body is always “culturally shaped and socially ordered” (p. 26). Drawing from both post-modernism and post-structural feminism she attends “to questions of self-definition, to the powerful forces that may territorialize and reterritorialize the body, and also to the historicity of the social and material technologies used in body projects.” (p. 48).

In order to find out “how radical body art practices reflect, consciously and otherwise, the social and political locations of individual bodies in the larger power relations of society” (p. 14), she concentrates on body modifications of women, gays, modern primitives and cyberpunks.

Chapter 2 deals with women body modifiers, many of whom perceive body modification as a way to reclaim their bodies, especially after sexual or physical abuse. Pitts sets their assertion into a discussion of radical and pro-sex feminists which evolves around the issue of whether women body modifications internalize patriarchal hatred of the female body or whether they reclaim female sexuality and desire. While generally supporting the later position, Pitts strongly reminds us of intersubjectivity of meanings which somehow limits its inscription.

In Chapter 3 Pitts shows how queers use body modifications for “visibly queering” by “inscribing the body with badges celebrating prohibited pleasures and identities” (p. 114). The queer body is used as a “space of rebellion and self-actualization” (p. 114) and “body technologies as potential practices of agency” (p. 114).

Just as women body modifications contest patriarchy, queer body modifications contest heteronormativity.

While Pitts seems to be pro-woman and pro-queer, in Chapter 4 she provides a radical critique of modern primitivism. Modern primitives are body modifiers who simulate body modification practices of indigenous cultures (e.g., Plaineo Indians *Sun Dance*, Mandan *Okipa* or Tamil Hindu *Kavadi*) in a romanticized attempt “to rescue the body and self from the problems of the modern world” (p. 3). Pitt’s critique of modern primitivism concerns the problem of appropriation of non-Western practices, but also the reproduction of racist and colonial discourse and fetishization of the Other by “project[ing] white Western desires onto the bodies of non-Westerners” (p. 137). Moreover she shows that modern primitivism implicates not just in subculture, but also in pop culture and high culture.

Chapter 5 addresses the last of the presented perspectives on body modification, that of cyberpunks. While modern primitives gain their inspiration from indigenous cultures, cyberpunks find it in science fiction. Influenced by the work of William Gibson, they see body modifications as a “post human experiment” (p. 153). Through denaturalization of the body they aim for “hybridity of humans and machines” (p. 152) resulting in the cyborgian body. Pitts further discusses Orlan and Stelarc, body artists using high technology in their performances, and also cyber communities of body modifiers, such as *Body Modification Ezine*.

One of the main strengths of this book lies in its theoretical richness. While primarily grounded in post-modernism and

post-structural feminism, Pitts draws on many other paradigm including cultural studies, radical feminism, the queer theory, etc. But the author’s high theoretical competence might be the reason why the “voice of the people,” their informants’ perspective, is somehow limited. Personal narratives present in chapters of women and queer body modifiers are missing in accounts of modern primitives and cyberpunks. Limited seems to be also the usage of analyzed newspapers, which Pitts used only to claim “that body modification has been framed in public discourse as a social problem” (p. 21). Although it might be the most usual representation of body modifications and body modifiers, as she states, it is certainly not the only one present.

Another point I would like to address is the ambiguity of the central term, nonmainstream body modifications. In a number of instances, Pitts used this term in contrast to mainstream body modifications, although she did not explicitly define it anywhere. This becomes important especially in regard to body piercing and tattooing and their increasing acceptance in the mainstream. Although it might be intentional that author did not want to draw a clear line between these two, in some instances it creates doubts and uncertainty about what kind of body modifications are addressed.

I would also welcome more detailed descriptions of each scene, even though this book is not an ethnography. It would not only help those readers unfamiliar with these groups to gain more understanding but it would also bring the issues depicted more to life.

In the Flesh: The Cultural Politics of Body Modification gives an account of four different parts of the body modification movement and their perspective on body modifications. While doing so, it clearly shows not just that body modifications have the potential to be subversive or transgressive and that the body is a place of both resistance and power, but particularly “how the Western flexible body, or the body-seen-as-project, (...) is saturated with political meanings and is symbolically, culturally and even materially stratified” (p. 197). I recommend this book to anyone interested in issues involving the body, body modifications and body politics.

Martin Heřmanský

Thomas Turino: MUSIC AS SOCIAL LIFE: THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION.

The University of Chicago Press
2008, 258 pp. + CD.

After Thomas Turino, professor of ethnomusicology at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign (IL), had thoroughly studied two different cultures, that of the Peruvian Conima (*Moving Away from Silence: Music of the Peruvian Altiplano and the Experience of Urban Migration*, 1993), and the Shona of Zimbabwe (*Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*, 2000), this time he worked on theoretical soil, understandably in the sphere of theory, nearer rather to the social sciences than to classical musicology. This has to do with the prevailing affiliation of American ethnomusicology (alias musical anthro-

pology) to anthropology. His initial understanding of music continues along the line of, e.g., Small’s book *Musicking* (1998). In sum: music is not a “thing”; it is not primarily “sound structure”; it is an activity which not only sounds different in different cultures, but also has very different meanings and represents very different values. The only thing that these various musics have in common is the very fact that people “make” them. Turino considers the main sense of the very existence of music to be an expression and reinforcement of individuals, and mainly of collective identities: *Music and dance are key to identity formation because they are often public presentations of the deepest feelings and qualities that make a group unique* (p. 2), that are decisive for survival.

For an explanation of how music functions for the integration of the individual, he uses Bateson’s concept (the connection of stimuli from the unconscious in the primary process), and Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “flow” – a transcendental experience of heightened concentration which a person reaches, e.g., through the performance of music.

However, Turino pays greatest attention to the effect of music on the human collective. His basic approach is semiotic: he earlier adapted Peirce’s doctrine to musical material (“Signs of Imagination, Identity, and Experience: A Peircian Semiotic Theory for Music,” *Ethnomusicology* Spring/Summer 1999, 221–255) and here he repeats it in simplified form. Afterwards (in the second and third chapters) he presents his own typology of existences/modes of music: “participatory” and “presentational” performance

of music and two types of studio modes: “high fidelity” and “studio audio art.” What is important is in the basic argumentation of what the values are like for each of the above-mentioned types and also what kind of sound consequences these values have in the way of performance.

The fourth chapter leads the reader back closer to anthropological discourse, concretely to the delimitation of the terms “self,” “identity” (I like Turino’s emphasis on its distinctive features: I show to whom I belong and to whom I don’t) and “culture.” He recommends that this term be replaced by two hierarchically arranged formulations: cultural formation (a group of people sharing most habits which constitute the “self” of individuals) and “cultural cohorts” (within the framework of the cultural formation of a group of people who develop and emphasize selected habits). In my experience the term and concept of cohorts are relatively widespread in American ethnomusicology.

The next three chapters are applications of the above-presented concepts. In the fifth chapter he describes the development of the approach of music in Zimbabwe in the 20th century: with massive influence of British colonial culture at the turn of the 20th century, along with the restructuralization of society, western values of presentational performance begin to advance, which also understandably influenced further development of local music. The sixth chapter begins with a very personal memory of the beginning of “folk revival” in the USA, in which the author participated as a teenager. In this con-

nection he also describes two contexts of “square dancing”: on one hand as an ordinary part of the community’s social life in the most various parts of the USA and Canada (e.g., on Cape Breton), on the other hand with the participation of “white middle-class participants” in an urban setting; this context is strongly influenced by the very concept of folk revival. Both of these types of performance – although in different ways – fill the need of the members of their cultural cohorts. The seventh chapter describes various cases of the use of music by political movements, beginning with the German Nazis and ending with the American civil rights movement. The concluding chapter “For Love or Money” expressively summarizes the necessity for music for individual and collective integrity.

Music as Social Life is primarily intended for students of humanities and social sciences. However, I definitely recommend it to everyone who in today’s noisy world still has the remains of his hearing because here it is again clear that – in the words of Congreve – “Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast, to soften rock, or bend a knotted oak.”

Zuzana Jurková

Ingrid Monson: FREEDOM SOUNDS. Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, 402 pp., photographs, music illustrations, appendices.

Ingrid Monson describes *Freedom Sounds* as a “critical essay on the relationships among music, racism and society in a particular historical period...” (p. 23). It is that among a number of other things. And since Monson is an ethnomusicologist (among other things: she was a performer on trumpet for many years and is now a professor at Harvard University with a joint appointment in the Departments of Music and African and African-American Studies), this review will underscore the truly ethnomusical nature of *Freedom Sounds*. Jazz is here treated as both a musical and a social phenomenon; the historical and the ethnographic are not merely accessory but essential to explaining the music.

An introductory chapter lays the groundwork for what is to follow: the boundaries of the study are clearly delineated; the larger issues that the book intends to address are outlined, and the conceptual framework within which events and issues will seek elucidation is presented. Monson sets her temporal focus on the period between 1950 and 1967. The major social forces that were to have a transformative effect on jazz—the civil rights movement, the cold war and anticolonialism—played particularly significant roles during that time. Three concepts undergird her narrative as it unfolds: 1) *discourse*, a property not only of “talk about music” but of the music itself; both have the capacity to mean; 2) *structure*, the sum total of laws, social categories, and systems that “define the terms of social experience” for social groups; and 3) *practice*, which “is about agency in everyday life, that is, the implementation of cultural ideas...

through various kinds of social action” (p. 25). The consistent use of these concepts goes a long way to ensure coherence in this multi-part, multifaceted and difficult undertaking.

Complexity is immediately evident in some of the issues that have to be confronted: the festering wound that is racism in the United States with its repercussions in the social, political, economic and musical lives of both African Americans and non-African Americans in the States and abroad; the conflicts between self-interest on one hand and moral and aesthetic principles on the other, between jazz as a way to gain access to the world of high art and as a banner of black nationalism, between jazz as “colorblind or fundamentally black” (p. 71). These issues were frequently debated and acted upon in an atmosphere of great tension. Political events—regional, national, and international (with special emphasis on Africa)—often echoed, provoked or exacerbated conflicts. Because music was used as protest, as manifestation of activism in support of causes, as response to what was happening around it, music, inevitably, had to change.

Monson addresses these matters with a skillful interweaving of theory, biography, journalistic reports, and musical description, analysis and illustration. Interviews with key figures and reports of musical activities from one side of the racial divide are juxtaposed to those from the other side. Data were drawn from a multitude of sources: labor (musicians’) unions, record companies, clubs, contractors, musicians black and white, writers on jazz, commentators and politicians as well as historical records and

extant literature. True to the concept of music as discourse, musical illustrations are both rendered in words as well as allowed to speak for themselves (through musical notation). The narrative traces the emergence of jazz from its status as a degraded and marginalized music to the elevated status of a valued American contribution to the world of music.

Prodigious research lends authority to the work. Monson's analysis reveals dynamic processes that are multiplex, a mix of mutual rejection and reciprocity; multi-directional, dialectical and recursive, a term that Monson uses "where a cultural resource borrowed from one group becomes indigenized and transformed over time and in that new state is borrowed back by the first group" (p. 103). The documentation is copious and meticulous, yet the book is readable and engaging.

Only in the eighth of its nine chapters does the book call for a level of musical expertise that can deal with the vocabulary and techniques of musical analysis. In what seems to have a synthetic intent, chapter 8 trains its spotlight on George Russell and his *Lydian Concept of Tonal Organization*, to illustrate "the quest for a theory of improvisation and a comprehensive musical system" that would systematize the practice of jazz and make it accessible to a wider public. At the same time, Monson uses the chapter to explore the linkages between the spiritual and the aesthetic that are to be found in African American music-making. Leaning on the work of Cornel West, she observes that "the belief of many musicians in the ethical, spiritual, and moral qualities of music...and simultaneously in modern-

ty's values of progress, individual rights and self determination seems to be particularly tied to black music's view of what it is to be human" (p. 305).

This entails a big leap, difficult to justify in a few pages. Monson seems to acknowledge that much in a section called "Back to Earth" where she notes that "spiritual in the context of the black arts movement was often a code word for blackness" (p. 311).

Throughout the book, Monson maintains a careful balance and treats her subject with great sensitivity. But in the Coda she allows herself to voice what to this reader sounds like a personal and deeply felt plea. She argues for "a better interracial dialogue...[in which] non-African Americans think through the *particularity* of their own needs and expectations of [African American music]. No one's relationship to the music, after all, is universal; everyone comes to it from particular places on the social and historical map. To acknowledge this is the first step in learning to respect each other's differences" (p. 316). She ends by calling attention to "the ethical dimensions of this music history, and the pure pleasure and beauty of the musical sounds." (p. 321).

This is a book well worth reading for those interested not only in jazz and African American music but in the music of urban America and the history of the nation as a whole. It provides food for thought to those concerned with what makes a work ethnomusicological.

Adelaida Reyes

**Jacques Bouët – Bernard
Lortat-Jacob – Speranta
Radulescu: À TUE-TÊTE:
CHANT ET VIOLON AU PAYS
DE L'OACH, ROUMANIE.**

Nanterre: Société d'Ethnologie,
2002, 533 pp., CD-DVD.

Starting in 2000, the French Ethnomusicological Society (*Société française d'ethnomusicologie*) published, in the edition *Hommes et musiques*, several remarkable monographs dedicated to the music of various parts of the world and covering a range of basic contemporary ethnomusicological research topics. Their common characteristic is thorough field research, with the aid of which were brought to light not only musicological, but mainly cultural anthropological aspects of the problematics which were investigated.

Fourth in the series of this edition was *À tue-tête: Chant et violon au Pays de l'Oach, Roumanie* by three distinguished ethnomusicologists (Jacques Bouët, Bernard Lortat-Jacob and Speranta Radulescu), who, in the course of the nineties, set out a few times for this poor agricultural Oach region on the northern border of Romania with Hungary and Ukraine. Here music is mostly heard at weddings and at Sunday dances, but it is also heard during work in the fields. It is sung in a particular way, "at the top of one's voice," that is, in an unusually high position with characteristic initial exclamation or shouting, after which follows a descending melody. According to local custom, men play the violin either alone or with a peculiar accompaniment of the

guitar; in addition, a flute, leaf or Jew's harp may be used. The area is famous for its musical tradition; in the introduction to the book the authors characterize it as "extremely unusual and bewildering, unfamiliar to West Europeans and even to Romanians from other regions" (p. 7). Local people point out with certain pride that scholars barely understand their music: not one of the researchers was born in this region, so they could not "absorb" it from their childhood. Despite that, or even for that reason, it is necessary to carry out research. When one says, "music of the Oach," however, one uncertainty emerges: did not the famous Béla Bartók (and after him a few other researchers) already investigate this region from a musicological point of view and make tens of transcriptions which are legendary today?

Not only the world and, along with it, musical tradition, but also the methodological approach to both, however, change. Facts in the publication corroborate both. Despite considerable esteem for Bartók and his remarkable work, the authors feel a certain need to juxtapose themselves with his and Constantin Brailoiu's methods and goals. The time of one-shot forays with the purpose of "a hunt for a tune" collected from peasants, from whom it is necessary to get to know "only" their name, age, religion and marital status, is over. Replay of Bartók's transcriptions of local musicians, nevertheless, will help to nail down certain findings.

From the information of researchers, it is clear that the music of the Oach was still, in the 1990s, a component of daily life; it accompanies both special and ordi-

nary occasions. For all of this to come to light, it is often necessary to obtain and maintain the fragile confidence of the people and spend hours and hours in the field, from which gradually, as from a landscape covered by fog, there emerge miscellaneous facts that it is necessary, with initial insecurity and confusion, to *(re)construct*. According to the authors, the contents of the publication were produced in the field, where the researchers became witnesses to a considerable number of weddings, watched Sunday dances, conducted interviews with a number of people, with the aid of their own sense of hearing and modern technology recorded hundreds of musical performances, lived in village buildings and, with local people, drank *horinka* spirits out of a common glass, as was the custom.

In the introductory part we find a synopsis and the above-mentioned methodological assumptions. The authors conceived the publication deliberately to corroborate the approach of their research work. The uniqueness of the monograph is the segmentation of its chapters into two parts, of which the first is often perhaps too literary, while the second is a professionally conceived presentation of the problem or situation described in the first part. In the "literary" parts of the chapters the researchers do not hesitate to depict subjectively tuned perceptions of observed facts, impressions of the people researched and their assumptions; they admit occasional doubts, dilemmas and fatigue caused not only by a musically specific and for them foreign environment.

All of this, although not always outwardly admitted by a number of research-

ers, undoubtedly belongs to field research. Although in the text one finds diverse and rather disturbing allusions, for example, to oppressive social and economic conditions of the local inhabitants, one does not get bogged down in an interpretation of details which would exceed the field of relevant information. The publication is mainly about the music of the Oach, but without knowing the people, their fates and the world in which they live, it could not exist, nor could its interpretation be formulated by the researchers. Although the authors claim that the first part of the chapters can be left out during a reading of them, they have their importance in their ability to confirm the contextual background, formulations of ethnomusicological conclusions.

At first, readers are also shown the equivocality of the first information obtained and key questions of the researchers which are clarified in the following chapters. At first they cause considerable difficulty as various informants conflictingly defined musical terms such as *dant*, *pont*, *figura*, and *tipurit*, whose role in local music is, however, basic. The authors of the book decided to hold onto original Oach terminology, supplemented by their Western musicological characteristics so that there would not be a flattening, a simplifying of reality in the field. All things considered, the goal is not *to take possession* of music in our way, but to get to know and understand it as a peculiar tradition, a system organized according to its own, not coincidental rules.

The first chapter is oriented toward the musicological side of the problem: Which Oach musical expressions are considered

music and what distinguishes it? At first, researchers are confused: everything, whether it is about solo singing, violin playing or playing another instrument, during dance or without it, is termed as *dant* by the locals. A second crucial term is *pont*, which evidently is immediately connected with *dant*. With increasing knowledge, researchers are capable of ascertaining that the *dant* is the emblematic musical form for the region, whether sung or played on an instrument, which is composed of various numbers of eight-beat melodic-rhythmical segments (*pont*) and is similar to another Romanian (and also Balkan) form (*strigatura*), for which “shouting” verses in dance rhythm is typical. Each *dant* has a range of one and a half octaves and characteristic progression: at the beginning there is the introductory “shout” (*tipuritura*), along with a descending melody whose range of intervals narrows toward the conclusion. A *dant* that is sung seems to be a relatively simple form which increases in complexity if it is played on a violin or sung with guitar accompaniment. Basically it has two forms: the “dance” *dant de jucat* – in a lively, quick tempo, while a slower *dant* is interpreted locally with characteristic singing “at the top of one’s voice.” The higher the singing and the noisier or “rougher” the singing, the better the *dant*. In private, however, it is possible to sing more quietly and in the middle position. Every *dant*, nevertheless, has its appropriate position – some should be sung/played low (*dant pe jos*), while others high (*dant pe sus*). The delimitation of the position is, however, relative: with singers, the category of “low” or “high” depends on the abilities of the individual;

just as with instruments, it depends on the highest or lowest playable position. This basic information complements a detailed musical analysis of all parts of the *dant*, which are the introductory *tipuritura*, the “beginning” *inceput*, the *figura/refren* = ritornel (typical for music and dance in Transylvania) and the concluding *terminat*.

The basis for all interpretive assumptions is the thoroughly worked transcription of sound materials along with transcripts of sung texts in the original version and in a French translation. A valuable supplement of the monograph is a DVD on which there are sound and audiovisual examples which capture a Sunday dance, a wedding, the course of an evening visit to some girls, and an excerpt of an interview with one of the informants. Musical transcriptions can also be heard in sound form. Scholars’ information of field research suitably complements the basic, broad characteristics of the region studied and an essay about predecessors who carried out research here. Mainly, the musicological information confronts the authors with the results of research done in the past and also records basic changes substantiated with facts which showed organological research of local musical instruments. The authors refer to the findings of Béla Bartók in the years 1912 and 1913, the research of Constantin Brailoiu of the ’30s and the development studied in the ’60s and ’70s. Despite the disappearance of many musical forms, the *dant* has been the core of local music since the beginning of the twentieth century and it still plays a dominant role today. With the advance of time, however,

violin playing and the way of accompaniment, both the pitch of tone and the speed of tempo have had an ascending tendency. The violin is an important musical instrument here. Despite the fact that in the Oach region Roma are in the minority, the introduction of violin playing has been attributed to them. The people of the Oach themselves consider the Roma the best violinists simply because they "have no other work." At the time of Bartók's research, violinists, *ceteras*, were almost exclusively "Gypsies"; later, however, the number of Romanian violinists increased. A most interesting fact is, however, that there was a considerable shift in playing and singing, in comparison with the time of Bartók's research; today the singing and playing are in a much higher position, which enabled an important modification of construction of the Oach violin and *zongora* guitar. So that violin playing resembled the strenuous singing "at the top of one's voice" at the limit of the physiological possibilities of a voice, violin tuning and the position of the individual strings were adjusted, which also permitted typical local playing with progression of parallel fifths.

Musicological character soon alternates with interesting cultural anthropological findings. The authors pay special attention to the fact that the performance of the *dant* is personal, but it is also a family matter. It turns out that the *dant* is passed down in the family through the male line to descendents, including to women. *Dants* are thus some sort of historiography of the area and credit for their maintenance goes mainly to the violinist (*ceteras*) who remembers many *dants* that are the "emblem" of

local families and thus he also preserves them for his descendents, who would forget them. After puberty, thus, each has his "own" inherited *dant*, to which, however, he must add something personal. Therefore one *dant*, according to informants, has so many varied forms. Researchers further find that the *dant*, concretely singing "at the top of one's voice" and dance music, are mostly performed by young people and they notice its important role in the period of courtship, described evening visits to girls and Sunday dances, and during a wedding ceremony. There appears again the well-known hypothesis about the connection of musical performances with the period of youth, i.e., concurrently with sexuality and preparation for entrance into marriage. It is confirmed by the fact that especially young people sing in a high position with considerable vocal tension; at the same time, however, they do not use a suitable head register. High, but, despite that, chest singing "at the top of one's voice" has, namely, according to the authors, a relation to the lower part of the body connected with sexuality. The *dant* also belongs not only to the world of youth but mainly to that of the *living*. Music proclaiming death and crying over the dead is not a *dant*, which is evident from the musical instruments used and also from the way of singing/playing and the shape of the melody.

The authors attempt to confirm the very understanding of the *dant* and its peculiarities by having *dants* composed by themselves judged by one of the most skillful local musicians. How surprised were they when Gheorghe Meti considered a *dant* composed by Sper-

anta Radulescu as original, typical for a certain village of the region. Meti also considered other *dants* as indigenous if there did not vibrate in them elements that were atypical for the people of the Oach. Scholars then came to the conclusion that the *dant* must become whatever fills certain local musical criteria. The people of the Oach can adapt any melody to their own musical taste and, thus, accept it as their own. And so can also be explained the initially confusing variability and quantity of verses of the *dant*: the people of the Oach do not inherit a precise form of a melody, but a form or way of its formation. The *dant* is basi-

cally an “open” musical form which characterizes, apart from a few relatively common musical features, mainly a (cultural anthropological) *context* of its performance.

The epilog is a rather nostalgic musing over the future of this very unusual musical tradition that has been appearing in Europe to date. Does the music of this small region, despite the influences of modernity and the growing emigration of the inhabitants of the Oach, have a chance to survive? The conclusion ends ambiguously, but the validity of contemporary speculation can be confirmed only by the future.

Zita Skořepová Honzlová