

EUROPEANIZATION AS STRATEGY

Disciplinary Shifts in Switzerland and the Formation of European Ethnology

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This paper examines the epistemological and institutional activities in the field of *Volkskunde*/folklore studies in Switzerland leading to the discipline's reformation as "European ethnology". Drawing on archival materials, the article takes Arnold Niederer (1914–1998) as a starting point by showing how Niederer, his networks and research contexts were involved in the formation of the loose alliance of interests that were subsequently institutionalized. This paper traces the new perception of the discipline "European ethnology" as it draws on early transnational contacts of Swiss Folklore Studies in order to overcome the crisis in which *Volkskunde* found itself in the 1960s. Europeanization and an orientation toward the present were strategies to stabilize the academic discipline but also to establish the discipline in the public sphere.

Keywords: European ethnology, *Volkskunde*/folklore studies, history of knowledge, disciplinary historiography, Switzerland

European ethnology has never been a coherent, conclusive discipline but has rather been a loose network of interests, topics and collaborations. This had already been the case as numerous institutions such as the *Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore* (SIEF) and the journal *Ethnologia Europaea* were founded. Within these institutions, a small group of "Europeanists" that formed in the middle of the 1960s played an important role. A key member of this group was the Swiss-born Arnold Niederer (1914–1998). Not only was Niederer one of the founders of *Ethnologia Europaea* in 1966/67, he was also significantly involved in the formation of the loose network of actors who helped promote, share and establish European ethnology as a new discipline. Early on, Niederer saw himself as a European ethnologist; his comparative

cross-cultural interests were present already well before the institutionalization of the corresponding research context. Thus, he is one of the pioneers of the discipline; a comparative perspective on the Alpine region and research on forms of cooperative work organized at the community level kindled his interest in European issues. Niederer was one of the researchers, together with Sigurd Erixon, Jorge Dias and others, who wanted to overcome divisions between the different national and local ethnologies in Europe and thus contributed to the network of European ethnology. In this process, they also reflected theoretically on the common – as well as distinct – characteristics of European ethnology across Europe.

Revisiting Anthropological Knowledge Production

International and European research cooperation dates back to the beginnings of the ethnological disciplines and *Volkskunde*; there were numerous – and in the long term usually unsuccessful – attempts to create cross-border research organizations. One of the most important ones in the twentieth century was the *Commission des Arts et Traditions Populaires* (CIAP). It suffered from the political tensions caused by the rising Nazi and Fascist movements, and failed to overcome difficult circumstances once it was resurrected in the post-war years (Rogan 2007, 2008c). In the mid-1960s, a new dynamic developed that radically changed things. Along with new conceptions on the disciplinary focus that asserted itself on the international level, various researchers in the folklore disciplines transformed their previously nationally oriented studies toward international cooperation because of a general decline of national identities in academic contexts. A clear expression of this is the formation of the *Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore* (SIEF) in Athens in September 1964 as an institutional home for international cooperation in ethnological research (Rogan 2008a: 53–56). However, the participants brought the previous differences regarding scholarly conception, organizational issues and the name debates with them to the newly founded SIEF, making the organization incapable of action in the beginning as “literary folklorists” and “anthropological folklorists” waged a battle. SIEF’s weak start was due to disciplinary politics and the strong influence of the German folk narrative expert Kurt Ranke (Rogan 2013, 2014). A clear result of this conflict is the explicit founding of the journal *Ethnologia Europaea* separate from SIEF (Rogan 2008b: 72–73). Only much later did the journal come together with SIEF, even entering into an official cooperation with SIEF on the occasion of SIEF’s 50th anniversary in 2014. Within the framework of SIEF, it would take until after the congress in Paris in 1971 and the now greater influence of the network of European ethnologists for a significant increase in cooperation and a strong interest in research organizations to take effect and become established.

Reflecting on the past is fitting as anniversaries and birthdays are important rituals of self-assurance within academic disciplines. But it is also important to take a look back in order to better grasp the interaction between knowledge producers and society, in this case significant disciplinary predecessors and their contribution to both the formation of scholarly ideas and social reality. To this end, this contribution¹ to reflexive disciplinary historiography wants to be more than just the history of one academic field, bound to the logic of a discipline and its names, institutions and paradigms. Building on perspectives from the history of knowledge making, this article puts the epistemology of the discipline “European ethnology”, its perception of problems and the decisive socio-economic and cultural contexts under scrutiny. By taking a perspective in regard to the history and anthropology of knowledge, the aim of this work is to take non-scholarly factors such as the role of politics in the production and circulation of knowledge (Ash 2002) genuinely into consideration.² In such a view, the history of a discipline presents itself as a discursive quest for knowledge, as an ongoing construction of its subject matter and – with that – as a permanent reproduction of research topics. Scholarship is not *quasi* detached from its surrounding society, but is rather most closely linked to the characteristics of a particular society. Thus, the task of a history of ethnological scholarship is to examine the social construction, production and circulation of knowledge.³ These processes are not only characterized by progress logics and do not end at the borders of the disciplines, but are linked with the contexts of a society in which research is conducted and with the social environment of the people and institutions that study these knowledge formations (Latour 1987; Nowotny, Scott & Gibbons 2001; Weingart 2005).

It goes without saying that such an investigation of knowledge production is fundamentally close to an anthropological position. It is doubtful whether such a knowledge history of our discipline can still serve the scholarship’s self-confidence (Sievers 1991: 11), but it will serve for sure as a reflexive tool for the understanding of circulations between the research

fields and the science discipline (Tschofen 2011) and increase the self-reflection of our research activities.

During the last years, there has been increasing research interest in such knowledge studies that served as a reflexive history of European ethnology as an academic field and as a history of *Volkskunde* as a bridge between the academic worlds and general society in German-speaking countries.⁴ Consequently, research now is interested less in the history of the discipline than in the history of the various processes of construction, production and circulation of anthropological and ethnological knowledge. Nevertheless, the image of the 1950s and 1960s – which is of special interest here – as a phase of accelerated changes and important cooperation remains unclear and opaque in regard to historical questions on the interaction between *Volkskunde*, the newly evolving European ethnology and social and political conditions in European countries.⁵ Bjarne Rogan concisely traced how uncertain and inconsistent the institutionalization of European ethnology developed in the post-war years and beyond (Rogan 2008a, 2012, 2013), since SIEF was the “only general society of European ethnology” (Rogan 2008b: 66). However, at the same time, he pointed out how little can be observed about methods, paradigms shifts and theoretical influences on the level of research on such a scientific organization. This can only be demonstrated in the historical reconstruction of concrete research practices that often had a strong national basis. On the basis of archival material, published contributions and oral-history-interviews, this paper examines this national research practice and its interaction with international European collaborative research projects, using Switzerland as an example. Switzerland is highly relevant during the 1950s and 1960s for the entire development of the discipline in German-speaking regions, but also in the rest of Europe. This was due to several reasons. First, Switzerland could seamlessly revive its previous international contacts from *Volkskunde* after the war. Second, similar to Scandinavian and southern European countries, the discipline in Switzerland is the only one in German-speaking regions that had not been completely discredited due to collaboration

with the Nazi regime. Third, its academic community had not been significantly affected by the war. Fourth, the social and cultural change caused by the rapid economic boom in the post-war years was rather visible at a very early stage and presented an ethnological discipline new challenges and topics. Finally, Switzerland with its four official languages, was in a better position than other European countries to meet the requirements for international cooperation.⁶ Nevertheless, many of the specific developments that can be observed and described locally with the empirical examples of scholarly practice in Switzerland have parallels in other European countries.

When taking a look at the Swiss situation, a discipline with limited personal and institutional resources reveals itself. This discipline remained focused with the institutionalization of the discipline at the universities and with the establishment of its research topics in the public well into the second half of the twentieth century.⁷ *Volkskunde* in Switzerland was characterized by national bias, traditional research perspectives and narrowly defined topics in the decades after 1945. Starting in 1955, the combination of these characteristics led to an internal scholarly crisis in regard to the position of the discipline. This crisis only came to an end with the strategy of Europeanizing the discipline and the systematic repositioning as a scholarship with contemporary relevance. Arnold Niederer played a central role in this strategic repositioning. Despite this Europeanization strategy, the previously nationally orientated discipline in Switzerland was still shifting between the “cosmopolitanism” of transnational academic communities and the “provincialism” of the regional networks and research topics (Hugger 1994), while at the same time “international activity” was influenced by German *Volkskunde* (Schmoll 2011: 426) and by processes of national functionalization. During the 1950s, conflict surrounded the different national *Volkskunden* and the internationally orientated European academic community in the context of European ethnology. Niederer and his European colleagues perceived European ethnology as an attempt to overcome this conflict by connecting

the various regional ethnographies of the national *Volkskunden* to a broader international debate and linking them to the goal of an interregional cultural analysis. With this, Niederer as part of a *Denkkollektiv* (thought collective) of scholars (Fleck 1983: 114) moved beyond the internal perspective that dominated and fostered international European interests and topics with an anthropological – and later social science – context.

This paper takes Arnold Niederer as a starting point by showing the academic interests and personal political positions that helped form the loose alliance of interest that was subsequently institutionalized as European ethnology. It then demonstrates how “Swiss Volkskunde” not only contributed specific new topics to European ethnology that resulted from the rapid modernization process in the 1950s and 1960s, but also had a long tradition of cooperation that would be built upon. In the third part, the research practice of a European ethnology “in the making” will be revealed, as well as its strategic use to stabilize the discipline.

Intercultural Understanding as Biographical Structure – Arnold Niederer (1914–1998)

In addition to the opportunity to commemorate Arnold Niederer’s 100th birthday, this paper focuses on Niederer as a biographical approach toward the history of ethnological scholarship. The general small size of the discipline – in Switzerland as well as the rest of Europe – means that the personality, interests and positions of the particular researchers have significantly influenced the content, strategies and effects of ethnological knowledge. Examining the personality of the researchers thus provides – with all of the risks of retrospective transfiguration – an opportunity for an in-depth view of the formation of the discipline, of knowledge production and of the relationship between a small discipline and the society of those times.

Arnold Niederer, born in 1914, only obtained his *Matura* (A-level exams) in 1944 after he had completed an apprenticeship in the French-speaking part of Switzerland (Gyr 1980, 2006). He studied French language and literature, Volkskunde and

sociology at the University of Zürich until 1951 and completed his short yet exceptional dissertation *Gemeinwerk im Wallis* in 1956 (Niederer 1956). Niederer was a language teacher at the municipal vocational school in Zürich from 1956 to 1963. Here he met foreign-speaking students with whom he went on “ethnographic” excursions – without explicitly calling them this – to Corsica, Greece, Sardinia and even London.⁸ With these vocational students, he experienced what had become a central characteristic of his research interests as he was a young travelling salesman during the difficult years of the Second World War: field-research encounters and learning directly from life rather than inanimate artifacts. The young Arnold Niederer characterized this approach during his time at the Minerva School for Adults in Zürich in an essay with the title “Ein Wissensgebiet, das mich besonders fesselt” in 1942:

In the past as I hiked over hill and dale – sometimes alone or sometimes also in the company of kindred spirits – filled with unrelenting *Wanderlust*, I would write down what filled my heart. Later, when I was deprived of such wanderings, I began working through my experiences, delving into the history of the valleys that I had crossed through, until I realized that my memories of these happy hours of wandering were almost better than the present itself. The knowledge that I gained here in terms of history, linguistics and Volkskunde is the most precious that I have because they were not “learned” nor “imposed” but – in the truest sense of the word – experienced.⁹

From an early point, Niederer perfectly formulated a methodical principle, and, as a European ethnologist, he remained true to this with his university students. While teaching at the vocational school, Niederer continued to maintain contact with academic Volkskunde even after completing his studies. He participated in conferences, went to lectures, gave lectures – for example at the *Zürcher Sektion der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* in 1961 (Kuhn 2010: 91–92) – and was active in the managing board of the *Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde*.

Following the accidental death of the University of Zürich's first professor of Volkskunde, Richard Weiss, in 1962, Niederer was appointed to the professorship in 1964. As one reads from the statements of the university's appointment committee in 1963, there were high expectations waiting for Niederer:

Of all of the candidates, Dr. Niederer is the only one who is familiar with all of the different fields of study within Volkskunde. Thanks to his talent for languages, he is the only to provide a guarantee that Volkskunde will not become a Volkskunde of German-speaking Switzerland only; the department attaches particular importance on the Atlas of Swiss Volkskunde which is orientated toward all four languages of Switzerland. Dr. Niederer is also the only one with a self-acquired overview of the problems of Volkskunde in a pan-European context. As of today and in the near future, he is the only candidate who fulfills the specific requirements of the professorship. With personal and character qualities, he also provides assurance of this.¹⁰

Despite that it was explicitly mentioned in the appointment of the Zürich Professorship for Volkskunde that "Swiss Volkskunde may not just be limited to Switzerland and has to work with the pan-European context," the domestic political functionalization of the discipline had remained as it was in 1945 when the professorship was established for Richard Weiss. Volkskunde still was a tool for the political demand for a national defense and closely related to political attempts and critical sentiments toward modernization:

In addition to the pure academic function, every modern Volkskunde has the special task in regard to education and cultural policy to protect cultural heritage in the form of architecture, language and traditional customs from threats caused by rationalization and technology and to save the genuine national traditions [*Echt-Volkstümliche*] from debasement. Researching traditions rooted in the national community [*Volksgemeinschaft*]

obliges Volkskunde to promote and support a sense of home(land) and state consciousness [*Heimat- und Staatsbewusstsein*] on the basis of a genuine tradition.¹¹

Niederer complied with the demand from the university's governing body for a pan-European orientation as well as with the political functions of the discipline – even if it was not what the political committees of the canton and university intended; as a sense of social responsibility, his academic research in European perspectives was also a concrete commitment against xenophobia.

With the increased number of immigrants coming to Switzerland, especially from southern Europe to work in the construction and manufacturing industries, as a result of the economic boom since the 1960s, the rallying cry *Überfremdung* (foreign infiltration) was increasingly used to politicize the increasing number of foreigners in Switzerland. After years of heated controversy, a referendum on the initiative on *Überfremdung* launched by the right-wing populist James Schwarzenbach took place in 1970. Although it was defeated with 54% of the votes against it, this incident helped to establish migration as a dominant topic of Swiss politics to this day. In these sometime fierce debates, Arnold Niederer as university professor campaigned with enlightening impetus in public for intercultural understanding from employers and against ethnocentrically based prejudices.¹² Niederer's public involvement as a scholar coincides with the fact that he had been a member of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland since 1948 and of the Union of Public Employees since 1958.¹³ Even though he did not highlight these memberships publicly, he was, however, more than just a party member; for example, he was active in the Educational Committee of the Social Democratic Party in Zürich.¹⁴ Niederer was one of the few scholars then who combined their research topics with political partisanship (cf. Niederer 1967a, 1969a, 1970b). This put him under political pressure during the heated situation of the late 1960s due to the migration debates as well as the student movements. In a private letter in 1969, Niederer wrote:

Thus I have a busy year ahead of me. The closer it gets to the referendum on the Schwarzenbach Initiative, the more I am hassled by the newspapers for an article on the matter from an academic point of view... [...] I am satisfied with the academic achievements, but they came at a high price because I took this position completely unprepared for this. By the way, it is not at all so easy to become accepted at the University of Zürich when one is political on the left. This was hardly the case in the beginning, but since the student revolts, the differences among arch-conservative and progressive professors have become more pronounced and often develop into unpleasant confrontations.¹⁵

Here, Niederer was referring to the reprehensive responses that awaited all who carried out socially critical interventions from a position of research ethics in a Swiss post-war society whose domestic politics had been shaped by the harsh contrasts of the Cold War. Niederer's bold commitment against xenophobia was important to him throughout his whole life. This is exemplified in a letter to the author Laure Wyss shortly before his death in which he wrote that he shared her anger against racists and remembered the time that he "actively fought against the Schwarzenbach Initiative."¹⁶ The number of times he was asked by Italian or Portuguese *Gastarbeiter* to be the godfather for their children, the numerous wedding invitations and the countless long-term friendships he maintained with migrant families reveal Niederer's qualities as a philanthropist for working migrants.¹⁷

With the close relationship of his political and human attitudes, positions of a comparative European Volkskunde served Niederer early on to gain a "better understanding of foreign cultures and with that European integration" (Niederer 1967b: 311). This view beyond national borders was especially crucial for the linguistically gifted Niederer who started several friendships from travels and research excursions to Portugal and Sardinia. It was his teacher and supervisor Richard Weiss who advised Niederer, after completing his dissertation in 1957, to continue

to study "communitarianism" in Portugal as a "basic topic of Volkskunde."¹⁸ This is where Niederer encountered modern cultural anthropology and European orientated ethnology for the first time, as represented by Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira from Instituto de Estudos de Ethnologia Peninsular in Porto and the ethnologist Jorge Dias from Lisbon.

Europeanization as a Means of Overcoming the Crisis within the Discipline

Volkskunde in Switzerland gained an enhanced status in the 1930s as a defense against the foreign political threats of Nazism and fascism and even briefly became a "minor" *Leitwissenschaft* (leading science) as a legitimizing authority for cultural diversity in Switzerland against chauvinistic racial ideologies. This status was not only expressed in the government funding from the middle of the 1930s for the *Atlas der schweizerischen Volkskunde* as a counter-project to the German *Volkskunde-Atlas*, but also in the creation of the professorship for Volkskunde at the University of Zürich, to which Richard Weiss was appointed. Weiss played a significant role in the formation of Volkskunde in Switzerland and viewed the main task of his emerging discipline as researching regional and Swiss topics. Some of his important contributions to the discipline were making a clean break from earlier *Heimatkunde* (local history) and the opening of the discipline to a truly national perspective (Gyr 2009). After 1945, the discipline flourished with this secured position, and, at the same time, it was perceived as a lifesaver for the discredited discipline in the other German-speaking countries – the enthusiastic reception of the publication *Volkskunde der Schweiz* by Richard Weiss in 1946 is *quasi* a symbol of this status within the German and Austrian Volkskunde (Weiss 1946; cf. Scharfe 1986: 265). This level of saturation within Swiss Volkskunde led to "a slower renovation of the disciplinary enterprise" (Bendix 2012: 367) and to a period of "placid activity" (Hugger 1992: 25), which developed into a state of crisis around 1960. This is evident from the extensive correspondences in which Richard Weiss touches on the crisis of his discipline and the uncertainty on the relevant research

topics. It was becoming increasingly unclear for Weiss – as for other scholars such as Eduard Strübin (Scheidegger 2014) – as to what extent his scholarship still was part of *Volkskunde*. There are, for instance, statements from Weiss on various occasions that reveal the development of disciplinary identity issues from his teachings at the university:

In my seminars on “Problems of Mountain Farmer”, “Foreign Workers” and “Jews”, we always discuss things that move, at least me (and I hope also a few others), but no one knows exactly how these topics pertain to *Volkskunde*.¹⁹

At other occasions, he feared for the “future of *Volkskunde* (which I often fundamentally doubt)” as he wrote in a letter after a lecture at the University of Basel in 1962.²⁰ His struggles also became apparent in the search for a new name for the discipline that should fit a future identity of the discipline: in a letter, he wrote about “nightly dreams” in which “*Volkskunde* suddenly has another name, but I can no longer recall it.”²¹ By the mid-1950s, it was precisely the opening of the traditional canon of *Volkskunde* and disciplinary movements toward contemporary-oriented and comparative European topics that created a crisis for the discipline – and with that, also for its most prominent representative, Richard Weiss. This crisis had several sides: on the one hand, progressive scholars of the discipline perceived the dynamic of cultural change in Switzerland, which became increasingly noticed during the economic boom in the 1950s, as pressing. Weiss noted the changes of modernization on society most clearly within his academic field of interest that to him was an affair of heart: rural Alpine life (Gyr 2006). These astute and level-headed, yet also unsettling, observations on the Alps manifest themselves in his remarkably contemporary-oriented works on the cultural changes in the mountains, for example the topic of touristic gondolas and aerial trams (Weiss 1959) or on the problems of the mountain farmers (Weiss 1957). On the other hand, although Weiss and, thus, Swiss *Volkskunde* received international acclaim, he was, however, nevertheless oddly

isolated and alone. Despite the fact that there were institutional connections for the international Atlas project (Schmoll 2009b: 28–30) and an openness for European issues, Weiss usually remained confined to a Swiss context with his studies and to the cartographic methods on cultural spaces that he had employed for the Atlas and for his research on rural farmhouses. With his functionalist concepts, he was more and more in a lonely theoretical position within anthropological research and not compatible with, for example, Scandinavian research. Although Weiss made attempts to change the position of the discipline to one of contemporary *Volkskunde*, they were always hesitantly retracted again because of his personal background and academic socialization. In this way, he indeed shared an understanding for the discipline’s social responsibility and was also interested early on in urban topics and in an *Arbeitervolkskunde* (workers *Volkskunde*). Nevertheless, the positional shifts away from a static view on culture to insights on varied cultural and social change was by no means easy for him. A cultural-critical reluctance toward modernity and its characteristics had too strong of an effect here. His student Rudolf Braun addressed this in a posthumous characterization:

He incessantly fought for the reformation of *Volkskunde*. [...] The great lengths Prof. Weiss went so that *Volkskunde* should become contemporary orientated toward modern problems is known by those who knew him; fewer, however, I believe, realize how he suffered from this fight.²²

Due to the accidental death of Weiss in the summer of 1962, the corresponding attempts of renunciation of the traditional positions of the discipline remained unfinished.

Arnold Niederer not only took over the professorship at the University of Zürich in 1964, but also the urgent challenge of shifting the academic position of Swiss *Volkskunde*. He met this challenge by reforming the discipline into a problem- and contemporarily-orientated *Volkskunde* which, looking back, is often simply referred to as the “Zürich School” (Antonietti 2013: 39) even when one cannot speak

of an actual dogmatic school there. With this, Niederer continued much of what was already applied in Weiss' research: issues of the Alpine region, how the contemporarily-orientated *Volkskunde* was being practiced especially in the seminars at the university, the new topics such as the working class, or academic issues in the context of the social responsibility of the discipline (Kuhn 2015; Gyr 1999: 50). However, Niederer differed from his mentor with his application-oriented view toward his research that looked at cultural change – which also always meant social change to him – without the impact of cultural pessimism. Niederer was, partially motivated by his personal background as a young travelling salesman in the Alps and as a language teacher (Gyr 2006: 238), interested in the rural collective in the Alps, in the folk cultures of the Mediterranean countries and in the acculturation problems that migrants faced.

However, for clearly strategic reasons, he especially opted for the Europeanization of the discipline

with which he was able to overcome the crisis articulated by Weiss, allowing him to lead the discipline together with other progressive European scholars to new research fields and acceptance at the social, academic and political levels. So he consequently strengthened his contact to the *Commission Internationale des Arts et Traditions Populaires* via Jorge Dias. In particular, he had a constant academic exchange of opinions with Sigurd Erixon from Stockholm, “the master-mind behind the efforts to establish a European (regional) ethnology” (Rogan 2013: 92). As a newly-elected professor, Niederer regularly participated in conferences (Niederer 1965a)²³ and quickly adapted positions of a program to synthesize European ethnology that Erixon already formulated in the 1930s (Rogan 2008c, 2013; Arnstberg 2008). This active network of European ethnology was never strictly academic but included private friendship, too. This led, for example, to life-long friendships with the German scholar Günter Wiegmann,



Ill. 1: Arnold Niederer (reading a paper) among European ethnologists, one of them Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira (in the center), at the “Congresso Internacional de Etnografica” in Santo Tirso (Portugal), July 10–18, 1963. (Photo: Private Collection of Loni Niederer-Nelken, Zürich)

whom Niederer met in 1966 in Julita, Sweden, at a planning meeting to establish the *Ethnologia Europaea*,²⁴ or to Nils-Arvid Bringéus, with whom he travelled both professionally and privately in the 1980s.²⁵ Niederer, Dias, Erixon, Wiegelmann and others made it their objective to integrate the various national-based *Volkskunden* as regional ethnographies in a larger European context and, with this, to overcome the previous ethnocentric and nationalistic bias. In doing so, they met opposition from German *Volkskundler* with the rallying cry of “ethnologization” (Schmoll 2007). Niederer’s close contact to these pioneers of European ethnology was strengthened in the context of international conferences for the *Ethnologia Europaea*, *Alpes Orientales*, *Ständigen Internationalen Atlaskommission*²⁶ and later the SIEF. Niederer’s position on the opening of the discipline and his Europeanization strategy was already reflected in his inaugural lecture at the University of Zürich, in which he explicitly mentioned the international contacts from the earlier Swiss *Volkskunde*, established by Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer (Bendix 1997: 103–105):

Hoffmann-Krayer dismissed limiting research in *Volkskunde* to one’s own country as unscholarly. [...] His knowledge of foreign *Volkskunde* made him predestined to be involved in establishing the most important bibliographic tool of European *Volkskunde*, the *Internationale volkskundliche Bibliographie*. [...] Since Hoffmann-Krayer, there has been a stronger tendency toward the supranational orientation of the research areas in Swiss *Volkskunde*.²⁷

It is precisely this early international tradition of the Swiss – and specifically Basel – *Volkskunde* at the turn of the century that was taken up by the efforts of Europeanizing the discipline after 1945. In doing so, the Swiss scholars continued to fluctuate between proximity and distance, as they have done during the preceding decades (Kuhn 2015).

Due to this long international tradition, the contribution to Swiss *Volkskunde* on the founding of European ethnology in the 1950s and 1960s can-

not be limited to just Arnold Niederer. There were also figures internationally representing Switzerland such as Max Lüthi, Ernst Baumann, Walter Escher and Robert Wildhaber before and alongside him. Most notably, it was Robert Wildhaber (1902–1982) who, as a student of Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer, mainly studied peasant and rural relicts and whose interest for a comparative European perspective corresponded to his mentor’s scholarly views. Wildhaber had a universal comparative understanding of culture that could also be found during the institutionalization phase of the discipline between 1890 and 1914 (Warneken 2011). Thus, his desire for transnational awareness for ethnological knowledge (cf. Wildhaber 1956) led him on behalf of Sigurd Erixon to take over the editorship of the *Internationale Volkskundliche Bibliographie* (IVB) from 1942 to 1972 (Wildhaber 1951; Rogan 2013: 119–121).

It is hard to overestimate the effective – yet also selective – influence that Swiss *Volkskunde* had on the IVB up to 1977 because of this. On the other hand, Wildhaber was active as the editor of the *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* until his death in 1982. In this function, he wrote over 2,000 (!) reviews and linked the international research discussions with the German-speaking *Volkskunde*. Wildhaber was one of the “internationally well connected folklorists” (Bendix 2012: 369) who was able to maintain academic contacts with scholars in Eastern Europe and the Balkans despite the division of Europe due to the Cold War. This was due to his language skills that allowed him to publish overviews of research in German on various national ethnologies, as well as to also publish on the other side of the Iron Curtain. These international contacts developed due to the collaboration with the various contributors to the IVB, but were also strengthened with numerous study trips. An example of this European network where Wildhaber participated is the society *Alpes Orientales* in which scholars from Austria, Switzerland, Italy and the former Yugoslavia cooperated on researching the east Alpine region on the invitation of the Slovenian Academy of Science. This international orientation also manifests itself in Wildhaber’s travel activity as the director of the *Schweizerisches*

Museum für Volkskunde in Basel. Wildhaber was able to put together impressive exhibits in Basel with the help of his personal contacts throughout all of Europe.²⁸ Wildhaber functioned here as the “Swiss intermediary”²⁹ to the European research networks. He also maintained early and sustainable ties to the innovative research in the Scandinavian countries (Wildhaber 1960). The CIAP congresses, for example, were an important forum of these contacts with Sigurd Erixon.³⁰ Later, Wildhaber was involved in the founding phase of SIEF³¹, but withdrew shortly thereafter because of disappointment with it (Rogan 2008a: 58–60).

Wildhaber also maintained contacts in the United States, where he was “a visiting professor for folklore/ethnology” at the Indiana University Bloomington and at the Cooperstown Graduate Programs of the State University of New York.³² Significantly, the Swiss Wildhaber taught “European Folklore and Ethnology” there,³³ something that the one staff member of the Swiss Embassy in Washington particularly emphasized – perhaps even with a little pride. The letters of recommendation that his superiors received in favor that he participate in the conference on “Plowing Tools Research” in Copenhagen in 1954 (Rogan 2013: 129–131) demonstrate how Wildhaber also used these international contacts to be granted leave for research. The multiple letters of invitations from the Danish National Museum and the persistent letters of recommendation were making an impact; the Cantonal Department of Education granted him paid leave.³⁴

It had not gone unnoticed by the University of Basel that Wildhaber had a transnational network of personal relationships and knowledge at his disposal, which was unique in Switzerland. Therefore, the university appointed him as an “honorary lecturer for Volkskunde” after he retired in 1968 – an honor that meant a great deal to Wildhaber.³⁵ The enormous international network of Robert Wildhaber was also readily apparent from the *Festschrift* that was published in 1973 with contributions from 75 scholars in 25 different countries (Escher, Gantner & Trümpler 1973). His numerous honorary memberships in academic associations are also

an indication of this. Wildhaber acted as a pioneer of the international network of Volkskunde, which has become ubiquitous again in the times of global academic fields today. The international comparative Volkskunde embodied by Wildhaber appears almost emblematic in a letter, where Wildhaber spoke about wanting to use the stay in the United States as a visiting professor “to be able to make a modest contribution to the mutual understanding between peoples.”³⁶ This board perspective, however, remained within the narrow outline of the discipline’s identity in the context of the traditional canon and differed considerably from Niederer’s intercultural-comparative perspective. Nevertheless, Wildhaber and Niederer both did more than talk and made European perspectives actually possible.³⁷

Starting in the 1960s, the Europeanization of Volkskunde was given a boost within the program of a “European ethnology” in the framework of the plans for a European Ethnographic Atlas (Rogan 2013: 90). These activities quickly abated again shortly thereafter, parallel to the disappearance of cartographic cultural issues in European ethnology (Schmoll 2009a: 271–274, 282–291). The loose network of ethnological research, however, experienced a new impetus for institutionalization in the beginning of the 1980s. This can be seen with the second SIEF congress that took place in Suzdal, Russia, and, especially, with the congress on “The Life Cycle” that was organized in Zürich with over 300 participants from 30 countries. Here, Arnold Niederer, now an emeritus professor since 1980, not only played a significant organizing role, but also made a major contribution with his contacts over the years in Scandinavia – particularly to the former SIEF president Nils-Arvid Bringéus – and in Eastern Europe.³⁸

Research Strategy and Networking: Practice of a European Ethnology “in-the-making”

European ethnology was a strategic research opportunity in German-speaking countries to take a solid position in the ongoing discussions that started in the middle of the 1960s on the future status and subject matter of the discipline.³⁹ Shifting the discipline toward European ethnology was an option

for change without cutting off the connection to previous *Volkskunde* research.⁴⁰ It was also an opportunity to provide a more theoretical foundation to a discipline that was previously lacking a strong theoretical basis (Niederer 1973b: 12–13), whereby the new theoretical input came primarily from the social sciences. Although most “Europeanist” expressed common opinions with sociology and their issues (cf. Niederer 1970a), the discipline was, however, usually positioned between history and the social sciences with its own issues, but yet with interdisciplinary collaboration (Niederer 1973b). Opting for “European ethnology” can also be seen as a strategy to differentiate themselves from the up-and-coming sociology and its increasing popularity among students.

The new theoretical foundation of the discipline was accompanied by an expansion of the meth-

odological instruments. In 1965, Niederer already consistently advocated employing the data collection methods of “empirical sociology” in the future (Niederer 1965b: 6), but he was also impressed by the methods of the cultural and social anthropology from the Anglo-Saxon academic world, especially their application of rigorously conducted community studies (Erixon 1967b; Niederer 1969b). These new methods were also applied to new topics; migration research – or “foreign workers”, as it was referred to at the time – in Switzerland was one of the new research paradigms. Today, it is a broadly-established interdisciplinary research context in which Niederer and Rudolf Braun were the pioneers (Leimgruber 2012: 129–130). Related to this was the openness toward “contemporary problems” – as it was referred to then. Not only were migrant populations studied with the goal of a “scholarship in the service of in-



Ill. 2: Arnold Niederer speaking with an informant fisherman in Cabras (Sardinia, Italy), October 1966. (Photo: Fonds Arnold Niederer, Lötschentaler Museum, Kippel)

terethnic understanding” (Niederer 1969b: 9), but soon interdisciplinary topics were also studied, such as the student uprisings in the 1960s and issues of regional identity that were considered relevant from a scholarly political point of view in the context of the national research’s main areas of focus. In this reformation process, fieldwork increasingly played a significant role; participant observations, surveys and field interviews largely replaced the previously archive-based methods of research in almost all of Europe (Rogan 2012: 617).

In a programmatic text for European ethnology in 1969, Niederer not only formulated a politically and socially relevant position of the discipline, but at the same time, he developed an epistemological network of theoretical reference points for future research projects. Many of the goals and premises stated in this text defined “European ethnology” at the beginning of the 1970s.⁴¹

Under the title “Zur gesellschaftlichen Verantwortung der gegenwärtigen Volksforschung,” Niederer referred to works from Sigurd Erixon and Åke Hultkrantz, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jorge Dias and Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, Caro Julio Baroja and Alberto Cirese as the actual founding fathers of the reformed discipline. Furthermore, social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and ethnographer Marcel Maquet (Weber 2009; Rogan 2013: 125–127) are prominently represented as two scholars from related disciplines whose analytic approach Niederer considered exemplary. In accordance with their view of scholarship, Niederer pleaded for a discipline that was “freed of ethnocentric biases” and that would open up new practical applications in society: “in the long run no scholarship can avoid the questions of ‘knowledge for what’ that society asks if it does not want to be seen as a fad of an extravagant or egoistic loner, scholarship in the sense of *l’art pour l’art*” (Niederer 1969b: 3). After this position provided a significant vote against the *Volkskunde* practiced up until then, Niederer repositioned the discipline with the research of contemporary-relevant problems within the scholarly canon and within society. This had the important side-effect that it opened up new career opportunities for the university graduates in

administration, politics and teaching. These careers in various cultural and political institutions were important not only in regard to the generally low social background of the students but also in regard to the strategic considerations of the university and the acceptance of the discipline within the humanities department. For fostering the discipline, it was especially the explanatory, comprehending function of the scholarship that was increasingly used:

Europe is a challenging continent with its patchwork of ethnicities and languages. If done from a distance, *Volkskunde* – along with sociology – can make a valuable contribution to solving the problems that result from the increasing geographical and social mobility in the form of cultural clashes and take on a crisis characteristic. Although within the individual ethnicities, there still exist more or less great differences, e.g. between the “official” and “peripheral” culture or “subaltern” cultures, between urban and rural areas, the north and south. Also here, *Volkskunde* can find a rich field of application if it tries more than it previously has to combat prejudices and the lack of understanding and tries to understand foreign cultures and sub-cultures from their historically-determined structures and patterns and when it pays greater attention to the particular systems of values.⁴²

In that context, it was more than just a supplement that Niederer wanted to include “European ethnology” along with “*Volkskunde*” as the name of the discipline at the University of Zürich already in 1971 – but this proposal failed to get the approval of the faculty. Despite its name, the Swiss scholarly practice in Zürich (Niederer 1975), however, was that of a rigorously practiced European ethnology since the middle of the 1960s.

Conclusion

In the long run, European ethnology successfully rescued a discipline that found itself in a precarious situation. Swiss *Volkskunde* demonstrates these growing uncertainties, but similar motivations and situations can be found in other national contexts.

What is specific to Switzerland is the earliness of these repositioning efforts to find safe ground for future research endeavors. Specific is also the fact that the discipline in Switzerland was not affected by any external crisis, but became lethargic and called into question from within. *Volkskunde* was a discipline whose representatives felt the pressure of an enormously dynamic and perceptible cultural change; they were faced with their field's theoretical inabilities due to the previous paradigmatic premises of *Volkskunde*. Put in another way: Swiss *Volkskundler* noticed that they would lose their field of expertise if they did not dynamically change and adjust their scholarly strategies to keep pace with the changing topics of the times.

In this difficult situation, Arnold Niederer led his discipline – the old *Volkskunde* – to firm ground with the systematic reorientation as European ethnology. Doing so, he helped to gain renewed acceptance for the discipline within society as well as at universities. This new acceptance from public, governmental and academic authorities manifests itself not only in Switzerland, but also in an international academic framework. Like-minded researchers were active here who not only studied comparative topics, but who also shared a common, consistent European view of ethnological scholarship. For this research context, Europeanization was a promising strategy for the future. European ethnology owed its appeal in the 1950s and 1960s to the fact that it offered a new foundation for the discipline and, at the same time, increased the theoretical basis of the discipline, improved its methodological instruments and established relevance for society. With this, European ethnology provided the various national scholarships a context that allowed a practical role in the social shaping of the future. The socially critical viewpoint of the present entailed in the Europeanization of the discipline corresponded to the personal ethical position of many scholars and was hence appealing. Europeanization was, thus, a successful strategy in providing a scholarly option to stabilize the discipline.

At the same time, reforming the realm as European ethnology also brought the different national

disciplines into potential critical positions vis-à-vis the state and the surrounding society. It is exactly with research topics relevant to the present and their European comparative relationship that emancipated and effective knowledge could develop, which was no longer meaningful for the collaborated common national identity. It is an open issue waiting for in-depth analysis, to what extent the newly gained acceptance in society and politics was again called into question by this critical perspective toward official migration policy, the gap between losers and winners of modernization and social discrimination. Future research on the history of ethnological knowledge will show whether and how European ethnology not only used its inherently critical potential, but also how the reformed discipline was introduced differently in the various national academic, political and social contexts. Precisely in the academic everyday life within a discipline like ours, it is, however, significant that European ethnology as a collective venture has always been a decentralized and international network of scholars, common interests and issues and – not to be forgotten – diverse friendships.

Notes

- 1 The initial idea for this paper came from the talk given on the occasion of Arnold Niederer's 100th birthday on September 13, 2014, at the Lötschentaler Museum in Kippel (Lötschen Valley, Switzerland). I would like to thank Ueli Gyr, Thomas Antonietti, Loni Niederer-Nelken, Maja Fehlmann, Bjarne Rogan, Joaquim Pais Brito, Regina F. Bendix, Hermann Bausinger and the anonymous reviewers of this article for informations, access to archival material, suggestions and helpful comments. Many thanks to Brent Wood and Thomas Klett for assistance with the language. All translations are the author's.
- 2 Corresponding research on experimental, natural and medical sciences has quite advanced during the last years, mostly informed by "science and technology studies" (STS) and a history-of-knowledge-perspective (Sarasin 2011; Speich Chassé & Gugerli 2012). Nevertheless, humanities, and especially anthropological disciplines, are only rarely focused on. See Barth (2002) for a concept of "anthropological knowledge" and Ash & Surman (2012) for a convincing attempt.
- 3 For a recent example of a discussion of the various innovative ways one could reexamine past research prac-

- tices, concepts and approaches of our scholarly field through the idea of revisiting rather than a traditional history of the discipline, please see the special issue *European Ethnology Revisited*, *Ethnologia Europaea* 44:2, 2014.
- 4 Much of the current knowledge history informed research has been done within the German research group on “Volkskundliches Wissen” (German Research Foundation DFG, 2006-2008/2013), see Kaschuba et al. (2009); Dietzsch, Kaschuba & Scholze-Irrlitz (2009); Davidovic-Walther, Fenske & Keller-Drescher (2009); Fenske & Davidovic-Walther (2010). See also Lozoviuk & Moser (2005); Brinkel (2009, 2012); Moser, Götz & Ege (2015). For research related to Switzerland: Schürch, Eggmann & Risi (2010); Eggmann & Oehme-Jüngling (2013); Antonietti (2013); Kuhn (2015). For Austria: Nikitsch (2005, 2006); Johler & Puchberger (2013).
 - 5 The current state of research is not only inadequate, there are also incorrect assessments such as: “[...] Volkskunde, stigmatized by its association with German nationalism, was largely absorbed into social anthropology” (Kuper 2003: 377).
 - 6 See Church & Head (2013) for a conclusive overview on the history of Switzerland.
 - 7 For an overview of the discipline’s history during the period in question, see: Bendix (2012: 366–370); Kuhn (2015); Hugger (1994). These texts also introduce the difficult relationship (and cleavages) between the French-speaking and the “Alemannic” areas and their corresponding research practices.
 - 8 For example, from April 4–14, 1961, in Corsica, as documented in a map from the Vocational School of Zürich, in: Dossier Wissenschaft, Fonds Arnold Niederer, Lötschentaler Museum, Kippel. See also the photographs from the 1960s that document trips to Greece, Cabras (Sardinia) and Portugal, in: Lötschentaler Museum Kippel, Fonds Arnold Niederer, Dossier Biografisches.
 - 9 “Als ich früher allein und manchmal auch in Gesellschaft Gleichgesinnter mit unbändiger Wanderlust erfüllt, über Berg und Tal zog, schrieb ich das, wovon mein Herz voll war, in mein Wanderbuch. Später, als mir solche Streifzüge versagt blieben, begann ich, meine Erlebnisse zu verarbeiten, mich in die Geschichte der Täler, die ich durchschritten hatte, zu vertiefen, bis ich fand, dass die Erinnerung an die glücklichen Stunden des Wanderns noch fast schöner waren als die Gegenwart selbst. Die geschichtlichen, sprachlichen und volkskundlichen Kenntnisse, die ich mir dabei erworben habe, zählen zu den kostbarsten, die ich besitze, weil sie weder nur angelernt noch aufgezwungen, sondern im tiefsten Sinne des Wortes erlebt worden sind.” Arnold Niederer: “Ein Wissensgebiet, das mich besonders fesselt,” hand-written manuscript of essays, Maturitätsschule Minerva Zürich, 1942, in: Lötschentaler Museum Kippel, Fonds Arnold Niederer, Dossier Biografisches.
 - 10 “Von allen Anwärtern hat sich Dr. Niederer als einziger mit den verschiedensten Forschungsgebieten der Volkskunde vertraut machen können. Dank seiner sprachlichen Begabung bietet er, ebenfalls als einziger, Gewähr dafür, dass die Volkskunde nicht in wenigen Jahren zu einer Volkskunde der deutschsprachigen Schweiz wird; die Fakultät legt hierauf im Hinblick auf den auf die viersprachige Schweiz ausgerichteten Atlas der schweizerischen Volkskunde besonderes Gewicht. Dr. Niederer ist auch der einzige, der eine selbstgewonnene Übersicht über die Probleme der Volkskunde in gesamteuropäischer Sicht besitzt. Heute und für die nächste Zukunft ist er wohl der einzige Anwärter, der die besonderen Bedingungen des Lehrstuhls erfüllen kann. Er bietet auch mit seinen menschlichen und charakterlichen Qualitäten Gewähr dafür.” Appointment of Arnold Niederer, Minutes of the State Council of the Canton of Zürich, 4331. University, Nov. 7, 1963, in: Universitätsarchiv Zürich, AB.1.0718.
 - 11 “Neben die rein wissenschaftlichen Aufgaben jeder modernen Volkskunde treten die besonderen erzieherisch-kulturpolitischen Aufgaben, um das Kulturerbe baulicher, sprachlicher und brauchtümlicher Art vor der Bedrohung durch Rationalisierung und Technik zu bewahren und das Echt-Volkstümliche vor der Entwertung zu retten. Die Erforschung der in der Volksgemeinschaft wurzelnden Tradition verpflichtet die Volkskunde zur Förderung und Untermauerung des Heimat- und Staatsbewusstseins auf dem Boden einer echten Tradition.” Appointment of Arnold Niederer, Minutes of the State Council of the Canton of Zürich, 4331. University, Nov. 7, 1963, in: Universitätsarchiv Zürich, AB.1.0718.
 - 12 An example of this is the paper that Arnold Niederer presented on May 6, 1969, at the Chamber of Commerce St. Gallen-Appenzell on the “Überfremdungsproblem aus volkskundlicher Sicht,” see the letter from Arnold Niederer to the president of the University of Zürich, Apr. 5, 1969, in: Universitätsarchiv Zürich, AB.1.0718. See also Niederer (1969a, 1970b).
 - 13 This is confirmed by the membership register of the Social Democratic Party in Zürich (since Nov. 6, 1948) and by the membership register of the Union of Public Employees (since Jan. 1, 1958), in: Lötschentaler Museum Kippel, Fonds Arnold Niederer, Dossier Biografisches.
 - 14 However, in 1967, Niederer resigned from the Educational Committee due to lack of time; before that there were heated arguments in 1965 involving courses that Niederer started at the vocational school, see the documents, in: Sozialarchiv Zürich, Ar 32.21.2: Dossier Korrespondenz.

- 15 "So habe ich ein arbeitsreiches Jahr vor mir. Je näher die Abstimmung über die Schwarzenbach-Initiative kommt, umso mehr werde ich von den Zeitungen bedrängt, die Artikel eines Wissenschafters zur Sache haben wollen... [...] Ich bin mit dem Lernerfolg zufrieden, aber er ist teuer erkauft, weil ich seinerseits so ganz unvorbereitet dieses Amt antreten musste. Im übrigen ist es an der Universität Zürich für einen politisch Linksstehenden gar nicht so leicht, sich durchzusetzen. Am Anfang zeigte sich dies kaum, aber seit die Studenten unruhig geworden sind, tun sich auch unter der Professorenschaft die Gegensätze zwischen den Stockkonservativen und den Progressiven immer mehr auf und führen oft zu unerfreulichen Auseinandersetzungen." Letter from Arnold Niederer to "Tante L.", Dec. 28, 1969, in: Lötschentaler Museum Kippel, Fonds Arnold Niederer, Dossier Biografisches.
- 16 Letter from Arnold Niederer to Laure Wyss, Aug. 26, 1997, in: Schweizerisches Literaturarchiv, Nationalbibliothek Bern, Nachlass Laure Wyss, B-4-15-15.
- 17 Interview with Loni Niederer-Nelken, September 10, 2014.
- 18 "[...] wie sehr Ihr Gemeinwerk ein volkskundliches Grund-Thema angepackt hat," Letter from Richard Weiss to Arnold Niederer, Nov. 13, 1957, in: Lötschentaler Museum Kippel, Fonds Arnold Niederer, Dossier Wissenschaft.
- 19 "In meinen Seminarien 'Bergbauernprobleme', 'Fremdarbeiter', 'Juden' redet man immer über etwas, das mich wenigstens (und ich hoffe: auch einige der andern) bewegt; aber niemand weiss genau, was dabei Volkskunde ist." Richard Weiss to Rudolf Braun, Apr. 5, 1962, in: Staatsarchiv des Kantons Zürich, W I 41.11.2.
- 20 Richard Weiss to Karl Meuli, May 11, 1962, in: Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Handschriftenabteilung, NL.45.F.938,24.
- 21 Richard Weiss to Rudolf Braun, 16 Mar. 1962, in: Staatsarchiv des Kantons Zürich, W I 41.11.2.
- 22 "Unablässig hat er um eine Erneuerung der Volkskunde gerungen. [...] Wie sehr Prof. Weiss sich um eine gegenwartsbezogene und auf die grossen Probleme der Gegenwart ausgerichtete Volkskunde bemühte, dies ist allen, die ihn kannten bewusst; wenige jedoch, so glaube ich, realisierten, wie er bei diesem Ringen auch litt." Rudolf Braun to Karl Meuli, Oct. 6, 1962, in: Staatsarchiv des Kantons Zürich, W I 41.11.2.
- 23 This is documented in Arnold Niederer's regular correspondence with the president of the University of Zürich in 1964–1977 in which he requested dispensations for his lectures and travelling allowances, in: Universitätsarchiv Zürich, AB.1.0718. Thus, Niederer also participated in the conference in Håsselby/Stockholm in the 1965, cf. Rohan-Csermak (1967).
- 24 Cf. Arnold Niederer's curriculum vitae, undated (ca. 1990), in: Lötschentaler Museum Kippel, Fonds Arnold Niederer, Dossier Biografisches. See also Rogan (2008a: 59).
- 25 This is documented, for example, with a postcard signed by Arnold and Loni Niederer and Nils-Arvid Bringéus from Lund, Sweden, to Rudolf Schenda on Sep. 15, 1985, in: Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Handschriftenabteilung, Nachl. R. Schenda.
- 26 This led to academic contacts in the former Yugoslavia (due to the Ethnographic Atlas of Yugoslavia), but also with Sigurd Erixon (Stockholm), see Invitation to the International Working Conference on Ethnological Cartography, February 1966 in Zagreb, in: Universitätsarchiv Zürich AB.1.0718. Whether intentional or not, Niederer changed the name to "ethnographic cartography", see Arnold Niederer to the president of the University of Zürich, Jan. 26, 1966, in: Universitätsarchiv Zürich, AB.1.0718.
- 27 "Hoffmann-Krayer lehnte die Beschränkung der volkskundlichen Untersuchungen auf das eigene Land als unwissenschaftlich ab, [...]. Seine Kenntnis auch der ausländischen Volkskunde prädestinierte ihn zur Schaffung des wichtigsten bibliographischen Hilfsmittels der europäischen Volkskunde, der internationalen 'volkskundlichen Bibliographie'. [...] Seit Hoffmann-Krayer ist die Tendenz zur übernationalen Ausweitung des Forschungsgebietes in der schweizerischen Volkskunde stets wach geblieben" (Niederer 1965b: 5).
- 28 Letter from Robert Wildhaber to the Research Committee of the University of Basel, Dec. 22, 1956, StABS ED-REG 42a 2-2-6 (1) 25.
- 29 Hans Trümpy: Robert Wildhaber zum Gedenken: Ansprache an der Trauerfeier vom 20. Jul. 1982, StABS PA 301b D 3 (1).
- 30 Letter from Axel Steenberg (Secretary-General of the Dansk Folkemuseum Kopenhagen), Mar. 25, 1954, in: Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, PA 301b D 3 (1).
- 31 Letter from Axel Steenberg (Secretary-General of the Dansk Folkemuseum Kopenhagen), Mar. 25, 1954, in: Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, PA 301b D 3 (1).
- 32 He also brought this experience and knowledge to the discussions in the German-speaking countries, cf. Wildhaber (1964).
- 33 Letter from Robert Wildhaber to the Commission of the Museum für Völkerkunde und Schweizerischen Museums für Volkskunde Basel, May 14, 1962, in: Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, ED-REG 42a 2-2-6 (1) 25.
- 34 Cf. Correspondence from 1954, in: Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, ED-REG 42a 2-2-6 (1) 25.
- 35 Letter from the dean of the Philosophisch-Historischen Fakultät to the president of University of Basel on the appointment of Robert Wildhaber as honorary lecturer for Volkskunde, Feb. 29, 1968. The documents on the

appointment in 1968 are located in: Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, ED-REG 5d 2-1 (1) 398.

- 36 Letter from Robert Wildhaber to the Commission of the Museum für Völkerkunde und Schweizerisches Museums für Volkskunde Basel, Mar. 27, 1963, in: Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt, ED-REG 42a 2-2-6 (1) 25.
- 37 Although a little euphoric, Burckhardt argued along the same lines, cf. Burckhardt (1972–73).
- 38 Cf. Documents from the Congress in Zürich 1987, in: SGV-Archiv Basel, A dd 12. See also SIEF 1987.
- 39 To which he also provided an understanding to an interested publisher, cf. Niederer (1973a).
- 40 This is most apparent during the years that Arnold Niederer, Elsbeth Liebl and Walter Escher worked together on the Atlas der schweizerischen Volkskunde until its conclusion in 1995. They were fully aware of the ligation of the times and problems in regard to the materials collected and supported completing this collective work of Swiss Volkskunde, cf. Gyr (2001: 113–114).
- 41 Erixon formulated a similar and, in many parts, accordant text in the introduction of the first volume of the *Ethnologia Europaea*, cf. Erixon (1967a).
- 42 “Europa mit dem bunten Teppich seiner Ethnien und Sprachen ist ein anspruchsvoller Erdteil. Bei der Lösung der Probleme, die bei der heutigen wachsenden geographischen und sozialen Mobilität in der Form von Kulturzusammenstößen zuweilen Krisencharakter annehmen, kann die Volkskunde, wenn sie aus Distanzhaltung heraus betrieben wird, neben der Soziologie einen wertvollen Beitrag leisten. Aber auch innerhalb der einzelnen Ethnien besteht immer ein mehr oder weniger grosses Gefälle, z.B. zwischen der ‘offiziellen’ Kultur und den ‘peripheren’ oder ‘subalternen’ Kulturen, zwischen Stadt und Land, Norden und Süden. Auch hier findet die Volkskunde ein reiches Anwendungsgebiet, wenn sie mehr als bisher versucht, Unverständnis und Vorurteile zu bekämpfen und fremde Kulturen und Subkulturen aus ihren historisch vorgegebenen Strukturen und Ordnungen heraus zu verstehen, und wenn sie den jeweiligen Wertsystemen grössere Beachtung schenken als bisher” (Niederer 1969b: 9–10).

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