

SIEF Commissions

Nils-Arvid Bringéus

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At the request of the editor, Nils-Arvid Bringéus, former president of Société internationale d'ethnologie et de folklore (SIEF), provides a brief survey of the different commissions of SIEF: the Ballad Commission set up in Prague in 1966, the Picture Commission established in Lund, Sweden, in 1984, the Commission for the Ethnology of Religion, set up in Bergen, Norway, in 1990, and the Commission for the Ethnological Study of Food, established in Lund in 1970 and working in cooperation with SIEF in 1994.

Prof. em. Dr Nils-Arvid Bringéus, Galjevångsvägen 4, S-224 65 Lund.

SIEF, Société internationale d'ethnologie et de folklore, founded in Athens on 8 September 1964, seeks to promote the study of traditional life and popular traditions, to stimulate cooperation among research workers and scientific organizations concerned with this study, and to contribute within its fields to the knowledge of man and to mutual understanding amongst people.

At SIEF's second congress in Suzdal, USSR, in the autumn of 1982, the organizer of the congress, the academician Dr Yulian Bromley, Moscow, expressed a hope that SIEF in future would not just arrange congresses but also be active in the form of working groups or commissions in various parts of the field covered by ethnology and folklore.

It was objected that the establishment of such commissions could lead to the risk of segmenting a subject in which holism has long been the guiding star. On the other hand, ethnology and folkloristics are to a large extent comparative sciences. Every opportunity to facilitate personal and institutional research contacts should therefore be warmly welcomed. It is probably a generally shared experience that symposia and Arbeitstagungen can be at least as fruitful as mammoth international congresses of the type found in many subjects.

The Ballad Commission

A SIEF commission for ballad studies was set up in Prague in 1966. A total of 24 conferences have been held to date, that is to say, one a year as a rule. The latest conference was held in Tórshavn in the Faroe Islands in summer 1994. The next one will be arranged in Quimperlé in Brittany. On some occasions the commission has met in conjunction with congresses of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. Professor Rolf W. Brednich, Göttingen, was president of the ballad commission for many years.

One joint concern of the members of the commission has been to draw up a type index for the European folk ballad and a European ballad catalogue. The symposia have sometimes dealt with general problems, sometimes with specific ones. The commission is always anxious to inform members of current research trends.

Lectures delivered to the symposia have as a rule been published in various national or international journals and are listed in the *Internationale Volkskundliche Bibliographie*. At times the commission has also distributed mimeographed newsletters with details of ongoing research and coming symposia.

The Ethnological Study of Pictures

SIEF's predecessor, CIAP, was an international scientific organization which owed its origin to the "Congrès International des Arts Populaires" held in Prague in 1928. In recent years the interest has been extended from folk art in the rigid sense to comprise pictorial communication, and this has resulted in exhibitions and publications, particularly in Germany.

At the SIEF congress in Suzdal in 1982, Dr Christa Pieske, Lübeck, and I decided to try to form a commission for the ethnological study of pictures within SIEF. The commission was formed in connection with the symposium that was held in Lund, Sweden, in 1984.

The designation "the ethnological study of pictures" – or picturelore – instead of the term "folk art" which is more difficult to define, indicates that the research field aims at neutral values and a greater social breadth. The commission is geared primarily to ethnologists and folklorists, but cooperation with disciplines studying art and communication is also important. The focus of the commission's work is the message of pictures and the way it is spread via media such as books, newspapers, single-sheet prints (such as *kistebrev*, the hand-coloured woodcuts of Sweden, and *lubok*, the popular prints of Russia), devotional pictures, painted wall-hangings, murals, *Hinterglas* paintings, painted tiles (Danish *Fliser*), posters, and so on. Examples of current themes are picture and text, picture and context, and the transformation of pictures (from fine art to folk art). The picture commission has since organized symposia in Göttingen, Germany, in 1986 (theme: "Der Mensch und die Bildmedien"), Miskolc, Hungary, in 1988, and Innsbruck, Austria, in 1990. Invitations to a fifth symposium in the Bergen region, Norway, for the autumn of 1995 will soon be distributed. The responsibility for implementing the symposia has rested with the local arrangers, who have also found sponsors and published the lectures.

The books published hitherto by the commission are: N.-A. Bringéus (ed.), *Man and Picture* (Lund, 1986); Rolf W. Brednich and

Andreas Hartmann (ed.), *Populäre Bildmedien* (Göttingen, 1989); Ernő Kunt (ed.), *Bildkunde – Volkskunde*; Leander Petzoldt, Ingo Schneider & Petra Streng (eds.), *Bild und Text: Internationale Konferenz des Komitees für ethnologische Bildforschung in der Société internationale pour ethnologie et folklore (SIEF) 2.–6. Oktober 1990 in Innsbruck* (Bratislava, 1993).

Ethnology of Religion

At the SIEF congress in Bergen in 1990 a commission for the ethnology of religion was set up. Professor Anders Gustavsson, Uppsala, was appointed coordinator. The first symposium, on the theme of "Religion in Everyday Life", was held in Stockholm in September 1993. Thanks to generous sponsorship by the Natur och Kultur publishing house, it was possible to invite about thirty delegates from different parts of Europe. The symposium was hosted by the Royal Society of Letters, History, and Antiquities. The lectures have recently been published, edited by myself, in the Academy's symposium series; anyone who is interested can order the book from the Academy.

The theme of "Religion in Everyday Life" can simultaneously be said to be a kind of guideline for the work of the commission. The focus is not on institutionalized, confessional religion, but on the private exercise of religion in the home or in the public sphere, whether past or present. The population movements in Europe in the last few decades have provided particular motivation for the work of the commission.

In future the symposia will be advertised in the *NIF Newsletter*, among other places. To retain the character of working meeting, however, the number of participants must be limited to 30 or 40. A second symposium is planned for Portugal in 1996.

The Ethnological Study of Food

At the Seventh International Congress of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Moscow in 1964, the first contacts were established between the participating European

food researchers. In 1970 Professor Dr Günter Wiegmann, Münster, Germany, and Grith Lerche, MA, Copenhagen, Denmark, and I myself took the initiative for a first international symposium on the ethnological study of food. It was held in Lund, Sweden, in August 1970 on the theme of "Ethnological Food Research: Development, Methods, and Future Tasks". The reports were published in *Ethnologia Europaea*, volume 5 (1971), in *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 1971 and in a separate volume (N.-A. Bringéus and G. Wiegmann, *Ethnological Food Research in Europe and the USA*, Göttingen, 1972). This and the three following symposia were presented in *Ethnologia Europaea*, volume 11:2 (1981).

Since the Lund conference, ten international symposia have been arranged: Helsinki, Finland, 1973 (on the theme of National Food); Cardiff, Wales, 1977 (Food Taboos); Stainz, Austria, 1980 (Nahrung als Kommunikation); Matrafűred, Hungary, 1980 (Sequences and Periods of Change in the History of Popular Diet); Karniowice, Poland, 1985 (Innovations in Food Habits); Sogndal, Norway, 1987 (Food Preservation and Conservation); Philadelphia, USA, 1989 (Food as Symbol); Dublin, Ireland, 1992 (Milk and Milk Products); Freising, Germany, 1994 (Kulturprägung durch Nahrung: Die Kartoffel). It is planned to hold an eleventh symposium on the theme of "Food and Tourism" in Cyprus in 1996. I was coordinator of the research group until 1987, when Dr Anders Salomonsson, Lund, took over. The lectures from all the symposia except those in Stainz, Karniowice, Philadelphia, and Freising have been published (see *Internationale Volkskundliche Bibliographie*).

On becoming president of SIEF in 1982, I found it natural to try to incorporate the symposia within the framework of SIEF. This met with opposition, however, not least from representatives of Eastern European countries, who were afraid of extra-disciplinary control. It was not until the symposium in Freising in 1994 that it was agreed to formalize the group into an international commission for ethnological food research in cooperation with (but not subordinate to) SIEF.

New Commissions?

The Bergen congress discussed the possibility of setting up new commissions in the future, for themes such as women's studies or working-class research. Symposia on these themes have since been arranged at national and, for example, Nordic levels, but no initiative has yet been taken within the framework of SIEF. The possibility is still open.

The different SIEF commissions all have one feature in common: they work completely independently with no control by the management of SIEF. SIEF has not hitherto been able to grant financial support to the work of the commissions. In my view and that of many people, however, it can facilitate both individual participation and the local arrangements of international symposia of the kind described here if they are organized under the auspices of SIEF. At the latest SIEF congress in Vienna in 1994, Professor Konrad Köstlin was re-elected president. Further information about SIEF can be obtained from him or from the coordinators of the separate commissions:

Konrad Köstlin, Institut für Volkskunde der Universität Wien, Hanuschgasse 3-IV, A-1010 Wien, Austria.

The ballad commission: Professor Stefaan Top, Seminarie voor Volkskunde, Katholieke Universiteit, Blijde Inkomststraat 21, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium.

The picture commission: Professor Emeritus Nils-Arvid Bringéus, Galjevångsvägen 4, S-224 65 Lund, Sweden.

The commission for ethnology of religion: Professor Anders Gustavsson, Etnologiska institutionen, Åsgränd 1, S-753 10 Uppsala, Sweden.

The commission for ethnological food research: Dr Patricia Lysaght, Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland.