

SITUATION OF ETHNICAL-ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCHES INTO THE HUNGARIAN POPULATION AND THE TASKS OF THE FUTURE

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Abstract

In a report, delivered at Meeting 200 of the Anthropological Section of the Hungarian Biological Society, the author summarized the problems connected with the anthropological research into the adult population of present-day Hungary. In the present work — using this material — he is outlining the tasks promoting the further development of the determined research theme. He determines these as follows: Determination of the aims of research, realization of the representative sampling, elaboration of the fact-finding programme, marking out of the geographical areas of research, realization of the elaboration by means of electronic computers, the cooperation of experts.

Every nation endeavours, in some form depending on the level of her social development, her cultural demand and erudition and, last but not least, on her economic conditions, to preserve, or to prove worthy of, the traditions of the past. The expression “the traditions of the past” is, however, a very vague notion, containing the historical past, folk art, several aspects of the social superstructure and may include even man himself.

The preservation of all these traditions is undertaken by more than one division of learning, thus by archaeology, history, ethnography and, in our opinion, this is to be done by anthropology, as well.

The preservation of the traditional material of knowledge or relics for the man of future cannot be and is not independent of the social background people are living in. With another expression: not all knowledge, spiritual or objective relics may call for respect and preservation. To decide the extension of this demand, much depends upon the erudition and social maturity of the researchers, scholars or scientists. The vanguard fighters in this work have always and everywhere been the progressive research workers and intellectuals who took up and understood the idea of development. And this will be so in the future, as well.

If we try to specify a little more, how in Hungary this activity of preserving traditions has developed, looking at it in a certain perspective, and particularly in our days, we can establish that this work has been promoted by our State with a developed network of museums, with the work of renowned archaeological and ethnographical researchers, with decrees of legal force, with setting objectives as main research works, with public support and subvention. This research work enjoys a serious material subsidization. But if we want to express ourselves more exactly, we should perhaps rather say that all these conditions, the spiritual and material productions

of man primarily ensure the preservation of human environment. But we have not paid, as yet, so great attention, even in our days, to a massive anthropological or humanbiological cognition of man: at least not so great an attention as we should and could have done.

It seems to me, therefore, that the man of the next century will be able to collect from the material of the stores of museums, the libraries every knowledge, with the help of which he can form a reliable picture of the work, life and activity of the present-day Hungarian man. It is questionable, however, whether he obtains such a reliable picture of man himself, as well. We think, unfortunately, that we must give — at least for the moment — a negative answer.

This establishment in itself does, however, not say anything if we don't try to find the causes of this and the possibilities of a solution.

It would be very wrong to allege that the cause is that the research into the population in Hungary had no historical precedents. It is namely enough to cast a glance into our anthropological bibliographies. It turns out immediately that there are some data on the study of the living population already from the end of the 18th century. The work of Z. HUSZTI (1781) indicates the turning of attention towards the living man. This is followed by the reports of JÁCINT RÓNAY (1846), LÖHER (1874), P. HUNFALVY (1880), S. SCHEIBER (1881) on the characters of the living Hungarians. And this list could be continued.

This interest got a thoroughly unambiguous formulation in the third part of the last century. Namely: what the Hungarian is. It could also be said, what the difference is between Hungarians and other people.

In the beginning of the present century, and then in its first third, this formulation unambiguously turned into the direction, of which the knowledge in a noble sense was only the nucleus. Its true aim would rather have been to "prove" superiority. Owing to the social background then (stirring up chauvinism, irredentism), we need not be surprised at this, even if we thoroughly disapprove this tendency today. It is only surprising that this direction had any followers at all, although it is true that primarily not among the anthropologists.

After the Liberation, this situation has essentially changed. In this place, however, we don't want to touch upon this in detail. The results achieved since then are dealt with in several publications.

As the way of looking, the social background and demands changed, the way in which we could promote the knowledge of up-to-date outlook of the present-day population of Hungary has not changed.

It is to be noted here that it is, in our opinion, more correct to speak of the inhabitants or population of Hungary and not only the research into, knowledge of, the Hungarians. The cause of this is that the present-day population of Hungary speaks not only the Hungarian mother tongue. And at the same time, several people with Hungarian as a mother tongue (and not at all of insignificant number) live outside the national boundary. We have, unfortunately, not much possibility to recognize these anthropologically.

The causes of the weak development of the branch of the Hungarian anthropology, the ethnical anthropology, which we see at present, is nevertheless not to see first of all on ideological territory. The cause may first of all be looked for in the outlook partly of the researchers of our special branch of studies, partly of those of the related sciences. According to us, there are namely not exploited, as yet, the

possibilities of the interdisciplinary research work. The common subjects are not looked for by the workers of any study in a suitable degree. And it is also a fact, unfortunately that the results are realized on the basis of the individual idea of researchers and thus the force behind any cooperation is not exploited in due degree.

This is proved by the publications, too, which render accounts of the results of investigations carried out not by research teams but in largest part by individuals. It occurred also sometimes that, on a few occasions, some research groups stopped in a minor settlement, carrying out there efficient, or perhaps sometimes even too efficient, research work (Ivád, Turricse). But we have not found any trace that their aim would have been the systematic knowledge of the whole population of Hungary — which would have demanded, of course, some serious material support as well. On the other hand, the investigations of such a purpose can be included well, according to us, in historical, local or regional historical researches, of which we can find individual examples (Vésztő, Orosháza, Tápé, Gyoma). The latter ones can, at any rate, be considered as only individual initiations, as yet, and have so far been realized mainly on the territory east of the river Tisza, in the area between the Danube and the Tisza rivers, and in North-Eastern Hungary. These results are very valuable, useful but they mean only a drop in the sea.

Why do we emphasize the necessity of recognizing the whole population of Hungary? We do this because the tendency of the ways of production, the increase of urbanization and also several other social processes is to put an end to the rural, sometimes endogamous, communities. After not a too long time, communities of this type cannot be studied any more.

But the realization of a nation-wide research of major volume would first of all demand a most important collaboration, concentration of forces on the part of archaeologists, ethnographers, anthropologists equally.

The other group of problems — because of which, in my opinion, the knowledge of the population of the present-day Hungary runs into difficulties — is to be looked for in the application of different method so it is not rare, namely, that even today everybody considers his own method as infallible instead of applying real, realizable, up-to-date processes, into which the individual ideas could be embedded. The modern mechanical evaluation — which is doubtless the way of future — today already expects everybody to follow a uniform method of investigation.

It cannot be, namely, doubtful for any specialist that nowadays the main task is not to establish the cephalic index. Science has already got beyond this level and however we see the question, there are just these difficulties, connected with the measuring technology and factfinding, the surmounting of which is the most difficult in the course of the everyday work. Experimentalists do simply not take seriously the sampling activity. In addition to this, the present-day research cannot be satisfied any more with the superficial acquiring of knowledge, it must get an insight into the interior of the man, as well, it must endeavour with somewhat more complicated means and more thoroughly to get acquainted with the man of our days and describe him in this way. There is no doubt that these problems do not only emerge in Hungary and it is not unimportant, either, that the investigations into the physiological characters, human polymorphisms which are known by the experts, alike the investigations on isozyme, haptoglobin and blood-group constituted considerable help.

At any rate, the manifold, very ramifying method makes the comparison impossible already in advance, particularly if we take separately into consideration the

methods studying the metric, morphological and physiological characters, to say nothing of the way of evaluation.

It also belongs to the methodological problems that the samples are not representative, the distribution is not uniform in respect of the whole territory of the country and the themes dealing with studying young people and grown-ups are separated at the investigations into the inhabitants of settlements.

A further task to be solved would be the agreement in methodological questions, the unambiguous indication of tasks (characters to be investigated).

At the same time, it is a fact as well, that even the evaluation of the earlier information, data, collected with rather much work and readiness to sacrifice, has not been done entirely until now.

A following task would, therefore, be the publication of the already existing, collected but not evaluated stock of learning.

We should create, of course, suitable bases for realizing all these tasks. It is to be said that a well, prepared scientific planning alone is not sufficient for this. We need something else, as well. As the researchers are no more expected to have alone professional training and talent but also to be men or women in public life, it is not enough, either, if they publish scientific results in learned journals. It is necessary, too, to create a climate of public opinion, to arouse general interest, in order to enable the continued development. We should need to count on the support of public opinion, as well. That there is such an effort, or at least its germs can be found, is proved by the initiations connected with the Hungarian local monographs.

When we recognize our possible infirmity, backwardness, we should also look for the objective and subjective eliciting causes. Some of these were already mentioned above. But there is one which is worth while being analysed separately. This is the problem of the education and training of specialists.

We don't think that alone the Hungarian anthropology has some difficulties in this area. It may be said rather generally that the special expert training of high demands and the formation of the consequently created scientific competition are still unsolved problems in the domain of anthropology. On the other hand, many examples can also be found for what kind of solutions they try to surmount this difficulty in the single countries, and not without any success. The Hungarian education of anthropologists is, however, entrusted — at present and it had been earlier, too — to chance. Our undergraduates are today more captivated and attracted by molecular biology, biochemistry than by anthropological problems, although these don't exclude each other. Moreover, a teaching staff of small enough number are dealing with educating the future anthropologists and even these are specialized. This means that our students can only become acquainted with some domains of detail of anthropology so that it can later become a basic point of departure at the beginning of a scientific career. This may also be the cause why some research places abroad that some decades ago were very backward, go today already very much before us.

It would, of course, hardly be possible to carry out in a small country such a training as that of the Lomonosov University in Moscow even today. The instruction of about thirty different special subjects, connected with anthropology, and the about 19-week long practical training, spent in the field, presuppose a serious spiritual background. We have not the conditions of an education like this. But this is perhaps not necessary, either, because it is possible that Hungarian undergraduates

take part in such a thorough-going education in universities abroad. It is a much greater problem that post-graduate education is not solved, as yet, which could be one of the main promoters of the further development.

It is not questionable, therefore, that one of the most serious tasks — which is in connection not only with the research of the now living population but with the general development of the whole Hungarian anthropology, as well, is the training of specialists at high level, insuring, replacing new specialists. To this, it is highly important, to popularize the scientific results, to arouse interests towards the specialized branches of learning.

After mentioning these few general problems, we could not formulate better the tasks of future than we did this already earlier, indicating our tasks as follows:

(1) We should unambiguously determine the aims of the anthropological investigations of the living population.

(2) In case of investigations, representative sampling is to be realized.

(3) At selecting the characters, two sorts of programmes should be elaborated, taking into consideration the individual numbers of the rural and town populations; namely:

— a detailed programme comprising several characters, the aim of which would primarily be to reveal the regularities of the inheritance of characters; this could be realized in case of minor communities; as well as:

— a programme comprising fewer characters but taking into consideration the peculiarities of town environment, which could be carried out in a comparatively short time even in case of larger communities, applying the rules of the sampling processes.

(4) We shall elaborate — taking into consideration the density of population — a scientifically founded plan, which terminates the disproportionatedness of the fields investigated and not-investigated.

(5) We should change over — changing first of all the structure of the collecting list — to the calculator elaboration, according to uniform biometric points of view.

It is proved by the scrutiny of the results of the ethnical investigations that the volume of the work carried out so far is not negligible. But the condition of achieving some results in the future that can be accepted for the universal science, as well, may only be the thoroughgoing planning, common work and the appropriate guiding. In other fields of the scientific life, but even in other branches of biology, new methods are more and more widely applied. This demands not a little material sacrifice. The achieving of this aim can be realized, at any rate, only if we produce the necessary, usable results demanded by the society. The representatives of anthropology ought, therefore, also to understand the voice of times: if we fall behind the speed of development determined by other sciences, this may involuntarily result in arrears in the special branch and, within that, in the ethnical anthropology.

The tasks can be outlined clearly enough but the development in science can only be achieved with cooperation of the man.

Both lectures, delivered at Meeting 200 of the Anthropological Section of the Hungarian Biological Society (namely: "Humanbiological investigation into the human populations", as well as the present abstract of my report) may only mean the elucidation of the same problem from two directions; because it would be not justified to speak separately of the humanbiological and ethnical investigations into the living human communities.

On the other hand, the report, serving for a basis of the present paper, affected in some respects certain questions, too, which also took part in the other lectures delivered there. As the lectures were made independent from one another, touching different special fields of anthropology, repetitions mean a stronger manifestation of the existing problems. It is not probable, namely, that these coincidences, seeming to be incidental, could be attributed to the barrenness of mind of the lecturers. We should rather be optimist and consider these coincidences assigns of a spiritual agreement between the Hungarian anthropologists.

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