

AT THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS POLITICS: SOME REMARKS CONCERNING A GUBERNATORIAL COLLECTING

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The interest in folk songs in its oldest and basic form, which means in the collecting of material and its publishing, usually related to the Enlightenment schools of thought. Song collections did not only emerge based on cultural, patriotic or similar meritorious intention. The events which took place in Austrian crown lands—which means also in the Czech environment—in the early 19th century seems to have been organized for completely different reasons. The events concerned a large collection of folk songs which is most often called “gubernatorial” in Czech specialized literature and which was brought about by the Vienna Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde des österreichischen Kaiserstaates zu Wien [Society of Friends of the Music in the Austrian Imperial State]). The activity started in 1819¹ and ended in the same year in most places, i.e. in Upper and Lower Austria, Tyrol, Styria, Illyria, in Moravia and in Silesia. Only in Bohemia werethe songs collected until 1823. The contemporary ethnomusicological research still very much appreciates the aforementioned project and its results. There are several reasons for this. First of all, it is the age and volume of the entire collecting activity as well as the absence of any selection of the recorded material.² Moreover, as early as at that time, i.e. at the outset of the 19th century, the collecting of songs strictly respected the request

1. For details about the commencement of the project see Schmidt 1969a: 1n; Vetterl 1994: 9.

2. About the selective attitude to and censorship in the field of folk songs see Uhlíková, Lucie.2015. “Duch a povaha národa v písni. Idealizovaný obraz lidové písně v tištěných sbírkách první poloviny 19. století” [The spirit and character of the nation in a song : Idealized image of folk songs in the printed collections of early 19th century] in Wögerbauer, Michael – Píša, Petr – Šámal, Petr – Janáček, Pavel and others. *V obecném zájmu. Cenzura a sociální regulace literatury v moderní české kultuře 1749–2014. Svazek I / 1749–1938*. Praha: Academia. 333–344.

to record both components of a song, i.e. the text and the melody. The fact that they could faithfully record the original form is also positive. Nobody reckoned on the publishing of songs, and for this reason it was not necessary to change anything, for example due to ethic, aesthetic and other perspectives. All the above demands were strictly placed on collecting activities one hundred years later.

Despite the uniqueness of the project, its assessment differed at that time. Some experts condemned the project as something unnecessary which would not bring anything new—e.g. Christian d’Elvert (1803–1896), a historian and politician living in Brno, wrote about it as “*An unfortunately unhappy and unusable collection of old folk melodies from Moravia and Silesia*” (quoted as to Vetterl 1994: 31, note 15). Nearly everything else closely relating to that large collecting activity, especially the sense of that great project, mostly disappears beside the modern and predominantly appreciative statements and opinions. The aim was probably pure political. It was encouraged by the struggle to express—ostensibly and in the highest circles—a generous interest in the folk culture of the nations living in the Austrian Empire in the time, when wide social strata did not look with favour on the ruling House. This was probably the reason why the administration did not stop the project. However, it is hard to understand that the start of the project, which had no parallel with its volume in that period and for a long time later and which was supposed to be very important for the monarchy, was followed by a conspicuous indifference towards its course and results, their storing, consequent treatment and use in practice. This indifference could be seen both in the case of those who brought about the projects, and in the case of the highest positions and other parties that were responsible for the project based on the orders from on high.

The project administered and supported by state authorities lacked a more particular target. It was obviously not based on a scientific or patriotically motivated interest, but rather on an accidental impetus within the Society of Friends of the Music (Deutsch – Hofer 1969: 11–21). Joseph Sonnleithner (1766–1835), an Austrian lawyer, musician and the first secretary of the Society, is usually

mentioned as the major organizer. He was knowledgeable enough to prepare the project well and in a professional way. However, his participation consisted only in the determination of frame instructions that defined what was to be collected and recorded. During the next course, Sonnleither's interest completely faded. In reality, it was the state authorities—which were given a special and unexpected task—that paid higher attention to the project than its initiator—i.e. the Vienna Society of Friends of the Music. However, the authorities were no longer interested in the project, after the instructions had been met and the material had been collected, even though not in full. This meant the end of the project for the next one hundred and fifty years.

In the Czech environment, the attitude to the project, even after its end, was rather negative, above all from the intelligentsia. It must have been personal reasons that played a role in it. For example, the publication of the *Slovanské národní písně* [*Slavic National Songs*] (1822–1825) by František Ladislav Čelakovský, which the author prepared during the abovementioned collecting project (Čelakovský 1946: 582), was deliberately delayed. As Jaroslav Markl (1931–1985) said: “*The songs collected by gubernium were unofficially prepared for publication at the very time when Čelakovský's collection was censored. The gubernatorial collection, splendidly prepared and provided with a magnificent dedication to the highest burgrave of Bohemia, was expected to be published as soon as possible, as noble-minded evidence of governmental tolerance thanks to the art-loving nobility. However, the publisher's intention with Čelakovský could have done harm to the success of the prepared representative collection.*” (Markl 1987: 27–28). Of course, the works on the outcome of the all-Austrian project dedicated to Count Harrach took precedence over Čelakovský's publishing endeavours. The censorship began to endanger the reasonably smooth preparations for his edition of folk songs of all Slavonic nations with enclosed Latvian songs which were to be included in the edition too. In the case of Čelakovský, his disapproving reaction to the gubernatorial project was understandable. Well-known are also the rejecting

words of Josef Vlastimil Kamarýt, Čelakovský's close friend and collaborator, about the gubernatorial collection, and more exactly about its published section called the Rittersberg collection: "***The national songs are historical monuments; but the national songs, not the ones uttered by the naughty rabble in their immodest voice [...], not the ones sung usually by a hungry grocer from his head to domestic servants; those who dare to pass such songs off as the national ones slander the whole nation and deceive other nations with lies.***" (Markl 1987: 101)

František Bartoš (1837–1906) was one of the critics of the collection too. He expressed his dismissive opinion of the results of the project in the foreword for his second song edition (Bartoš 1889: V). However, he changed his feelings and incorporated two hundred songs into his third collection, which he prepared for print together with Leoš Janáček.³ The gubernatorial collecting was negatively assessed by Karel Jaromír Erben, Otakar Hostinský, Otakar Zich and other researchers. Stanislav Souček (1870–1935), a literary historian, expressed a positive opinion. In 1819, he dealt thoroughly with the material collected within the project, at least with its Moravian-Silesian section, and he wrote: "***There is no doubt that the collection from 1819 is worthy of being published as a whole due to its content and origin*** [bold print by Stanislav Souček]. *One can find recordings of the songs sung by the Czech people in Moravia, which are (if we do not take into account a small Fryčaj collection in the Muza Moravská [The Moravian Muse] by Gallaš) the oldest ones, and sometimes even more complete, correct and valuable than those published in all follow-up collections; one can find recordings of several songs and musical compositions that sank into oblivion later; there are also variants for a scientific study of poetic and musical traditions which are important due to their existence as well as artificial compositions which are not highly valued as to their aesthetics but interesting for a cultural historian and which—alongside*

3. See Bartoš – Janáček 1899–1901.

some already published pieces and other ones that are still hidden in older manuscripts—can offer material for a chapter about artificial poetry in the 18th century, which has not been written to date; in addition to melodies to these compositions, one can find three ‘operas’ which, together with two operas from the muza Moravská [Moravian Muse], [...] will succeed in being mentioned not only in the history of poetry, but also in the history of music; then there are also notes written by contributors, which are sometimes interesting. However, the collection is worthy of printing due to its origin. It is a document about the absolutistic regime that understood the fondness for the romantic period and was enlightened enough to lend its administrative services and influence to implement a pure cultural task, but its social feeling and practical thinking were so poor that it imposed all the work, not sweetened and not strengthened by a merest hope of any remuneration, on the proletarians of that time—teachers—one of whom was really entitled to compose the following chant as a ‘Finale’ of his contribution

*Rectors are good people,
they have quite a lot of troubles:
the rector is ragged
and the preceptor is barefooted*

and to complain with bitter disappointment that although the authorities forbid the teachers to make some scant extra money by playing in pubs due to the merit and luck of the school, they set him a task that cost him a year-worth sobotales [≈ a fee collected for teaching on Saturdays] from one child.” (Souček 1910: 5–6) It can be stated in general that the researchers of the 19th and early 20th centuries assessed the project differently from how it is perceived by the contemporary professional public.

The situation relating to the gubernatorial collecting is thoroughly described in the studies that Jaroslav Markl (1987) attached to the edition of the oldest Czech collections. Markl studied a lot of project materials that survived in a quite large amount in Bohemia

(in contrast to the Moravian part where most of the records were shredded). He depicted all the well-known circumstances of the project, while the works by other authors rather inform about the course of the project, its results and consequent fate of the collected materials. The final hypothesis that Markl says about the project is: “*Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* [*The Society of Friends of the Music*] was not demonstrably interested in the collecting and its name plays a pure **formal** role in the period files. Sonnleithner’s participation consisted in the mere suggestion the implementation of which was the **matter solely of the Ministry of Interior**. The ordered collecting was done not because of the recording of folk songs, but because of the **course** of the collecting whose nature could make a positive impression in a politically, nationally and socially critical period.” (Markl 1987: 35)

The name of the project and its tangible results, i.e. records of folk songs of different nations living in the Habsburg Monarchy, also gives rise to questions. The Czech professional public and—through its activity—all those interested, accepted the name “gubernatorial collecting”. In the literature, we can encounter other names. Austrian works wrote about Sonnleithner’s collection (Sonnleithner-Sammlung).⁴ Czech researchers used the name “Kolowrat Manuscript” after Count Kolowrat, the highest burgrave, who, however, merely issued an order to carry out the collecting. The material was called the “Kolowrat Collection” in German literature quite recently.⁵ It is obvious in all the above cases that the mentioned names do not correspond to the reality. They do not say anything about the author or the organizer of the song collection. It is well known that the people who the collection is named after did not take any part in the implementation of the project, or they were instrumental to it only insignificantly. The name of the Bohemian section of the gubernatorial collecting, which was the only one

4. This is what the gubernatorial collecting was called by Austrian researcher Raimund Zoder (1929: 49n).

5. „...der sogenannten Gubernial – oder Kolovratschen Sammlung“ (Schroubek 2008: 117).

printed at the time, the Rittersberg Collection, does not correspond to the participation of the editor Jan Ritter from Rittersberg (1780–1841) in the implementation of the edition. His merits were restricted to the publication of a rather random selection of a part of the song records, which was made by Bedřich Diviš Weber (1766–1842), the director of the Prague Conservatory. Rittersberg published the songs—without expert revision—anonously under the name *České národní písně* [*Bohemian National Songs*] / *Böhmische Volkslieder* in 1825. The relation between the name of the editor and the work did not cause any objections in professional circles and the problem was not solved in any way. For this, the interest in the collecting of songs and the follow-up fate of the collection was too small. The collection did even not draw the attention of the project initiators or real collectors—musicians, teachers, regenschoris, etc., who were given an involuntary extra job based on an order and beyond their poorly paid duties.

The name “gubernatorial collection” is another reason for reflection. This name is commonly used in practice; however, it can be mostly understood by a few knowledgeable experts. Sometimes, the name is not clear even for them. The name is more familiar for the historians who know the words “guberniya” and “gubernatorial”, which are rather less used in the Czech environment. Before we explain the word, a short digression closely relating to the indicated issue is worth mentioning. The reason is that we encounter imprecise names of song editions quite often in the literature. For example, the name “Sušil Collection” corresponds to the fact that František Sušil recorded the songs and he was also an editor of the printed form, as for example Čeněk Holas was.⁶ On the other hand, the well-known Erben Collection, for example, concentrates on recordings made not only by Erben himself, but also by other collectors. Moreover, the name Erben Collection can relate to three diverse editions, as is the case with the three named Bartoš Collections. These used designations B I, B II and B III ought to be differentiated. If the

6. Holas, Čeněk. 1908–1910. *České lidové písně a tance I.–VI.* Praha: B. Kočí.

names of František Bartoš, Karel Jaromír Erben and others are written on the front page, these are the names of editors, i.e. those who compiled the collection, not the names of those who recorded the songs. For this reason, the designation of these collections is—at the very least—imprecise. So as not to mention only examples from a long time ago, we may remember the collection of folk songs and dances from the Valašské Klobouky area, which is mentioned under the name of Karel Vetterl, and Zdenka Jelínková is a co-author of the 2nd volume.⁷ In the spirit of team cooperation, which started to be promoted systematically at the Institute of Ethnography and Folkloristics of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences at the beginning of the 1950s, other experts also took part in the preparation of this model song edition. The objective was to have the corresponding sections treated by a dialectologist, historian, ethnographer and folklorist.⁸

In the cases mentioned above, the edition titles related to the names of authors or editors, i.e. people; however, in which way was the gubernatorial collecting given its name? Although the name—despite its strangeness—became established as a certain *terminus technicus*, it lacks exactness and legitimacy; after all, nobody was looking for its origin. Recently, thanks to information from our colleague Lucie Uhlíková, we were able to monitor the use of the term in the field of musical folkloristics. In the early 19th century, the name *gubernium* was used for an authority in Austrian lands; the term was later replaced by the word *místodržitelství* [*governorship*]. The highest administration authorities, i.e. *gubernium*, were established in Prague, Brno, Graz, Innsbruck, Trieste, Lvov, Venezia, Milan, Zadar, and Cluj. The Bohemian *gubernium* replaced the former royal representation and chamber. However, the authority was led by a person who

7. Vetterl, Karel (ed.). 1955. *Lidové písně a tance z Valašskokloboucka I*. Praha: ČSAV; Vetterl, Karel–Jelínková, Zdenka (eds.). 1960. *Lidové písně a tance z Valašskokloboucka II*. Praha: ČSAV.

8. See Uhlíková, Lucie (ed.). 2011. *Hudební a taneční folklor v ediční praxi*. Praha: Etnologický ústav AV ČR, v. v. i., pp. 35–36.

continued to use the original title of “the highest burgrave”. In Moravia, the *gubernium* was established only for a certain period, as in 1782, Moravia and Silesia formed one administration unit which was governed by the Moravian-Silesian Gubernium under the leadership of the land *gubernator* (*Ottův slovník naučný* [*Otto's Encyclopaedia*] 1896: 580). From this, the adjective *gubernatorial* was assigned to events that took place on the territory administered by the authority mentioned above. In professional texts devoted to the collecting project in 1819, one can find derived words, such as Moravian gubernator, and especially connections of adjectives and substantives, for example *gubernatorial* event, *gubernatorial order*, *gubernatorial files*, or *Gubernial Verordnung* in German. However, the use of the adjective *gubernatorial* is not appropriate. The name of the collecting or collection, widespread today, seems to reflect the activity of an authority, the activity of gubernium clerks. These were authorised to assign a task and probably to check whether the task was fulfilled, but completely different actors, musicians, regenschors, teachers, organists and others, who were able to record songs in their entire form, were ordered to do all the other necessary work relating to the collecting.

The word *gubernium* is included in the title under which the collected songs were incorporated into the collections at the Francis Museum in Brno, after that they were transferred to the Moravian Land Archives. The full name of the collection is *Lidové písně. Sbirka německých a českých lidových písní, kostelních zpěvů, melodií z Moravy a Slezska sebraná v roce 1819 na základě pokynu moravskoslezského gubernia* (*Volkslieder. Sammlung deutscher und böhmischer Volkslieder, Kirchengesänge, Melodie aus Mähren und Schlesien gesammelt im Jahre 1819 im Auftrages mähr.-schles. Guberniums* [*Folk Songs. The Collection of German and Bohemian Folk Songs, Church Songs, Melodies from Moravia and Silesia collected in 1819 by order of the Moravian-Silesian Guberniums*]). The manuscript of the Bohemian section stored in Prague is called *Sbirka českých národních písní duchovního i světského obsahu kromě národních tanců s nebo bez textu* (*Sammlung böhmischer Nationallieder geistlichen und weltlichen*

Inhaltes nebst Nationaltänzen mit und ohne Text [The Collection of Czech National Songs with Spiritual and Profane Content in addition to National Dances with Text or without It]); the collection was given its name by B. D. Weber who selected the songs from shipments which were delivered to Prague in 1923 within the gubernial project.) The German adjective *gubernial* also appears in the correspondence from that time. The teacher Jan Vincenc Merlíček from Želetice, one of the Moravian contributors, complains in his letter regarding the collection about the pecuniary lost he suffered through his participation in the collection: “According to the highest order, the teachers were forbidden to play in pubs. However, to comply with the gubernatorial order and to record some folk songs, he had to sacrifice a one-year school fee for one child from his poor salary.” (Vetterl 1994: 10)

As to the introduction or the oldest use of the name “gubernatorial collecting” in professional texts, it is the Brno musicologist and folklorist Karel Vetterl (1898–1979) who seems to assign (in his German language study) the adjective *gubernial* to the oldest collection of song records. He was the first one who began to deal professionally and systematically with the Moravian-Silesian section of the collection, which was stored in two non-identical copies in Brno and Vienna, after the project had ended. His objective was to make one of the oldest song complexes accessible to the general public in the form of a printed edition. František Bartoš, Stanislav Souček, Čeněk Zíbrt and other experts wrote about the collection prior to Karel Vetterl. Stanislav Souček dealt with the collection in detail in 1910, in his study called *Jak použito sbírky lidových písní a tanců moravských a slezských, pořízené r. 1819 [How the Collection of Moravian and Silesian Folk Songs and Dances, Collected in 1819, Was Used]*. In the study, he explained and described thoroughly how Bartoš used the songs recorded in 1819 in his last edition (1899–1901), how he treated the material, to which extent he modified the originals, etc. However, he always speaks about “the song collection from 1819”, whereby Bartoš himself also defined the collection vaguely as “the first collection of Czech folk songs”. Čeněk Zíbrt in his work *Bibliografický*

přehled českých národních písní [*A Bibliographic Overview of Czech National Songs*] (1895) also writes solely about the 1819 collection. Although the term “gubernatorial collection” was mostly associated with Karel Vetterl, he did not use that term before his study *Volkslied-Sammelergebnisse in Mähren und Schlesien aus dem Jahre 1819*, written in 1973.⁹ But Jaroslav Markl, mentioned above, writes about a *gubernatorial collection* as early as in his study published in the *Hudební rozhledy* journal [Musical Horizons] in 1955, and the term was commonly used by musical folklorists in the 1960s. Nevertheless, the term “gubernatorial” or “gubernatorial 1819” can be found as a description of some songs in the edition of *Moravské písně milostné* [*Moravian Love Songs*], which was processed by Leoš Janáček and Pavel Váša in the 1920s.¹⁰ Despite the hitherto period documents, which indicate the origin of the term, it has not been clarified yet why the term was accepted only in the Czech environment.

The final interesting fact is an issue concerning the publishing of this important song source. It is possible to notice a certain urgency, maybe a hurry with the implementation of the project. Some of the collectors, based on the instructions given, had to deliver the songs within two weeks (Vetterl 1970: 235). But after they fulfilled the task, nobody was interested in the results of their work. Besides the Rittersberg Collection from the year 1825, it was the Weber selection from the Bohemian part of the collecting (the Kolowrat Manuscript, prepared for the publication by Jaroslav Markl) alongside other period collections (the re-edition of the Rittersberg Collection, the Sadská Collection and others) that was published as late as in 1987. Another part, which was discovered in the 1990s, is available as a facsimile prepared by Lubomír Tyllner.¹¹ In 1994, after

9. In the review of an Austrian catalogue (Deutsch – Hofer 1969) relating to the gubernatorial collection, Karel Vetterl writes only about a 1819 collecting (see Vetterl 1970).

10. See Janáček – Váša 1930[–1937]: No. 9, 11, 24, 25/1a, 32 etc.

11. Kunz, Tomas Anton. 1995. *Böhmische Nationalgesänge und Tänze. České národní zpěvy a tance. I., II.*, edited by Lubomír Tyllner. Praha: Ústav pro etnografii a folkloristiku AV ČR.

years of failed negotiations with publishing houses, the Moravian-Silesian part of the gubernatorial collecting was at last published, although Karel Vetterl prepared it for print at the end of the 1970s. The recordings of Austrian songs were published to a limited extent; the comprehensive collections were published at the end of the 20th century, within the edition *Corpus musicae popularis Austriacae*.¹² The Slovenian and Croatian songs—as far as we could find out—have not been published yet; part of them was destroyed and the rest has been stored at Glasbeno Narodopisni Institut in Ljubljana.

Conclusion

The explanation of the reasons for the 1819 collecting of songs and the misleading designation of the collection as a *gubernatorial* one will probably cause neither a change in the collection's name nor the opinions on its importance. The collection remains one of the oldest Czech song sources, and it was followed by other collecting activities. Let us repeat in the conclusion what the original intention as formulated by Sonnleithner was: to record everything that people sing, both profane and spiritual compositions. This means not to record solely folk songs but the entire active repertoire of that time, i.e. the really sung songs, played compositions, and performed dances. In this way, a picture of folk singing developed; using today's terminology, we would define it as a picture of spontaneous singing and singing abilities, not only as a repertoire of sung folk songs. As can be seen from the collection, the repertoire did not include folk songs only, other genres were also included, because the singing repertoire was influenced by school, church, dramatic plays, social and cultural life, travelling, migration of inhabitants, etc. The follow-up research confirmed this fact. The gubernatorial collection, despite all its limitations, is the oldest document of the described situation. Despite all objections from different experts, the collection must be understood as it was characterized by the Austrian ethnomusicologist

12. See Deutsch – Hofer 1969.

Leopold Schmidt: “...and for this reason, the *Sonnleithner Collection* must be accepted as it was compiled: as a cross-section of folk singing in Austrian lands immediately after the end of the Napoleonic wars.” („Somit muss die *Sonnleithner-Sammlung* auch so genommen werden, wie sie entstanden ist: eine Querschnitt-Sammlung durch den Volksgesang in den österreichischen Ländern knapp nach Beendigung der Napoleonischen Kriege.“) (Schmidt 1969b: 11).

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Summary

A gubernatorial collecting was an early 19th century activity which was initiated by the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna, Austria. Following the ideas of the Enlightenment concerning its understanding of relics of material and spiritual culture, the aim was to collect folk songs, dances, and music. The rendering of the gubernatorial collecting was ordered by Franz Earl of Saurau, Minister of Interior and Lord Chancellor. The instructions for collectors, namely teachers, musicians, priests, and church choir masters, were prepared by the first secretary and founder of the Society of Friends of Music, Joseph Sonnleithner. The collecting took place (within the lands of the Habsburg Empire) in 1819, but in the Czech lands it lasted till 1823. The main aims of the collecting activity were obviously political, especially the effort to demonstrate the recognition of culture of individual nations within the Habsburg Empire. These nations started to advocate themselves independently, as well as openly show their dissatisfaction with their unity within the Austrian rule. The gubernatorial collecting was very fast; the recorded material was deposited in Vienna, where it stayed unnoticed for the next one hundred and fifty years. Nevertheless, the songs of the Czech lands had a different fate. The contemporary scholarly research appreciates the value of the collection for its age, extent, and the fact that it includes all songs written down without moralistic censorship, thus providing a real picture of the period song repertoire, and a consistent record of both song parts: song lyrics and song melody. In spite of the fact that the results represented a unique and extensive song resource for the folk singing study, the period reflections of the gubernatorial collecting were predominantly unfavourable. In the Czech lands the collecting became known as the gubernatorial; which was perhaps because of the responsibility for its rendition in the Czech lands by gubernatorial clerks in Bohemia and Moravia. In the Austrian lands, the collecting is known as the Sonnleithner Collecting (*Sonnleithner-Sammlung*), after the first secretary of the Vienna musical society and possibly the initiator of the whole activity.

Key words: Folk songs; folk song collecting; politics; the Habsburg Empire; the Austrian Monarchy; *Sonnleithner-Sammlung*.