

# FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this volume, a collection of articles based on the papers presented at SIEF 24th International Ethnological Food Research Conference in Budapest in September 2024. Over three days, 44 speakers from 14 countries gathered across 9 sessions to examine the role of food and related traditions in shaping or preserving the identities of communities, with a focus on globalisation, festivalisation, and sustainability.

This book continues the documentation of the long-standing work of The International Ethnological Food Research Group, founded in 1970. Since the first conference held in Lund in that year, the organisation of biannual conferences has created a dynamic meeting place for food scholars in and beyond academia. With a few exceptions, the conference proceedings have been published in book format. This is one in a line of more than twenty volumes of conference proceedings. These publications provide an excellent overview of the development and diversity of ethnological food research. While a more comprehensive overview would need more space, let me give some brief reflections about the continuity and the changes observable over the years.

The first volume, *Ethnological Food Research in Europe and USA*, edited by professors Nils-Arvid Bringéus and Günter Wiegelmann in 1971, presented two concepts that are still focal points in ethnological food research today – Meals and Foodways. The social dimensions of eating and the extraordinary capacity of food to cross borders of time, space and social milieu are dimensions that continue to fascinate and evoke new research questions to be studied.

It is not just food in itself that crosses borders, the ethnological food research community itself is also interesting in this regard. From the beginning, scholars from both Eastern and Western Europe, Asia and America, have been active at the

conferences. As a refreshing contrast to more traditional and introspective scientific conferences, food enthusiasts from outside academia were welcomed to these meetings. Researchers and practitioners, science professionals and journalists, found a platform at the conferences on which to interact, to exchange positive feedback and critical remarks, and to explore new paths. All in a friendly and open atmosphere. It was a foodie community long before the term was invented. I dare to say that the SIEF Food Working group (the title since 1994) is a truly global, inclusive, and friendly cross-border community.

Since I attended my first conference in Basel/Vevey in 2002, some remarkable changes have occurred. At that time, food was not the hottest topic in European ethnology. But gradually, a new generation of talented researchers approached the field with fresh eyes and new perspectives. Boosted by an increased interest in the gastronomic dimensions of food, and a growing awareness of how many of the global challenges are related to how we eat, the research community has grown over the years. This volume is a fine example of that development.

The disruptive technologies associated with digitalisation have had an impact both on the research itself and publication channels. Paired with a New public management approach to research, where the number of publications in highly-ranked peer reviewed journals has become essential for any academic career, the book format with compilations of conference proceedings is no longer as common as it used to be. This is quite a dramatic change since I started as a Ph.D. student at the turn of the millennium. To merit academically, publishing in books was essential in the Humanities. A doctoral thesis accepted by a publishing house was an important step towards getting a research position. To be promoted to associate professor, another monograph should have been published, and yet another to have the chance to become professor. Journal articles were written, a lot of teaching was undertaken and administrative tasks were carried out, but the books were at the centre of the qualification. It was in the ability to write large syntheses that reached beyond a narrow part of the research community that the academic hierarchy was established.

Second best to monographs was to publish articles in books edited by renowned international scholars. I still remember the pride I felt when I saw my first 'international' article in the book from the Basel conference, named *Changing Tastes. Food Culture and the Processes of Industrialization*. As so many of the books, this was carefully edited by Patricia Lysaght. Anyone familiar with the thoroughness and standards of Professor Lysaght's work finds it to be insulting to not count the volumes

of the SIEF Food Conferences as 'peer reviewed.' Sadly, however, that is what many of the younger researchers experience today. Only journal articles have merit.

Don't get me wrong. The multitude of journals, accessible online, has done a lot for progress and outreach in ethnological food research. But I still find volumes like this, published in 'proper' book format, to be a valuable contribution to food culture research. They facilitate the experience of getting a comprehensive overview of current research while having a good time of cozy armchair reading.

In that spirit, I hope you will enjoy this collection of articles on 'Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage!

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