

## **Three successful and fruitful decades of work: Professor Patricia Lysaght as President of the SIEF Food Research Working Group**

**Maja Godina Golija**

It is a great pleasure to welcome you this evening to the impressive Museum of Ethnography, Budapest and to shed light on the long-term work of Professor Patricia Lysaght and her Presidency of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research, later renamed the SIEF Food Research Working Group.<sup>1</sup>

The International Commission for Ethnological Food Research was created on the initiative of ethnologists and food researchers as a group of researchers independent of SIEF in 1970 in Lund, Sweden. Its first president was Professor Nils-Arvid Bringéus, a Professor of European Ethnology at the University of Lund. Among the founding members, we must also mention some other long-term members of this group: Professor Günter Wiegelmann, Professor Alexander Fenton, Professor Eszter Kisbán, Professor Konrad Köstlin, Professor Grith Lerch, and Professor Johanna Maria van Winter.<sup>2</sup> We are happy that some of the founding members of this Commission still participate in our scientific meetings and enrich our work with their contributions. Among them, I should mention Professor Eszter Kisbán, who is with us tonight, and Professor Konrad Köstlin, who unfortunately could not travel to Budapest this year.

Professor Lysaght became involved in the work of this group from a very early stage. In 1983, she first attended the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research conference, held in Mátrafüred, Hungary, and organized by Professor Eszter Kisbán. Professor Lysaght's active work in this group continued even after this scientific conference; in 1992, she organised the 9th International Conference on Ethnological Food Research in Ireland, entitled 'Milk and Milk Products'. She also edited its proceedings, titled 'Milk and Milk Products from Medieval to

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<sup>1</sup> The text was prepared for the ceremony at the SIEF 24th International Ethnological Food Research Conference: *Living Eating Habits, Revitalized Foodways and the Concepts of Tradition and Food Heritage*, in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest, 18 September 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Bringéus, Nils-Arvid, 'Ethnological Food Conferences 1970–1998: Ideas and Routes for European Collaboration', in Patricia Lysaght, ed., *Food from Nature: Attitudes, Strategies and Culinary Practices*, Uppsala 2000, 19–29.

Modern Times', published in 1994.<sup>3</sup> Three decades ago, based on her successful work in the Commission, she was elected President of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research. When she took on this task, a long, stable, and fruitful period started for this group. Professor Lysaght successfully managed the Commission for a long time with her great enthusiasm for work, good organisation, discipline, and knowledge. It is likely, if I may joke a little, that her success was also due to Irish perseverance, which is always necessary for such work.

Under her leadership, conferences were organised that aimed at the scientific treatment of established ethnological topics, as well as some new and until then poorly researched ones. To name just a few: 'Food from Nature: Attitudes, Strategies, and Culinary Practices' in 1998, in Sweden<sup>4</sup>; 'Food and Celebration' in 2000, in Slovenia;<sup>5</sup> 'Changing Tastes: Food Culture and the Process of Industrialization' in 2002' in Switzerland<sup>6</sup>; 'Time for Food: Everyday Food and Changing Meal Habits' in 2010, in Finland; 'Places of Food Production: Origin, Identity, Imagination' in 2016, in Germany; and 'Tradition and Nutritional Science in the Modern Food Chain' in 2018, in Greece.

During the decades when Professor Lysaght led the Commission, the conferences were carefully planned with local scholars, well organised, and open to researchers of different theoretical orientations, disciplines, interests, and ages. At these events, experienced and established nutrition researchers from Europe, Asia, North and South America, and the Arab world, met with younger colleagues, including doctoral students. It was a great experience that

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<sup>3</sup> Lysaght, Patricia, ed., *Milk and Milk Products from Medieval to Modern Times* (Edinburgh: Canongate Academic in association with the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin and the European Ethnological Research Centre, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Lysaght, Patricia, ed., *Food from Nature: Attitudes, Strategies and Culinary Practices: Proceedings of the 12th Conference of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research, Umeå and Frostviken, Sweden, 8–14 June, 1998* (Uppsala: The Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Lysaght, Patricia, ed., *Food and Celebration. From Fasting to Feasting. Proceedings of the 13th Conference of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research, Ljubljana, Preddvor, and Piran, Slovenia, June 5–11, 2000* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC; Dublin: Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Lysaght, Patricia, with Christine Burckhardt-Seebass, eds., *Changing Tastes: Food Culture and the Processes of Industrialization. Proceedings of the 14th Conference of the International Commission for Ethnological Food Research, Basel and Vevey, Switzerland, 30 September–6 October 2002* (Basel: Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Volkskunde; Dublin: Department of Irish Folklore, University College, 2004).

enriched and inspired all of us for further work. It also provided carefully selected keynote speakers and professional excursions that showcased various food-related practices in the field.

Cooperating with Professor Lysaght in organising conferences also brought out her personality's warm, human side. Despite the abundance of work and concern for the organisation of conferences, she always had time to address the personal problems of the participants – caring for the well-being and logistics of the older members of the group, helping the sick, and working to provide financial assistance for those for whom participation in the conferences represented a significant financial burden. It is essential to mention her help to researchers from Eastern Europe who faced financial problems and other restrictions on travel and participation in conferences.

The editorial work of Professor Lysaght is extremely important. She took great care to ensure that the scientific contributions were printed in independent publications after the conferences, which was not common practice before her leadership of this group. In editing and proofreading the texts, Professor Lysaght invested hours of work so that the texts would be accepted for printing by reputable publishing houses. I want to thank her for this important and often overlooked work.

It is hard to imagine how Professor Lysaght managed to accomplish so much for the food research group while also teaching at University College Dublin, delivering guest lectures at foreign universities, serving as President of The Folklore Society in London, editing important folklore journals such as *Folklore* (London) and *Béaloides* (Dublin), and serving as an elected member of the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture, Uppsala, and the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. However, Professor Lysaght performed all of these tasks very successfully and without complaint.

For her excellent work and leadership of the International Ethnological Food Research Group, I sincerely thank her on behalf of the members of this group – and past and present conference participants. Her efforts have created excellent conditions for the future work of this food research group and have forged many scientific and friendly ties between food researchers and institutions.

Dear Patricia, thank you again for your exceptional work, and I wish you all the best in the future!