India as Reflected in Czech Consciousness in the Era of the National Revivalist Movement of the Nineteenth Century (ca. 1800-1848)

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Since the Middle Ages, European peoples have had a particular fascination with India and all things Indian - be it material objects (spices, textiles, curios) or intellectual contributions (religious and philosophical ideas, literary motifs etc.). Their interest was, to a large extent, guided by the current state of their political, social and cultural developments and tended to change with time, place and particular circumstances. The images of the Orient and India constructed by the British, French or German cultural elites have long maintained their position at the center of attention for historians of ideas and have been extensively described and commented upon. With the less culturally and politically prominent and powerful European nations and nationalities however, the situation is rather different. In particular, the task of undertaking a comparative study of the images of India produced by small or non-imperial nations of Europe - certainly a fascinating option - is long overdue.

Orientalist constructions and attitudes that were developed in the western parts of the continent, and later studied in great depth by oriental scholars and historians of ideas, should not be automatically seen as representative of Europe as a whole. Europe has never been a single entity and when we consider the phenomenon of the exchange of ideas between different cultures or civilizations, that are in themselves internally complex and multi-faceted, it is essential to define as precisely as possible the exact milieu and sets of circumstances which generated this or that particular type of interest in the "other". The kind and degree of motivation was always closely connected to the dominant questions and problems occupying the minds of intellectual and political elites of the day. It will not be irrelevant, therefore, to recapitulate briefly on the types of state and society that covered the map of Europe - and Central Europe in particular - at the beginning of the 19th century, the period focused on in this paper.

In the context of the present discussion it will be helpful to remind ourselves of a few basic historical facts. At the beginning of the 19th century there were only seven fully-fledged nation states, or, perhaps more exactly, state nations with their own national identities: Spain, Portugal, France, the

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Low Countries, Great Britain, Denmark and Sweden. Five of them had experience of overseas expansion, had established elites profiting from overseas trade and had been gradually establishing a variety of patterns of colonial domination. A glance at the ethnic and linguistic map of Europe will suffice to make us aware of the fact that at this time these nation states represented an exception rather than a rule: apart from these seven, there were more than thirty ethnic groups inhabiting vast spaces of the European continent, many of them subject to the three big multi-ethnic empires that covered large parts of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. These groups had no state they could call their own, often they had no ruling elites that would identify with their ethnic consciousness and language; some of them still held in their collective memories their past independent status and statehood, dating back to the Middle Ages and some had still been able to keep alive the vestiges of a literary language, also formed in the medieval period.

These "non-dominant ethnic groups" never formed a unified class, amenable to a simple or summary description: their various pasts, social structures and political and cultural environments in which they functioned differed vastly from case to case. If they had anything in common, it was their gradually awakening and strengthening will to emancipate themselves from the domination of elites that were increasingly perceived as foreign and oppressive. For most of the nineteenth century the majority of these groups (with the exception of the early emancipated Belgians) devised political and cultural programs that remind us more of the emancipatory aspirations of colonial subjects, rather than of the ideas of the European colonial masters, their more immediate neighbors.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, large areas of Central Europe were occupied by two multi-ethnic empires, the Austrian and the Russian, which ruled over a number of "non-dominant ethnic groups": Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenians, Hungarians, Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians (we prefer not to include the northern Europe and Balkans into the term "Central"). The main theme around which the political and cultural activities of these groups revolved was an effort to attain national emancipation - a process whose aim was to attain all those attributes of national status which marked the existence of contemporary independent nation states. To this one dominant aim were, to a greater or lesser degree, subordinated all other themes, cultural, literary or scientific, that reflected and reacted to contemporary developments in the world. One such theme that related to these developments was, of course, an interest in the extra-European world of which India and "things Indian" formed an integral and important part. It was only natural that the reflections of India in the eyes of the members of the non-dominant ethnic groups of Central Europe were formed to a great extent by their immediate needs relating to their specific national emancipatory programs.

As in all other respects, Central Europe presented a picture of great diversity. The Poles and the Hungarians, endowed with more complete social structures, focused their attention from the very

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2 For the terminology and classification of the revivalist movements of small European nations, see esp. the path-breaking study by Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of the*
beginning on political aspects of their emancipatory efforts, whereas the Czechs, with a relatively weak and, to a great degree Germanized aristocracy, concentrated on the importance of saving their own language during the early stages of their emancipatory process. It can be clearly stated that, particularly in its initial stage (ca. 1800 to 1830), the so called Czech national revival was concerned primarily with language and had a strongly linguistic character. It is therefore not surprising that in the earlier part of the nineteenth century the interest of the educated Czech public in Indian subjects concentrated primarily on literary and linguistic aspects of the Indian culture, in as far as these could play a role in bolstering their arguments for the proclaimed close affinity between the Slavic and the prestigious languages of India, particularly Sanskrit. The aim of the following piece is to show how some of the most prominent representatives of the Czech revivalist movement reflected the Indian influence and how they worked the available information about this country into their patriotic writings and literary creations.

It should be stressed at the outset that the closing decade of the 18th century and the first ten or fifteen years of the 19th were, for Czech society, years of unprecedented change, upheaval and calamity, events which all followed closely one upon the other and had hardly any parallel in the collective memories of the local population. Josefinism, with its enlightened administrative and bureaucratic reforms, affected virtually every aspect of life for the common man, as well as for the aristocracy. The drive for greater administrative efficiency led to greater centralization and almost automatically to the promotion of the German language as the exclusive means of communication with and within the state apparatus. At the same time, the introduction of general and compulsory school attendance, accompanied by a thorough restructuring of the educational system, brought literacy to a greater number of people than ever before. The echoes of the French Revolution and its ideas, and later direct confrontation with the Napoleonic armies, led to massive mobilization of all the resources of the Habsburg empire, including mental and spiritual ones; for the first time the absolutist state appealed to the patriotic feelings and emotions of the population. However, with the traditional structures and loyalties in deep crisis, the non-German and at the same time literate, underprivileged and impoverished graduates of the state gymnasiums and universities, many of them coming from artisan and rural families, began to look for new alternative bonds and relationships and, gradually, for an alternative future. An essential aspect of this new future was to be the equal status of the Czech language with German; this was seen as a necessary condition for the abolition of a serious language handicap that debarred the mass of the Czech speaking population from access to higher education and higher posts in the administrative and judicial apparatus.

In this situation, one of the most pressing concerns became the need to save the Czech language from its complete substitution by German and from its gradual demise. Apart from the hard work done in the field of Czech lexicography and grammar, followed by the first attempts at literary activity in

this "rejuvenated" language, the thoughts of this first generation of revivalists frequently centered on
the themes of beauty, antiquity, structural complexity and the comparative richness of various
languages. It is here that India, represented by her prestigious language, Sanskrit, came into play for
the first time in the emerging stages of modern Czech culture.3

Linguistic information always played an important part in narratives about the lives and customs
of Indian peoples, as reported by European travelers and missionaries. Missionary activity required a
good knowledge of the local languages; that many grammars of Indian languages were written by
European missionaries is a well known fact. The work of one of them, a Jesuit from Bohemia, Karel
Přikryl (1718-1785)4, was destined to become a stimulus and inspiration for a closer interest in India
on the part of the first generation of the Czech revivalists. Přikryl became a member of the Jesuit
order, studied theology at Karl-Ferdinand University in Prague and, as a proficient linguist(by the age
of 22 he had a very good knowledge of Czech, German and Latin, only his Greek being "below
average") was sent to India in 1748. In India, he was to spend 11 years of his life, probably for the
most part in Goa, where he held the post of Professor of Theology at the Jesuit College. When, in
1759 the Jesuit order was banned in Portugal and in the Portuguese overseas settlements, Přikryl was
deporated to Lisbon; after six years of imprisonment he was finally released and in 1767 allowed to
return to Bohemia. During his stay in India he wrote many letters describing the manners and customs
of local peoples, all of which have since been lost; his most important surviving work bears the title
Principia linguae brahmanicae and contains a systematic presentation of the grammar of the Konkanī
language.5

The manuscript of this work might have followed the same fate as Přikryl’s letters had it not
come to the attention of another enlightened Czech Jesuit scholar, the linguist and founder of the
Slavic linguistics in Bohemia, Josef Dobrovský (1753-1829). Dobrovský was the first Bohemian
scholar who took serious scholarly interest in the comparative study of Slavic languages and Sanskrit.
At some time, in 1791, he came across Přikryl’s Konkanī grammar and noticed several structural
similarities between this Indian language on the one hand and Slavic languages on the other: the
existence of an instrumental case in nouns, similarities in verbal inflexions.6 He had the entire
manuscript copied clearly, added his own marginal notes and probably intended to have the work
published. This never actually happened but Dobrovský’s interest in India did not abate. Two years

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3 Out of a number of standard works mapping the origins and development of the process of the Czech cultural revivalist
movement, the one which abounds with novel and sharp insights and (re)interpretations is Vladimír Macura, Znamenti zrodu:
české národní obrození jako kulturní typ. [The Sign of the genesis: the Czech national revival as a cultural type]. Jinočany
1995. In the following presentation the author of this paper is to a large extent indebted to interpretations formulated in this
extraordinary book.

4 Miloslav Krása, “First Czech Scholar in India”, 609-624.

5 In Přikryl’s biography written by his younger contemporary F. M. Pelc, the title is given as Grammatica linguæ
Canarinae, quam Gentiles Goani et circumjacentes Ethnici inter se loquuntur. Krása, ibid., 620. The text of the grammar
was published by José Pereira under the title: “Karel Přikryl, S. J. Principia linguæ brahmanicae: A Grammar of Standard
Konkani”. ArOr 36 (1968), 625-684.

6 Adolf Patera (ed.), Korrespondence Josefa Dobrovského. Díl I. Vzájemné dopisy Josefa Dobrovského a Fortunata
Duricha z let 1778-1800, 198 (letter of 23. 5 1791).
later he tried to obtain the grammar of the Sanskrit language written by an Austrian of the Carmelite order, Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomeo, and, in addition, another book whose title he gave as *De diis Indorum orientalium*; this he intended to use for comparisons between the names of Indian and old Slavic deities. Dobrovský was, most probably, not aware at this time of the existence of William Jones’ *The Sanscrit Language* (1786), in which the English author pointed to the existence of a relationship between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin. It is also possible, but not certain, that at a later date he became acquainted with his "Third Discourse" published in 1798.

In correspondence his with friends Dobrovský on several occasions mentioned his interest in typological classification of languages and in their comparison on historical principles. Thus, in two letters written in the middle of 1790s to Slovak patriot Jiří Ribay, he described his idea of a large project named by him in Latin *Systema linguarum secundum genera et species*. Dobrovský was very much aware that such an undertaking would demand sustained collaborative effort of great number of dedicated scholars, but felt that he himself should at least show the way which others might follow. More problematic, but perhaps even more revealing of his innermost thoughts and interests in this respect, are statements found in letters he wrote in fits of a mental illness. On these rare occasions he expressed himself in language couched in Biblical idiom, inspired by the style of the Revelation of St. John the Divine. In one such letter to his friend V. Durych he prophesied, i.a., the eastward expansion of the Russian empire which would bring the Slavic race back to their original home at the borders of India; and expected discovery of common source of all classical wisdom and philosophy.

Dobrovský himself belonged to the older generation of Bohemian patriots who were keenly interested in national history, language, geography, etc. but were rather sceptical about the idea that contemporary Czech vernacular could ever attain the status of a modern universally spoken and written language. His other area of interest, Oriental languages and cultures (he himself had learned Hebrew and Arabic), was not connected with any type of national program or agitation. Up to the time of his death in 1829, he remained faithful to his critical methodology and, particularly in his later
years, showed a certain dislike for the activist approaches of the younger generation of patriots who readily sacrificed critical inquiry to ideology and detached research to dilettantistic voluntarism.

Nevertheless, it was these same dilettantes who, in the first three decades of the 19th century, almost completely monopolized learned discourse, not only in the field of nascent linguistics, but also in the study of foreign and ancient cultures and literatures. One of the most important underlying motives behind the thinking and activities of the first generation of national revivalists was the urgently perceived need to set the Czech language and culture off against its German counterpart: the new Czech culture had to be built and developed purposefully as non-German. In the context of the revivalist movement the term non-German implies a strong negative bond: every creative act in the field of culture was at least in part influenced by considerations of the state of the contemporary German scene: Czech creative acts had to be either radically different or better than their German counterparts. Thus, negation and analogy, however mutually incompatible they may appear to be, became the two most important guiding principles of the Czech revivalists. It is possible that this approach owed its inspiration partly to a German model - to the German effort to rid itself of French cultural and political influence during and after the Napoleonic wars.

In this context, and in a situation where accurate and precise information about India was rare and far between, the stage was set for the development of “Fantasy India”, very peculiar in its character. In the field of language discourse, the Czech and Slavic languages in general were proclaimed to be the direct descendants and closest relatives of Sanskrit, the most venerated language of all. What was felt to be of particular importance was the observation that the Czech language was structurally and lexically closer to Sanskrit than the German language. Josef Jungmann (1773-1847), one of the most prominent philologists of the revivalist period, stated this belief with almost epigrammatic clarity. In a verse composed in the Indian meter áryá, he states: "You can boast of the Indian origin of your speech, O Teuton; your speech is the Indian beauty’s stepdaughter, but mine is her true daughter." Josef Jungmann never mastered Sanskrit; all his translations of Sanskrit texts - two short specimens of Sanskrit poetry and one story in prose - were through the medium of English (H. Th. Colebrook) or German (A. W. von Schlegel, Indische Bibliothek). His ideas about the historical relationship between the Old Slavs and Indians were informed by the book written by the Polish author Valentyn Skorochód Maiewski O Slawianech a ich pobratymcach (On Slavs and their

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13 For characteristic examples of revivalist proclamations of this type, see, V. Macura, op. cit., p. 46-48. A good guide through the articles on Indian subjects published in the Czech journals in the first half of the 19th century is the B.A. thesis by Lenka Suková, Obraz Indie v české společnosti a literatuře 19. století (The Image of India in Czech society and literature of the 19th century)(unpublished).

Relatives) published in Warsaw in 1816 - a collection of lectures on Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature which Jungmann found in the personal library of Josef Dobrovský.

Josef Jungmann himself was more interested in the prosody and metrical systems used in the poetry of different European languages, as well as in Sanskrit. According to his ideas, which were widely shared by his contemporaries and by not a few literati of the following generation, the only natural way of poetic expression in the Czech and Slavic languages in general was metrical versification, inherited by the Greeks, Latins and Slavs from their common cultural background. It was only in later times, according to Jungmann, that the corrupting influence of German set in and caused a most unnatural shift toward the syllabotonic, accented prosody. Thus, the Czech revivalist poets began to compose not only in hexameters, but also in the more exotic Indian meters āryāgīti, sārangī, upacitra, mauktikamālā and several others. The purpose of these experiments was to prove the close relationship of the Czech language to the prestigious languages of antiquity, whereas German, with its less noble syllabotonic prosody, was to be excluded from this "aristocratic" group. This revivalist fiction was of relatively long duration - the so-called Indian episode lasted for thirty years, with the last attempt to compose in an Indian meter published as late as 1851.

A somewhat deeper knowledge of Sanskrit was attained by Josef's younger brother, Antonín Jungmann (1775-1854). In an extended article published in the learned revivalist journal Krok, he summarized various statements on this language made by William Jones, A. W. von Schlegel and Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomeo (as treated by V. S. Maiiewski) and provided them with his own comments and observations. These are followed by a short grammatical exposition of Sanskrit with copious examples of words and forms used in a comparison with the Slavic, German, Latin and Greek languages. His ideas about the current linguistic situation in India are confused and misleading. According to him, the current Indian vernaculars were mixtures of Sanskrit and foreign languages: Sanskrit mixed with Arabic is called Hindostani, which is of two kinds: the noble one is called Prakrit, understood by everybody; the other, rather rough one is Hindi or Gindevi. As proof of the close relationship between Sanskrit and the Slavic languages, Jungmann mentions the personal experience of a certain Czech master wood-turner who understood the language of Indians and was understood by them, "as far away as Cochin China".

In no way less notable were the achievements of the revivalist men of letters in the field of comparative mythology. The most original was probably Jan Kollár (1793-1852), author of the celebrated poetical composition Slávy dcera [The daughter of Sláva/Glory]. In several consecutive re-workings, published between the years 1824 and 1852, he elevated the figure of Sláva (of his own creation) from the symbol and personification of the Slavic race to the status of a real goddess of the

15 For a complete description and careful metrical analysis of these experiments, see the article by Julie Nováková, “Indické rozměry v českém básnictví” [Indian meters in Czech poetry], Věstník Královské české společnosti nauk, třída filosoficko-historicko-filologická, ročník 1952 - č. VIII. Praha 1952, 1-32.


17 Ibid., 68.
putative Slavic pantheon. The word sláva (meaning "glory") first became Sláva (Glory personified, therefore with the capital G) and finally a mythological being.\(^{18}\) For Kollár this was no mere word-play - in a later, wholly prosaic treatise\(^{19}\) he attempted to construct, giving free rein to flights of etymological fancy, a peculiar Slavic mythology where Sláva becomes an object of actual worship by the Old Slavs. Sláva had now been endowed with a new etymology: her name was connected to the old Indian goddess Suaha (Svāhā). This purely fictitious construction and etymology took a surprisingly firm root and was taken seriously well into the middle of the 19th century.\(^{20}\) Kollár’s literary and philological procedures were, in their time, by no means an isolated phenomenon: it is in his works that the construction of culture through philology and concurrent subordination of philology to a patriotic ideology stands out in particularly clear relief.

Already by the 1830s and 1840s this "creative" approach to glorious Slavic past was the subject of criticism. Such criticism was to grow stronger and more vocal as the Czech reading public ceased to be limited to the relatively small and closed groups of patriots writing and versifying for their own narrow audiences. This process was accelerated as Czech literature gradually acquired a more natural character, attracting a mass readership oriented towards more mundane issues. One of Kollár’s contemporaries, the poet František Ladislav Čelakovský (1799-1852), commented in a letter on his colleague’s methods, making the observation that Kollár’s "concepts get sometimes confused - he begins to write poetry philologically and philologises poetically".\(^{21}\) The unreal, game-like character of the first stage of the revivalist culture, where mystification and fantasy freely traded places with real facts, was only possible because, to use V. Macura’s words, this type of cultural creativity took place in a vacuum, an empty space – an environment in which there was no need to confront an already established culture, but where it was necessary to create one almost from scratch, as pure fiction.\(^{22}\)

The gradual development of more sober and realistic attitudes toward culture that were already visible in the 1830s stimulated calls for a clear demarcation line between the realms of fact on the one side and fiction on the other. In the field of academic interest in Indian subjects, this change can be observed in the works of another celebrated Czech (or, to be more exact, Czecho-Slovak) revivalist, Pavel Josef Šafařík (1795-1861). His most important contribution to the steadily expanding horizons of the Czech revivalist culture was his opus *Slovanské starožitnosti [Slavic antiquities]* (1837), a bold attempt at reconstructing the oldest history of the Slavs up to the end of the first millennium A. D. To be able to correctly assess the historical relationship between the Slavic and Indian languages, he took

\(^{18}\) The process of construction of Sláva in Kollár’s poems is reconstructed by Vladimír Macura, *op. cit.*, 82-94.

\(^{19}\) Kollár, Jan. *Sláva bohyně a původ jména Slavěj a přízvěti Slavjanů*: S případky srovnalost indického a slavského života, řečí a bájesloví ukazujícími. V listech k vělebnému příteli panu P. J. Šafaříkovi od Jana Kollára. [Sláva, the goddess, and the origin of the name of Slavs or Slavjans, in letters to the esteemed friend, Mr. P. J. Šafařík, with additions showing similarities between the Indian and Slavic life, language and mythology]. Pešť 1839.

\(^{20}\) Vladimír Macura, *op. cit.*, 86, gives as an example the learned treatise by Ignác Jan Hanuš, *Die Wissenschaft des slawischen Mythus im weitesten, den altpreussisch-lithauischen Mythus mitumfassenden Sinne ...* Lemberg / Stanislawów / Tarnów 1842.

\(^{21}\) Quoted in: Jan Kollár, *Slávy dcera*, 266.
up the study of Sanskrit grammar in earnest. Firstly, he acquired Franz Bopp’s celebrated work *Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache* and later, in addition, his *Vergleichende Grammatik* and *Glossarium*. With the help of this state-of-the-art Indological equipment he proceeded to study and analyze the rules governing the formation of verbal stems in Sanskrit. His linguistic conclusions would not be accepted today, but his general approach had more in common with the methods of modern linguistics than with the preconceived notions and ideologically motivated treatises of his contemporaries.

During the decade preceding the tumultuous year of 1848 a sea change had taken place in the attitudes of the now greatly expanded and socially structured community of Czechs. Growing numbers of them were able and willing to use the Czech language not only in day-to-day communication but also in the fields of science, journalism and all other branches of literary activity. As Czech society entered the second phase of the struggle for national emancipation (characterized by demands for the elimination of political inequality and participation in the spheres of administration and politics), the vision of the Czech nation as a proud member of a broader pan-Slavic and pan-Indo-European community were quickly losing their appeal and had to give way to concerns and demands of a more practical nature. The idea of a small nation with a glorious past, a less satisfying present and a brighter future worth fighting for now, became a favorite topic of essays, poems and conversations of the day. Czech journals began to pay attention to the contemporary fate of the Irish, Greeks and the Baltic nations and to their efforts at cultural and political emancipation. It is in this context that in 1845 the journal Česká včela [The Czech Bee] published an extended and well-informed article (signed only by an abbreviation "Š"), describing the enlightened activities of Rammohan Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore. The author emphasizes their efforts at cultural and economic improvement and describes the obstacles and prejudices of their own people, which these two "revolutionaries of enlightenment" had to struggle against. Dwarkanath’s initiatives, stressing the need to found technical colleges, along with his demands for the greater participation of Indians in the administration of the country are duly highlighted. Evidently, the aim of this article was not simply to provide information about events in a distant and still little known country (for this he could have chosen a more colorful topic, one which was in line with pieces in contemporary Czech journals of the time) but to present an exemplary model of enlightened patriotism, one which devoted its energy to economic and social progress - a model for Dwarkanath’s Czech contemporaries. Significantly, the author closes his text

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22 Vladimír Macura, *op. cit.*, 106.
25 “Braman Dwarkanat Tagor”, 332.
with words of praise and exhortation: "We have noted this example in order to remind ourselves of the fact that the well-being of the nation rests in the progress of education. If our education too is to make progress, let us learn from the sons of that country - love of fellow men and love for the motherland, even if they are maligned. Blessed be the nation which has his Dwarkanaths." It seems that the extraordinary popularity of Rabindranath Tagore, which dates back to the first two decades of the twentieth century, may have deeper roots - in the eyes of the educated Czech public, the Indian struggle for national emancipation made the Indians look like distant allies.

This new feeling of a common plight, however, did not displace the older revivalist idea of common prehistoric origins, but rather superimposed itself on it. Equally strong and long-lasting were the notions of the essential character of the Indian people (the comparative character studies of nations was another favorite pastime of the first generation of revivalists): well into the twentieth century one could come across stereotypical writings, sounding like a distant echo of an article O Hindich [On Indians] by Antonín Jungmann, written in 1821: "Hindostan can rightly be called mother of the human race and teacher of all arts ... the nation is very good, kind, well-mannered, affable, honest and fair-spoken, noble and sober and very clean, gentle and hospitable ... it is neither bloodthirsty nor vengeful but submissive; though it has also martial tribes, e. g. the Marathas, Varawas etc."26

As was the case with other European nations, the image of India constructed by Czech intellectuals, writers, poets and journalists also served certain more or less clearly defined purposes; the specific situation in which the Czech nation found itself in the first half of the 19th century endowed that image with a very peculiar character, one that differed greatly from the constructions developed in contemporary Western Europe. The Czech variety should not be seen as a specific type of orientalism - the quantity of information coming to this part of Central Europe was still too small for this to occur. It was only natural that, during this period at least, the more "down-to-earth" considerations of political advantage or economic gain coming from trade were completely absent. The then existing social structure of the renascent Czech nation created suitable conditions for intellectual constructions of the type described above; the more material motives were still far beyond the horizon of Czech society.

It is the belief of the author that, in this particular case at least, the concluding words should not close the debate on this topic; rather, this work should open up the possibility of wider future research possibilities. One of these is certainly within the field of comparative studies: further comparisons focusing on a larger body of images of India created by other small non-imperial nations, each struggling for its own survival or independence, might significantly expand our understanding of the earlier phases of Oriental studies in Europe. Such comparative studies might also provide us with an ideal opportunity for deeper hermeneutical reflection.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT

The interest of the educated Czech public in India during the first phase of the Czech national revivalist movement spanning the first four decades of the 19th century was formed almost exclusively by leading personalities of this movement and the selection of themes connected with Indian civilisation was largely subordinated to its ideological program. The predominantly linguistic and
literary character of Czech emancipatory efforts directed the attention of leading Czech intellectuals towards the study of Sanskrit as prestigious language of great antiquity and historical relationship to Slavic languages. Important topics during this phase of the movement included debates on the nature of Czech verse and metrics (with imitations of Indian meters), national characterology, comparative mythology and literary aesthetics. Selection of examples of alleged Indian parallels was subordinated to the perceived needs of national ideology with a relatively weaker link to actual facts and their original context. In this early stage the more "down-to-earth" motives of political advantage or economic gain were absent. From the 1840s the focus of attention gradually shifts from this naive and narrowly pragmatic comparatistic stage to a more informed and less biased interest in the classical Indian culture as potential source of universal human values and aspirations. Still, several early stereotypes persisted well into the twentieth century.

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KEYWORDS
India - Indology - Nationalism - Czech Revivalist Movement - 19th century