

Abstract

This monographic work devoted to the images of India in Czech literary and journalistic production of the long 19th century tries to be, as far as possible, a comprehensive overview of the issue and its main purpose is to give a broad insight into the issue of the source base as a whole. It attempts to organise this source base into certain imaginative categories and interpret the basic images of the other, arising within individual texts or text groups, especially with regard to the historical context of these images. Thus, the thesis tries to engage in the discussions about the possibilities of application of Saidian Orientalism as a working method in areas outside the Anglo-French-American imagination of the Islamic world, that is, beyond the material basis of Edward Said's ideas. At the same time, it shows how a historically descriptive non-ideologising approach can introduce new perspectives into the ways of evaluating the imagination of the other, working primarily with the high variability of individual approaches and the historical dependence of the formation of images of the other on the needs of self-definition and articulation of one's own ideas. The thesis traces the emergence of Czech images of India and the projection of the European ones into the Czech press approximately in the period 1800–1914. It does so in several areas: it specifically defines the Slavic romantic imagination of India as the cradle of its own ethnicity and examines the development of this idea and its reflection in Czech authors. From this specific phenomenon, it moves on to an interpretation of the gradual emancipation of professional Indology as a science, oriented mainly philologically, primarily by examining the development of the role of the Indo-Aryan languages within the emerging Indo-European studies. Although attention is subsequently paid to the more marginal images of India, as they appear in the Czech specialised and popularisation literature (its ethnic composition, history, geography, flora and fauna), the subsequent attention is mainly focused on interpretations of the reflection of Indian religious and philosophical systems. This reflection, in fact, is one of the focal points to which the European imagination returns throughout the whole period of the mutual contact. The thesis follows it in the texts of philosophers, religious studies scholars, but also occultists, and in specific articulation by the clerical press. The second half of the thesis is focused on fictional texts: it deals first with reflections on Indian (mainly Sanskrit) literature and issues of its Czech translations, then moves on to a specific reflection of Indian reality as reflected in travel texts. The thesis concludes with a chapter devoted to images of India in Czech fiction, trying to trace how individual images and stereotypes were projected into fiction (in a positive or negative sense).

Keywords

imagination, images, imagology, India, 19th century, Czech literature, literary history, Oriental Renaissance, Orientalism, Oriental studies, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sanskrit, Indomania