

ETNONYMIC ANALYSIS OF BANJA MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS FROM THE INSTITUTE OF ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE RESEARCH

SUMMARY

This article analyzes the presence of etnonyms in spoken and oral literary genres of the Banja manuscript collection from the 1950s and 1960s. We start from the assumption that essential determinants of ethnic identity are based on linguistic utterances referring to members of one's own or another ethnic group. We do not treat etnonyms merely as particular form of onomastics with the primary semiotic function of names, but rather consider their discursive semantic system as well and their emphatic sociolinguistic function in modeling spatial, ethnic and value-related relations. Aside from comprehension of these functions of etnonyms as key representative symbols of identity, we consider the emotional impact of the intentional act of naming and the unconscious need to motivate a name interpreted as a message, which conditions processes of re-etimologization or replacement of names.

We distinguish three types of etnonyms: the "legitimate" type authorized by the dominant ideological discourse (Croats, Serbs) the "alternative" type (Šokci, Vlasi, Kranjci, Bunjevci) which suggest more a sense of difference, a distinctness of identity than they identify separate ethnic communities, and third, the "replacement" type (Muži, Žabari, Krdžani) which are usually treated as stylems, archaisms, nicknames or as names of members of different religious groups (Catholics, Orthodox). Through these different types of etnonyms we read the mythemic and ideological reference of ethnic identity and ethnic personality (Devereux) and we compare the relation toward an ethnic "other" both in oral discourse and in the texts of ethnological-folkloristic discourse. We note that expression and surfacing of ethnic identity (personality) in the realm of everyday life is various, difficult to pinpoint and many-voiced, and essentially determined by the act of communication usage, while scientific-theoretical discourse reduces this variety to only a few dominant and legitimate etnonyms. This pragmatic reduction, maintained by socializing-educative mechanisms, is desirable in an ideological vision of societal integration and homogenization and is most radically evidenced in the form of the "categories" in the census list which attempt to group all individuals "without exception". Anthropological discourse, particularly on the question of ethnicity, is essentially marked by the author's subjective vision, adopted with scientific models and its place in the hierarchy of variously ideologized (non)discursive praxis, and as such it must be aware of its position "on the front lines"; it should be in as little conflict with reality as possible. Anthropological discourse is, indeed, aware that it influences recognition, observation of certain differences as ethnic, and not (sub) cultural, and vice versa.

(Translated by E. Elias-Bursać)