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ETHNOLOGY, MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES AND POLITICAL RETICENCE IN CROATIA

From Mediterranean Constructs to Nation-Building¹

The paper examines the relations between Mediterranean studies, ethnology, and political projects and strategies for national identity-building in Croatia during the socialist period, and subsequent to it.

Keywords: ethnology, Mediterranean studies, nation-building

Prologue

Two apparently distinct lines of inquiry will be tackled in this paper. In the first part I shall look at various ways in which the Eastern Adriatic has been researched and represented by Croatian ethnologists since the 1930s. Since other contributors to this symposium will be discussing folkloristic (in the sense of oral literature) and ethnomusicological aspects of Mediterranean research in Croatia, I propose to consider only ethnological studies, relying on the "division of labour" between folklorists, ethnomusicologists and ethnologists practiced at the Institute whose fiftieth anniversary we are celebrating.

The survey of ethnological Mediterranean studies in Croatia, the country which is washed by the Adriatic Sea from the south and south-west, shows that they do not have a prominent status in ethnological research. To a large extent they can be qualified as an *ethnology in the Mediterranean*. That ethnology does not aim at developing a specific field of research in the designated area. Its interest is not to come up with an agenda for the study of the Mediterranean; it does not identify specific

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problems, forge new concepts or elicit hypotheses that would be relevant for the research in that area. It is the type of study which relies on general theory and a research plan developed by ethnologists for application in other areas. Therefore it is just an ethnology *in* an area, specifically in the Mediterranean. However, several ethnologists did undertake to formulate a specific field of research based on comparative studies in the Mediterranean. They have offered several constructs of Mediterranean culture identifying it with a different cluster of cultural traits found in the area and setting it apart from other regions in Croatia. Following researchers who have used a similar phrase ("anthropology of Europe", "anthropology of the Mediterranean", "ethnologie de la ville"), I propose to refer to this second type of research as an *ethnology of the Mediterranean*.²

In the second part of the paper, my focus will be somewhat different. I shall be looking at the uses of ethnological constructs in general and, more specifically, those of the Mediterranean as metaphors for state and national identity in the socialist and post-socialist Croatia. By doing this, I do not want to impute a certain purpose — nationalistic or political — to Croatian ethnologists, who, with rare exceptions, refrained after 1945 from political statements and explicit engagement in nation-building processes at both the Croatian and the Yugoslav level. Rather I want to examine whether Croatian ethnology has had a role in post-1945 national and state ideologies, or, in other words, to what extent the latter have made use of ethnological, particularly Mediterranean, constructs in the state and nation-building processes. My concern will thus be the political use of ethnological elaborations. This seems a legitimate pursuit for an ethnological inquiry of complex societies, which, as stated by Joel Halpern and Eugene Hammel, is led to reflect "on the role that social science plays in national ideologies and the ways in which the current state and development of social science reflect other cultural states and processes" (1969:17).

Croatian ethnology *in* the Mediterranean

Much of Croatian ethnology — and research in the Mediterranean is no exception — has been descriptive, meticulously noting down minute details about peasant artifacts, tools, costume and customs. This is an ethnological tradition which, as in other central European ethnologies (Hofer 1969:312), is founded as a humanistic discipline, in close association with other humanities, designed to study "folk heritage of national cultures". Although the founder of Croatian ethnology and ideologist of the Croatian peasant movement at the beginning of the 20th c., Antun Radić (1868-1918), did not intend to build national culture

² See, among others, Boissevain 1977; Goddard et al 1994; Silverman 1997; Choron-Baix & Williams 1987.

exclusively on the basis of folk culture,³ to generations of ethnologists he handed down meticulous recording of the way of life of the peasants (while at the same time failing to develop a theoretical foundation for the new science that he is credited with having established). To later ethnologists pedantic description of peasant culture became an end in itself: knowing about one's own past and traditions became the rationale of ethnographic work. Thus the process that Hofer identified in central European ethnographies was under way in the Croatian one: research was permeated with the conviction "that all that had been studied (ballads, tools, religious ideas, systems of land tenure) were of interest and value by themselves" (Hofer 1968:312). This opinion was not restricted to amateur local patriots who, thanks to Radić, suddenly realized that their culture had value, but was also shared by most ethnologists, and has lingered to this day.

This had repercussions on the way they approached the study of peasant culture, in the Adriatic and elsewhere in Croatia. Although still only in the framework of ethnology in the Mediterranean, attention should be drawn to the complex monographs dating from the beginning of the 20th c., based on Radić's questionnaire. They provide the contemporary researcher with a host of material for the study of modern ethnological issues (see Čapo Žmegač 1997a). However, this is not the place to give a review of the entire body of research on the Adriatic conducted in Croatian ethnology. In this paper I shall be limiting myself to a summary of the more recent monographs devoted to the Adriatic.

To a certain extent, ethnographies done in the Mediterranean since the 1970s can be credited with some methodological and theoretical innovations.⁴ Yet it can be argued that, basically, they have not moved away from ethnographic inventories and descriptions characteristic of most of the ethnology in Croatia. Nor have they proposed a specific agenda for Mediterranean studies in Croatia. I shall present them cursorily using two thematically and methodologically representative examples. Both refer to the central Dalmatian region (the island of Brač and Zlarin). The two monographs present studies in folklore and ethnographic topics (folk music, dances, poetry, drama, customs, etc.).⁵ One monograph contains an introductory chapter with historical information on the studied region

³ His aim was to establish an equal place for it with the culture of the nobility and the bourgeoisie within national culture (cf. Čapo Žmegač 1997a).

⁴ Some texts based on the research in the Mediterranean discuss the status of data obtained through interviewing, express resistance to the understanding of folklore as a timeless phenomenon, and insist on dynamic understanding of customs, etc. (Rajković 1981; Milićević 1974/1975; Muraj 1981a; 1981b). Those methodological and theoretical insights were inaugurated in Croatian ethnological research in general during the 1970s.

⁵ Actually folklore is given more space than ethnology, which can be explained by the fact that both projects had been carried out by the Institute of Folk Art, later the Institute for Folklore Research, today the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, which was originally founded as a centre for ethnomusicological research. See *Narodna umjetnost* 35/1 for texts on the Institute's history.

analyzed by a professional historian. The historical chapter has only general relation to ethnographic evidence presented in a later chapter and the authors of the ethnographic texts barely refer to it, mainly to establish historical precedent for a particular folk phenomenon. This is use of history of the type that John Davis identified in some of the early work on the Mediterranean (1977:240-45). Both monographs have contributions by a linguist on regional language characteristics, which, again, have little relevance for the ethnographies, but stand apart as independent studies with linguistic interest.

The ethnological studies contain two chapters: one is an "ethnographic survey" of traditions in the region under study (mainly of economic activities, types of settlement and housing, cuisine, costume);⁶ the second describes customs⁷ (yearly customs, life-cycle customs, sometimes customs springing from working activities, and the like). Whether it is a description of a tool used in olive oil production or of the course of a certain custom, the texts are usually devoted to detailed descriptions of artifacts or techniques of their use, or to a detailed presentation of the unfolding of the customs. Exceptionally, as in the work about the costume on the island of Zlarin, the author surveys historical sources and discusses influences that the costume had integrated during the centuries. Applying a well-known typology of Croatian peasant culture, which will be elaborated shortly, the discussion is contained within the framework given by Mediterranean and Dinaric influences on costume (Muraj 1981a).

In sum, those studies treat the Mediterranean as just another region that is worth ethnographic surveying according to an approach that had been characteristic of ethnological research elsewhere in Croatia. Generally they do not make an attempt to go beyond descriptions of particular Mediterranean localities, nor to conceptualize a specific field of Mediterranean inquiry. Their aim is exhausted by knowing about one's own traditions.⁸ Therefore they remain instances of an *ethnology in the Mediterranean*.

⁶ In one case the latter theme was set apart in a separate chapter (Muraj 1981a).

⁷ Within the Institute, customs were perceived as the loci of folklore (Rihtman-Auguštin & Muraj 1998:115). Though an important step towards a dynamic understanding of folklore had been made in the 1970s and 1980s, the perception of customs as autonomous and reified folklore phenomena persisted until the 1990s when first attempts appear which bring them back into social and political context, treating them as symbolic codes used in group constitution, as indicators of social relationships among different social groups and the like.

⁸ This is explicitly stated in the monograph devoted to the island of Zlarin. The research was conducted at the instigation of the *Society for the Advancement of Zlarin*, which organized the collection and notation of the memories of the older inhabitants of Zlarin. Ethnologists subordinated their research to that need "for nurture or at least knowledge and positive evaluation of their own cultural tradition" (Rajković 1981:223).

However, some scholars went beyond micro-descriptions and engaged in comparative ethnological research. They can be credited with the establishment of a separate field of study in Croatian ethnology, a kind of *ethnology of the Mediterranean*. In the next section I shall present three scientific constructs of the Mediterranean and discuss their political connotations and influences.

Competing local scientific constructs of the Mediterranean

1. **Milovan Gavazzi** (1895-1992), Slavic scholar and ethnologist, long-term professor at the Department of Ethnology in Zagreb, considered by many ethnologists to be the central figure of 20th c. Croatian ethnology and the founder of scholarly ethnological work in Croatia. His main contribution to ethnological research in Croatia covered the field of cultural and historical analysis of traditional rural culture. Underscoring cultural diversity in south-eastern Europe, he identified no less than twelve culture areas spreading through the territories of the former Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey (Gavazzi 1978a).⁹ His model distinguishes between the periphery and the centre of the Balkan peninsula. It posits that the inland Balkans might be "to a certain extent thought of as a uniform traditional cultural whole", while the peripheral areas are different and embraced by the Mediterranean, Alpine, Pannonian (or south Danubian) and Black Sea cultures (Gavazzi 1978b:57).

According to this construct, Croatia is a culturally heterogeneous area whose territory is divided among the Mediterranean (a narrow coastal strip and the islands); the Dinaric (stretching from the Adriatic hinterland into the central areas along the Dinaric Alps); and the Danubian or Pannonian culture zone (in the northern plain) (Gavazzi 1978a).¹⁰ Gavazzi defined culture areas as (dis)continuous zones given unity by identical natural conditions and traditions which give rise to a considerable number of shared cultural traits not found in neighbouring areas.¹¹ He never conceived of culture areas as territories with fixed borders: on the contrary, much of his work was devoted to showing their permeability allowing for penetration of culture items into adjacent areas and appearance of zones of

⁹ They are: the eastern-Danubian area, the Balkan area, the Thracian area, the Rodopi [Mountains] area, the Macedonian area, the Šop area, the Moravian area, the Dinaric area, the Danubian or Pannonian area, the eastern-Alpine area, the Mediterranean area, and the south-Albanian-Epirote-Pindus area.

¹⁰ While this piece, originally written in 1956 seems to be Gavazzi's first systematic statement on culture areas in south-eastern Europe, the "cultural-genetic" and "cultural-geographic" analyses by the same author were contained in some of his earliest work, thus announcing the tripartite structure of Croatian peasant culture (e.g. studies in 1928 and 1940). The 1928 piece is also an early example of Gavazzi's methodology which would dominate his work throughout his long career, profoundly marking the Croatian ethnology of the 20th c. (see Čapo Žmegač 1995).

¹¹ See my earlier articles (1991; 1995) for a discussion of Gavazzi's work.

hybrid cultures. Moreover, he posited that culture areas did not coincide with political, administrative, religious, linguistic or ethnic divisions. For example, the Dinaric culture area encompassed a vast territory of the former Yugoslavia, including parts of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo (Gavazzi 1978a:185).

In this scheme, two distinct culture areas — the Dinaric and the Mediterranean — meet and in bordering belts intermingle along the Eastern Adriatic coast. According to Gavazzi, what mostly distinguished the two areas was the economy, in itself an adaptation to ecological constraints: in the Dinaric cultural zone, the basic activity of the inhabitants was transhumant stock-raising, particularly sheep-raising in combination with grain farming. An abundance of woollen and leather clothing and easily movable objects are linked with this type of economy. Concomitant ethnographic traits of the area include wooden architecture, geometric ornaments, epic poetry etc. (Gavazzi 1978a:190-191). In contrast, the basic economic activities in the Adriatic culture area were fishing and the cultivation of olives, figs and grape-vines, while tillage was limited mainly to vegetables on small terrace-like plots. Sheep and goat-breeding was well developed and those animals gave certain characteristic products (items made from goatskin, wool). Further typical Mediterranean traits were stone architecture,¹² circular buildings used for temporary shelter, a typical Mediterranean distaff etc. (Gavazzi 1978a:193-4).

To this cultural-geographical analysis Gavazzi added a classification of culture items by their origin ("cultural-genetic analysis"). He clearly defined what were to be considered "old Mediterranean" traits in Croatian peasant culture: the cultivation of olives and grape-vines, stone architecture, circular shelter-type buildings, rolling wool by trampling with the feet, some beliefs (ibid.). He can thus be credited with the establishment of the first *ethnology of the Mediterranean* in Croatian ethnology. Though he insisted that culture areas were not rigidly bounded units, he contributed to the construct of the tripartite model of peasant culture in Croatia, and, along the Littoral, to the differentiation between a Mediterranean and a Dinaric cultural type. Gavazzi never discussed possible uses of that cultural opposition for identity construction of either Croats or Yugoslavs.

2. **Vera Stein Ehrlich** (1897-1980), psychologist and anthropologist trained at the University of California, Berkeley was in many respects an outstanding figure. Author of the first and only introduction into cultural anthropology in Yugoslavia, and of a classical work on family research, "The Family in Transition. A study of 300 Yugoslav Villages" published in Croatia in 1964 and by the Princeton University Press in 1966, this collaborator of Robert Lowie, taught social anthropology at the sociology department at the Zagreb University. However, she remained marginal to the mainstream Croatian ethnology, which in the 1960s and 1970s was

¹² For crop-storage, for livestock and tools, built in stone without mortar.

strongly opposing any association of local ethnology with Anglo-American anthropological research.

Helped by local teachers, in 1937 she began a large-scale survey on changes in the traditional peasant family in Yugoslavia (1971:26). In the centre of her interest were social and psychological aspects of the family: authority, conflict and rivalry, love and hate, intrafamilial groupings, rank of members and processes of transformation thereof. The author organized the gathered material by historical regions: Muslim Macedonia, Christian Macedonia, Muslim Bosnia, Christian Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia (ibid.:29-33). Actually she identified four regions in Croatia: the southwest (the mountainous region), the central (north of Zagreb), Slavonia (in the northeast), and the Littoral (which encompassed settlements located within five kilometres from the seashore). In the final presentation of the data, the first three regions were, without explanation, lumped together,¹³ while the Littoral was treated separately.

The author interpreted the differences obtained by regional grouping as instances of an evolution in family relations. Differential tradition in the sphere of family relations in particular regions was not sufficient to account for differences in family relations observed in Yugoslavia in the 1930s, which led the author to consider other variables such as the influences of shifting political systems (Venetian, Austrian, Ottoman), monetary economy (its onset, the speed and success of adoption, etc.) and religious affiliation (Muslim, Christian Orthodox, Christian Roman Catholic). An attempt to transpose regional differentiation (space distribution) onto a developmental sequence with varying degrees of "ancientness" (the term is the author's) of particular areas in the final analysis gave way to the conclusion that unilinear development from an "ancient" to a "modern" phase in family relations could not be predicted:

Our phases of development do not represent stages of development with a settled sequence but different types of transformation (of the patriarchal order). Then we are faced with two basically different types of adaptation to a monetary economy: one with pronounced disturbances in family balance and the other with preserved balance (ibid.:410).

The first characterized the mountainous hinterland in Croatia and was also found in Serbia. The second type was unique in the Yugoslav context and was found only along the Littoral (areas along the coast and on the islands), and in some features also in north-eastern Croatia. The specificity of the Littoral, according to the author, was due to its greater exposure to the West.

¹³ We can only speculate at her reasons for doing so. They might have been motivated by a desire for easier presentation of data, keeping the same level of analysis as for other parts of Yugoslavia, fitting into the evolutionary scheme proposed in her analysis...

Stein Ehrlich explicitly views the mountains in the hinterland of the Littoral as an obstacle to communication between the Littoral and the inland areas:

The East and West meet at the coastal markets, one sees *Školjan* or *Bodul* types (islanders) and Vlah (Wallach) types (mountain people). But it is always evident that the Littoral is more open towards the West than towards the East. It is separated from the hinterland by steep mountains which can be crossed in only a few places, with the passes frequently blocked during the winter. During World War II, too, the roads and railway connections were often impassable. Anyone who stands on the seashore can see that the connections with the West are stronger. (...) From many places it is easier to reach Italy than Herzegovina (ibid.:463).

Thus the geographical given — the mountains — is seen by the author as a hindrance to communication and cultural hybridization of the Littoral with the inland areas of Dinaric mountain range.

Referring to family relations, V. Stein Ehrlich establishes a cultural dichotomy between the Littoral and the inland areas and associates it with another more general division: when balanced and calm family relations characteristic of the narrow coastal region are contrasted with a "tumultuous reformulation" of the same in the hinterland, actually the West is being contrasted with the East. However, no value judgment is given to those two designations, nor does the author characterize as "more or less" Croatian either of the two cultural styles.

3. **Marijana** (1901-1987) and **Branimir Gušić** (1901-1975) are the authors of what might be called yet another locally constructed model of the Mediterranean. It has an apparently similar starting-point to the model proposed by Gavazzi, but its harnessing by B. Gušić into a certain nation-building programme has significantly altered its connotations.

M. Gušić was a historian, geographer and ethnologist, a long-time director of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, while her husband, B. Gušić, was a well-known anthropogeographer and doctor of medicine. Both identify two basic economic activities in the Littoral area, or, as they like to say, in the "old Mediterranean" in general: growing of olive trees and transhumant sheep-breeding. Very much as in her husband's account, semi-nomadic sheep-breeding is seen by M. Gušić as an older economic adaptation in the region, which was "on the eve of historical events" followed by the stabilization of settlement and the beginning of tillage (M. Gušić 1962:612). M. Gušić claims that those two so different "economic points of view" necessarily give rise to social opposition — the well-known constant dispute between peasants and their neighbours, shepherds from the hinterland. Nevertheless, continues the author, that opposition does not preclude a need for mutual knowing, so that a "tight symbiosis" is developed between the nomadic shepherds and the sedentary inhabitants of the Littoral (ibid.:594).

Basing his argument on the same type of "symbiotic" interpretation, B. Gušić argues for inclusion of the interior of the Balkan Peninsula (the Dinaric Mountains) in the Mediterranean region from prehistoric, pre-Indo-European times up to this day. Within that communicationally united space, the author sees a constant duality of two economic systems which are sometimes on the verge of conflict, yet always interdependent and influencing one another. The constant interaction of the sedentary populations in the Littoral with the nomadic circum-Mediterranean shepherds of the neighbouring mountainous regions was so strong, concludes the author, "that they formed a *uniform cultural and economic region* in the course of the historical development" (B. Gušić 1962:60, emphasis by J. Č. Ž.). Thus, B. Gušić argued that a large part of the former Yugoslav territories (south Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, parts of Serbia) were culturally and economically unified.

Unlike the authors presented earlier, B. Gušić made an explicit political and nation-building statement based on the above argument. He posited that "the centre of our State territory (speaking of the former Yugoslavia, comment by J. Č. Ž.) lies in the coastal regions which, by their geographic characteristics, are closely linked with the Adriatic, therefore making part of the Mediterranean culture and civilization", and made a plea for recognition of the Mediterranean as central to Yugoslav identity:

Enclosed as we are by the framework of Mediterranean regions, we —
— children of a pure atmosphere and clear colours of a warm southern sun and an ancient European civilization — are called upon to look for our *national* (= Yugoslav, comment by J. Č. Ž.) *affirmation in the creation of harmonious relations of the new society and the Mediterranean culture*, which is as old as the history of the human race itself (Gušić 1962:65, emphasis by J. Č. Ž.).

B. Gušić offered an interpretation which could have very well served unitary tendencies of the post-World War II Yugoslav state. Its appeal for all the Yugoslav peoples lay in Gušić's conviction that the "highlander" became "the preserver of the people's traditions", that he "remained the only bearer of liberty and resistance, of the Mediterranean tradition and spiritual creativeness" (ibid.:64-65). It could also have lain in the antiquity of the Mediterranean civilization and in its status as the founding European civilization. However, unlike in Greece, as has been depicted in masterly fashion by Michael Herzfeld (1982), this effort at establishing Mediterranean affiliation of a larger part of Yugoslav culture, and, by extension, of locating Yugoslav identity in the Mediterranean, remained a solitary scholarly attempt which was not harnessed to promote Yugoslav state identity. With all its appeal, Mediterranean-ness was an invented identity trait offering few grounds for self-identification to most Yugoslav citizens, and especially to Yugoslav politicians (see Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin's paper in this volume).

Disciplinary constructs and their echoes — — before the 1990s

The models that have been discussed vary along with the scientific profile and interest of their authors, while at the same time showing certain similarities. The Gavazzi and Gušić constructs are close in theoretical and methodological approach; both are related to a diffusionist type of historical cultural studies, more specifically to the culture area approach which places special emphasis on environmental considerations, and the search for origins and cultural layers. In contradistinction, Stein Ehrlich is more interested in the socio-psychological aspects of culture which she analyses in their economic context. In one way or another, all three perceive cultural specificity — highly dependent on economics — of the Littoral area *vis-à-vis* its immediate mountainous hinterland.

Of those three constructs only the one proposed by Gavazzi gained wider recognition in the scholarly community. Gavazzian ethnology was already well-established when Stein Ehrlich returned from the United States in the 1960s and presented her analysis of pre-World War II family relations. As has already been mentioned, her work was not considered ethnologically relevant by the mainstream ethnology of the time, so that the students of ethnology were not even superficially familiarized with it. The careers of M. and B. Gušić were equally marginal, at least with regard to the dominant ethnology which was represented by Gavazzi and Branimir Bratanić by virtue of their appointment at the central ethnological institution in the country — the Department of Ethnology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb.

Gavazzi's approach to peasant culture dominated the ethnological science for a long time (from the 1940s, if not earlier) and was not rivalled by other approaches until the 1970s and 1980s. Vjera Bonifačić has tried to account for the unwavering domination of Gavazzi's approach in Croatian ethnology, relating it to the author's authoritative and domineering posture (1996:254-258). Not only did Gavazzi's authority prevent most ethnologists from pursuing other research interests than those stated by him, it also limited theoretical discussion to the point that most students remained satisfied with descriptions of bygone traditions for their own sake (or for the sake of their "preservation"), refraining from questioning his tripartite model of Croatian culture, or his methodology. Besides the undeniable authority of the professor and his longevity, his research model did not collapse because it was *the* paradigm taught by the only ethnological chair in Croatia until the 1990s.

None of the local scientific constructs of Mediterranean culture has been used for inventing Croatian identity on the Mediterranean basis. Nor were they instrumental in building the Yugoslav state identity, in spite e.g. of B. Gušić's explicit statement pointing in that direction, and in spite of the relevant potential contained in Gavazzi's analysis of south-eastern European cultures. Although Gavazzi's concept and division of culture

areas, which cut across ethnic and republic boundaries of the former Yugoslavia, and his insistence on Slavic roots common to all Yugoslav ethnic groups, could have been useful in the realization of the Yugoslav national project, they have never been utilized to promote Yugoslav (meaning national and state) identity.

An underlying reason might be sought in the marginal status of ethnology in global society, and in the anti-peasant policies of the socialist regime¹⁴ (Supek 1988:17). A number of mutually dependent factors are responsible for its marginality. As shown by Lydia Sklevicky (1991), it is due to the lack of a consensus among ethnologists as to what constitutes the subject, the main concepts and methods of ethnology, to the lack of outer recognizability of ethnology, to the social impotence and political reticence of ethnologists, etc. In a word, in the late 1980s, Sklevicky gave a bleak diagnosis of Croatian ethnology as lacking the minimal characteristics of an established discipline.

It can be argued that the political factor had the most important role in the "invisibility" of ethnology in broader society. Throughout the socialist regime, the leading Croatian ethnologists were consciously distancing themselves from dominant politics and from social commentary in general. Rihtman-Auguštin argues that, since they did not engage in either criticism or support of the governing system, they enjoyed relative freedom in scientific work at the price of auto-censorship and low funding (1997:86). The withholding of support on the one hand, and the refusal of criticism of the state regime on the other, actually point to two things: that the ethnologists distanced themselves from the socialist regime and that they abhorred political declaration. Those two factors might help explain why Croatian ethnologists — led by Gavazzi and Bratanić — insisted for so long on studying peasant culture — which they called "folk" or "people's" culture — and, equally importantly, on studying *historical* peasant culture. Any other stance — a change in either the social group that was being examined or the theoretical model and method of research — could have led to asking questions relevant for the contemporary social and political order, and, by the same token, to the undesirable interference into politics. The insistence on studying the peasant and the archaic roots of their culture, either in a way which meticulously notes down forgotten artifacts of peasant traditional culture, or spells out hypotheses about their origin and diffusion, protected Croatian ethnologists from meddling in contemporary politics. This interpretation brings us to another hypothesis: was not the term "folk" or "people's" culture used as a shield for ethnologists working in a society whose ideology was hostile to their subject matter — the peasants? Could it be that those two favoured

¹⁴ Another reason might be sought in a certain spirit of anti-Mediterraneanism in Yugoslav state politics. That thesis opens up a whole new chapter and cannot be dealt with here (for an outline of the argument see Maroević 1995). Also, see D. Rihtman-Auguštin in this volume.

designations of the subject matter had nothing to do with the exaltation of peasant culture as *the* national culture, as is usually suggested by the critics of the use of the adjective "folk" or "people's" to denote the subject matter of ethnology? Gavazzi's use of the term "peasant culture" during the Fascist regime would speak in favour of that hypothesis.¹⁵

The insistence on studying historical peasant culture resulted in the ossification of the research paradigm, at least until the 1970s. In particular, Mediterranean research was not the privileged domain of the ethnological critique which started in Croatian ethnology in the 1970s. Therefore, Davis' judgment that "Mediterranean anthropology is an almost complete museum of research techniques" (1977:2) could have been applicable to Croatian Mediterranean research until recently, much more so than to general ethnology in the country.

The reliance of most ethnologists on the old paradigm — the study of historical peasant culture — had another consequence — the social marginalization and irrelevance of ethnology. Therefore, in the socialist period, mainstream Croatian ethnology seems not to have reflected social states and processes. In other words, it seems not to have been part of society's subjective ideology about itself, as would be expected from a social and/or humanistic science (Halpern & Hammel 1969:17). If Croatian ethnology was at all a reflection of the general social state and relations, it was a negative one: it insisted on studying peasant culture in the period when the dominant ideology would have preferred it to study worker's culture or folklore of the "people's liberation war" of the 1940s.¹⁶ The historical approach and rural focus could thus be interpreted as an escape from critical examination of social processes and involvement in contemporary politics. Within the discipline it meant stagnation, outside it, it meant virtually complete ignorance of its analyses, and, with that, the lack of its presence in the building of the state and socialist society.¹⁷ It is therefore not surprising that its writings about Mediterranean or other regions were not made instrumental in the creation of national — Croatian and/or Yugoslav — identity in the socialist period.

¹⁵ In a book which obviously had been meant to serve as a tool of state propaganda, in 1941 Gavazzi published a text which could well, in fact, have been published before and after the existence of the Fascist marionette state, in which, moreover, he replaced the syntagm "people's culture" by "peasant culture", ignoring the then-dominant theory about the Iranian origins of the Croats, and concentrating on the Slavic roots of rural culture and the various influences exerted upon it by other cultures (Rihtman-Auguštin 1997:89).

¹⁶ This topic has received only cursory treatment by Croatian ethnologists.

¹⁷ My focus in this paper is on the direct political use of ethnological models in the state and nation-building processes. There were other, more indirect ways in which ethnology has participated in the formation of local, regional and to a certain extent of national identity of the Croats, especially e. g. through the participation of its experts at folklore festivals both in pre- and post-World War II periods. They contributed to the establishment of the canon of authentic folk culture. Recently this topic has been receiving more attention by Croatian ethnologists.

In the 1990s

The status of ethnology and, with it, that of Mediterranean studies has not essentially changed since the breakdown of Yugoslavia and the communist system, in spite of significant transformations within the discipline. These changes are mainly seen in the orientations towards studying contemporary cultural processes, particularly those provoked by the war and the post-war situation, while the study of traditional culture continues mainly within the descriptive and diffusionistic approach inherited from Gavazzi. Today, ethnology tries to compel the interest of society by insisting on its contemporary relevance and not by reminding it of its old paradigms. That might explain why none of the constructs about the specific Mediterranean culture of the south of Croatia presented here have been used in political and public discussions in the 1990s, which, however, have been conducted precisely around the invention of appropriate identity markers of national (state) culture.

In many discussions, the Mediterranean is the preferred topic. The 1990s have witnessed a proliferation of books and journals predominantly written from the viewpoint of literary and art history, as well as a series of conferences and manifestations devoted to the Mediterranean.¹⁸ Most recently, much attention has been given to the presentation of Croatia as a maritime country at the World Exposition 1998 in Portugal.

The texts by literary critics and art historians affirm the Mediterranean component of Croatian culture, while, at the same time, not denying its place in Central Europe and the Balkans. Compared to the Balkan and central-European components, however, the Mediterranean one "significantly outweighs [them] proportionately" and is "the unavoidably dominant characteristic", as claimed by Tonko Maroević, a well-known art historian, poet and literary critic (1995:45). Non-ethnological constructs of the specificity of Mediterranean culture within global Croatian culture are thus similar to ethnological insights. Within the circum-Mediterranean area, they assert the opposition between the Mediterranean culture of the narrow coastal strip and the Dinaric culture — sometimes also referred to as Balkan culture — of the immediate hinterland, giving the latter less prominence in national culture.

This idea of cultural duality has a huge semantic potential: sometimes it refers to a simple economic opposition between the shepherds of the hinterland and the peasants of the Littoral; sometimes it is expressed as opposition between oral and written culture (with the implication, in contradistinction to the hinterland, that the Mediterranean has been the

¹⁸ E.g. the annual get-together in Split entitled "A Week of Literature with Mediterranean Themes" celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1998. Together with Culturelink /IMO Network, European House from Zagreb organized a conference on "The Mediterranean: Cultural Identity and Perspectives of Intercultural Dialogue" held in Dubrovnik in 1997, etc.

cradle of the great names of Croatian science, literature and art). Sometimes it invokes historical ethnic differences between the rural Slavic hinterland and the urban Romanised Littoral (Županov 1993).¹⁹ Today it is presented most of all as a mark of differentiation between the urban Littoral and the immediate rural hinterland, the opposition which during the war of the 1990s was on occasions conflated with the distinction between the predominantly ethnic Croatian Littoral and the predominantly ethnic Serbian hinterland. The opposition sometimes thrives as the difference between the West and the East. When the conflict with the Serbs escalated, an *orientalizing* tendency appeared for distancing from the presumably "eastern" heritage in Croatian culture — more or less corresponding to the Dinaric cultural model — accompanied by its all too easy attribution to the ethnic Serbian population in Croatia, and the entire former Yugoslavia. More recently, the opposition has enriched (or perhaps only revived) its virtually unlimited repertoire of meanings. Stepping outside the immediate Mediterranean context and outside the context of the demarcation with the Serbs, to most Croats it serves for *intra-ethnic* (*intra-national*) cultural and regional differentiation from the Croatian inhabitants of the hinterland, who are being identified with the Dinaric i.e. Balkan cultural model.

In political discourse, however, that dichotomy, which is practically inherent in all local constructs of national culture — academic and popular alike — is passed over in silence. The Balkans — or the Dinaric cultural model — are left out of the politicians' speeches on Croatian identity. Politicians refer only to the Mediterranean and, depending on the context, central-European "belonging" of Croatia. However, it could be argued that this reference to Mediterranean — and Central European — — Croatia is nothing more than a rhetorical device born out of a wish for a clear-cut demarcation from previous and possible future political alliances in the Balkans. I argue that it is not accompanied by a transparent and systematic state-level effort at constructing Croatian identity based on its Mediterranean location. Thus, the new state has an ambivalent relationship both with local cultural distinctions and with the founding of national identity on the Mediterranean.

Why is this so? Does this stance reflect the state in the Croatian political and economic arena which is dominated by the people from the hinterland, coming from just those areas that are culturally defined as Dinaric or Balkan? Or, does the Mediterranean cultural model play a less significant role in Croatian national life because it is turned towards the sea and not inland, where the centre of the state is located (cf. Županov 1993)?

¹⁹ "I remember when the Partisans entered Split, the Kozara *kolo* [circle dance] was danced on the Prokurative [Square]. Although I was a Partisan myself, I was also a Mediterranean, and I experienced that scene as cultural sacrilege. It seemed to me that, after many centuries, the Slavic Barbarians had finally managed to conquer the Byzantine Dalmatia" (Županov 1993:952).

Finally, does the ban on regional discourse in mainstream politics play a role in all this?

Due to the limitations of space I can only sketch an answer to those questions. To the elite in power, the project of national integration means, by definition, centralization and unification, with the exclusion of internal regionalisms and regionalizations (which, as we have seen, are inherent in all — ethnological and other — constructs of Croatian culture). From the dominant political perspective, supporting Mediterranean-ness means fragmentation and division of the supposedly monolithic Croatian corpus; it is immediately associated with the 19th c. discourses in Dalmatia which aimed at regional autonomy (see Maroević 1995). Therefore, it is potentially dangerous. Petar Šegedin, a well-known writer (1909-1998) asserted that a certain reticence towards nation-building based on Mediterranean identity should be understood in the light of the fact that Mediterranean-ness is still the basis of the regional identity which has not yet been included under the aegis of the national identity of the Croats. In other words, the Croats do not relate their Mediterranean-ness with their national but rather with their regional identity. It is precisely the regionalism of the Mediterranean identity that prevents the latter from becoming a feature of national identity, very likely also among local politicians who have not yet applied to Croatia a beneficial formula of "unity in diversity".²⁰ Instead, they would like to construct national identity as unity which does not admit diversity. It is understandable that such a stance immediately triggers regionalisms and a failure at the incorporation of regional identities in the national identity.

Whatever the reasons for the ambivalent affirmation of the Mediterranean in the national project of the 1990s, it certainly does not initiate discussions within ethnology about Mediterranean studies, making them lag behind even more after theoretical developments in ethnology at home and abroad, and, by the same token, relegating them to a kind of ethnology *in the Mediterranean*.

²⁰ I have used a similar formula — "Croatia, one and different" in another text (1997b).

A final note

The problem referred to at the beginning of the paper about the role that social and humanistic sciences play in national and state ideologies has informed this presentation of ethnological research done in the Eastern Adriatic and has led to a discussion of the status of ethnology in society. I have argued that the political restraint of ethnologists in the socialist period had consequences for the discipline itself as well as for Mediterranean studies — where it meant stagnation — and for the position of ethnology in the society — where it was practically ignored.

In the 1990s, the discipline has remained marginal and has failed to develop Mediterranean studies as a field in its own right (*ethnology of the Mediterranean*). It has equally failed to participate in the social arena by producing a commentary on the processes of nation-building in the new state. In no way has it related to the national project with its ambivalent affirmation of the Mediterranean aspect of Croatian culture, which is at variance with ethnological, literary and art-history constructs of the Mediterranean. If such a state of affairs continues, Mediterranean studies and ethnology in general will again be threatened with social marginality within the country.

I am not arguing in favour of a politicized or ideologized ethnology, for its dangers have so far been exposed in manifold contexts: my concern is for a modern ethnology which has a critical dialogue with the society within which it is found, and by the same token for a local ethnology which will have relevance for the Anglo-American, as well as the French and other anthropologies of the Mediterranean.

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ETNOLOGIJA, MEDITERANSKE STUDIJE I POLITIČKA SUZDRŽANOST U HRVATSKOJ Od mediteranskih modela do izgradnje nacije

SAŽETAK

Članak se bavi odnosima između mediteranskih studija, etnologije i političkih projekata, odnosno strategija izgradnje nacionalnoga identiteta u Hrvatskoj.

Autorica predlaže distinkciju između *etnologije na Mediteranu* i *etnologije Mediterana* i pokazuje kako je hrvatska etnologija koja se bavila Mediteranom bila uglavnom ograničena na tradicionalnu etnografiju hrvatskih mediteranskih krajeva te nije razvila zasebnu mediteransku problematiku, teze ili pojmove.

Nekoliko je autora ipak prakticiralo komparativnu etnografiju i razvili su koncept specifičnoga mediteranskog prostora: Milovan Gavazzi, Vera Stein Ehrlich, Marijana i Branimir Gušić.

Nakon što je predstavila njihove modele, autorica proučava odjek tih koncepcija u socijalističkom razdoblju u širem društvu, a posebice u invenciji nacionalnoga identiteta. S time u svezi propituje teze stranih antropologa, prema kojima je etnologija u južnoj i istočnoj Europi bila u službi izgradnje nacionalne kulture. Pokazuje kako je u drugoj Jugoslaviji hrvatska etnologija bila u političkoj oporbi, te da su etnolozi ustrajali na proučavanju povijesne narodne tj. seljačke kulture, a ne kako je bilo za očekivati radničke kulture ili folklor NOB-a. Marginalni status etnologije u globalnome društvu smatra posljedicom distanciranja etnologa od političkoga angažmana i zahtjeva dnevne politike, koji su bili presudni i za nekorištenje triju modela mediteranske Hrvatske u funkciji invencije hrvatskoga identiteta i u funkciji izgradnje jugoslavenskoga državnog identiteta.

Na kraju autorica prikazuje situaciju devedesetih godina u kojoj i nadalje nema uporabe etnoloških modela u društvenim diskusijama.

U zaključku pledira za kritičku etnologiju suvremenoga društva koja će toj disciplini osigurati važnije mjesto u hrvatskom društvu i u svjetskoj znanstvenoj zajednici.

Ključne riječi: etnologija, mediteranski studiji, izgradnja nacije