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## In memoriam **Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin** (1926. - 2002.)

The Croatian ethnology and cultural anthropology has suffered a heavy loss. Dunja Rihtman - Auguštin, Ph.D, an eminent scientist and public figure, passed away in her Zagreb home on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2002.

She was born on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1926 on the island of Sušak (Rijeka), where she attended the classics-program high school. Still a in her high school years she joined the anti-fascist movement. After the war, she took her degree in ethnology at the University of Zagreb and earned her doctor's degree at the Faculty for Political Sciences, Sociology and Journalism in Ljubljana. Her career began in the domain of journalism, until she joined the Institute of Economy in Zagreb and finally the Institute for Ethnology and Folkloristic, where she developed her significant ethnological and anthropological activity. For a number of years, Dunja Rihtman - Auguštin was the head of the Institute, manger of numerous scientific research projects and editor of the Institute publication "Narodna umjetnost" (Folk Art) and other scientific publications. Together with her staff, she organized a range of national and international conferences, such as the symposiums held within the projects "Ethnological Parallels between Croatia and Slovenia" and "Ethnographia Pannonica" and the conference on national art in ex-Yugoslavia that took place in the United States in 1976. She was a member of the committee for the preparation of the 12<sup>th</sup> congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) in Zagreb in 1988, taking active part also in the organization of the symposium "Folklore and the Historical Process" and the large-scale ethnographic exhibition "Magic of the Thread", which were arranged during this congress. As the representative of ex-Yugoslavia at he UNESCO conference on the protection of folklore (Paris, 1982), she was the first to initiate the computerization of the Croatian national culture and folklore material.

In 1988, Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin received the Republic award for scientific work.

For a number of years she chaired the Croatian Ethnological Society and was member of several international expert associations. In 1990 she was elected vice-chairwoman of Europe's International Society for Ethnology and Folkloristics. (SIEF).

She passed her research results and scientific discoveries also on to younger generations by participating in continuous post-graduate studies or as guest lecturer both in Croatia and at universities of Sienna, Rome, Basel, Warsaw, Krakow, Budapest and Ljubljana.

Her bibliography comprises an extensive range of some hundred studies and publications, several books, countless poignantly written newspaper articles. She was also known to the wider public through her frequent appearance in electronic media.

Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin belonged to the kind of scientists who never cease to rethink the essence of their science. Drawing on contemporary European and global ethnological and anthropological trends, she constantly re-examined the content of her scientific subject, the applicability of methods and the validity of the results achieved. Her critical mind rebelled against the fetters of a single theoretical orientation and did not allow her to use one methodology to settle down comfortably and work along its lines for an entire lifetime. She was incessantly looking for new horizons. Systematically tracking new movements in her field of expertise, she promptly applied them to the issues she was currently dealing with or informed her colleagues about them. Thanks to her intellectual flexibility, she sometimes gave up approaches she had adopted at an earlier stage, when they were still fresh, and went on searching. But her efforts were indeed opening new horizons in the Croatian ethnology and anthropology for the last forty years, which is precisely where the contribution of Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin is invaluable.

As early as in the 60's, she pointed out the relevance of the cultural-anthropological concept of values and was among the first to apply the structural analysis in the interpretation of ethnographic records of the Croatian rural society at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The results of this research were published in her book *Structure of the Traditional Thinking*.

In the 80's, she confronted Yugoslav ethnologists with contemporary theories of ethnicity and caused disturbance by her idea of ethnicity as a dynamic process and nationalism as a multi-layered phenomenon, to be regarded neither as a completely positive nor as an utterly negative social, cultural or political force. Reconsidering the category of tradition, she paid particular attention to the interrelation between tradition and innovation, focusing on the seemingly contradictory concept of the "invention of tradition", i.e. discovering the construction of tradition.

The shift of her research from the rural to urban agglomerations and suburban zones was also very significant. She ventured into discovering the urban everyday life, bringing awareness to the cultural and scientific meaning of the so-called banal, especially in her book *Ethnology of Our Everyday Life*. Within this new context, she began researching newspaper obituary notices as phenomena in which individual

human destinies and their reflections in the mass media get intertwined and permeate each other. In her analysis of obituary notices published in 1991 and 1992 for Croatian soldiers and other victims of the Croatian War of Independence, she dealt with the characteristics of mentality in times of war.

Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin is one of the ethnologists/anthropologists who equally tried to understand our tradition and reveal our contemporary. In her Book on Christmas, she showed the creative manifoldness of celebrating this deeply traditional holiday of the folk culture, the change of customs and adaptation of the celebration forms to the needs of a community. At the same time, being a direct witness to profound changes of the social system that took place in the entire Eastern Europe over the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, her interest was increasingly absorbed by phenomena of political anthropology. Her book *Streets of my City* deals with the research of political rituals and symbols that accompany them, interpreting them as means of identification in the shaping of the political identity and establishing political power. Finally, in her last book, *Ethnology and Ethno-Myth*, she critically tracks down the development of the Croatian ethnology in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, attempting to determine the extent to which ethnology itself has contributed to the construction of the national myth.

The extensive work of Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin encompasses a wide range of other subjects, reflecting her inquisitive spirit and inclination to the research of non-established topics. These traits were also noticed by the members of the Herder award jury. It was awarded to Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin in 1997 with the explanation that "...she laid the groundwork for modern research of the everyday culture in Croatia, provided decisive impetuses to the European ethnology and made a significant contribution through her work to the understanding between the East and the West." This award placed her indisputably among Europe's spiritual and intellectual elite.

With the demise of Dunja Rihtman Auguštin, the Croatian scientific community and cultural public has lost a person of a brilliant mind and immeasurable working energy, but, above all, a brave woman who fought even a terrible illness by writing, managing to finish her last text just before she passed away.

Prevela: Sanja Novak