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## ANTUN RADIĆ AND CONTEMPORARY ETHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH

### SUMMARY

The paper is a contribution to the evaluation of the Antun Radić's (1868-1918) place in Croatian ethnology, especially from the standpoint of the contemporaneity of his understanding of ethnographic method, ethnological subject matter, the relationship between ethnic group and culture, cultural relativism and culture change. The topics chosen for discussion do not exhaust various possibilities for considering Radić's work. Some have been chosen either because they have been influential or neglected in Croatian ethnology, some because they are at the forefront of anthropological inquiry today, some because they have not been adequately treated in previous critical evaluations. The interest of the entire discussion lies in the fact that Radić is considered to be the founder of Croatian ethnology.

Referring to his view of ethnographic method — which can be described as a request that insiders describe culture in vernacular — the author concludes that Radić was in a way a forerunner of contemporary postmodern ethnographers and their request that ethnographic texts be "cooperative texts jointly written by the informant(s) and the ethnographer", if possible in the vernacular. By underlying that the very subjectivity of data (more precisely their mixture of objectivity and subjectivity which arises from the identification of ethnographer and informant) makes them "most precious" and "most valuable" almost a hundred years ago, Radić expressed a most (post)modern idea. Unfortunately for Croatian ethnology, informants-ethnographers were later replaced by professional ethnologists, who neglected Radić's methodological advice that a culture

should be studied from the native's point of view, without, however, introducing theory in their descriptions.

Later ethnologists were not inspired by another of Radić's modern concerns — his definition of culture as "the way of life" and his insistence that culture be studied as a whole and not as bits and pieces; as meanings given by people to their lives and not as things. In his questionnaire however, with a heuristic aim in mind he divided culture into "bits and pieces", which was later misunderstood by Croatian ethnologists. The detail of his questionnaire influenced later ethnological descriptions, but later ethnologists did not pay attention to his quest that culture be studied in its entirety. It followed that post-Radić ethnology was no more an ethnology of living beings (people), but of objects (things). Thus, of the two tendencies that the author has identified in Radić's work — — positivist and interpretative — later ethnologists retained only the first. The interpretive has been reinvented in the sixties, but was not inspired by Radić.

The author further analyzes the way in which Radić used two critical concepts of ethnology — ethnic group and culture, concluding that we cannot get a firm conclusion concerning his treatment of these concepts. On the one hand, Radić takes culture to be a crucial marker of an ethnic group, an idea which is untenable, having taken into account more recent research on ethnic groups. On the other hand, and in contradistinction to the previous thesis, Radić also has a very modern thought that ethnic identity is subjective, a matter of decision, and not a given (cultural) fact.

Similar contradictions are found in his writings on cultural relativism and ethnocentrism. When he attests that all peoples have culture, that no culture is better or worse than any other, he is one of the first proponents of cultural relativism in Croatian ethnology. Yet, when he says that only elites create cultures, that there are cultural and non-cultural peoples and alike, then he is the proponent of ethnocentrism.

In spite of some acceptable elements, Radić's conception of culture change is today untenable. Although he has a mixture of a static and dynamic concept of culture, the static concept takes over abberating into the stand that a culture change entails a change in ethnic denomination (this thesis results from the thesis that culture determines ethnicity).

The author concludes that there are two aspects of Radić's work — the one that makes him our contemporary and the one that is entirely outdated. Unfortunately, it is rather his modern side that has remained unrecognized in Croatian ethnology.

Keywords: ethnology, postmodernity, Antun Radić