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ASSUMPTIONS FOR MODERN ETHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Summary

This paper intends to formulate a conceptual framework for dynamic ethnological research. The author, therefore, neither wished nor could afford to avoid a scientific critique of the concepts used by Yugoslav ethnologists in the past. This refers in particular to the concepts of 'folk culture' and 'folk life'. A comparison is thus made between the different approaches to the concept of culture (from Tylor's approach, through the joint statement by Kroeber and Parsons, to Murdock and Lévi-Strauss, and to the systemic and semantic approaches to culture). In agreement with the criticism of the concept of 'folk' (Volk) by some German ethnologists (H. Bausinger, I. Weber-Kellerman) and with the critical analysis of the concept of «folk literature» given by Maja Bošković-Stulli, the author expresses the view that 'folk' is a subjective category in ethnology (whose definition depends on the position taken by the one who defines it) which also remains undefined sociologically. Furthermore, the author rejects as unsuitable the concept of *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies) — a harmonious, conflict-free community — which, together with the concept of 'folk', has established deep roots in Radić's view of 'folk culture' and in the greater part of contemporary Yugoslav ethnology.

In the present state of her knowledge, the author is inclined to determine the ethnological conceptual framework on the basis of the structural and communicative definitions of culture. A model of dynamic ethnological research may be located in the domain of authentic groups, that is, groups of people who live, communicate and make decisions about their lives relying on very specific knowledge about all those whose fate they share (as long as they share it) in the group, and who resort to no intermediaries in their communication with others. This is not to say that written communication does not take place within such groups and that such groups, or individuals belonging to them, are necessarily isolated from the complex processes characteristic of society as a whole. It is precisely the impulses coming from the large communication systems, as well as from authority and from the manner in which power is exercised, together with feedback effects of specific groups upon global systems, that form the subject matter of ethnology.

Rejecting the romantic notion of 'folk', the author makes a case for parallel investigations of socio-cultural processes within certain social classes, strata and groups. She emphasizes the relevance of the analysis which will account for both levels of order, the ideally conceived order and the actually realized order, the norm and the reality, and their mutual relationship.

Permanent criticism of ethnological theory, both the one dating from earlier periods and the one developed at the present time, will enable us to correct the theory and each new correction will lead to new research. Encounters with

living people, their needs and desires, their values, their crises and conflicts, as well as with their creative achievements, represent the only valid test of ethnological theory. Since ethnology in Yugoslavia has until recently developed one-sidedly, in a neglect of theory, it would be anything but ideal if the new generation of ethnologists, in a period which cannot but be a reaction to the preceding period, developed theory without that test.

(Translated by Vladimir Ivir)