

TALKING WITH DUNJA

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For the past ten years I have shared my office at the Institute with, among other colleagues, dr. Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin. Our desks lean against one another, we sit across one another. In front of me there is a person of unusually lively spirit, whose observations are penetrating and reactions are keen. She likes to think aloud about the problems that preoccupy her. The talks in our office have been motivating in both directions, and very often productive for all of us.

One of our common professors had told us during his course on the history of ethnology that there were ethnologists whom we ask the facts, and there were ethnologists whom we approach for the light. Dunja is among the latter, the ones who continuously re-thought the very core of our science. Supported by current European and world-wide ethnological/anthropological tendencies, she questioned the substance and scope of their subject, the applicability of their methods and the validity of the gained results all the time. Her critical mind did not allow her to limit herself within one theoretical orientation, to place herself within its methodology, and to spend her entire working days following it. She has always been searching -- and she still is -- for the new horizons. Following systematically different movements in our profession, she would immediately employ new approaches on the issues she was dealing

with at the time, or tell us about them. Thanks to her intellectual flexibility, sometimes she would later on renounce those -- new at the time -- approaches, and continue searching. Those efforts have brought light to Croatian ethnology/cultural anthropology during the last thirty years. To the ones who wanted to see it.

During the past couple of days, Dunja has started to clean up her desk in our office at the Institute because of her retirement. This became the stimulus for yet another of our talks. This time we are trying to look back as well, instead of talking only about the current topics brought to us by everyday life, a kind of talk Dunja is especially inclined to. We are discussing some of the steps of Dunja's road and their meaning, the way my collocutor is seeing them now. Of course, this kind of talk has to start at the very beginning. Therefore, although Dunja's intellectual (and personal) habitus is everything but ordinary, I cannot avoid an ordinary, conventional question:

• What made you choose ethnology/cultural anthropology as your profession? What did a young person in post-WWII-period, at the beginning of socialist regime in her country, expect from studying this science? Was it a random choice or well-considered decision with articulated expectations?

I have not finished my high-school education regularly. I was attending the sixth grade of grammar school (grammar school lasted for eight years, and it started after completing the fourth grade of elementary school) when, on 11th February 1943 I was arrested by the Italian *carabinieri* - the gendarmes. I was arrested together with a group of young anti-fascists from Sušak, among whom I was the youngest.

For me, at the age of sixteen, prison was a powerful life experience. Actually, I was handling it rather fine, but I met women whom I had not had a chance to meet before in my middle-class urban surrounding, the suffering that I had not known before, the filth and bad lodging that took time to get used to -- I had to think hard and improvise to gain the minimum of hygiene. I saw that, besides a peaceful and kind, well-mannered, urban world in which I had lived and for which I had been raised, there were also different worlds -- primarily the world of violence and rudeness, and then worlds of misery and suffering. As we would put it today -- others.

I spent about six months in Italian prison. Then, after some interventions (luckily enough, the Italian occupation police and judicial system could be bribed) I was set free. In January 1944 I was again arrested, this time by the German *Special-Dienst* (because by then Quarner

Bay was under the Germans). I managed to get out of prison similarly as the previous time, and I joined the anti-fascist movement of Croatian Litoral. I held meetings with the young people in the villages of Grobničko polje and the ones above the town of Bakar, I spent time and slept in peasant houses. Peasant families shared their poor meals with me. They liked me staying at their houses, because they knew I was not armed and therefore I was not jeopardizing them. I had my handwork in every house that I had been visiting regularly -- I used to knit, sitting in the kitchen and talking to my hosts.

And it were some other, different people, the people I had not known before.

That is why I studied ethnology. I thought that I could learn more about the people that I had discovered during the war. It was a kind of a romantic expectation, and this romanticism covered primarily the social values.

• You studied within the framework of the Zagreb ethnological school of that time, represented by professors Milovan Gavazzi and Branimir Bratanić. It was dominated by cultural-historical theoretical orientation. I suppose this is the root of your continuous rethinking of the theory of our science. In your later work, you have explicitly distanced yourself from the cultural-historical ethnology. You emphasized, among other things, that it was deeply enrooted in studying narod the folk, and that, at the same time, it had not clearly defined its subject. What are your basic complaints, in what way did you perceive the term narod -- folk or people?

The ethnology of Gavazzi and Bratanić was not exactly what I was hoping for, but it offered some other, unexpected knowledge. For example, I tried to learn all the types of distaff and their spreading, although I never managed to memorize all of the parts of the loom, for which one could fail on a Gavazzi's exam. I was lucky, I was not asked this question.

Besides the positive knowledge on the Croatian popular culture (it seems to me that today's students of ethnology are not obliged to obtain this positive knowledge; I think it is a pity), the department also offered certain knowledge on non-European cultures and directly or implicitly introduced cultural relativism as appreciation of deep sense of each individual culture -- the criteria of one culture should not be used to judge another culture. The spreading, origin and old-age of phenomena did not make an impact on me, although there is a certain charm within the cultural-historical research (or perhaps the invention) of historical

substrata. For me, the thinking about the culture itself was a greater impulse.

Gavazzi and Bratanić dictated their lectures. As I got ill during my studying and spent several years laying ill in bed, I had a chance not to learn from those notes, but to read the books that they were quoting. I was studying older ethnological readings in German that was recommended by the professors, but I soon realized that the Anglo-Saxon anthropological readings offer interesting, unknown theoretical approaches I was attracted to.

Considering the question about my distance from the Croatian cultural-historical ethnology, I would say that it was more of a critique of this ethnology. My critique was inspired by my co-work with two very different scientists which I appreciate very much even today. First, during the early 1960s, the sociologist Josip Županov from the Institute of Economy in Zagreb, who was a spokesman for a new, until then in socialism not recognized sociology, asked me to research values, i.e., a cultural-anthropological category. At that time, I was talking to Vera Stein Erlich (the author of "Porodica u transformaciji" [Family in Transformation], a book well-known also outside of former Yugoslavia) about what ethnology and cultural anthropology here should look like. I also remember a conversation with professor Rudolf Bičanić, a well-known economist and the author of "Kako živi narod" [How the People Live. Life in the Passive Regions (Peasant Life in Southeastern Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Yugoslavia in 1935), eds. J. M. Halpern, Elinor Despalatović, Amherst 1981], a book important for ethnology as well. He told me about his encounters with American scientists and about the anthropologists who do not deal only with history and cultural history, but also with people in present time.

The second important impulse came from Maja Bošković-Stulli, our most significant folklore researcher, who encouraged me to replace her at the position of the director of the Institute of Folk Art, as it was called at the time. Her folklore research offered new insights into the research of tradition. Besides, she drew my attention to the German critical ethnology and authors such as Hermann Bausinger, Ingeborg Weber Kellermann and Ina Maria Greverus. Although we usually think that small national ethnologies became modernized before their folklore research, here it was the other way round. The main reason for this were the pioneer research of oral literature of Maja Bošković-Stulli, but also the approach of Olinko Delorko (the approach that was close to the one of Benedetto Croce) a poet and a researcher of oral literature, and original, although sometimes a little dishevelled observations of a writer and the Institute's member Miko Bonifačić-Rožin.

I immediately accepted the Tübingen, for that time very radical, sixty-eight critique of *Volkskunde* and its subject, the more or less mythical folk, i.e., of all what Bausinger would have later on called "dancing peasants". It seemed justified to try not to view a *folk* in a romantic way, not to neglect the complexity of social structure when researching culture, and not to single out the phenomena that ethnology deals with from their cultural, social and at the same time historical context. At that time, the notion that a culture does not comprise only the harmonious relationships among people, but is also full of competitive values and conflicts, and that ethnology cannot afford the luxury of neglecting it started to emerge.

• *Speaking of the category of narod - folk, what can one think of the more and more expressed ethnic and national issues that imposed themselves during the last decade, both within the context of world-wide social and political changes, and within the context of the war in Croatia and former Yugoslavia?*

Numerous eminent scientists both from here and from abroad have written and talked about nationalism as an outgrown phenomenon that belongs to the nineteenth century. On the other hand, state and ideological system of former Yugoslavia wanted to erase national identities; all of us in Croatia -- not only the ones who are explicitly nationalistically oriented -- have felt this pressure growing. That is the reason why many of us were not surprised when the crises began. Still, ethnology was not ready for all those national or ethnic clashes; our science had simply not dealt with that. It was not only ethnology's oversight -- it happened in sociology as well. We avoided such themes; it was dangerous to deal with them within a fieldwork. Nevertheless, this was not the only reason. I would say that ethnology was always interested in similarities by its definition. We have many data showing the similarities of the ethnographic phenomena of Croatian national culture with the equivalent phenomena of other Slavic, Balkan, European and even, let us say, Caucasian peoples. Jasna Čapo* noted this several years ago -- we know very little about the differences between ethnic groups, between culture of a Croatian and a neighbouring Serbian village... What differentiates us, and does anything really differentiate us on the level of popular culture?

That was how the ethnologists of former Yugoslavia failed to get acquainted with the modern theories of ethnicity, still leaning on the romantic idea of the nation, and not wanting to enter the politically

* In her paper "Croatian Ethnology, The Science of Peoples or the Science of Culture?" published in *Studia ethnologica*, Vol. 3, Zagreb 1991, pp. 17–25.

sensitive field of research. Those modern theories re-think the dynamics of ethnicity very differently, starting from the 1969 and the well-known Barth's introductory paper in the book on ethnic groups and their boundaries. Slavko Kremenšek, a professor of ethnology in Ljubljana, the leading Slovene ethnologist of the time, talked me into presenting those new theories in a round table discussion at the first and only common congress of Yugoslav ethnologists and folklorists in Rogaška Slatina in 1983. There was no response. Many have still believed in the eternity and unchangeability of nation, and folk culture (or, the perceived model of folk culture) was -- and perhaps still is -- considered to be a genuine transmitter of the symbols of a nation.

Therefore contemporary cultural anthropology is starting to comprehend that the ethnicity is a dynamic process, and that not even nations or states are defined once and for all, and that the individual identities change and define time after time. It seems to me that this comprehension was also influenced by the bitter experiences of inter-ethnic clashes in former Yugoslavia. And finally, they realize that the nationalism itself is a manifold phenomenon that cannot be discussed as absolutely positive or absolutely negative social, cultural or political determinant. Besides that, nowadays it is very clear that the political structures largely manipulate the simple, I would even say noble human feeling of belonging to a nation.

• Culture, together with folk or people, is one of the basic ethnological categories. You noted the existence of different aspects of culturological research, that can be ethnological, cultural anthropological, social anthropological. We were employing terms such as cognitive, symbolic and structural anthropology. Let us stick to the last one, the one that spoke about the parallel existence of abstract structures and concrete facts. This presumption has inspired the comprehension of values of a society or a human group in order to interpret a culture from the culture itself. You dealt with value research; after all, you named your dissertation "Economic value orientations and models of decision making in the traditional socio-cultural system". You have experienced the application of structural analysis of culture. To what extent was this approach fruitful and what was the result of your work?

When you start the adventure, or, to be more realistic, the apprenticeship of a scientific research, you have to follow some rules. These rules are often limiting, because they impose certain type of language, style, and topics that are advisable and that are not advisable to deal with. Frankly speaking, a researcher's workshop also has to follow the *fashion* trends. Nowadays, new theories and their *languages* enter

anthropology every couple of years. You are supposed to recognize and master them. But speaking of structural anthropology, it really was a challenge. The Zagreb linguistic circle had a number of lectures and discussions on structuralism, I think it was back in 1971. Maja Bošković-Stulli talked me into presenting Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology. I have worked hard, but I was also glad to do it, because at the same time when the world was excited about and inspired with Lévi-Strauss's ideas, our ethnological department was still restfully dealing with its old methods and topics: diffusion, continuity, cartography, and ploughs. I shall make a digression now -- I found out something quite paradoxical much later, namely, that the circles surrounding Lévi-Strauss supposedly considered Bratanić's study on ploughs to be structuralist. On the other hand I thought at the time that such approaches were an obstacle for modernization of ethnology and for its theoretical foundation.

I took over the value theory from Kroeber's and Kluckhohn's anthropology at the time. However, this theory pre-supposed the harmony of values and I have noticed -- in real life and in monographs on folk life, composed following the Questionnaire written by Antun Radić in 1897 -- -- the competition and clashes between the values, as well as the conflict situations. I noticed -- and perhaps it was a female, practical intuition -- -- that people (not only the ones close to me but also the collocutors of the researchers of folk culture and the writers of materials on folk life) speak and want one thing and do something else. Besides that, I saw that the ideologies offer their more or less wonderful ideas which, however, materialize differently. Besides constructing oppositions and structures, besides comprehending the ethnological research as *bricolage*, reading Lévi-Strauss I found an idea, that is not originally his, about the co-existence of *ordre conçu* and *ordre vécu*, the imagined and the real. This idea was accepted by contemporary anthropological theories as well, but they express it differently. However, it seems to me that in an ethnoanthropological research it is important always to bear in mind the existence of the real and the imagined and their mutual relation, not only in life but in one's own ethnological workshop.

The work that you are referring to is my doctoral thesis. Its starting point was the hypothesis that I shall find elegant models of *value orientations*, as Kluckhohn called them, in the existing materials on folk life, and that I shall be able to establish a firm system of thinking that influenced the decisions and economic behaviour of our peasant society, and that inhibited the socialist project of the modernization of society.

Instead, it came out that individual researchers have described a harmonious picture of the functioning of communal families - *zadrugas* but at the same time they offered the information (or the information

crept into their writings) about how those family communities had lead their everyday life not always paying attention to their *ideology*. I had some problems with the exam commission/board on the Faculty of Political Sciences and Journalism in Ljubljana. The board was composed only of sociologists, who were used always to hear that a research confirmed the starting hypothesis, and my problem was to prove that the hypothesis failed, and that it is not the case that people behave irrationally because of traditional values, but that economic and political system motivate them.

• *Among the basic ethnological categories that you thought about and re-questioned, is the concept of tradition. You wrote about cultural conflict and the valorization of tradition, about tradition and innovation, about the construction, the invention of tradition. You asked a (rhetoric) question whether it was necessary at all for ethnology to deal with history and tradition. Besides that, you deal with the structure of the traditional thought in one of your books. Can you say something more about this network of problems?*

I was inspired by the concept of tradition in different ways during different times. When I was advocating the critique of older ethnology and the revision of the term *narod* - folk I started to replace the expression *folk culture* with the expression *traditional culture*. I was wrong, because *traditional culture* was soon realized and stiffed by some ethnologists the same way as *folk culture* before that. After all, I do not think that there exists something that is only and unchangeably *traditional culture* and something that is significantly different, without tradition, without history, i.e., *contemporary culture*.

Nowadays, in 1990s, I am still interested in invention and construction of traditions. Dealing with the invention of traditions and detecting the construction of traditions was a challenge, especially at the times when such research exposed the authoritarian character of the socialist political and governing system. However, the times we are living in do not lack in neither the inventions nor the constructions of national, winning, heroic traditions and ceremonies. But it has all gone on since several decades. It has lately been intensified and thus it becomes gloomy and tiring. The invention of traditions is obviously not a single process, something that has begun to take place in Europe during the last two hundred years, as Eric Hobsbawm claims. It seems that people have always invented some of their new tradition, which is a product of human imagination, as my friend ethnoanthropologist Pietro Clemente, a professor in Siena and Rome, says. We exchanged our thoughts through letters. I replied that it is certainly true, also charming as a subject-matter,

but still tiring and even painful if it happens all the time during your life. You get tired of the constant shift of the state and other holidays, of the changing of the names of streets and towns, the city and village patrons, monuments, symbols. How to calm your own identity, where is your homeland, you have not moved and you have got a completely new address?!

• *The Croatian ethnological practice has arisen from the frameworks and principles of the Middle European Bauernkunde until the 1970s. This science tried to discover and recognize the authentic national values and symbols in studying the way of life and cultural heritage of the peasantry. However, by viewing culture as a communicative process it legalized the research of relationships (structures) and real processes in any social group. It enabled the shift of the researched area from -- until then the only possible research area -- rural environment to the urban agglomeration or suburban areas. This certainly imposed methodological questions -- how to make the research work in a heterogeneous conglomerate such as a city? What ethnological and anthropological methods to employ? What was their range and what was the result of the concrete research that you conducted in the Zagreb area during the 1970s?*

The shift from researching more or less imagined peasants towards researching the city did not happen only in Croatia. It was a result of the deconstruction of ethnological subject-matter of the time, provided the subject-matter were peasants. We, at the Institute of Folk Art -- as it was called at the time -- wanted to modernize ethnological and folkloristic paradigm during the 1970s. At one moment it seemed that the best thing to do was to revive the subject-matter. We wanted to show that narod - - people, and even folk, also live in the city, and that everyday urban culture of different social strata, including us as well, is worth researching. I was personally irritated by the despise for the kitsch of the everyday life. Some humanities scientists raged against that supposed kitsch. That was why I tried to point out the charm of popular culture, the cultural and scientific meaning of co-called banality. Besides, the communist ideologists tried to convert people by blaming them of accepting kitsch and unculture and thus being responsible for the socialist ideas not coming true. And basically it was all about being in control. Of course, our projects were neither dissident nor political, because introduction of the category of power, i.e., political relations in researching culture was not legitimate at the time in cultural anthropology and ethnology as well.

Nevertheless, we tried to show, to discover everyday life, we tried to distantiate it, as Ines Prica diagnoses today, as well as to discover

phenomena that were before that not given any legitimacy by ethnologists and folklorists. These were the issues of everyday urban story-telling, children's games and most of all the taboo issue of death. Actually, we have never conducted any urban research in the sense of urban ethnology or urban anthropology. We were more following the ideal of Roger D. Abrahams, the well-known American anthropologist, who claimed that if there is a human group that communicates directly, verbally, this group will sooner or later produce folklore.

So, we have not summoned any general knowledge on anthropology or ethnology of certain cities with this research, but it seems to me that we have successfully disturbed the existing ethnological and folklore paradigm. I am always sorry for the part of Croatian ethnology that was very critical about our novelties, that has not made their criticism public until almost today and so has not created a dialogue that would most certainly contribute to the identity of our profession.

• Contrary to sociology and the sciences close to sociology that study global processes, ethnology deals mostly with small human groups, even with individuals. You have noticed that there is a large space of interaction between the means of global social system that functions on the explicit level and implicit values cherished within spontaneous human groups. Overlapping and intermingling of "large" and "small" world, individual human destiny and their reflection in the mass media inspired you to study the phenomenon of obituaries. What have you found out?

When I first felt the call of folklore in newspapers obituaries, I realized that they can help me understand, or at least interpret, the relationship towards the death in our contemporary society, but also the social structure, the strength of family relations, the influence of tradition. French historians such as Ph. Aries and M. Vovelle helped assuring me that I was following the right direction, since they asserted that relationship towards death of the people of certain time period was a significant indicator of their mentality... Since the mid 1960s, when I started collecting the obituaries, and since 1976, when I published my first study of this topic, I have returned to the subject several times. My last paper based on obituaries was published in "Narodna umjetnost" in 1993. I tried to analyze obituaries published for the Croatian soldiers and other victims of the 1991/1992 war. I believe that in this paper I have shown certain characteristics of mentality that were not sufficiently perceived during the war. Namely, during the most violent war fightings, and especially now, when the time distance from the battles is constantly growing, the public discourse referring to people who were killed emphasized and insisted upon their heroism and sacrifice for the homeland. On the other hand, the

newspapers obituaries that are published by their family members mention their heroism much rarely. On the contrary, they cry because of the horror caused by deaths of their most beloved, they scream with loneliness and misery of the ones who survived, they witness that never and in no way will this humane and family loss be replaced and forgotten. As a matter of fact, the newspapers obituaries are talking about the horror of war as it is perceived on the individual and family levels and they are significantly different from the winning heroic rhetoric. This speech is different even today, when the military units and families commemorate the death of a soldier. The family memories often do not even make note of the late person being killed in war; one can often find that out from the obituary written by his military unit, published at the same page... So, it is about the other side of heroism.

• *The 1980s were marked by post modernism, that faced us with the discourse of the other. Having judged that the earlier work of an ethnographer consisted of clearly defined other (primitive, tribal, non-graphic, without history), the post modernists thought that ethnography gets new perspectives opened with the encounter of the other in relationship with ourselves. They were convinced that even ethnographers can observe themselves as the other. The radicalism of certain postmodernists, obvious in their judgment of ethnographic texts as unobjective cultural and historical truths, i.e., as fiction, has soon got its critiques. You said yourself that the post modernist theses have caused certain "draft" in our science. To what extent and in what way do you perceive them as effective and did they really drag anthropology out of crisis?*

The critique of postmodern ethnology seems more fruitful than postmodern ethnology itself. A generation of European ethnologists that has, as I have already stated, started a sort of deconstruction almost thirty years ago, met the postmodern critique very distantly. However, the criticism was using the language of the end of the century. Because of speaking the language of this decade it is close to young people. It seems that, besides the fact that the postmodern approach pointed out something very important, namely, that ethnology/ethnography is primarily a text. On the other hand, the critique of postmodern ethnography cast light on something different, that I also find critically important, and that is the fact that one cannot reject or ignore the natives' ethnological knowledge -- no matter what it says -- in the name of any anthropological authority. I enlist all the European past and present ethnological approaches in here. In that sense I think that both the postmodern critique in anthropology/ethnology

and its reactions have successfully blown through our way of thinking and our texts.

• *At the same time when the critiques of modern ethnology start to fight, and the postmodern criticism of cultural anthropology is a current issue, you start to deal with a very classical ethnological subject. Namely, you prepare "Knjiga o Božiću" [Christmas in Croatia], with -- concerning your later **procédé** -- an unexpected subtitle: "Ethnological Presentation of Christmas and Christmas Customs in the Croatian Folk Culture". A question imposes itself upon us: how come that you return to the expression **narodna** or **folk culture**, and is it now getting any new connotations? And another question: what new could be said about the network of the Christmas customs? Have you reached after the new enlightenment of the old subject-matter because of political processes that marked the late 1980s both in Croatia and in former Yugoslavia, and that you have expressly labeled as the conjunction of the populist movements, the revival of traditional symbols, the national myths and re-Christianization?*

The idea of "Knjiga o Božiću" [now in English translation as "Christmas in Croatia"] started to realize in autumn 1988, when I asked the postgraduate students of ethnology what current topic should contemporary ethnologists deal with. They did not answer my question, and I thought that ethnologists have the responsibility and the task of participation in the discussion on Christmas that were lead within many other polemics that were current at the time and that were announcing the end of existing political system in former Yugoslavia. I saw the disputing of public Christmas celebration as a violation of a human right. In an article in the political weekly "Danas", published at the time, I was discussing it with a governmental disputer of religion, and today's nation-constructing journalist Nenad Ivanković. I was advocating the human right of celebrating Christmas, not only because of its religious, but also because of its popular, folklore meaning. On the other hand, Croatian ethnology has had no published monograph about any of the phenomena of folk culture except Gavazzi's book "Godina dana hrvatskih narodnih običaja" [Croatian National Customs Throughout a Year]. The reason was not only the weakness of ethnology but also that any book on customs and rituals -- and all of the folk customs were connected with religious meanings -- would be difficult to publish in our earlier circumstances.

I returned to the concept of national culture after I have read with pleasure and later on translated (together with my son) book by Peter Burke on popular culture in early modern Europe. There the concept was historically argumented and situated. Phenomena of popular culture are

shown within the historical process, within the interrelationships between social strata and influences of high and popular culture through time.

I therefore tried to picture Christmas as the greatest holiday of Croatian national culture on basis of the existing materials describing this very culture, but also on basis of re-thinking individual customs and rituals, symbols and characters in ethno/anthropological readings. My intention was not to construct a model of the Croatian Christmas, but to show the creative manifoldness and polyphony of celebrating Christmas in different regions and places. Besides, I wanted to show all sorts of cultural as well as political influences in history and nowadays. I dared to acknowledge the status of folk custom to certain rituals and symbols that did not have this scientific status in Croatian ethnology before, because they have not Slavic or some other ancient historical pedigree but they are entirely modern products of imagination and market economy. At the same time, I tried to answer the questions about the national character of customs and folk culture, but also emphasize some phenomena from the "drawer filled with the multi-coloured materials describing customs". It is about the whole social and historical context of Christmas customs, then about the middle class Christmas (unnoticed in Croatian ethnology) and about the laughter and grotesque in popular culture.

• In autumn 1989, when the socialism calmly collapsed in the whole Eastern Europe, we could already hear the ominous beatings of the warrior drums. Soon after, we found ourselves in the everyday life of a war, surprised and confused by the cruel events, and with the shaken perception of our own society and culture. At that very time you started to deal with political ethnology much more intensely. You spoke about the limitations that a political system imposes upon science in your analysis of the socialist period, and you detected some entirely neglected research fields of Croatian ethnological practice. One of them was the research of mentality. Multinationality and multiculturalism that -- no matter how -- -- functioned in former Yugoslavia, are almost forever disturbed and thoroughly swept by "ethnic cleansing". It is the fact that has put us into a situation when we ask ourselves again about something as difficult to grasp as mentality. In one of yours recently published papers you wrestled with this delicate topic. In what way did you approach it and what could you conclude?

The decay of socialism (and the left ideas have fully inspired my young years and I have deluded myself for a long time -- as many other intellectuals -- that socialism can be improved), and then the war, started the dilemmas about the reach of ethnology, its oversights and its failures. What exactly should I deal with in order to be able to answer questions

about so bloody and cruel war in which yesterday's neighbours transformed into executioners? Is it caused by the Balkans mentality or by something else? That is why, in one of my latest papers, I tried to explore theories about mentality that were dominant here, such as the one written by Serbian ethnologist and anthropogeographer Jovan Cvijić. Today, I could say that in the last century and on the turn of the century both Croats and Serbs had had similar intergralist ideas about nation. However, the founding of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the Croatian integralism is shot down and repressed (and the trouble for modern Croatia is that it has waken up again), and Cvijić's (Serbian) became the Yugoslav state ideology together with the myth of the heroic mentality.

Mentality is a very complex topic to research and I think that anyone who has ever tried to explain it by using unimodel approaches was wrong. It seems to me that mentality has to be studied within the framework of historical, and basically political tendencies. It is also very significant to research the mentality of political elites that have power and force people to do the things people themselves might have never done.

• I would say that observing phenomena within the historical process is also a characteristic of your ethnological approach. In 1990/1991 we were put in the shoes of direct witnesses of dethronement of a political system and its replacement with different political system. At the time, you tried to recognize the forming of new political identity and founding of new political power by studying political rituals and symbols which follow them. The parallel analysis of "old" (socialist) and "new" (post-socialist) political rituals and symbols that you have conducted must have enabled you to have an insight into the trends of an alluring phenomena -- the "production" of history. Can you tell us more about that?

I have already said that so-called alluring phenomena as production of history and recognizing this production can occupy the researcher and offer critical insights. But speaking with my seventy-year-long life and ethnological experience, I might have been happier if I had lived in a world with less "alluring" phenomena.

• You are one of the ethno/anthropologists who tried to understand our tradition, and at the same time unveil our contemporary situation. You have great life experience; behind you, there is an almost half a century long active dealing with a profession that you have constantly re-thought. Therefore, there is a question that spontaneously imposes itself upon the end of our talk -- the question of further development of our

discipline. Should it be re-defined? Which scientific environment does it belong to? What could its social contributions look like? In a word, what are your visions?

Modern ethnology and modern anthropology share common tradition, i.e., several decades of discussing their own crises. We have also discussed crises in Croatian ethnology and some people have maliciously interpreted these discussions as the end of ethnology. And it was not at all about the end but about something that seems very good to me, and it is good. New generations of researchers have started to re-think our science, and they are doing it using their means. If I could give a piece of advice, I would say that it is more appropriate to re-think a scientific discipline in a dialogue with the forerunners, not neglecting or ignoring earlier knowledge a priori.

At the moment, I am most interested in the relations of power within the very cultural phenomena, in other words in political influence on cultural processes and phenomena. We have always known that there was an influence, but we have never written about it, nor have we studied it. On the other hand, political anthropology was founded within the frames of colonial, tribal anthropologies and for a long period of time it was believed that it was not relevant for more developed European societies and cultures. Domestic, European ethnologists, such as our M. Gavazzi and B. Bratanić, had their personal and political integrity. At the same time they were a part of the generation of intellectuals who had a firm view that one's own political attitudes were not allowed to be presented in ethnological papers. That was why they did not include the reflections on the relations of power in their research. Today, we know that it is not possible and that all of the author's attitudes, including the political ones, always find their way in his texts.

So, there are several levels of the problem. First, cultural phenomena are not autonomous from the bearers of power. It is obvious from the small communities in the "genuine" context, and from the relationships of small communities and global political systems. The political power cannot be understood without taking insight into symbols, rituals and ceremonies -- the ones the power constructs itself or the ones it only uses.

A pink future picture of the world, that was actually always offered by ethnology, from the picture of the anti-world and dancing peasants to the romantic construction of national symbols in last century, is in a way still present in our century, until today, when the horror of the war asked me/us a painful question about the folk and people with whom ethnologists spent their time, and whose creativity and culture they researched, not being able to anticipate the seamy side of their idyll and the power relations upon which, after all, everything depends.

There are no more eternal truths or unique schools of thought in modern sciences. That is why I cannot and I do not want to issue recipes. There are much more active (female) ethnologists in Croatia nowadays than when I started working. They study, research, publish and are very skilled in the theories that are here and that change. That is why I am expecting many different approaches, criticism, dialogues. As far as I am concerned, I shall research and write as much as I can -- I shall deal with political ethnology/anthropology in contemporary everyday life. Getting to know ethnological, i.e., anthropological theories has always been to me a search for a paradigm that is going to help me to interpret everyday life.

I shall conclude: Croatian ethnology has always regretted not being publicly acknowledged, for not being respected enough neither by political factors nor by general audience. I wonder whether it is necessary to bend with the wind of the political system the way we had to do the whole half of a century? Or whether cultural analysis, interpretation of culture, ethnographic writings have to criticize the power and the bearers of power. Dealing with political anthropology at the end of my career gives me the latter opportunity.

I am convinced that the expression "the end of my career" that you have just said, we both understand only in the administrative meaning. I deeply hope that your retirement will only do good to the continuation of your dealing with our science with the same intensity as always. The challenges are in front of you, and you yourself once told me that writing is your destiny. The results of your future work, re-thinking of new topics and the accompanying dilemmas are surely going to be an inspiration for our next talk. Until then, Dunja, I would like to thank you for this conversation, as well as for all the inspiration you have been giving us.

Zagreb, September/October 1996

(Translated by Sanja Kalapoš)

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* Zbog neujednačenosti akademskih titula, Uredništvo je odlučilo ne navoditi ih. The Editorial Board decided to omit the academic titles because of their unevenness.

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