

THE WAY OF LIFE - A HISTORICALLY CONDITIONED STRUCTURE

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A significant part of research practice of Slovene ethnology has been firmly tied with the term "way of life" for decades. Way of life has been discussed a lot, although still not enough. That is why it is not surprising that the expression "way of life" entered the publishing terminology and exists in non-professional writings.

This is basis of the hypothesis that says that way of life can be considered to be a more or less clear structure which appears and becomes real throughout different levels. "Way of life" is actually the common category that we need for genetical and structural re-thinking of social and historical process of development, both on the global, as well as on the so-called micro level.

At the conference of the Federation of Ethnological Associations of Yugoslavia¹ a decade and a half ago, I presented a paper on the *way of life* as an ethnological category with economic as well as political meaning. Among other things it has been ascertained at that time that Slovene ethnologists started using the term the *way of life* for practical reasons. The incorporation of new social strata and their everyday cultural phenomena

¹ Slavko Kremenšek, "Način življenja - etnološka kategorija z gospodarskim in političnim pomenom" [The Way of Life - An Ethnological Category of an Economic and Political Importance]. *Etnološki pregled* 18, Beograd 1982, pp. 57—60.

into the realms of ethnology called for a new definition of the research subject of ethnology. The then prevailing syntagms *folk culture* and *folk life* had become insufficient. In this situation, the term *the way of life* seemed the most useful of all. Since a similar situation occurred abroad as well, we accepted the term without any profound theoretical reflection. We were aware, however, that this would have to be undertaken sooner or later.

In the professional ethnological endeavours of today, the term *the way of life* still has the same validity it acquired over the last three decades. This is true of ethnological practice. Theoretically, there have already been certain objections, however vague, written more or less off-handedly, and without clearly defined intentions. This is why they cannot be accepted with adequate attention. The term *the way of life*, however, should be constantly followed on the theoretical level as well. After a critical survey of the terms such as *folk*, *folk culture*, and the definition of ethnology as a science about the history of the way of life,² and after the above-mentioned review of the economic and political meaning of ethnological research of the ways of life, some other surveys suited for this purpose have also been conducted and published. There has been a lengthy discussion about the genesis of the term *the way of life* in Slovene ethnology.³ In former Yugoslav ethnologies⁴ and elsewhere in Europe,⁵ the use of this term and its synonyms was examined (revised). Even more revealing is the insight into the understanding of the notion of *the way of life* in so-called social practice.⁶ For this purpose sporadically made notes from Slovene dailies and from other periodicals during the span of several years were mainly used. Aside from the term *the way of life* similar syntagms which are found more or less often in ethnological literature were considered as well. There is a number of these syntagms. Especially frequent terms are *life style*, *life structure*, *the way of life*, *everyday* and *everyday life*, also *life* (without an attribute), *life forms*, *life cycle*, *folk life*, *circumstances of life*, *culture and cultural structure*, *mentality and customs*, *patterns of behaviour*, and the like. The objective of this survey was to establish how far and into which fields extend the forms of socio-historical life which correspond to one of contemporary subject characteristics of ethnological science, what they denote and how great their importance is within the society.

² Angelos Baš, "O 'ljudstvu' in 'ljudskem' v slovenski etnologiji" [Of "Folk" in Slovene Ethnology]. *Pogledi na etnologijo*, Ljubljana 1978, pp. 67–115.

³ Slavko Kremenšek, *Etnološki razgledi in dileme* [Ethnological Prospects and Dilemmas], 2. Ljubljana 1985, pp. 102–167.

⁴ Slavko Kremenšek, *Etnološki razgledi in dileme*, 3. Ljubljana 1987, pp. 5–46.

⁵ Slavko Kremenšek, *Etnološki razgledi in dileme*, 4. Ljubljana 1990, 119. p.

⁶ Slavko Kremenšek, *Etnološki razgledi in dileme*, 3, pp. 47–146.

The above-mentioned notes, still being made, enable a certain systemization of notions which in non-professional publications have been labelled with the syntagm the way of life, or with one of the expressions which we assume is similar to it in one way or another. Such a survey also enables a hypothesis which maintains that the way of life is a more or less clearly expressed structure which appears or gains value on several different levels. Let us examine them closely.

Among the syntagms in which the term the way of life has its broadest meaning are contemporary or modern way of life, the way of life of the 20th century. The planetary or worldwide way of life has been mentioned as well. These terms have been linked with the process of industrialization, urbanization, and also with post-industrial society. Quite frequent is a critical relation towards the phenomena of the way of life on this level for which the so-called consumer way of life should be especially characteristic. Such life-styles which are more or less characteristic for the world at large are undoubtedly the result of the worldwide socio-historical developmental process.

Until recently, there have often been mentions of the capitalist and the socialist way of life, especially the so-called "American way of life" among the historically concrete variants of the contemporary way of life. In connection to this, one or the other revolution has been mentioned as well, their essential meaning being in the very radical change of the then practiced life-styles, mentalities, views, customs, etc. Socio-political activities aiming to change this or that way of life can be, of course, different. They remain the living traditions of the past historical constellations, and together with natural conditions influence more or less distinct regional ways of life, for instance the way of life of inhabitants of Central Europe, of the Mediterranean, or the ways of life of national or other political communities. Non-professional periodicals thus mentioned the Japanese, the Finnish, or the British way of life, for instance. These life-styles, of course, encompass a very broad circle of people whose life-styles differentiate within this circle. Among the most general are the agricultural and the urban life-styles. A special category is represented by townspeople with their own life-style. Since some national ethnologies in Europe especially stress the so-called world of "small" and "everyday" people who are most often termed the working-class, the way of life of this social category should not be overlooked either.

The above-mentioned life-styles are more or less innerly differentiated according to generations or gender. We should also consider differences between professional, regional, and local communities, between different towns, even between town districts. A unique way of life is evident in individual companies, factories, and institutions. Certain groups,

especially those with a generational character, purposely and intentionally cultivate a life-style different from the majority of the members of the same group. This is the basis of the so-called alternative subculture which usually changes quite rapidly. Alternatively, there are life-styles which remain more or less unchanged through long periods of time and are attached to tradition. The oldest such form can be found in monasteries or within certain social classes such as the nobility which might, to a limited extent, preserve its way of life even despite the loss of its social basis.

If we follow non-professional publications through a longer period of time, it is possible to find the term the way of life and its more or less distinctive synonyms in widely different connections. Aside from the already mentioned ones, there is also talk of "a healthy way of life", "the way of life of quality", of "active life-style," etc., and their opposites. One can read about "the female life-style," "the mechanized and technicalized life-style," "the Christian way of life," "an easy way of life," "a non-alcoholic life-style," a "secluded" and "monastic way of life", of an "inflationary life style," of "masochistic life-style," or even of an "utterly impossible and crazy way of life." Different articles speak about the way of life in connection to a number of things: yoga, religion, fitness, trumpery, violence, science and creativity, saving, mountain-climbing, suicide, rock, subculture, lies, competition, film production, sports, etc. The way of life is thus the *terminus technicus* for a number of different behavioral patterns, activities, and interests.

If it is possible to use the collected material as a relatively faithful reflection of the existing social context on the level of everyday life and everyday life-style of larger or smaller groups of inhabitants and individuals, we can see that the context encompassed in the term the way of life is unusually broad. In its hypothetical and rudimentary form this is the contemporary socio-historical context in its entirety, its macro as well as microlevel.

As has already been mentioned, the macrolevel concerns the contemporary or modern way of life brought about by the development of industry. This is the first form of life-style with a worldwide character. In the more developed countries of today, it is gradually being transformed into a post-industrial era. As far as the microlevel is concerned, the accumulated data I mentioned before essentially deals with only this life-style. There were, of course, other macrosystems before it, but they were regional and not worldwide. Since they are not the subject of this study, they are only briefly mentioned here, but "are of course just as interesting".

Within the frame of the way of life as a world historical system we deal with several global structures. Aside from the above-mentioned socio-

-political systems we have already referred to certain regionally conditioned ways of life and also those with national characteristics. Aside from the differences in the structure of life-styles which are the result of social systems, political and national aspects, the degree of general cultural development and the like, there are also structural differences such as those between, let us say, the rural and the urban way of life. These are noticeable in all of the mentioned systems and structures. Every country, every state and nation has its farmers and villagers, its townspeople and urban professionals. Indeed there are certain differences among them, also due to the fact that they are part of different life-styles existing as parallel structures. Structures intertwine, affect one another, supplant and support each other. They are in continuous motion and change all the time, within themselves as well as in relation to other structures. The tempo of these changes differs from one to another, of course. Some lose their importance, while others gain it at the same time. Only when we take into account all of these processes, when we learn about the most common concrete forms of life-styles on the microlevel, in smaller social units or on the level of a single individual, are we able to draw professional conclusions about the prevailing way of life and its main alternatives at any given moment. We do have to take into account the fact that the forms of life-styles of individuals are more or less immeasurable.

The terminological practice of periodicals which has formed the basis of this paper further supports the conviction that the term the way of life can be seen as the common denominator which is needed for a genetic or structural explanation of the socio-historical process of development. It seems that in this manner it is actually possible to surpass a positivistic treatment of socio-historical phenomena alongside each others, such as, for instance, politics alongside economy, then so-called culture, and so forth. Finally, it is also possible to denote as a way of life the socio-historical process as a whole.

The research of the way of life has been dealt with from different starting-points. It is of extreme importance for the ethnological point of view that it is possible to encompass with one single term the socio-historical process in its entirety, from one pole to the other, from its macro to its micro level. In this way ethnology organically links with other sciences without neglecting its own specific aspects. A characteristic of ethnological research is that ethnologists proceed with the research of the way of life on the so-called microlevel, on the level of everyday life. We usually stay within this framework as well. It is, of course, not forbidden to reach beyond it; this is only a matter of our professional possibilities.

NAČIN ŽIVOTA - POVIJEŠĆU UVJETOVANA STRUKTURA

SAŽETAK

Znatan dio istraživačke prakse u slovenskoj etnologiji već je nekoliko desetljeća tijesno povezan s pojmom "način života". O načinu se života raspravljalo mnogo, premda još uvijek ne i dovoljno. Stoga ne iznenađuje da se sintagma "način života" uvriježila i u publicističkoj terminologiji te zaživjela i u nestručnome tisku.

Na tim je temeljima nastala hipoteza da je pri načinu života moguće govoriti o manje-više jasnoj strukturi, koja se pojavljuje i ostvaruje na različitim razinama. "Način života" zapravo je onaj zajednički nazivnik koji nam je potreban za genetsko i strukturalno pojašnjavanje društveno-povijesnog razvojnog procesa, i na globalnoj i na tzv. mikro-razini.