

TWO SCIENTIFIC PARADIGMS IN CROATIAN ETHNOLOGY: ANTUN RADIĆ AND MILOVAN GAVAZZI

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On the basis of the ethnological work of two Croatian ethnologists - - Antun Radić and Milovan Gavazzi - the author gives a review of the major part of 20th century Croatian ethnology. While assessing Gavazzi's dominant paradigm as older, in Radić's opus she identifies certain elements as being in harmony with world-wide cultural anthropology in his era and in the second half of the 20th century. However, to a certain extent, only Radić's ethnographic canon is present in Croatian ethnology, with certain assumptions compatible with Gavazzi's approach.

I would like to refer to Croatian ethnology-ethnography¹ observing it with the help of the work of two significant Croatian ethnologists - Antun Radić (1868—1918) and Milovan Gavazzi (1895—1992). Although he was active at a later time, it is possible to identify the methods and theory of *older* Croatian ethnology in the works of Milovan Gavazzi; therefore in certain parts of the text I speak of it through the prism of an earlier, but, from today's perspectives, *more modern* approach by Antun Radić. Gavazzi's cultural-historic approach, although in fact presented already in the period between the two world wars, became the canon of ethnological research in Croatia during the second part of the 20th century. Moreover, even at the end of the 20th century, it dominates the teaching and research of the sole ethnological teaching institution in Croatia (at University of Zagreb).

While we really may speak in Gavazzi's case of a scientific paradigm, in the sense of Thomas Kuhn's definition, as "achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice", or, as "examples of actual scientific practice - examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together" which "provide models from which spring

¹ I shall be using the difference in the two terms which derives from their etymology. I take ethnography to mean the collection of data and the text which then results: ethnology is taken to mean ethnographic material illuminated by particular ethnological theory. It is not easy to define the difference between the two terms. All ethnography implies certain theory, while ethnological theory, on its part, is created on the basis of ethnography.

particular coherent traditions of scientific research " (1970:10), one could argue whether Radić was the founder of a particular ethnological paradigm. Namely, although he mentioned it in the introduction to his ethnographic questionnaire, Radić did not present an integral theoretical and methodical statement. Further, apart from that ethnographic guideline, no Radić's ethnological works exist in which the collected ethnographic material was analysed. Linked with these two reasons, Radić had no direct successors i.e. an ethnological paradigm parallel to Gavazzi's ethnology was not founded on Radić's work; one could perhaps speak only of Radić's ethnographic paradigm, which in certain elements shows itself to be very modern. Only some of his theoretical conceptions have thrived in Croatian ethnology, for example the theory of two cultures, rural and urban, and the concept of peasant culture as national culture.

Gavazzi's ethnological paradigm

Contemporary knowledge of Croatian peasant culture has its foundations in so-called *cultural-historic* research into the influences on peasant culture, both from various cultural spheres and ethnic groups and from the geographical environment. Milovan Gavazzi (1928; 1940; 1942) analysed the culture of the Croatian peasantry according to its spatial distribution and the influence which the ecological traits of an environment wield on culture, and according to the creation, age and origin of the cultural elements of which it is comprised. He called this first research *cultural-geographic*, and later research *cultural-genetic*. Both types of research are direct confirmation of the thesis on the plurality of culture and cultural strata within Croatian peasant culture. The first, namely, shows that different ecological traits in an environment result in the specific regional cultures within Croatian peasant culture (the so-called Pannonian culture in the north, Dinaric culture in mountainous regions in central and southern Croatia and Adriatic culture along the coast); the second that Croatian peasant culture, with the basic characteristics given to it by Old Slavic (Old Croatian) culture, is comprised of a series of elements which have penetrated into it throughout history from foreign cultural spheres.

Cultural areas, a term which Gavazzi adopted from the anthropological lexis of the discipline in the first half of the century (cf. Franz Boas, Clark Wissler), were defined as continuous or discontinuous regions with identical natural conditions in which different human communities (societies) live in a similar manner. They are established on the basis of a considerable number of *specific cultural elements* which are not present in neighbouring areas, or elements with a relatively significant role in the life of a specific population (Gavazzi 1978). The borders of such culturally determined areas are not

fixed: belts in which a number of areas or traditional cultures mingle appear on their outskirts.

For the sake of illustration, I will mention certain characteristics of one of the regional Croatian peasant cultures mentioned by Gavazzi (1988). Pannonian culture was characterised by an equal share in the economy being taken by grain farming (the cultivation of grains and cereals with large, heavy wooden plows) and by livestock raising (cattle). Linen and/or cotton fabrics prevailed in clothing, home-spun on horizontal weaving looms, and the costumes were roomy, often richly puckered, predominantly white, with woven or embroidered ornamentation.

In a similar way, Gavazzi described the traditional culture of the Croatian village in three ethnographic regions. He claimed that they differed because of specific ecological ("in the nature of these provinces themselves") and cultural-historic conditions ("in traditions old and new"). The description of each cultural region is limited mainly to isolated elements of so-called material culture, those which are in direct connection with the soil (economic activities and food, village houses, material from which costumes are made, etc.), while only passing mention is made of cultural traits from the sphere of so-called spiritual and social culture (customs, beliefs, music, dance, family, households etc.), which are not connected to ecological conditions but are the result of the more or less similar cultures and community of life of inhabitants of particular ecologically identical areas. The description does not encompass an entire series of elements of peasant culture in a specific region, but only those which confer to it *particular traits*, nor is any mention made of the internal dynamics or social factors in particular cultures. In addition, in mention of cultural elements in a spatial sense, their dynamisation in time is omitted; i.e. eventual changes which could also have influenced the alteration in cultural characteristics of a region in the past are overlooked.

By cultural-genetic analysis, Gavazzi carried out research into the cultural strata common to the three regional peasant cultures. Looking into the *origins* and *age* of cultural elements, he shows that, despite diversities linked to some ecological particularities, regional peasant cultures are connected by certain common cultural strata. In other words, he shows cultural strata which the peasant culture of the Croats comprises: Old Slavic and/or Old Croatian, Early Balkan, Early Mediterranean, Early Pannonian, Turkish-Oriental, Apennine, Alpine, Magyar, and urban (Gavazzi 1988).

According to Gavazzi, the Old Slavic (Old Croatian²) stratum predominates in Croatian peasant culture, imbuing the entire culture with Slavic traits, and this can be recognised in plant culture (and the accompanying devices and tools), in the processing of plant and animal fibres

² The author does not discuss the relationship between Old Croatian and Old Slavic culture (cf. Čapo 1991).

in textile-making (the horizontal loom, certain weaving techniques etc.), and customs associated with births, deaths, and weddings, and those linked with the time of year (painting of eggs in Spring, bonfires at the time of the Summer Solstice etc.).

Along with the dominant Slavic cultural stratum, a series of elements from other cultures are identified in Croatian peasant culture. Among others, the raising of sheep and goats and use of the upright loom - - elements of Dinaric regional culture - are of Early Balkan origin, or, in other words, cultural goods which the Croats adopted from cultures which existed in the Dinaric region before their settlement there³ (Gavazzi 1988).

Thus Gavazzi established that Croatian traditional peasant culture is comprised of a series of elements which filtered into it from various cultures, by either diffusion or acculturation and/or developed throughout the territory of diffusion of the Croatian ethnos, under the influence of different geographic factors. These elements are of diverse age and origin. Some are part of the Slavic heritage from the era of Slavic community; some are part of the pre-Slavic heritage encountered in the regions settled by the Croats; while some were adopted from neighbouring cultural spheres after the migrations. As well as being present in Croatian culture during various time spans, they were also spatially divergent: certain cultural influences were of regional significance, so that Mediterranean culture was crucial to the Adriatic variant of Croatian peasant culture, Pannonian to the northern (Pannonian) regional variant, Alpine to certain particular traits of Pannonian culture in the north-western part, and Early Balkan and Turkish-Oriental to the Dinaric culture.

Cultural-genetic research has shown that Croatian peasant culture is comprised of elements of diverse origin. Regardless of the (non)autochthonous nature of individual or even many of its elements, despite the lack of uniformity of that culture in various geographic zones demonstrated by cultural-geographic analysis, both Gavazzi and ethnologists who write in this paradigm consider that all those elements are part of Croatian culture: for them Croatian culture is the summation of all cultural traits which it comprises notwithstanding their origin or age, and in its peasant part it is determined as a Slavic culture with three regional cultures, each with a different participation by cultural elements adopted from non-Slavic cultures⁴.

³ In the Dinaric cultural zone, non-Slavic cultural elements even prevail over Slavic.

⁴ The view that a particular culture can be reduced to the sum of cultural traits is questioned when the culturalist perspective is abandoned for the social, that is when the main question becomes the construction of communities (at local, regional and national levels) whose feeling of belonging is not conterminous with cultural zones established by the culturalist approach (cf. Bromberger et al. 1989:140). Since it can be argued that Gavazzi's paradigm is a culturalist paradigm, and not one interested in "social construction" of reality, I proposed a

Gavazzi's cultural-historic paradigm which provided the foundation for the above brief analysis of Croatian peasant culture, is an important, and, as I have said, still widespread research tradition today in Croatian ethnology. In the Seventies some ethnologists, inspired by the work from abroad, adopted a critical stance towards it. There was particular criticism from the viewpoint of functional-structural and symbolic-interpretative paradigms, and within one and the other there have been major methodical critiques of ethnographic work such as has been established by that paradigm. Most recently, led by several ethnologists from the *Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research* (mostly by Ines Prica and Maja Povrzanović), postmodern ethnography has challenged both older ethnology and its critique.

Radić and new paradigms

Although Antun Radić appeared in Croatian ethnology thirty years earlier than Gavazzi, it is possible to find viewpoints in his opus which place him alongside later ethnological paradigms, which appeared initially in world anthropology at approximately the same time in some aspects of the activities of Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski⁵. As he preceded it, Radić could not have been a critic of Gavazzi's cultural-historic paradigm. From today's perspective, however, his work may serve for a critical reference to that ethnology. Unfortunately, because of the brief period of his activities and the fact that he did not leave a systematic theoretical statement, Radić did not found a separate ethnological paradigm - in Kuhn's sense - which would be parallel to that of Gavazzi. Nevertheless, we are able, in a certain measure, to speak of the *ethnographic paradigm* which he established.

To Radić, ethnology was a science about culture, and culture was defined as a manner of life ("how the people live") and the thinking of the people ("how the people think") (1897⁶). This concept is very similar to contemporary anthropological definitions of culture. By this definition, culture is rules for behaviour (in Radić, "how the people think") by which members of particular societies guide their activities and set the borders of proper and acceptable behaviour (in Radić, "how the people live"), and the

thesis that the ethnology of Gavazzi and his followers was rather a science about culture than a science about ethnic characteristics of culture, as is frequently claimed (Čapo 1991). Moreover there are grounds for an argument that it shared Barth's conception of the relationship between culture and ethnos: for Gavazzi (1928) wrote that an ethnic group is determined by the consciousness of belonging and not by some objective cultural traits (Čapo 1991). See also Rihtman-Auguštin for an argument that research into ethnos and ethnic relations was avoided during socialist regime (1992).

⁵ I have dealt at length with the "modern" aspects in Radić's work in another paper (1993).

⁶ All quotes from Radić can be found in *Sabrana djela dra Antuna Radića* (The Collected Works of Dr. Antun Radić), Zagreb, Seljačka sloga, 1936–38.

results of such activities (cf. Haviland 1990:30–32). Therefore, culture includes the system of thinking (ideas, values, knowledge and beliefs) by which people live and behave, followed by a system of norms and patterns of concrete behaviour and activities in society, with all the products of such activities (all material goods).

Radić's definition itself gives an inkling that his objective was not to show "individual", "interesting", or "strange" data from village life (cf. Radić 1887; 1899). He was against "the mechanical severance and grinding of material" (1897) which could ensue, as he said with irony, in a study titled "The Flea in Folk Poetry" (1987). Radić did not approve of the collection of isolated data on peasant culture because he conceived culture in an *integral* manner, as "the whole of a human's life" (1913). His plea was that the aspects of culture be studied in the *entire cultural context*; to use the lexis of anthropology, holistically, which is the basic premise of the functional-structural paradigms.

In addition, in dealing with the culture of the peasants, Radić dealt with social actors, and not only with the objects they had produced or which surrounded them: "Not merely the houses and similar things are described, rather inner life, thoughts... Not... only that which can be seen, but also that which can be felt..." (1898) said Radić, or even more explicitly: "what is important are not some *old crone spells* in which folklorists are so interested that in various descriptions of weddings they have drawn attention away from the *life* of the people" (Radić 1913, emphasis J. Č. Ž.). As Aleksandra Muraj remarked (1989:16), humankind and its way of life were the focus of Radić's attention; more precisely the peasants and their culture, in which Radić identified the standard-bearers of national Croatian culture⁷. In Radić's ethnographic questionnaire - *The Basis for Collection and Study of Material on Folk Life* (1897) - many questions are in relation to life. It seems as if no description of any part of the culture of the peasantry was an end in itself to Radić, not even the descriptions of material culture - they should have been the function of understanding the peasantry in the context of their entire way of life and thought (their culture).

⁷ The peasant population, identified with the "people" (in the national sense), was the basic subject of research, not only to Radić and Gavazzi, but also to the major part of Croatian ethnology, and, for that matter, to all European ethnologies initially and subsequently, right up until the Sixties when the research of culture of other social groups was introduced. On the trail of the main part of Croatian ethnology during 20th century, many Croatian ethnologists see a *differentia specifica* of that science in the study of peasant culture, and sometimes still qua national Croatian culture, to which is linked the imperative to study traditional (peasant) culture to the detriment of the study of its transformation and present state, and the culture of other social strata. Here I cannot enter into semantic analysis of the concepts of the peasant and the "people" in Croatian ethnology.

At least theoretically, Radić took an important step forward from mere positivistic enumeration of cultural facts, which many later Croatian ethnologists - mainly of the cultural-historic persuasion - did not manage to avoid. It can be argued that Radić joined two, later separated, tendencies in Croatian and world ethnology - the positivistic and the symbolic-interpretative⁸. According to Peacock (1986), in studying culture the positivistic perspective supports the look from afar as though culture was only a mass of objects which have to be isolated, described and categorised, and then compared with other similar objects in other cultures; if at all, people are present only as passive parts of that world. Bromberger (1987:71) commented that that kind of ethnology was characterized "par son substantivisme": its aim is to establish facts in their material appearance (morphology of objects, sequence of rituals, various texts found in rituals, myths, etc.), it takes those facts to represent the "real" world and is not concerned with incorporating them into their local context to look for endomeanings - that ethnology is reduced to inventories, catalogs of cultural items.

The symbolic-interpretative perspective, claims Peacock (1986), takes a closer look: it regards the entire *context* and the *meaning* which people give to the world in which they live as being more important than objects⁹. The culture described from that perspective is a world with few artefacts, because facts are not essential in themselves and separate from their context; what is important is the vision of the world and existence which the ethnologists interpret (cf. Peacock 1986).

I argue that Radić is akin to the symbolic-interpretative paradigm in the cultural anthropology of the second half of the 20th century. Radić joined it to the positivistic approach, endeavouring also to accumulate systematic information on Croatian peasant culture and to get to know it through descriptions in which people were present as interpreters, as communicators of meaning. In Radić, the positivistic tendency was, at least in his intentions, in the service of the interpretative, while in the later development of ethnology in Croatia they were not only separated, but the first prevailed, and the second was "discovered" once more only at the end of the Sixties and the beginning of the Seventies, this not being inspired by Radić.

In still another of his perceptions, Radić is our contemporary. In his demand that ethnography be noted down by participants in specific cultures, in the language of the region, one can recognise the demands of contemporary

⁸ I adopted the differentiation of the two perspectives from James Peacock (1986:68 — 75). To differentiate it from the more recent postmodern interpretative approach, I denote Peacock's interpretative perspective with the word symbolic.

⁹ Peacock calls the positivistic perspective in anthropology macro, and the interpretative the micro approach.

postmodern ethnographers for polyphonic ethnographic texts (cf. Clifford 1983; 1986). These claims are based on criticism of the dominant ethnographic canon of cultural anthropology which gives a monopoly over description of culture to researchers, usually foreigners in the culture they are researching. Almost a century prior to the similar scepticism of the postmodern ethnographer, Radić expressed his doubt that ethnologists coming from *other* (non-peasant) cultures are able to see the world as the peasants see it i.e. to understand it with the aid of the referential system of members of particular cultures (*emic viewpoint*). Therefore, he recommended that ethnographers should be educated people from the villages. The first Croatian ethnographers at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century were just that: in keeping with Radić's recommendation, they were participants in the cultures they described, or, as priests and teachers, direct observers of the culture from which they themselves had sprung. It could be said that Radić established practice similar to that of early American anthropology that informants note down data on their own culture (which was used, for example, by Franz Boas, cf. Marcus and Fischer 1986:71). Radić's research model - *The Basis for Collection and Study of Material on Folk Life* - was filled in by literate peasants, teachers or priests, while he edited collected material, augmenting, questioning, checking, and so on. As early as Radić's time and under his influence, ethnographic authority was thus established as the *voice of the participant* in the culture (ethnographers were members of the researched cultures, they were the informants).

In this light, it is understandable that in early Croatian ethnology, theory - analysis of collected material within a set theoretical framework - - did not usually accompany ethnographic descriptions. In this way, a dual reason was created for having no doubt in the representative nature of material collected according to the *Basis*. On the one hand, the *Basis* was so comprehensive that it made possible an insight into manifold aspects of life, and, on the other, the writers were in fact *insiders* in the cultures or communities about which they wrote. The description of an insider in the dialect and the detailed nature of the questions in the *Basis* obviate the possibility that some aspect of culture will not be adequately described, and the danger that something be overlooked or that only something exotic will be seen.

During the Twenties and Thirties of the 20th century, the informant-ethnographer was replaced by the professional ethnographer (Čulinović-Konstantinović 1979:78) who, with some exceptions, did not at the same time become a theoretician-ethnologist¹⁰. The duality of ethnographic and ethnological work was retained in Croatia, and almost up

¹⁰ See footnote 1 for the distinction which I make between ethnography/ethnographer and ethnology/ethnologist.

until the present day one finds separate ethnographic descriptions and ethnological (theoretical) analyses: on the one hand, ethnographic descriptions of aspects of culture in a village or region, and, on the other, cultural analyses i.e. interpretations of ethnographic descriptions (on the basis of any of the ethnological paradigms - frequently cultural-historic, more rarely structural, symbolic, recently postmodern). Indeed, even today, the tradition continues that amateur (better-educated) participants in the culture being described, note down material for various popular magazines or the media, often in the dialect of the place or region, as recommended by Radić¹¹.

Ethnographic method in older Croatian ethnology

The majority of ethnographers in Croatia, whether amateur or professional, were interested - and still are - in some old, "authentic" state of Croatian peasant culture, uncontaminated by contributions from "elevated" urban culture. This can be explained by the cultural-historic orientation of the majority of Croatian ethnologists, deriving from the activities of Milovan Gavazzi; and also from the influence of the Antun Radić's concept on the parallelism of the two cultures - rural (domestic, national culture) and urban (imported, foreign culture) - which, despite certain input from urban to rural culture, live almost completely separate lives. Searching for the past, ethnographers are not interested in the present, or more precisely, they are interested in it only to the extent in which it preserves some older cultural forms. Therefore, they rely on the sole possible research technique - *collection of oral statements about the past*, which results in a series of negative characteristics in the collected material, which was dealt with critically by Zorica Rajković as early as the Seventies (1974).

In Radić's time, however, the technique of ethnographic research was not limited to collecting oral statements, but also included observation, and as the writers were also often participants in the culture described, it can be said that in the Croatian ethnography of his time the technique of *participant observation* was being applied.

However, with time, Croatian ethnologists, heedful of the canon of research into "authentic" and "uncontaminated" culture, were more and more rarely participants in the cultures they were describing. In addition, from the second half of the 20th century, there were less possibilities for application of the observation technique in search for "authentic" culture, with growing reliance on oral statements from peasants about their cultural past. Oral statements slip away from more precise temporal denotation of cultural

¹¹ A conflict between ethnographer-amateur and ethnologist-specialist may ensue. The first considers that his ethnographic authority is not contestable because it is based on his unique position as a fieldworker having origin in the researched culture.

phenomena. They relate to some *indefinite past time* which creates the impression that some old, stable culture existed in the past, "some period in the past which can be taken as fixed and unique, whose discovery should be the aim of ethnologists" (Rajković 1974:131). Because of imprecise dating of certain cultural phenomena, descriptions of culture often compress differently dated time periods.

In the search for the past and the old, the impossibility of observation and the reliance on oral statements result in another characteristic of ethnographic material - its generalisation: the researcher's general questions receive "general answers, which are based on the total knowledge and experience of the informant, and not on a particular event" (Rajković 1974:132). A general description produces a *model* of a particular phenomenon but we do not know what proportion of the entire population of a place or region acted according to it. Additionally, described models are *normative* i.e. they are descriptions of what should have been, what it is desirable that there should be. Both traits are strikingly present in Croatian ethnographic material.

In their desire to find the old(est) stratum of Croatian peasant culture, Croatian ethnologists added the epithets "ancient" and "eternal" to Croatian peasant culture from the beginning of the 20th century. Although they do not have data available from the long period of its history, they assume its continuity over hundreds of years. The comprehension that the peasant culture of the first half of the 20th century does not represent some ancient state of Croatian peasant culture but merely one of its sections at a specific time, together with awareness that the oldest stratum of Croatian peasant culture does not exist, nor has it ever existed, has, up to the present day, been very slow in penetrating professional ethnological and lay ethnographic circles, and even more slow in penetrating wider public circles.

Linked with this, it is still proving difficult to gain acceptance for the fact that traditions ("cultural forms", cf. Radić) do not always come into being spontaneously and that they are not always deeply rooted in the past, but are rather the outcome of deliberate activities in a community, and change both form and function during what is, at first glance, a continuous centuries-long existence (Ben-Amos 1984; Hofer 1984; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). The perception that traditions are not only continuous transmission of contents and forms from the distant past into the present, but can sometimes be the result of conscious choice from, and (re)construction of the past, is also important for research into the Croatian peasant culture of the 19th and first half of the 20th century, as it was then that conscious efforts began to be made for preservation and creation of traditions. During the Twenties and the Thirties of 20th century, this was linked to the activities of *Seljačka Sloga (Peasant Concord)*, the cultural and educational organisation of the Croatian Peasant Party whose activities were inspired by Radić's work.

My objective in this text has not been to present systematically Croatian ethnology nor the ethnological work of Milovan Gavazzi and Antun Radić, but rather, by selection from their opus, to draw attention to the difference between the two paradigms on the one hand, and, on the other, to the possibility of identifying certain modern elements in Radić's approach. Unfortunately, the latter failed to find a place in Croatian ethnology. Instead, those elements from Radić's writings which have survived - - probably thanks to their similarity to the dominant Gavazzi paradigm - - are the least modern from today's perspective.

Together with today's postmodern ethnographers I share distancing from both Croatian ethnologies - both from the positivistic research of the ethnologists of the Gavazzi paradigm, which expends itself in enumerating "facts" and describing objects, and from the symbolic-interpretative orientation of Antun Radić and its, albeit limited, conviction that the ethnologist can identify himself with the world of the people he is observing, and interpret it from their perspective. But nevertheless, when I want to write about Croatian peasant culture at the beginning of the 20th century, I cannot avoid using their heritage, though each line, whether written in one or the other tradition, contains the implicit and explicit orientations and objectives of the writers. They have considerably determined which data and type of data was collected, and thus also determined the possibility of modern interpretation of such material.

(Translated by Nina H. Antoljak)

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