

The Notions of Custom, Habit, Rite/Ritual, Ceremony, Celebration, Festivity and Holiday in Yugoslav and Foreign Dictionaries, Encyclopedias and Resource Books

Summary

An overview of the notions of custom, habit, rite/ritual, ceremony, celebration, festivity and holiday encompasses parts of several linguistic and scientific traditions. Ethnological, philosophical and linguistic dictionaries are quoted, as are general, ethnological and sociological encyclopedias and resource books.

Definitions from the overview are grouped according to those characteristics that are stressed as essential or primary to the notion of custom and the other related terms as mentioned in the title. These are: 1) definitions that determine customs as *customary behavior*, and liken them to the notion of habit, or tradition in the broadest sense; 2) those that define customs as a *means or way of arranging, rhythmicizing and accentuating the commonplace*; 3) those with stress on the *normative character* of customs; 4) those that define customs as a *means or way of communication*; and 5) definitions that place special stress, when speaking of the *origin, forms and existence* of customs, on elements of tradition.

This breakdown is merely a working orientation, and the order of the definition groups is not related to a quantitative representation of the definitions in this article. Although the result is merely a rough classification of a relatively small number of definitions, it points to the essential differences in grasping notions of custom, rite and the others.

It is impossible to finalize the collection of definition for notions of custom, habit, rite/ritual, ceremony, celebration, festivity and holiday as long as these concepts are an operative element of ethnological theory. Since only a representative sample of such definitions within the framework of a given ethnological tradition or period could facilitate a founded critical interpretation, this overview is presented as a supplemental work aid for these who research customs and rites.

(Translated by Ellen Elias-Bursać)