

ETHNOLOGY AS A VITAL MANIFESTATION, (FOLK RITES AND PRACTICES)

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Abstract

Society is always looking for means of creation, appearing in different forms in different time situations. The way the individual is incorporated within a certain grouping is of a great importance to be studied in ethnological terms. Ethnology, as a mindset, is related with everyday life, and we live with it every day, creating new ways of superimposing old things. Through some ritual holidays, which define the authenticity of an ancient nation, such as folk calendar holidays, we will try to give some explanations about how man takes from the past, what he carries, how it can be transformed to the new generation, complete, truncated, or completely disregarded. Fortunately, we still have people with good memory who have given us some details about ritual practices. Such a comparison with information from different generations is precisely made as a result of information or inheritance between generations.

Keywords: Society, ethnology, rites, practices, popular tradition

Introduction

Like many other issues from the sphere of national culture, social-historical circumstances, as factors of the creation of a locality, one locality cannot be treated separately from the complex of nationwide ethno-cultural factors. In the framework of close relations, in the beginning, between small social groups, which operated on a common basis, communications were developed in speech, traditions, customs and occasion ceremonies, or organized family and social ones, which in the past created the peculiarities ethno-cultural in the life ecumene. Along with the socio-economic development, communication also gradually expands, which also means regional expansion. In the wake of such a process, small provinces grow into large ones, even with the merger of some small ones. The provincial proximity, as a result of a communication, thanks to the higher degree of economic-social development, was the way to the national formation of the people. Thus, with the national formation of the Albanian people, the function of the ethnographic provinces, as forerunners in the path of national development that they once had, fades away. And, now when we approach this provincial problem, we consider its importance for the illumination of the historical path of national development. The importance of knowing these cores also lies in the field of linguistic, anthropological, historical, sociological studies, etc..¹

Ethnology as transmission into generation

How a certain cultural conglomeration is integrated in a person, how he builds a certain cultural value, is the result of many different factors, starting from the economic, social, or religious. If, for example, we take the organization of a wedding as a basis, in it are interwoven elements of paganism rites, new rites related to the economic expression of the family, rites that come as a result of human psychosis or the so-called social control, etc.. Some of these rites, if applied, have strict ways of practicing them.

¹ Ukë Xhemaj, *Emokultura Shqiptare në Podgur*, Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, Prishtinë, 2003, p.9

Humanity spiritually dominates itself, with new forms layered on top of the old, with temporal forms, with developments that have an early model as their basis. Spiritual culture is the basis on which we create perceptions about others, the things that surround us. We are the continuation of heritage relicts. On the basis of some forms, which appear during in the development of the individual as an individual and as part of society, we can develop the idea on some types of how the transmission of the heritage came to our generations and how it will be in the following years.²

Until the end of the 90s, Albanian society was still cultivating spiritual and cultural heritage. According to informants, until the years of socialism, people totally followed the ritual line. Admittedly, the elderly love to tell stories. The delightful story-telling side of people in this age group is highly developed. They tell us all sorts of things about their individual stories, and our study certainly benefits from their ability to shift into storytelling mode. This is not just an autobiographical exercise. Through the story, the elderly discover and transmit their most basic values and beliefs: they say: We did a lot, with very little: we were poor, but we have achieved everything by taking it as a whole.³

Albanian spiritual culture is closely related to the use of symbols, cults and the practice of traditional customs which were equally present in the life of the old Illyrians. The symbolism of the snake, the plow, metals, coins, talismans; marriage rituals, the cult of the dead, once part of the Illyrian reality, today are tangible to all of us, through their transmission from generation to generation as well as their imprinting in popular memory, ensuring an Illyrian-Albanian continuity, which contributed to the identification of Albanians.⁴

The place of women in Albanian society has been highly valued since antiquity. In his second book *Filipika Theopompi* writes: "The Illyrians..., at feasts they also take women with them, for whom it is a good thing to drink for the health of any of those present"⁵

They performed all the rites with a focus on folk calendar holidays, because they were closely related to agriculture, animal husbandry or different crafts based on manual work. The different folk calendar holidays made a difference in everyday life, giving basis to the ritual festivals, which lasted up to 3-4 days. The most important folk holidays were those with a beginning and an end such as St. George and St. Mitri, through which material good from nature was manifested and sought. This is a type of participatory transmission knowing the consequence of the action or ritual.

By the end of the 90s as a result of industrial and technical development, the direct transmission passed to the new generations, especially to those who were not engaged, and who were still as ritual participants and to some extent who understanding the symbols rituals.

But after the 90s, the big change began, the change between the new and the old, between what has more as its goal economic and rational survival than the cults from which nothing is profited. At the beginning of the 90s, a new period began, when ritual man began to withdraw from direct participation in the process of agricultural, livestock development, etc., trying to influence the development of fertility of earth and prosperity of life, but now they sees them as part of the past.

Ritual calendar holidays represent bright spots in the mosaic of our traditional spiritual culture, so it should be analyzed from all scientific points of view. After all, every human society has gone through different periods of time, leaving behind different cultural values. Culture means continuity. Researcher Potts believes that today's human capacity for culture does not represent a uniform monolith, but a structure - the parts of which have been given over time in our evolutionary past. According to him, culture is based on 5 elements:

² Rini Useini, *Transmetimi i kulturës shpirtërore ndër gjenerata*, "Albanalogjia 7, vëllimi I", Instituti Albanologjik, Prishtinë, 2017, p.563

³ Informator: Besnik Useini, farm worker, Koroshishta, Struga, 69 years old, 2022.

⁴ Aleksandër Stipčević, *Ilirët, Historia, jeta, kultura, simbolet e kultit*, Toena, Tiranë, 2002, p.348

⁵ Selim, Islami etc. *Ilirët dhe Iliria tek autorët antik*, Universiteti i Tiranës, Tiranë, 1965, p.285

- 1) transfer - to copy behavior through observations or instructions;
- 2) memory - as traditions cannot be developed if the new behavior is not remembered;
- 3) repetition - ability to reproduce or imitate any behavior or any learned information;
- 4) innovation - ability to invent new behaviors;
- 5) selection - the ability to select which behaviors to keep and which to discard.⁶

This is an evolutionary path of interweaving of provincial elements that rise on an ethno-cultural basis, the closeness of which led to the rise of relations up to the level of the national formation of the Albanian people, as early as the early Middle Ages. The ethnic elements from one province to another speak for the inter-provincial horizontal movements during the storms of history, these elements were always placed in ecumenes with the same ethno-cultural base. So, temporary flows moved within the framework of an ethno-cultural area from one province to another, from small to large and vice versa. It happened that the new element also took root in the new locality, not forgetting the cultural transmission. Thus, even today, some of the inhabitants of the province of Leknia, or Dukagjin, in R Albania, keep the memory of their emigration from the eastern plains, namely from the Dukagjin Plain, this toponim, which is considered by the people as their ancestral land.⁷

The ethno-cultural elements of a sole, with some ethno-provincial characteristics, which anyway merged on that sole, such as the language with the dialects and sub-dialects of the provincial dialects, customs and traditions, the tradition of agricultural and livestock activities with other branches of work vital, they speak of the embedded, autochthonous life on these lands, where they developed and interwoven. With the development of the nation, all the provinces with their divisions came and merged.

The ancient traces of their initial stages remained to be marked only as relics of a historical past. We thus recall the generalizing ethnonym, as M. Tirta calls it, "**land and world**", inherited before the Turkish period, in the provincial sense, in all Albanian lands. In social-historical sciences, European and beyond, there were occasions to treat different topics from the history and culture of the Albanian people. On this occasion, we should also mention some foreign scholars who dealt with the problem of provinces, tribes and Bajraqs among Albanians. Since they dealt with problems from a culture foreign to them, they were also given partial or inconsistent opinions.⁸ Thus, without taking into account the economic component, as a non-same basis in different periods for the ethnographic provinces as an ethno-cultural whole, Baldacci, Papers, Lippich, etc., qualify them all as belonging to a categorical "tribe", "Bajrak ", "tribes" or "cantons", asserts the ethnographer Rr. Joyce. Hecquard, Ippen, Seiner, etc. went one step further. who, taking into account the economic base and a number of other factors, also make regional differentiation, but not always on purpose, placing them in non-belonging groups. Cozzi and Cordigano also tackled this ethnographic problem, but not so successfully.⁹

Ethnology in everyday life

All that man created without having institutional schools of study but their schools were the past generations who, wittingly or unwittingly, imprinted their traditional culture on their descendants. With the creation of schools that more broadly delved into descriptions, all these actions were introduced into the so-called ethnological school.¹⁰ Some European cultural and professional institutions give the definition that: the ethnological heritage of a state includes the specific forms of material existence and the social organization of the groups that create the

⁶ Rick Potts, *Humanity's Descent: The consequences of Ecological Instability*, William Morrow & Co, New York, 1996. P.232

⁷ M. Tirtja, *Rreth njesive etnografike krahinore në gjirin e kombësisë shaintare në shek. XIII-XVI*, "Kultura popullore, 2," Tiranë 1982, p.69.

⁸ Rr.Zojzi. *ibid*, p.545

⁹ *Ibid*, p.546

¹⁰ Rini Useini, *Etmologjia si manifestim në kohët e sotme në turizëm, shoqëri, etj*, "Albanologji V", vëllimi I, Instituti Albanologjik, Prishtinë, 2014. p.241-246.

same, their knowledge, their presentations and generally speaking elements that create the basis of any social group and that makes it distinct from others (Report of the Ministry of Culture of France)..¹¹

In any situation, it has been necessary to adhere to norms, whether social or irrational with a punitive theme. If we talk about folk dresses in the past, every detail of the dress has been defined, starting from the dress of young girls, those who are engaged, young women, and those of old age. The differences were also in the clothing of women with different social statuses, the woman released by her husband sometimes had her apron worn backwards or the fringes of her apron cut (A Gjergji), which determines her current status in society.¹²

The question arises, how does ethnology affect a person with a superimposed religious subconscious? Ethnology is a factor that affects different forms of human identification, such as religious affiliation or religion.

Culture in general constitutes a victory of man over the dark sides of himself and society, an overcoming of his simple biological being. We are dealing with a conscious action of man, to determine and regulate his life and its natural environment or, according to another, more compact formulation; it is a matter of "different realizations according to the scale and manner of human possibilities".¹³ In different civilizations, some stable elements can be found, which can be called intercultural constants". In summary, they are outlined as follows:

- a) Creation of a communication system, of an agreement code, i.e. of a language
- b) Solutions that are given to the primary needs of human survival related to housing and food, that is, related to the development of technology and elementary economy.
- c) Arrangements in the coexistence of the basic human unit man-woman for the perpetuation of the species.
- d) Organization of coexistence of people, tribe, race, nation - definition of social relations.
- e) Determining what is good or bad, that is, the institutionalization of social rules.
- f) Various artistic expressions of the convictions and concerns of the individual and society.
- g) Experiencing the "holy", beyond everyday reality, with a religious form.¹⁴

More succinctly, culture provides a series of responses and solutions to basic categories of existence and is subsequently reshaped by them. It defines ways of survival (economic structures), good and bad (morality), truth (philosophy, science), laws (law), beauty (art).

Extending the ancient bipolar "Greek - barbarian" distinction, Europeans distinguished between the "civilized" and the "savage". But the most recent anthropological research showed that culture is something universal. In all societies there is a type of culture, even in an embryonic state. Ethnology refers to over 300 cultural groups that correspond to the so-called "primitives", i.e. tribes that live according to nature. Just as there are languages that are not written, there are also cultures without technological achievements. With different assessment criteria, the most developed cultures have been highlighted from time to time. For example, Spengler limits the number of superior cultures to eight, while Toynbee lists the most important human cultures in 21 groups.¹⁵

A distinction is often made between the terms *civilization* and *culture*. The first term defines technical and material culture, while the second term defines spiritual culture. This division is used especially in the West and is related to a period of time, which, under the influence of idealism, distinguished the material from the spiritual. But, in the Orthodox view, matter and spirit in man constitute an indivisible unity with mutual influence. Therefore, we prefer to consider them as two aspects of the same creative human spirit.

¹¹ Drita Halimi-Statovci, *Trashëgimia kulturore dhe aktualiteti*

¹² Andromaqi Gjergji, *Veshjet shqiptare ne shekuj: origjina, tipologjia, zhvillimi*. ASHSH, Tiranë, 2005, p. 103-104.

¹³ Max Weber: *An Intellectual Portrait*. University of California Press. p. 79

¹⁴ Max Weber. *ibid.* p.80

¹⁵ Rini Useini, *Emologjia si manifestim në kohët e sotme në turizëm dhe shoqëri*, "Albanologjia 5, vëllimi I," Instituti Albanologjik, Prishtinë, 2015. F.243

This line of unity is underlined by the finding that culture is a "group", a whole, often independent and self-contained and not just a bunch of separate elements.

It is a form of "organism", with logical entelechy, that moves within the space of human responsibility and freedom. The most systematic study of human cultures reveals a dramatic "duality", the action of demonic powers and simultaneously the burning desire for the Holy. Also, a kind of double evolution: one ascending and one degenerating.

Man has always been subject to supernatural forces, for this reason he has created prejudices regarding real life by transforming them into irrational ideas. For example, there is the myth of fairies, which people have valued as supernatural beings and have also defined their places with corresponding names such as the fairy stone, fairy cave or fairy river.¹⁶ The same thing happens with regard to other pagan beliefs, such as the belief and respect of the snake. The same happens in the personification of the snake in Albanian culture, first as a chthonic deity that protects the home and family members from evil. The opposite happens if they do something bad to him or kill the snake. His skin served as a protector during the war in which the son of the house participated. According to analysts, this version of faith has to do with the human subconscious when it has been subjected to nature, which affects even today.

As for today's religion, it can be said that pagan traditions are preserved even today. For example, without knowing their functionality in the villages of Struga, various calendar rites such as Summer Day, Saint George, Hermitage Day, Saint Mitri and some others folk holidays are still taking place. On Saint Eremia's day, women go to the village of Shum, to the spring of the village, to get pregnant, or to remove bad spells. There is an old woman who performed these rites. To perform the rite, he needs a piece of clothing which he throws into the spring, and then the women wash themselves with water from the same spring. In order for this rite to have a result, they present the old woman with a gift such as a shirt, handkerchief, etc."¹⁷

All this is important for entertainment for the new generations since they do not know the essential meaning of these rites but only receive instructions on how to perform them. On the summer day (Dita e veres), which is associated with the revival of nature, we are dealing with several objective ritual categories. The cult of vegetation is treated by collecting the first flowers which are then placed in the parts of the house so that the house has livestock. They are also placed on dairy equipment, on trees so that there are abundant trees, etc. While on the next day, the children gathered in crowds go from house to house taking in their hands some small branches that they leave in front of the door of the house called birds and at the same time they imitate the chirping of the birds by chirping several times until the lady of the house comes out, which gives them a symbolic gift even though the symbol of this day is the egg colored more in red from the skins that express its red color, onions. The egg symbolizes the beginning of a new life or a natural recycling. They are worldviews with archaic archetypes that in the guise of new times are acceptable with identifying value.

The same thing happens on St. George's Day (Shen Gjergj) or when summer begins according to the folk calendar cycle. During this day, rituals are performed that still have the meaning of a new life event.¹⁸ While the day of St. Eremi has a different character, in which case the small children take the cattle bells and sing loudly to the ringing of the bells saying the words: eremi deremi all the good things in the house, run away snake because we will kill you with sticks.¹⁹ This rite is passed through all the rooms of the house, as well as to the cattle. All this is a kind of apotropaic action in order to remove evil things from the house. At the end of this rite, a high fire is lit around which there is singing and dancing, all with the tendency of purification or purification from evil.

¹⁶ Mark Tirta, *Mitologjia ndër shqiptar*, ASHSH, Tiranë, 2004, p.112

¹⁷ Shpresa Tuda, *Te dhena per zakonet e vdekjes dhe vajtimet në Struge dhe rrethinë*, Gjurmime albanologjike-Folklor dhe etnologji, VII-1977, Prishtinë, f. 172.

¹⁸ Izaim Murtezani, *Festa e Shen Gjergjit te shqiptaret*, Mudoforse MKRM Shkup, 2010, f. 53

¹⁹ Eremi deremi, gjithë tëmirat nëpër shpi, gjithë të këqijat në mulli, ikni molla e gjarpni se do ju vrasim me shkopinj,

One day before Saint George day (Dita e Arifes, para Shen Gjergjit), children go to a water source and fill a bottle with water. In it they put three small stones with red, white and black colors and in the same water they also put a plant where the so-called mill flower is not missing. Here we can encounter the cult of stone, which gives strength to people to be as strong as stone in the annual framework, while the cult of vegetation for prosperity as much as possible. With this ritual water, which is placed on a rose until the next day, children and adults have previously washed the whole body, and later only the hands and face.

In addition to these pagan rites that belong to the folk work calendar, monotheistic religions also have a very effect on the way of life and on human consciousness. With faith in supernatural power or in a God, man holds his inspiration in life very high. And in monotheistic religions there are strong norms about how a person should keep a control over his actions, to be careful and to respect and bow with respect to the creator. Like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in addition to traditional norms, they have holy books through which they make a person more aware of any question that may be in his subconscious.

So man, from ancient times to the present, has acquired or is clothed with rules and norms to make his life more flexible and sublime. This defined ethics made it more reasonable in family, social or other types of organizations. In this case, it can be said that his culture becomes more uniform and conforms with the others, that in the ethnological aspect we can say that he is identified as the same in some forms with other members of the society, first kinship, then provincial and then national. But there are changes that make it more flexible and more competitive with others

Conclusion

Man always adapts himself to life's circumstances, from subsistence agriculture to new technological developments. He knew how to create for his needs and to seek the good from nature, being a good measurer of time through the days of the folk calendar, which he proved throughout the centuries he lived. The peoples who have, as we said, these days of importance for the popular culture are authentic in the place where they practice these holidays through which they seek the best from nature. In more detail, we have made a description of how ethnologists explain the transmission and how we translate it based on the theories in our field of activity in the diachronic and synchronic sense. Ethnology also studies the life developments rich with different rites which have their own symbolism.

Whether as researchers or as ordinary citizens, wherever we go, we are interested in getting to know the environment that surrounds us. This recognition comes as a human characteristic approved in the word "curiosity", but it does not fully correspond to the subconscious, which needs a more interactive approach to the perceptions that enter the analysis. We can do all this with certain templates, in the attraction of individuals to the popular creation, or the tourist of the artifacts. Ethnology as a mindset is everyday, we live with it every day, we create new ways by superimposing old things. So society is always a means of creation, appearing in different forms and time situations. The way the individual is incorporated within a certain grouping is of great importance to be studied in the ethnological aspect.

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